Dear Friends of the Furman Philosophy Department,

Greetings from Greenville. Homecoming is a bit earlier than usual this year and so even though the apples are all ready to be picked in the orchards of North Carolina, the leaves remain on the trees and we are dealing more with tropical rain than with anticipations of snow. Despite the recent rainfall, everyone at Furman is gearing up for another great homecoming celebration on October 19-20, 2018. We hope that you will all join us for the festivities. If you do, please stop by the department suite in Furman Hall 125 and say hello. Also, don’t forget about the Department tailgate before the football game on Saturday.

While you are here for homecoming, also make plans to come hear Dr. Bill Martin (a Furman philosophy alumnus) speaking on “The American South in Philosophy.” His lecture will be Friday, October 19, at 2:30pm in Furman 214.

There are a lot of exciting things going on in the Furman Philosophy Department and we hope that this issue of the newsletter gives you a good sense of some of them. Rather than offering short updates on the faculty here in the opening letter, we have decided to give each member of the department their own page so you can also see pictures of their families and hear about the amazing work they are all doing.

As just a brief overview, the department welcomed Dr. Darren Hick this year who is here for a visiting faculty position (see the interview with him in this newsletter and learn about his interests in aesthetics, free will, and comic books!). Additionally, Dr. Sarah Worth is closing out her final year as department chair and Dr. Erik Anderson is preparing to take the helm. Lastly, your two editors each received awards that further highlights the excellence of the Philosophy Department. Dr. Aaron Simmons received the Chiles-Harrill Award from the 2018 Senior Class. This award is given to a faculty or staff member who has played a significant role in the lives of the seniors and the recipient becomes an honorary member of the graduation class. Sandi Annone received the Staff Member of the Year for 2018-2019. This award recognizes
members of the campus that go above and beyond—those who have a love for the campus, students, and employees.

As our students remain the same age from year to year, all of our children are quickly growing up and will in a very short time become college students themselves. (Well, Sandi’s daughter, Nicole, is a junior at Furman and her son, Michael is also pursuing higher education—see pics below). Otherwise, books continue to get written, classes continue to be taught, young women and men continue to be invited to live lives of meaning and purpose, and, with the Furman Advantage in full swing, Furman continues to distinguish itself as a leader in liberal arts education. It is a great time to be a Paladin and we are always honored to share this heritage and legacy with all of you.

Don’t forget that if you would like to support the current generation of Furman students in their philosophical activities, please donate to the “Furman Philosophy Special Needs Fund.” Your support is crucial to the continued thriving of our department.

We hope that you enjoy this newsletter and that you will take the opportunity to reach out to us however works best for you. You can join the “Friends of Furman Philosophy Department” Facebook group, drop an email to any of us, or hopefully, stop by the Homecoming Tailgate.

On behalf of the Department,

Aaron Simmons
Sandi Annone

2012: (When Sandi started working at Furman) with daughter, Nicole and son, Michael

2018: with daughter, Nicole and son, Michael
How soon they grow up!
This past year, I have been busy doing talks on my book *In Defense of Reading* that came out in 2017, and have just been offered a new book contract to write something on taste. The working title for the new book is *The Pleasures of Eating: A Philosophy of Taste*. I will be doing research by tasting everything I can! I will do this partly by continuing to take students to Italy every May for my MayEx class Slow Food: Italian Style, but I am also planning a trip for alumni to go to Italy in the fall of 2019 for a food and wine tour.

Greece—with husband, Bill and children, William and Charles

In Rome with students and truffle hunting at the farm!
I continue to work with 2004 Alumnus, Paige Harden, on a grant that we received through the Templeton Foundation, entitled, “Fortune’s Favor: Implications of Behavioral Genetic Research for Distributive and Retributive Justice.” Work on this grant has resulted in collaborative projects with several students and alumni, multiple presentations, poster presentations, and articles submitted and accepted for publication. Using funding from this grant I will conduct a faculty seminar in the summer of 2019 entitled, “Genetics and Justice.” The seminar will bring together Furman faculty interested in creating a new course or altering an existing course to integrate ideas related to this topic.

I maintain my relationships with all of the medical schools in South Carolina, and the state ethics board as a clinical ethicist. My interdisciplinary work recently resulted in invitations to serve as an affiliate member of Emory University’s Center for Ethics, and to join the South East Consortium for Medical Ethics (SECME). I have also worked with Furman to establish a university-wide relationship with SECME in order to create research opportunities for faculty from a variety of disciplines and internships for students. I continue my own research on topics related to criminal mental illness, and have become particularly well known for my work on mass shooters and mental illness, which has resulted in multiple media interviews, guest commentaries, and visiting lectureships. My TEDx talk on this topic (recorded in 2016) has garnered more than 30,000 views, and is being considered by the national TED organization for inclusion on TED.com.

