

# **The Erskine College That We Know: Letters and Reflections on Erskine College**

By

Alumni of Erskine College

*Scientia cum moribus conjuncta*

This document presents some of the many letters and internet “postings” that have been written by Erskine Alumni over the last year or so as Erskine College and the ARP Church has become embroiled in controversy. For those who have access to the internet, many of these letters will be familiar. For those who do not have access to the internet or who have chosen to stay away from the controversy, we ask you to please take a moment to read and reflect upon what is written here – words of love and deep commitment to both God and his works through the institution of Erskine College.

There are some things that are certain in the current debate, Erskine College and the ARP Church have a deep historical connection. Alumni and members of the ARP Church, and especially those who are both, feel deeply about Erskine. Whatever else we may think and say, we all share a love for Erskine and desire to see her continue as one of the best Christian liberal art colleges in the southern US!

This document is loosely arranged according to class chronology with the newest class members writing first. It is these students and recent graduates who speak loudest for how God is working through Erskine College in their lives. They believe that Erskine College is meeting its commitment to integrate faith and learning right now, just as it has in the past, as reflected in the letters of those of us who have come before. The last letter here is especially poignant. It comes from Dr. Lucille (Class of 52) and Mr. Leo Hill, (Class of 49). Mr. Hill passed away as their letter was being completed.

So here are some of the thoughts of Erskine Alumni. We hope that you find these stories compelling! We believe that God has been and continues to work through Erskine College and Seminary. These documents are a reflection of His work there. May God continue to bless Erskine College and Seminary and the ARP Church!

**Jeremy Oropeza**  
**Class of 2008**  
**June 13th, 2009**

**A Letter to President Ruble, the Erskine Board of Trustees, and the Erskine Community**

Dear President Ruble, Board of Trustees, and Concerned Erskine Community at Large,

On a Saturday in April 2003, I stepped foot onto the Erskine College campus for the first time, after only first hearing about this institution of higher learning mere months before. I had worked myself to near exhaustion in high school to be able to get into any institution I applied for, and succeeded but on that April day, I knew I had found my home. The spirit of love and welcome was exuded from every part of this campus, from the people I met that day, all the way down to the care that was put into maintaining its grounds. I called the other schools I had been accepted to the following Monday to tell them "I'm sorry, I've found another school, another home."

I came expecting to learn at the feet of amazing professors, I've yet to see where that expectation was not met. I came to learn music, I have now had two successful jobs in that field, and several more offered to me, just because of my connection to this school. I came expecting to grow and flourish, and what I received was beyond my wildest dreams. I had professors willing to move a class time just so I would be able to be in Choraleers every day (thank you Dr. Signori), willing to sit down with me and explain in excruciating detail when I didn't understand (thank you Drs. Christie and Elsner), professors from outside of my department that knew my passion and gave me materials that they thought would further me! (Dr. Chaney will never know how much that copy of "The Oxford Book of Carols" meant to me and all the help it gave.)

I gained friendships that will last a lifetime, a mentor who keeps me going and working toward my ultimate dream of being the best church musician I possibly can be. Most of all I gained true knowledge and understanding of Christ's love. There was a camaraderie that I can say, with assurance, I wouldn't have gotten anywhere else. Yes, I was challenged, academically, physically, emotionally, and in my faith; in and out of the classroom. I had questions, but I was put on the right path to finding the answers when people couldn't give me one right away. I learned about myself and my faith, and even though I may still have questions, I have been equipped with the knowledge of how to find the answers myself in a Christian manner.

I am now a proud Erskine Theological Seminary student, striving towards a Master's degree in Church Music. The first to say, I graduated from Erskine College as an undergraduate and received what I believe to be the best education out there. I have actively recruited students to this campus, in the hope that they find what I found.

I have been here six years, and will start my seventh in the fall; I have seen this campus brought together and now I am seeing it divided more and more every day. Now, my alma mater is suffering persecution; now, I am stepping up to give my story and to show my great unswerving love for this school and what it stands for; a Christian Community where I am free to learn and achieve excellence in academia. Take heart Erskine that I love dearly, we may have hit a rough patch, but it is my faith from both knowledge of God's truths and experience in my own life, these troubles, will also, pass. May Erskine continue to look proudly down from the towers as long as they stand. Praise be to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the blessed Three in One, and may God bless us all and draw us closer to Him!

