

CAMPUS LIFE

Dear Ms. Britt. . . continued

If I had to describe Ms. Suzanne Britt in one word, it would have to be “unconventional.” I first met Ms. Britt when I spontaneously signed up for a professional writing class my sophomore year. Little did I know that I had just made one of the most important decisions of my college career. Throughout the years, Ms. Britt showed me that it’s okay to color outside of the lines. She forced me to think and made me feel like my opinions mattered. She let me know that the “rulebook” isn’t always absolute, and it’s perfectly fine to throw it out the window sometimes. She taught me that being perfect isn’t always the best way to be. I learned to love my flaws because of Ms. Britt.

Even though I’m not her student anymore, Ms. Britt continues to be a part of my life. She is patient and has continued to support me in much of my post-graduation decision making. No matter how many times I have altered my course, and I have switched directions many, many times, Ms. Britt has always been there when I need her. I’m lucky to have such unwavering support.

Ms. Britt, you will forever be dear to me because you helped show me that being true to myself will get me farther than trying to be someone else. Because of you, I’ll never be “crunchy and dull, like carrots.” Your unconventional wisdom is one of the best gifts I have ever received.

—Anna Turner ‘11

“Miss Britt. Not Dr. Britt. Not Mrs. Britt. MISS Britt.” Those words began one of the most influential and meaningful relationships with a professor that I have. Ms. Britt, or my “honorary grandma” as my trio of friends called her, expanded my mind, my heart, and my sense of humor. She had me at “If you don’t have anything nice to say come sit with us.” And so I did. Ms. Britt taught me how to fly like superman – literally. She lay down on the floor, stuck her feet and arms straight up in the air, and insisted I put my stomach on her feet and fly, and so I did. She taught me how to speak my mind – especially at the President’s opening speech each year (I always looked forward to hearing her voice come over the microphone with a challenge for Dr. Hartford). Ms. Britt knows the power of her words, and she uses them. I saw her express herself honestly, and so I did, too. Through Ms. Britt, I learned to value and respect not only other people but also myself. However, I have to say that the greatest gift Ms. Britt ever gave me was laughter. She made cry from laughing too many times to count, and I miss those times so much. Ms. Britt – thank you for being an honest, open, humorous Grandma. I miss you dearly and wish you all the best beyond Meredith. With love, your honorary grandchild, Claire Keane, ‘09

Miss Britt is such a wonderful person, and I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know her during my time at Meredith. She has a way of lighting up a room with her presence and always making anyone feel comfortable. I had the opportunity of having her as a teacher during one of my Core classes, and she was also my “honorary grandma” while I was at Meredith. I always went to her when I needed advice or when I was having a hard day, and she always had something meaningful to say. She was even the inspiration to the Facebook page “Miss Britt is a Dankie” created by a few of my friends during our freshman year. Miss Britt, thank you for all that you do, and it has been such a pleasure knowing you. I wish you the best of luck in your future!

Love, Meredith Moore Stokes, ‘09

I’m not sure whether it was when we were doing somersaults at midnight or talking on a bus ride to Asheville, but at some point in my time at Meredith, Miss Britt became more than a professor; she became family. Calling me and my two best friends her “honorary granddaughters,” Miss Britt took us under her wing, shared with us, and taught us life lessons we will never forget. From correcting me every time I incorrectly used the word “lay” to giving me the confidence to speak my mind, even when my voice shook, Miss Britt taught me the power of a single human voice. She showed me the beauty of the human condition, through laughter and tears. Miss Britt would laugh like she was one of us, but give advice that can only come from the wisdom of a woman. She has the uncanny ability to make you feel comfortable in any situation. The “Miss Britt Fan Club,” as we affectionately deemed ourselves, would talk to Miss Britt about any and everything, knowing that each time we would get the answer we needed to hear, even if it wasn’t what we always wanted to hear. Miss Britt’s appreciation for humor and personality was equal to her appreciation for intelligence and was exactly what I needed. I remember a conversation Miss Britt had with me once; she told me that your life can’t be reflected in the number of columns in your obituary. Although I know this, I do also know that Miss Britt’s impact could fill pages of newspapers to come. I wish you the very best as you turn this corner in your life. Thank you for all you have done for me and every woman you affected at Meredith.

Love,
Lauryn Dupree, ‘09

Some of the most important lessons Ms. Britt taught me didn’t come from inside the classroom. Yes, I am perfectly aware of how cliché that is – why say something again if it’s already been said a million times before? (My sincerest

apologies to Ms. Britt, for I know how much she dislikes clichés.)