If you are interested in viewing the talk, follow this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXFBXhgzHJc

On a personal level, I am gleefully assisting my son, Luca Blocher, in his quest to become a total nerd. Our most recent shared passion is for the musical Hamilton. I employed my past life as a drama major to choreograph Luca’s talent show performance of “You’ll Be Back,” where, as King George, III, he threatened the pesky and rebellious colonists to remain loyal to England, lest he “kill [their] friends and family… to remind [them] of my love.” Luca’s father and my husband, Kurt Blocher, upholds the family’s nerdy honor by working with Luca to build hovercrafts, create bismuth crystals, and care for a wide variety of animals (including multiple reptiles, four cats, and a hedgehog). There is never a dull moment in our home which is filled with love, laughter, history, science, and various sorts of pet hair.

With son, Luca

Dr. M. Carmela Epright
I’m getting ready for a Sabbatical in Spring 2019 during which I’ll be pursuing two projects, tentatively titled, “Education as if Reality Mattered” and “Decoloniality and Liberation Philosophy.” The kids are doing great – we’re almost done with pre-school! We took our first full-family bike ride this year, and we took the whole family camping for the first time – big steps for engaging the fullness of the outdoors. My wife, Liz, a professor at Wake Forest School of Divinity, will be on sabbatical at the same time as me, and she’ll be working on her third book, also dealing with decoloniality.

During the past academic year, I have especially enjoyed the relationships I have built with students doing research. In the summer of 2017, I worked with Chambers English, one of our philosophy majors, and Dr. Courtney Quinn in the Sustainability Studies Department doing interdisciplinary research on Social Justice and Sustainability. I was able to present an account of the philosophical aspects of research at the South Carolina Society for Philosophy this past spring.

On the next page is a diagram that shows correlations between different ethical perspectives and different conceptions of environmental sustainability. *The big square at the intersection of “Community” and “Hum” indicates that among the people we surveyed, those who thought about ethics in terms of their relationship to a community referred to environmental concerns primarily in terms of their effects on “Human welfare.”*
This past summer I did research with Nick Haight, an Asian Studies and Biology major, and the relationship between the martial art of Aikido and the two major religious traditions of Japan, Shinto and Buddhism. We hope to present the results of our research at a conference next Spring.

Both of these summers have been rewarding to me and valuable for my students. The students received significant financial support for their work during the summer through the Furman Advantage Research Fellowship program. The Shi Center for Sustainability provided additional support for our interdisciplinary work the summer before last.

Last fall I also had the opportunity to travel to Japan with Nick Haight and Ben Wirzba, two of the active members of the Furman Aikido Club, to train at the Ki Society International Headquarters Dojo in Tochigi. We were also able to visit several important cultural sites while in Tokyo before training began, including the Meiji Shrine, the newly renovated Fish Market (where we ate unbelievably delicious sushi), and the Asakusa Temple and Shrine. In the picture Nick and Ben are standing in front of a series of brightly-painted torii enjoying the beauty of a Shinto shrine.

On a personal note, my son Alan (’07) and his wife Devon had a baby girl, Charlie Lynn, on August 14, 2018. This is a picture of me holding her on our recent trip to Denver.
During the summer of 2018, Dr. Hasan Birdwell attended and presented at workshop “Expanding the Canon: Transitions and Transformations in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy” hosted by University of Konstanz, Germany. The conference was held at a restored Medieval Austrian castle at the border in Northern Italy in South Tyrol (Gais, Italy).
It was a busy year for the Simmons family. Atticus has just turned nine years old and started third grade (after a summer of art camp, basketball camp, science camp, and lots of kayaking and fishing in the mountains). Vanessa remains a Marketing Director at Chick-fil-a while somehow also finding time to be the PTA vice-president at Atticus’s school, lead the children’s choir at church, and run her own event planning company. Meanwhile I (Aaron) continue to try to stay active across campus and within the philosophical world. I have recently finished a new edited volume on Christian Philosophy that will be published by Oxford University Press later this year. I was recently honored to be elected the Vice-President of the Søren Kierkegaard Society and I am currently working on a variety of other projects (on topics such as epistemic trust, the philosophy of liturgy, and democratic discourse) that will hopefully find their way to print soon.

Dr. Aaron Simmons
Sandi Annone (SA): First of all, congratulations on your appointment as Chair of the Philosophy Department! I want to start at the beginning. Why did you become a professor?

Erik Anderson (EA): I think air conditioning may be partly to blame. Like lots of young people, I had a series of terrible jobs when I was a teenager. My dad wanted me to have a good work ethic, so he always arranged for me to have jobs in the summers. These jobs were mostly related to construction, land surveying, or landscaping, which in Tucson, Arizona, meant working in the blistering heat. After my freshman year at the University of Arizona, I convinced my dad to let me take summer school instead of doing my usual summer work. He said yes, so I spent the summer in the nice air-conditioned university library, reading and writing for my summer classes. That was blissful. I thought, “Hey, maybe this is the kind of work I could do for a living? It sure beats construction!”

Soon thereafter, I transferred to the University of Puget Sound (UPS), a small liberal arts college near Seattle. I loved the cool, moist air, the clouds, and the rain. And I fell more deeply in love with learning—first with literature, and then with philosophy. I had small classes and good relationships with my professors. It was then I thought to myself, “I want to do what these people do when I grow up.” After that, I pretty much never looked back.
SA: If you were not a professor, what other career choice would you have chosen?