Jeremy P. Oropeza, Erskine College Class of 2008, Erskine Theological Seminary Class of 2010

**Rebecca Jones  
Class of 2008  
June 4, 2010**

### **Some Thoughts on Erskine College and My Life**

Christ once said that, “if [my disciples] keep quiet, the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40, NIV). As I sang at Camp Bonclarken as a child, “Ain’t no rock gonna cry in my place.” There are many literal and figurative rocks and stones on Erskine’s campus, including the One some claim to be absent. I went back to Erskine a few weeks ago for graduation and was reminded of a simple truth while standing on and beneath the rocks and bricks that construct the Erskine Building: Erskine is Home.

When I was four, my dad felt called by God to become a pastor. I was devastated because moving to Due West meant moving away from home. I thought I was leaving home, but in reality, I was coming home. Drinking cherry lemonades in the Kennedy Memorial Garden with Mom, kite-flying behind the Pavilion, and bike-riding on campus sidewalks were a few of the activities I enjoyed. Moving away from Due West was the hardest thing I’d done in my life; leaving Due West has never gotten easy. When I came back to Due West for college, I didn’t have much directional advantage over anyone else. I could find Main Street, but who couldn’t? Over the next few years, locations like the Mall, the Quad, and the Circle became more to me than places: they became Home. Whenever I stand under the Towers or in my garden by the Erskine Building, I feel a sense of belonging that I have never felt anywhere else. The reason for this is not political, ecclesiastical, or overly complicated: Erskine is Home.

Feelings and sentiments can only go so far, however. Explaining to others about how I get the warm fuzzies while walking across campus is not going to convince anyone that Erskine is already fulfilling her mission. Since there are no official definitions or criteria for the catchphrase, “integration of faith and learning,” I trust that the following examples of how I witnessed professors integrating faith and learning at Erskine will not be dismissed.

As an English major, I spent much time learning about how theology and faith impacted literature from different time periods. Dr. Crenshaw lectured about the role of clergy during the time of Chaucer. Dr. Little is well-versed in how Elizabethan theology influenced Shakespeare’s literature. Dr. Christie taught about the often-present theme of theory versus experience not only in literature but also in faith and practice. Dr. Reames was excellent at spotting Christian allegory in poetry even when most of the class missed it. Science class gave me a profound appreciation for God’s creation if not an aptitude for identifying flora and fauna. While every class was not a theological debate, I was never ridiculed for my beliefs. All of my science professors were fine professors and fine people. While their tests sometimes intimidated me, they themselves did not. Dr. Gettys taught us about Christian influence on everything from art to architecture; I can still remember acing the section on one of his tests about the theological significance behind the methods used to build a basilica. He also told us about the time when he got stuck on a dirt road in his truck during a thunderstorm and feared for his life just like Martin Luther feared for his. While the story was humorous, it helped us visualize Martin Luther’s predicament in a new way. I learned much from the numerous theology classes I took at Erskine; I took and enjoyed several of Dr. Evans’ classes. This is only a small sample of specific examples; there are many more I could mention if I had the space.

Speaking of specifics, I feel compelled to make a few points about Dr. Crenshaw. The amount of theology and politics we agreed on while I was at Erskine could probably fit in one of those ~~shot-glasses~~ toothpick holders the bookstore used to sell. However, I chose to take his classes. Dr. Crenshaw was my academic advisor for all four years; he helped me make many academic decisions in spite of my less than stellar decision-making skills. While we disagreed on most of the theology and politics that we discussed in class, Dr. Crenshaw cared not so much that I disagreed with him but that I knew why I disagreed with him. Dr. Crenshaw's classes are easy to avoid. A non-major only needs to take two two-hundred-level survey classes to meet the basic graduation requirement. As Erskine has four English professors that all teach such classes (as well as higher-level classes that would also meet the basic requirement), taking Dr. Crenshaw is not necessary. As an English major, I probably could have made it through all four years without taking a class with Dr. Crenshaw. An offended student can simply drop his class and choose another or stay away altogether. If Dr. Crenshaw says something with which a student disagrees, the student is not obligated to believe him.