I could probably write my own book about my adventures in life because of knowing Suzanne Britt and I think many could say the same. She is the kind of professor you could never forget, not only because she says the most outrageous, yet absolutely hilarious things, but also because she’s the professor who will push you out of your comfort zone. She doesn’t do it to be evil or because she dislikes you; she does so because she cares, because she wants you to be a better writer, and quite often, because she wants you to be a better, more assertive person. Some students simply aren’t prepared for the challenges that she brings, which is fine, but that doesn’t mean she doesn’t try anyway.

Overall, I think the biggest thing I learned from her was how much I want to be like her, and I don’t mean as a professor, or even as a writer. I mean the kind of person that when you stand up in a crowded room, people immediately sit down and shut up because they are eager to hear you have to say; the kind of person who is deeply respected for always voicing opinions. That is the kind of person I aspire to be. In fact, in this respect, I think we should all aspire to be a little more like Ms. Britt, don’t you?

—Julia Houtchings, ‘11

I used to hate English. I don’t even know why I registered for that writing class, but looking back I understand. As Ms. Britt knows very well, I have a strong faith that allows me to believe that each and every person was put into my life for a reason, and I have no doubt why Suzanne Britt entered life during my second year at Meredith.

There isn’t a single class I have ever taken with Ms. Britt where I didn’t laugh. One time, she asked our class something along the lines of: “Y’all know that 80% of the homeless people that hang around Crabtree have schizophrenia but got kicked out of Dorthea Dix due to space constraints, right?” I attribute a portion of my core strength to Ms. Britt, as my muscles have grown strong from the countless side-aching laughs she has provided.

It’s hard to believe that I never even knew I could write before entering this class, and to see that two and a half years later, it is one of the greatest passions I think I will ever know. She opened my eyes and gave me confidence. Inside of me, she sparked a powerful interest of the English language. She taught me to not be afraid to “stir the pot” and to be secure in my decisions. She made me ask myself, “If you don’t know how to speak and write well, how could you possibly live without looking like an idiot?” About a month before that semester ended, I declared my major as English.

One time, Ms. Britt told me that if I didn’t understand something, to write about it. I have abided by this rule and cannot say that it has ever failed me. She taught me not only about the technical aspects of the language that we use every day, but also how and why we use these things we call words. She has made the biggest impact on me during my time at Meredith and will forever remain close and dear to my heart. She will forever be reminding me, “I before e except after c, like in received,” and will chuckle while doing so, forgiving me for my negligence. She’s passionate, intriguing, caring, and influential. She’s irreplaceable.

—Emily Gamiel, ‘12

This is how I met Ms. Britt: On the first day of professional writing she wrote “You” on the board, turned around to the class and said, “Write on this for 8 minutes.” I was a hunched over sophomore sitting in the front row. I was afraid to talk and mostly walked around with my head down. But I knew who I was and poured myself out onto the page. I was still writing when she walked over in front of me. “Alright,” she said, “Read what you’ve got.” I looked up in shock, “You want ME to read EXACTLY what I wrote?” “Yes,” Ms. Britt was matter of fact, “up here in the front of the room.” I had put down things I had never told anyone before. But I read them. Uncensored, in front of the room. When I finished she said, “Now that’s writing.”

From then on Ms. Britt fostered and nurtured me in just the way I needed. I’d meet with her every week about what I was writing. And she’d voice her concern over my waitressing gig at a “seedy downtown sports bar,” but said that it would provide great characterization for stories. We’d talk about growing up in churches, Raymond Carver’s “Cathedral,” and the innate loneliness that few understand. She’d send me home with 3 books off her shelf at the time. And we became friends.

In time she started sending me some of her poetry. And to my surprise, she asked me to critique it. Ms. Britt treated me as an equal. She gave me confidence through example. She asked me to send her poems out to publications and I’ll never forget her request. She said with her deep full, laugh, “Send the first batch to the New York Times.” Ms. Britt was fearless. I knew then that I wanted to be a writer.

One day in her office, as I was getting up for the door, she said, “You’ve grown so much since we first met, and it’s been beautiful to watch.” I’ve never told Ms. Britt, but I believe that my growth not only as a writer, but as a person, has been because I met her. To be bold and to fully live life, laughing at yourself all along the way . . . this is what I’ve learned from Ms. Britt.

—Ashleigh Phillips, ‘12