(EA): One of the things I was most active in as an undergrad was the UPS college newspaper, *The Trail*. I started as a reporter, moved up to being Opinion Page Editor, Assistant Editor, and then finally Editor-in-Chief. It was tremendously fun, in part because we had virtually no restrictions on what we did. (One year right before winter break, we published a full-page picture of Karl Marx in a Santa Claus hat on the front page, with no explanation.) When I first started working for the paper, I thought I might want to be a journalist. Just to try it out, I even did an internship with a magazine in Seattle. But I found journalism—at least the kind in local newspapers—to be too trivial and un-intellectual. If I was going to be a journalist, I didn’t want to write stories about car accidents and livestock for the *Tacoma News Tribune* or the *Puyallup Herald News*. (Sounds snobby now, but I was young!) However, the idea of high-quality journalism still appeals to me. If I could do anything besides teach philosophy, I would like to be a writer for a publication like *The Atlantic Monthly*.

SA: What drew you to teach at Furman?

When I got the job interview at Furman early in 2001, the philosophy department sent me a video cassette (remember those?) containing two things: a promotional video introducing me to Furman University, and a videotaped interview with members of the philosophy department (at that time, the department consisted of Tom Buford, David Shaner, Jim Edwards, Sarah Worth, Mark Stone, and Carmela Epright). My friends and I sat in my apartment in Providence, Rhode Island, where I lived while finishing my dissertation, and watched this glossy promotional video about Furman. I was totally sold! The campus was beautiful, of course, but there was a real emphasis on exactly the things I valued: small classes, liberal learning, and student engagement. Furman seemed to be a kind of Southern version of UPS, the liberal arts college I had so loved and benefitted from. One of my best friends, who is now a professor at Mizzou, said, “Man, I want to work there!”

When I came for my on-campus interview, I did something that I didn’t even realize was risky. I had to teach a mock class, and I decided to present a question that I didn’t know the answer to. (The exact question escapes me now, but I know it had something to do with religious toleration, which was the topic of my dissertation.) Instead of trying to answer it myself, I presented the question and then asked students to try to answer it. I remember that they responded with really interesting suggestions. We were, in essence, doing philosophy live in the classroom, without any pre-ordained goals or end points in mind. Again, I was completely sold.

SA: What is one of your earliest memories of Furman that brings a smile to your face, or even some laughter?

EA: Well, the earliest memory that makes me laugh is that videotaped interview with my soon-to-be colleagues that David Shaner, the chair at that time, sent me. First of all, it was a bizarre idea. I don’t think I’ve ever heard of another department videotaping an interview with the department to send out to job candidates. (That was also part of its charm.) I cannot forget how awkward it must have been for my poor colleagues! I’m certain that if I ever proposed something similar as chair, I would receive A LOT of pushback! I wish I could say that I saved a copy of that tape that I could hold for ransom now, but alas, it got lost somewhere along the way.

SA: In the 17 years you’ve been at Furman, What has been your greatest or proudest professional accomplishment (s)? (Excluding the current appointment.)
EA: I started teaching at Furman in 2001. In the intervening 17 years, I am most proud of the progress I’ve made as a teacher. If you ask most philosophy professors how they learned to teach, you will most likely hear that they had to learn entirely on their own. At least when I was a grad student, there was almost no instruction at all on how to write a syllabus, grade assignments, and conduct class sessions. We really had to learn by doing. That also means learning by making mistakes.

What I have learned (largely through my mistakes) is to embrace and share with students a much broader and more diverse conception of philosophy than I was trained in. I have broadened significantly the authors, approaches, ideas, and problems that I bring into the classroom. This is a work in progress, of course, but I now teach far more feminist theory, gender theory, critical race theory, and LGBTQ issues and approaches than I studied as a grad student. I also use work from other disciplines like sociology, psychology, and law.

Besides diversifying my existing classes, I have created two new courses that reflect my growing emphasis on difference and diversity. The first is PHL 410: Knowledge, Truth, and Power, which has elements of a traditional analytic epistemology course but adds continental thinkers (Foucault & Wittgenstein), feminist epistemology and metaphysics (Sally Haslanger, Louise Antony, Elizabeth Anderson, Miranda Fricker, Jennifer Saul), and cutting-edge material on implicit biases. The second is PHL 415: Philosophy of Love & Sex. We cover a wide-range of topics in this class including how to define romantic love, how to understand sex, the relation between sex, gender, and sexuality, and debates over marriage, prostitution, and pornography. But the core of the class is an investigation of sexual ethics, focusing primarily on understanding the nature and importance of sexual consent. Again, this class has really forced me to stretch myself as a teacher and philosopher, and has led me to be more involved in campus programming that addresses sexual harassment and assault on college campuses.

Lastly, I would like to add that I have recently been named the Director of Curricular Initiatives for Furman’s new Intergroup Dialogue Program. As part of this new role, I am co-teaching IDS 180: Introduction to Intergroup Dialogue with Stephanie Hesbacher, the Assistant Director of South Housing. IDS 180 can be taught with different focuses; this particular version of the class is focused on having dialogues about gender. The class has been enormously enriching so far, which I hope will lead both the students and myself to be even more empathetic, insightful, and engaged with issues of gender oppression and injustice in the future.