While I have had excellent teachers and professors, God has most often used my best friends to reach me. Not only did God give me excellent professors at Erskine; He also gave me the best friends I've ever had. At Erskine, my closest friends at Erskine were Presbyterians of different stripes, Baptists, and Nazarenes. We had some spirited theological debates, but our love for each other and, most importantly, for God kept us from permanent estrangement. While theology was important, God's personal workings in our lives usually made clear to us that He had brought us together to love and care for one another regardless of theological differences. While my friends differ from me theologically, they are still some of the finest Christians I have ever known. I once told my Nazarene friend that although I was the ARP, she was the one who was trying to reform me through her personal example. As she is now, Erskine College is a place where a Nazarene can reform an ARP through genuine Christian commitment; that is part of what makes Erskine great.

No place makes me feel at home like Erskine, but Bonclarken is a close second. When I stand outside the Heidelberg and look down towards the lake, I remember Camp Bonclarken, visits with my grandparents, wedding receptions, and other such occasions. "Bonclarken" means "good, clear vision," and that is what I have been praying God will provide for this Synod meeting. I am praying that, by God's grace, Erskine College will remain a place where professors can impact students' lives in and out of the classroom. I pray that Erskine will remain a place where theological differences are viewed not as weaknesses but as opportunities for learning about the Christian commitment of others of other denominations. I pray that Erskine will stay a place where God teaches His people how to love and care for one another in the true spirit of Pr.17:17: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." I pray that the men of Synod will make a personal effort to get to know my Erskine family and my home because Erskine's measure cannot be taken with reports and surveys. Please, Lord, give others the good, clear vision to see that Erskine is a place that lives up to the first stanza of Bible Song 280, "Christian Unity":

Behold, how good a thing it is  
And how becoming well,  
Together such as brethren are  
In unity to dwell!  
In unity to dwell!

Rebecca Jones  
Class of 2008

**Jason Nussbaum**  
**Class of 2006**

**Some Thoughts on and Memories of Erskine College**

With all of the events in the last few months, an interesting concept has been forming in my ever-feeble brain. Who's will are we truly seeking? The ARP Synod, the moderators commission, SAFE, and others have made accusations that the college is intimidating its students into a certain belief system. They have argued extensively that there are professors who are adamant about their beliefs, and that those beliefs are being forced onto those in attendance of their courses. They want to be able to think in ways consistent with their personal faith, and don't want to be challenged by someone who thinks differently than they.

My question is, if all of the professors at Erskine are only allowed to teach the doctrines of the ARP church, is that not a culture of intimidation in itself? These folks want to be able to think their way, and not be questioned, but they can't have their cake and eat it too. I would argue that mandating professors to only teach the HUMAN interpretations of God's word that have been established by this denomination would in itself be a culture of intimidation. You can argue that you want free thought all day, but what they really want is for their thoughts to be the only ones taught. The only true freedom of thought comes through a personal loving relationship with Jesus Christ, who speaks into the hearts of those who are truly committed to serving Him.

As a non-ARP student, the views I brought to Erskine were very different from the ARP church. As I learned and matured, I realized that my denomination has many of the same problems as the ARP church. Each denomination wants to make its claim on Christianity, so we all pick our top priorities and focus on them. We become so adamant about OUR way becoming THE way that we lose sight on the Gospel. For my denomination it was things like dancing, alcohol, clothing, and music. For the ARP church one could argue its formality, pre-destination, and conformity of thought.

When I came to Erskine, my beliefs were challenged. The fact is that the Church (not just the ARP) fails to challenge the beliefs of its members because it's too afraid to offend or run off those who don't see on its level. The Church is concerned with creating a culture where everyone believes the same things, has the same preferences, and acts the same way. That is not the Church that Paul describes in Acts. Erskine did for me what the Church failed to do. Erskine challenged my beliefs and made me take my faith to a personal level, and to discover that what is taught and demonstrated in today's congregations is often not what is at the heart of God's word.

