

Tom Farley: teacher and musician

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He's come back from retirement and going ahead full force. He currently works full time at the college as a part-time geography and education teacher, Program Development Coordinator K-12, and of the National Board Certification Support Program manager. But he also has a music career and has produced five albums.

Tom Farley began as a teacher ... and is still teaching.

On his way to school he would think over his lessons for the day, about Julius Caesar or global warming, and he'd get excited. Not dreading the day's work, or fearing the frustration he might have with his students, but instead looking forward to teaching. Just being able to share his knowledge and love for history with his students gets him excited.

"I'm all over that!" says Tom Farley, a professor at Virginia Wesleyan College.

Since the end of his freshman year at Virginia Tech, Farley has known exactly what he wanted to do: teach.

"It made all the difference in the world," says Farley.

Once he knew he wanted

to teach, he looked forward to going to classes.

"It was perfect," he added.

For a little while, however, he quit teaching to pursue music; but after he "starved to death," he went back to his first love.

Of all the things Farley did during his work in the Chesapeake school system, he said, "teaching was always the juice." He worked at Hickory High School for eight years in "one jammin' department."

"Teaching is hard work, but I never ever ever ever ever looked at it as a job," says Farley.

No matter what challenges he faced, his main goal was still to influence the lives of his students – along with the teachers he worked with.

"If you really really work at it, you can make a difference in other people's lives," says Farley.

Teaching his advanced placement U.S. History class was a great challenge for his students and a great opportunity for Farley to help them grow.

"In the beginning of the year they probably wanted to kill me," he says, but after they got the hang of it, by about halfway through the year, "we

really started to have some fun."

They began to write with confidence and effectively debate their opinions.

"I wanted their views to be their views, but they had to be able to debate it," says Farley.

At the end of the year, when he saw their progress, it "floored [him]."

"It was fabulous. Good stuff."

"I love the material and the interaction with the students," says Farley. "I have a vested interest in their success. It's my job to help them with anything."

Farley believes the students should feel comfortable asking a teacher for help.

"When they learn, when you help them ... I'm all over that. It's good stuff," he says.

About 21 years ago Farley began teaching nights at VWC. Then, after 30 years of teaching, Farley decided to retire.

"I did nothing," said Farley, "which was great. I just want you to know that doing nothing is absolutely great!"

But less than a year later he had an attractive job opportunity at VWC and decided to come back. He only teaches part time now, but that's the most fun for

him. He loves what he's doing, he likes the hours, and he likes all the people he works with.

"I'm really intense, and everybody here works their guts out," says Farley.

He also wants to teach his other passion: music. He and some students want to form a society for acoustic music and music engineering.

"All that knowledge and experience I have, I want to give it back," says Farley.

He went through years of sounding terrible, to sounding good, to sounding great. He has produced five albums, has traveled around the country, and has played with famous sax player Clarence Clemons at a local beach jamming session.

"There's nothing like Clarence Clemons coming and jamming with you," said Farley. "We kicked some serious butt! Nothing but original

tunes. It was so great!"

Tom met his wife, Tania through music. They met one night as he was playing at the bar in a hotel where she was manager. They have now been

married 31 years. She plays the keyboard and he plays guitar.

Together they play in the Tom Farley Band – "all acoustic based, but with serious attitude."

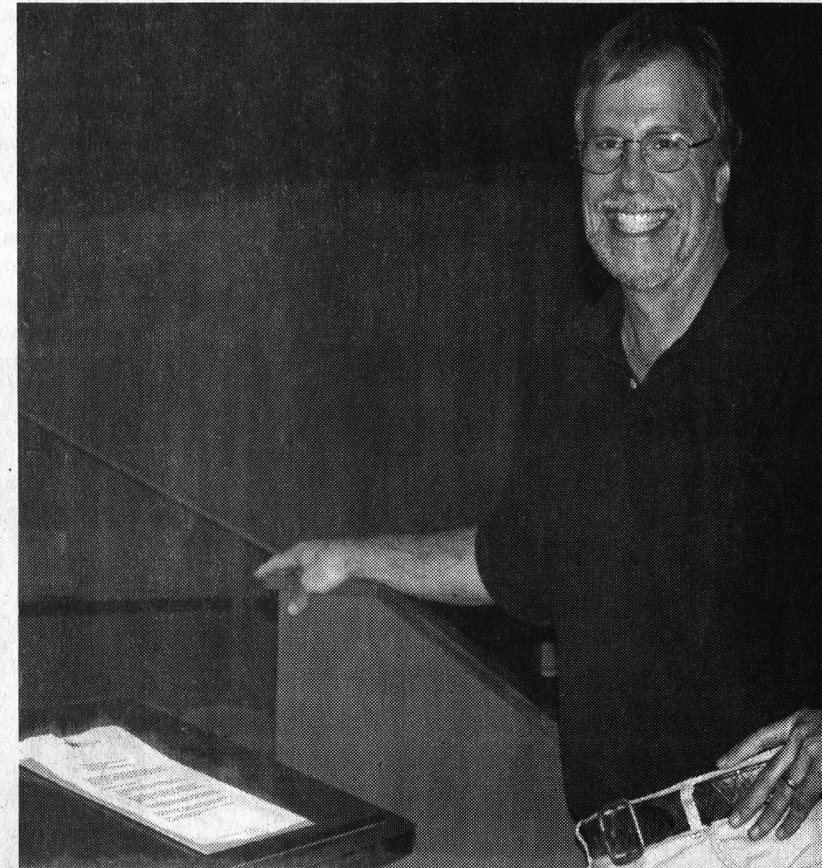


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