SA: When you learned that you would be the next department chair, what went through your mind? What did your friends and family say? (Be honest.)

EA: Well, the standard joke that people always say is, “I don’t know whether to offer congratulations or condolences!” Being chair, I gather, can sometimes be a challenging job. The members of our department are a diverse group of enormously talented, accomplished, and dedicated teacher-scholars. It is only to be expected that we will sometimes have passionate disagreements about things, especially the things most dear to our hearts. The prospect of being chair can thus be a little daunting. But I have known most of my colleagues for a very long time and have good relationships with all of them. My aim is simply to do my best to keep us improving and progressing and to help my colleagues continue to succeed at being their amazing selves.

SA: What are you most excited to accomplish as Chair?
I don’t have all the specifics worked out, but there are a number of things I’d like to work on. Our department has been so successful in part because of all of the connections and bridges we’ve made to other departments and programs. For example, Dr. Epright is chair of the Medicine, Health, and Culture minor and Dr. Gandolfo is chair of the Poverty Studies minor; our department contributes to these minors as well as those in African American and Diaspora Cultures, Ancient Greek and Roman Studies, Environmental Studies, Humanities, Latin American Studies, and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. In addition, a number of course count as electives for other majors and programs. I would like to continue our historical trend of building bridges between philosophy and other departments and programs at Furman. It is hard to think of any area of inquiry to which philosophy cannot contribute. In turn, it has always been true that ideas from outside philosophy continually enrich philosophical thought. I hope to continue this emphasis on openness and connection to other fields.

Another important thing for us to focus on is understanding how we can contribute to “The Furman Advantage.” To some extent, the idea that all students should have the opportunity to form close relationships with faculty mentors and to engage in individualized learning projects is something that we have always believed in and practiced in our department. In other words, what we are now calling the Furman Advantage has always existed in the philosophy department. But that doesn’t mean we can’t do it better—more intentionally, more creatively (trying out new things), and as more of an official area of focus. I am hoping we can come up with some new TFA initiatives in the philosophy department to add to what we are already doing. As chair, I would also like to make sure that the university provides us with the resources we need in order to make sure these new initiatives succeed.

SA: What would our readers be surprised to know about you?

EA: I’m not sure how much validity the categories of ‘introvert’ and ‘extrovert’ have, but I definitely have tendencies toward what would be considered the introvert end of the spectrum. I enjoy teaching and being with people, but afterward I need quite a bit of “alone time” to recharge. I spend my alone time running, reading, listening to music, and listening to podcasts.

SA: Finally, you are happiest when?

EA: There are a lot of things that make me happy, including being with my wife and sons, drinking beer with friends, traveling, and going on long runs. But on an everyday basis, I am often happiest when I settle into my reading chair in the evening with a stack of books and articles, looking for the next thing I want to teach, write, or think about.
Interview with Darren Hudson Hick by Aaron Simmons

J. Aaron Simmons (JAS): What do you like about teaching philosophy?

Darren Hudson Hick (DHH): What I like about philosophy is getting excited about a thing. Seeing the students get excited about ideas gets me excited. The last topic I teach in my intro course is the problem of determinism and free will. Because it’s the last topic, there’s no time left for them to write an essay on it. I tell them I put it last because the problem is too hard for me. And I show them why it’s so hard – because it seems to require us to give up one or another of our very deeply-held beliefs. It’s a genuine dilemma. Almost inevitably, when they get the problem, it bothers them, too. This is what I like to see. I want them to be bothered enough to continue to think about the ideas after the class is over. This is the philosophical attitude: “I have a problem and it bugs me and I can’t put it down.” I want students to get excited about a problem and dig.

JAS: Give me some of your background. Where are you from? How did you end up doing what you do?

DHH: I’m Canadian, from Hamilton, Ontario, which is in the little tail of Canada that sticks down into the Great Lakes. I got my undergrad at Trent University (we don’t have private schools in Canada, but Trent was close to the same feel, with about 5,000 students). I originally wanted to go to art school, but the parents wouldn’t pay for it – so no more art school. I started out instead as a sociology major, but quickly discovered it wasn’t for me. I ended up instead as a Philosophy/English double-major, which was perfect for me. It hit two sides of what I like. When it came time for grad school, I applied to both programs, but I ultimately decided to do philosophy. I like literature and literary theory, but doing well in philosophy was harder – it hurt more. So, I did that. I like the challenge. I focused on aesthetics and did a MPhil at the University of Wales on the aesthetics of comics. After completing that, I was in my early 20s and I didn’t really want to be an academic at the time, so I walked away for a while and became a textbook editor instead (it turns out that knowing how to spell and use semi-colons is a marketable skill). I eventually became sick of dealing with academics and so I decided to become one of them. I went to the University of Maryland and wrote my dissertation on the metaphysics and ethics of copyright. I finished my Ph.D. in 2008, exactly when the economy collapsed and the academic jobs disappeared. So, for the past decade, I’ve bounced around a bit – Pennsylvania, Texas, Pennsylvania again, Texas again, Charleston, and now here. Along the way, I’ve managed to publish some stuff that has been well received.
JAS: What interests do you have beyond philosophy?