My challenge is that the ARP church, Erskine, and everyone involved take an earnest look into what God's will is for this college. Can a Christian institution promote high standards of academics and knowledge while maintaining a Christian influence directed towards its students? I believe it can. Can a church support an educational institution through love, prayer, service, and devotion to her without re-creating the church in a different societal realm? I believe it can.

My concern is that the outspoken individuals who are bashing the ways of Erskine are not truly devoted in love, prayer, and service to her, or to God. God does not, through His word, call us to beat non-believers over the head with our doctrines and systematic theology. He does not call us to prove to others that our interpretations and personal stand is the only way. He does not need us to defend the Word He has given to us...HIS WORD DEFENDS ITSELF! He does call us to love Him so much that there is no other possibility than for His love, that He pours back into us,

to be overflow onto the lost and dying world around us.

Are there faculty, staff, and administrators at Erskine who are Christians but have lost sight of their need to make decisions that completely reflect God's calling on their lives? I believe there are. Do these folks need to experience the love of Jesus just as much as you and I do?

Absolutely! The sad part, though, is that the pressure from the ARP church to make decisions that keep PEOPLE happy has reduced the ability of the administration to make decisions that are pleasing to GOD. Only God should have control and influence over the intentions and thoughts of a man's heart...not a pastor, church, denomination, or board.

God does not always call us to do things that "make sense." He does not call us to make sure we don't offend anyone else while we act in obedience to His commands for our lives. He does not call us to rely on explanations made by man; He calls us to rely on His word, His voice, and His presence and to respond in obedience to the vision He creates in each of us. Only when the ARP Church and the Erskine Administration decide its time to focus completely on God's will, and unite under His vision and His will for their personal lives, and for the life of this wonderful college, will we ever see an Erskine that truly thrives.

I believe with all my heart that God has done great things, and has a plan for Erskine that none of us can fathom. Lying is not excusable when it's done to exert the will of God on others. We are not to lie about people and situations to ensure that God's word becomes the utmost authority over anything. We are called to love God, to obey His commands, and to accept His Word as the ultimate authority over our lives. God doesn't need any individual to re-create or enforce His will, His commands, or His standards. He doesn't NEED anything from any of us...He only WANTS us to love Him.

**Robert Whetsell,  
Class of 2005  
June 11th, 2009**

**A Letter to President Ruble**

Dr. Ruble,

Good evening. I recently found out about a group called SAFE (Students Aligned for a Faithful Erskine) that seems to be publicly lamenting Erskine's perceived lack of pervasive evangelical Christianity. I wanted to let you know that this group does not speak for me or for most of my former classmates at Erskine. I came to Erskine in 2001 from a Christian high school, a high school which effectively ostracized anyone who didn't strongly profess to a southern conservative brand of evangelical Christianity. Erskine was not this way. At Erskine, I encountered a variety of world views, both from my fellow students and from faculty members. I believe that this exposure played a hugely positive role in my development as a learner and a citizen, particularly when coupled with the excellent instruction I received in many of my classes.

I would ask you to continue to preserve Erskine's tradition of being a place where believers, non believers, and everyone in between can come together to get an excellent education untarnished by narrow ideological considerations. All of the best professors I had at Erskine (Drs. Thomas, Smith, Eves, Greer, Baker, Manning, Schmelzenbach, Bruce, and others) showed their faith by consistently working hard and holding us to a higher standard. I think their dedication to learning spoke much louder than any disclaimer they would have given about evolution.

Thank you for your time, and keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Robert Whetsell  
Class of '05, Chemistry

**Rockel Cole Bower**  
**June 13th, 2009**

**A Letter to President Ruble**

Dr. Ruble,

My name is Rockel Bower, formally Rockel (Rocky) Cole. I was an EB Kennedy scholar for the class of 2005 before I (quite abruptly) quit Erskine College in the spring of 2007. I left Erskine after just over a year and a half. Early in my freshman year Robyn Agnew recognized I needed help at a time when I was unwilling to battle the depression and bulimia I had struggled with since I was a preteen. I left because I knew I needed that help, and that was all I could focus on at the time. I never shared this reasoning with anyone at Erskine, or with Crosland Stuart when she came to check on me. Most people assume I was unhappy at Erskine, and I left for that reason, and I allowed them to believe that because of my own embarrassment. I learned more in my short time at Erskine, than I did in the 17+ years prior and have in the 2 years since about becoming a well reasoned adult.