DHH: I like playing games with my wife. We have a trunkful of board games and card games and we love it. Also, I know a lot about comic books. I have a lot of comic books. Part of my time in publishing was spent in the comics industry, so I’ve kept a foot in that world. I’m also a horror movie junkie and I have cats. Somehow that fills up most of my spare time.

JAS: How have you enjoyed living in Greenville?

DHH: It’s great! Because my wife and I move a lot, we enjoy exploring where we are while we’re there. When we were in Texas, we did as much of Texas as we could and then branched out around the southwest and have since developed a great interest in “roadside America.” When we were in Charleston, we made it our project to go to every brewery in the city. We got to all of them but one! We even wrote up a little booklet of reviews. Since we’ve been in Greenville, we bought our state park pass and have begun exploring. It’s now a question of figuring out where to go. I’m also leading Sarah Worth’s boys and their friends in a Dungeons & Dragons campaign on Wednesday nights, so I’m not wanting for things to do.

JAS: What are your initial impressions of Furman and its students?

DHH: They’re engaged at a level that is remarkable and which I haven’t seen in a while. They are excited – not all of them, but most of them – about new ideas. I guess the word I’d use to describe them is “hungry.” How quickly they fill up remains to be seen! Oh, and they’re also very polite, but that just might be South Carolina. We’ll see. But the students are generally not this polite in the North (and this is coming from a Canadian).

JAS: What philosophical question keeps you up at night?

DHH: All the stuff I work on revolves around two central questions: what rights do we have to the things that we create, and what rights to other people have to those same things? This is my ongoing theme. But it’s not what keeps me up at night. What keeps me up is the determinism problem. Do I have any reason to think that I have free will? I’m pretty sure the answer is “no,” but I don’t like that answer.

JAS: Why don’t you like that answer?

DHH: Because it doesn’t feel like it. I like to think that I have control over the things that it seems I have control over. I seem to have control.
JAS: What changes if we don’t have free will?

DHH: If we don’t have free will, then there is no morality. If you don’t get to decide what you do in a robust sense, then there is no moral responsibility, and if there is no moral responsibility, then there is no moral weight to anything. You know in video games, where there is a plot point that has to unfold? We’ve now gotten to a place in video game design where sometimes the video game plays out the way that it has to, but the player doesn’t immediately know it – it takes a while to figure it out that your controller isn’t really controlling anything. It only looks like we are still in control, but it’s causally determined. If everything is happening the way that it has to, then I’m just a tourist in my own life. I’m just watching it happen, but I think that I’m not. That’s a problem.

JAS: Given your interest in comic books, where would someone like me who doesn’t really read them find a good place to start and why?

DHH: My wife doesn’t read comic books. I have thousands in my house, boxes upon boxes in the attic. She has had to haul them state to state, but hasn’t read any of them. About a week ago, she said, “maybe I should read one.” So, for the last few days, I’ve been thinking, what would be the right one for her to read. Superhero stuff? For her, probably not. She loves movies like Deadpool, Avengers, Black Panther, and Ant-Man. I have an Aquaman shrine in our house, but she’s not really interested in that. There’s a lot she could read that isn’t superhero stuff. So what’s left? She has all sorts of literary interests. She reads a lot of non-fiction, historical stuff. There are things that fit into that wheelhouse in the comic field quite nicely. So, maybe the way to go is to read comic versions of what she already enjoys. Maybe Louis Riel, a historical Canadian figure who, in a nutshell, was one of the founders of Manitoba, who led a rebellion and got voted into Parliament twice despite being forcibly institutionalized and declared dead! Louis Riel is Métis: half-white and half-indigenous, recognized as its own indigenous group in Canada. This is part of Canadian history that we aren’t really taught as children. Chester Brown wrote a graphic novel about Louis Riel that is fantastic and that might be a good place to start for her. Or, if she wants something a bit more adventurous, there’s another graphic novel called The Northwest Passage, by Scott Chantler, which is about the founding of Canada in the time of fur-traders. The nice thing about graphic novels is that they can do about anything. Think about someone who had never seen a movie. Where would they start? Well, it depends on what they like, but maybe not with Deadpool.

JAS: Thanks so much for talking with me. I know that my colleagues and I are thrilled to have you here at Furman!
Dr. Jim Edwards (Philosophy Professor 1970-2011) recalls:

I mostly remember things I did or said that were dumb or embarrassing. I can easily recall the times when I said something that on reflection I came to think was in error. Sometimes I could correct those flubs later in the term, maybe even the next day; but often it was only after years had passed that I realized that my account of some philosophical thesis or argument was inaccurate or simple-minded. Teachers do a lot of damage, even if they don’t intend to.

I do remember that once I forgot to give a final exam. I was sitting at home in my underwear happily reading when the phone rang and a guy from my intro class asked where I was. I had thought the exam was scheduled for that afternoon. I hurriedly dressed and drove to campus, of course, and profusely apologized. The students were quite pleasant about it, even though surely it messed up their plans for the day.

I also remember, with great embarrassment, giving a C+ on a paper to a guy who went on to graduate *summa cum laude*, who went on to law school at UVA and then clerked for the Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court, and who is a brilliant legal mind. I was clearly just wrong about the quality of his essay, and luckily I wised up before the end of the term and he got a well-deserved A in the course. We’re still friends; so I guess he’s forgiven me for my bone-headed misreading of that piece of work. That was in the first class I ever taught at Furman; so maybe I had some small excuse. I’m still in touch with three of the students from that class, which makes me happy to think about, all these years later.

About the only thing I ever did at Furman that I’m unequivocally proud of is stopping the awarding of an honorary degree in the faculty’s name to US Senator Strom Thurmond, on the grounds that he had founded and pursued his political career on racism. There was lively discussion in the faculty meeting, with some substantial opposition, but my motion finally did succeed. (One of my own teachers said to me after the meeting, “Jim, I agreed with you 100%. But I voted against you.” I learned something from that, but not something I wanted to learn.) Of course the trustees awarded the degree anyway, in spite of the faculty’s action in dissent, which taught me something about where real power lies in a college; but at least the degree didn’t come from the faculty. (At that point all degrees, regular and honorary, had to be approved by faculty vote. Now only regular degrees are brought to the faculty for its approval.)

I also remember the time a perfectly sensible guy came to class in pajamas and a bathrobe (what was that about? I don’t have any idea), and I also remember the time a woman fainted and fell out of her desk in the middle of a class. (I took her straight to the infirmary; she was fine. She *claimed* that the quality of the lecture had nothing to do with rendering her unconscious.) But, honestly, I’m not sure those are “anecdotes” much worth preserving. Mostly what I remember about Furman students is their intelligence, their curiosity, their cooperative spirit, and their general good humor. On the whole they were genuine pleasures to teach, and I’m sure—this is not just hot air—that I learned more from them than they ever learned from me.
2001 (When Erik Anderson started teaching at Furman University) Erik and son Owen

1999—When Carmela Epright started teaching at Furman University

Fall 1988—First day of college for Sarah Worth

2008 (When Eiho Baba started teaching at Furman University) Dr. Harry Kuoshu and Eiho

Summer 2004—Carmela Epright giving the Commencement Speech at Furman University
Emma Gibson (c/o 2017) recalls:

1) My best friend in life and philosophy, Maia Wellborn, and I dressed up as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir for Halloween. We wore our costumes in class and paraded around the philosophy department having the time of our lives.

2) Maia and I bought a tandem bike (The Phi House Tandem) and brought it into the philosophy department where we proceeded to convince Aaron Simmons and Erik Anderson to take a spin. (This one is probably my all time favorite)

3) Taking classes and being co-presidents of Phi House with my best friend, Maia, made philosophy the best part of my day. At the end of our time at Furman we realized that the more we learn, the better philosophy jokes we can make. Philosophy is fun!!

Phi House lunch!
Emma Gibson (c/o 2017) recalls (continued):

Maia—House Sitting for Dr. Anderson

The Three Amigos:
Maia Wellborn, Jocelyn Boulware, and Emma Gibson

Phi House drinks Kava

"philosophy emergencies take centuries to handle"
Nick Torres, (c/o 2017) recalls:

Back in the day at Furman, Bryan Colhoun and I used to host a philosophy hour in our freshman dorm room where we would get people to talk about deep and important life questions by bribing them with DH cookies.

Kathleen Smith, (c/o 2017) recalls:

One of my best Furman philosophy memories was from the fall of my junior year. One of my best friends, Jocelyn Boulware, and I were really, really sad since it was our last semester at Furman together. I was going to spend a semester in D.C. and she’d be graduated before I got back. We decided to study together since we both realized we had slightly procrastinated on a paper we had due. It was during midterms, so we were both knee deep in deadlines. I went over to her apartment and we had a really fun night together. We watched spoken word poetry, got food, talked, and did almost anything but study until we absolutely had to. It was great for the soul during a stressful time.

Those are just a few of my favorite memories from Furman: normal, everyday experiences and conversations that turn into some of your most treasured memories when you leave. Cherish it while you can, undergrads!!!

QUICK DILEMMA *

Susan Berg is dying. The drug that might save her life is very expensive, and it’s only available in a single drugstore. Her husband, Carl, tries to borrow the money, but he only manages to get together about half of the drug’s cost. He goes to the drugstore manager, explains that his wife is dying, and pleads with him to sell the drug for less money, or to allow him to pay the outstanding amount at a later date. The manager is sympathetic, but refuses, even though he would make a large profit on the sale. The husband is desperate, so he returns later that night, breaks into the store, and steals the drug.

Is he right to do so?

* Would You Eat Your Cat?
Jeremy Stangroom
(New York: W.W. Norton, 2010)
ALUMNI UPDATE

Kate AuBuchon (c/o 2014)
I’m currently settling in as my husband and I recently moved to the DC area. I’m beginning my first year in George Washington University’s Applied Social Psychology Ph.D. program with a concentration in health. I’ll be doing research on how social/behavioral factors influence health, not limited to, but including, how racial inequalities on a social level contribute to health disparities (and how we can work to alleviate them). I’m very excited to be beginning this journey!

Emma Gibson (c/o 2017)
I am in my second year at the University of Alabama getting a MA in Religion in Culture. Right now, I am writing my thesis on phenomenology (an interest that began at Furman!) while also working as a Teaching Assistant for Religions of the World. I got a dog in January and she is wonderful. I love her so much. For the most part, everything is great, but I miss my Furman Philosophy family everyday.
**Nick Torres (c/o 2017)**

I am back at Furman working in the IT department as the Instructional Technologist for the Humanities and Social Sciences. My role consists of providing firsthand technical support to professors, staff, and students within these departments, but also expanding my knowledge as the Moodle administrator. Each day is a new puzzle as I am challenged to continue expanding my technological knowledge.

I’m in the beginning stages of my M.Ed. in the Administration of Higher Education at Auburn University. I’m also applying to law school this cycle and hope to either move into an institutional General Counsel role or potentially Congressional committee staff. If there’s one thing I learned at Furman...it’s that the best answer to any question is “it depends.” So, I’m trying to get more comfortable with a little bit of uncertainty. It keeps life exciting!

**Kathleen Smith (c/o 2017)**

**Jonathan Hensley (c/o 1997) [not pictured]**

I recently finished a two-year stint working as a Program Manager for the Maryland Judicial College, Department of Judicial Education, the agency that provides continuing education for Maryland judges. In August, I started a new job as a lecturer in the political science department at Towson University, where I teach courses on constitutional law and the judicial system. My wife and I have two daughters, ages 5 and 3.
Jeff O’Connell (c/o 2009)

I graduated from Furman with a major in philosophy in 2009. After graduating, I took a little time off to work for an environmental science non-profit in Oregon, but I knew that I wanted to keep pursuing philosophy, and ultimately wound up doing a Ph.D. at Florida State University. In Tallahassee, I was able to keep pursuing my interests in science by picking up a Masters Degree in the History and Philosophy of Science while en route to the Ph.D. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the Darwinian and Emersonian themes in Nietzsche. Briefly put, I tried to show that despite adopting a quasi-Darwinian evolutionary framework to explain human nature, and despite appearing to subvert the traditional philosophical conceits of free will and power of reason to determine action and belief, Nietzsche was not fundamentally a methodological naturalist. The key is to understand the Emersonian nature of the Will to Power, which offers the condition for the possibility of freedom and the attainment of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, but through an act of creation rather than discovery.

The undoubted highlight of my graduate school experience was having the opportunity to design and teach my own undergraduate courses. I consider myself deeply fortunate to have had such amazing professors at Furman, from whom I learned so much about how to be an effective teacher. These are skills that I also get to use in other contexts, as in addition to teaching philosophy, I also lead nature walks and do a lot of educational outreach in my local community to get people interested in the natural world.

After defending my dissertation this spring, I was invited by the Furman philosophy faculty to give a talk on campus, which I delivered on October 1st. I chose to talk about Nietzschean forgiveness, which is a topic that I’ve been thinking about a lot recently. At its best, philosophy should teach us things relevant to daily life, and I think that forgiveness is an important part of daily life. Moreover, I think that Nietzsche has some interesting things to say about the topic! The gist of the talk was that our ordinary conception of forgiveness involves the giving up of resentment, but true forgiveness (which is opposed to justice) requires the absence of resentment, which is possible only through love. It was a real joy to return to campus and reconnect with the philosophy department, and to meet the current crop of philosophy students, who are uniformly impressive! And it was a real joy to give a talk from the stage of Burgiss theater, where I watched many others give talks while I was a student at Furman.
John Weatherford, President of Weatherford Communications and Executive Producer with Broadcast Solutions, is an Emmy and Telly award-winning producer with over 40 years of creative work in radio, television, audio and digital media. John’s current work includes producing, writing, researching and narrating documentaries as well as selected projects for domestic and international clients.

From 2004 to 2015, John served first as Senior Vice President and General Manager and then as Chief Operating Officer for Public Broadcasting Atlanta (WABE-FM and WPBA-TV/30). Prior to joining PBA, John founded and operated Weatherford Communications, Weatherford Television and a group of related companies for 15 years. Before founding Weatherford Communications, John was a reporter, anchor, producer and executive producer for Atlanta CBS affiliate WAGA-TV for 15 years. He was Executive Producer of the Local Programming Department at WAGA during the PM Magazine years. While at WAGA, John became the first U.S. citizen invited to participate in the BBC Study Visit program in London. Prior to WAGA, he was a reporter and anchor for more than six years at the NBC radio and television affiliate in Greenville, South Carolina.

Weatherford’s awards include six Emmy Awards, more than a dozen Emmy nominations, 27 Telly Awards, eight AXIEM Awards, three U.S. International Film & Video Festival Awards, two Flame Awards, ICIA National Educator of the Year, in addition to various awards from Associated Press and Parents’ Choice.

John is a 2002 Silver Circle inductee of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. He was elected twice to the Board of Governors of the Atlanta Chapter of NATAS (National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences), where he also served as Vice President and Emmy Awards Chair. After ten years as Vice President of the Georgia Radio Reading Service (GaRRS) Board, John is in his second five-year term as President of the GaRRS Board.

He will be giving a CLP talk at Furman on October 24, 2018 on the documentary he just finished. The basic story: “The Wanderer – A Story of Slavery, Survival and the Strength to Prevail,” is a half-hour documentary about a slave ship that arrived in America in 1858 at Jekyll Island, 50 years after the importation of slaves into the United States had become illegal [in 1808]. The story follows how a sailing ship, originally flying the burgee of The New York Yacht Club, was purchased by Savannah resident Charlie Lamar to sail to Congo to pick up as many slaves as possible (487 on board a ship that couldn’t hold 100 people standing up). [Lamar went to great lengths to hide his true intent from the public and casual observers.] His crew ended up “tight packing” 487 Africans below deck on the Wanderer, so that the slaves on board had about 16 inches of space person for a 43-day voyage from the Congo to Jekyll island. 409 lived to walk off the ship, into a life of slavery, again, 50 years after the U.S. Congress had declared such practices illegal and 38 years after it had become a capital offense.

The documentary examines the (worldwide) slave trade at the time, the trial and attempt to prosecute Lamar and the Wanderer crew and follows the lives of the Wanderer captives and their descendants. The great-great grandson of one Wanderer captive was Jim Brown, NFL great and American actor, another Wanderer descendant became a justice of the Nassau County Supreme Court in New York and the granddaughters of another captive became the Doublemint [Chewing Gum] twins.
Bill Martin (c/o 1978)

I have retired now, after 28 years as a philosophy professor at DePaul University in Chicago. Here is my retirement agenda (what I mainly hope to do):

1. Of course it will be great to finally live full-time with Kathleen League, and to have many more great adventures, everything from going to Japan and China some more, to some new places, to just lying in bed reading novels at the same time.
2. I will devote myself to philosophy and other kinds of writing more fully. I have many book projects that are half-finished that I need to finish.

2a. I might still do some teaching for shorter periods of time, either in the region, or in China, or elsewhere. If you have any ideas about this, please drop me a line.
3. I will also devote myself more fully to making music--writing, playing, recording, practicing my instrument, etc. I have in fact put out or been a major part of five albums in the last few years, which some of you know about and some of you don't. I am working from both a forty-year backlog of music I've written, and new stuff that I'm writing all the time. I will also work on getting my stuff more out there in various ways, which I really haven't had time to do these last few years.
4. I'll get back more to cycling and getting back into shape. Last year was the first year since my major accident of 2011 when I got a thousand miles on the bike. Part of the problem is that cycling in Chicago wasn't working for me very well these last two years, because I didn't live on the lakefront anymore. But I already took a ride today (Thursday) on my first full day back in Salina. So, lots more exercise and better diet, and also I hope not-so-insane hours.
5. I hope to start a little Buddhist meditation group, modeled to some extent on the Soto Zen that comes out of Shunryu Suzuki and the San Francisco Zen Center. If you are in the greater Salina metropolitan area (e.g., Abilene, Lindsborg, etc.), and are interested in working with me on this, please drop me a line.
6. And perhaps I can even get my chess-playing back to a better level (and one of my unfinished book projects is on chess and philosophy).
7. Obviously, shenanigans in general. I would love to talk with locals in and around Salina who are interested in doing projects with philosophy, music, writing, culture in general, Buddhism, etc.

Leaving DePaul University and Chicago after twenty-eight years is bittersweet, of course, and there are many who and there is much that I will miss. But I think I got out of academia at the right time, for me at any rate, and I feel like a great burden has been lifted. I'll still be around in the world of academic intellectual pursuits, though. I'll be at the *World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing in August, and I would be very happy to come to the campus of anyone who wants to invite me for a talk--and a concert! Beyond expenses, I don't need a lot of financial inducement.

* I did indeed attend the World Congress in Beijing this past August, and it was brilliant. I gave two papers, one on the question of love and compassion in Buddhism, the other on Maoism and Buddhism and the consumer society that is developing in China now.
SPOT THE DIFFERENCE PUZZLE
HOW MANY DIFFERENCES CAN YOU SPOT?
(CREATED BY SANDI ANNONE)
Furman University strives to develop in its students a passionate commitment to liberal learning. The Department of Philosophy is central to this endeavor. We seek to introduce students to the most important philosophical thinkers, movements, and texts in the history of philosophy and in the contemporary world, from both Western and non-Western perspectives. We do so with the aim of teaching students to be critical thinkers, inquisitive learners, clear writers, and engaged citizens.

Philosophy Department

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SPOT THE DIFFERENCE PUZZLE
ANSWER KEY:

- Second chimney added
- Larger window added
- Truck removed
- Walker replaced with other walker
- Small water spout removed
- Additional column added
- Light post added
- Additional bush added
- Flowers added
- Furman bell tower logo added