I was a student who came from a non-Christian home, I however was a Christian. I believed in the fundamentals of the Christian Faith. The summer after my graduation from high school, I went through several personal traumas and almost didn't come to Erskine in the fall. At the urging of my fiance (who is now my loving husband and adoring father), I reluctantly started college. That first day at Erskine, without my fiancee or my best friend, who had become the rocks I leaned on, was absolutely miserable. I felt like a duck in a sea of swans. I had lost most of my faith, and felt like a fraud. My second day, that feeling changed. During freshman orientation, I remembered why I had fallen in love with Erskine and with Christianity to begin with. There were no ducks and no swans. There were people, of all kinds, who harbored no judgement towards each other no matter the differences in faith or background. I made some amazing friends, and met people who have forever changed my life. More importantly, the renewed faith in God I found during my freshman year was invigorating. This faith was not because anyone told me I had to believe, or I was wrong not to. It was also not because every faculty member agreed with it, or reminded me of it. It was because the faculty, and the students following the example of those faculty, showed me in their actions that God is forgiving and loves us unconditionally. Christian faith is not an exclusive club, and it is not an all or nothing choice. The passion for the Lord I felt in every aspect of my life at Erskine, resonating from every faculty member, regardless of their demeanor, was the thing that helped to pull me back to the Lord.

Every faculty member I encountered, whether in a course or just in passing, had a strong desire to instill in their students more than just academic material. We were challenged to become free thinkers, capable of reasoning and intelligent argument. In the real world you must be able to defend your point of view, not just declare it. I was challenged to defend my faith several times while at Erskine by faculty. This was not meant to discourage that faith, but rather to encourage me to know enough about my faith to be able to defend it when asked. Prior to Erskine, I had been told about Christianity and the Bible. I had never been taught. When I took Old Testament, I learned more than just what books are included and what passages are written on their pages. I learned what they meant, and how they applied to me. I learned how to understand the Old Testament in the way the Lord meant for me to understand it.

I took two history classes in my time at Erskine. Neither of those classes were bible based; neither of them were taught from the ignorant mindset that unless you are talking about the Bible, you are not teaching Christianity. I do not recall ever hearing Dr. Grier speak about his faith or the Lord directly. What I do remember is the passion with which he taught. I remember knowing that I was going to learn more than just a date each time I walked into his classroom. I was going to learn about something that happened to shape the world I live in. I was going to learn the implications and the effects, and how to think about that event critically, and in turn, how to think about any event in the same way. By the time I finished with my first history class, I had learned how to understand history in a way that I had never understood it before. My first year at Erskine, I learned what it truly meant to be made in His likeness as Gen 1:26 states. The courses I took that were not at all related to my faith or the Bible (English, Chemistry, History, etc), taught me how to learn and to think intelligently. I am sure that in order to be in the likeness of God, as he intended, we must be intelligent. A college that teaches strictly one sided beliefs and refuses to foster debate, is molding well versed Christians, not intelligent ones.

In my short time at Erskine, I learned how to be an intelligent person, an intelligent Christian. I may not be able to recite scripture in the way people who graduate from colleges like the one SAFE would like created can. I can however think intelligently, and it took the diversity and intellect, in addition to the belief structure, of all of the faculty at Erskine to mold me into an intelligent person. Anyone who understands that God is intelligent can see that it takes more than just a Bible and someone reciting it to mold us into the people God would have us to be.

God created us in His likeness, not in the likeness of tape recorders. I am glad that I got to attend an Erskine that understood that, and exposed me to a faculty with diverse beliefs so that I too could understand.

Thank you,

Rocky

**Em Greene Jones  
Class of 1986  
March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

### **The Erskine That I Know**

Here are some thoughts about “The Erskine that I used to know.” I don’t have a Facebook so I asked my sister to post this for me! I think the best four years of my life were spent in Due West, South Carolina, and I hope that many students on campus now are experiencing the same things we did back then! Em Greene Jones (class of 1986)

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 1 Corinthians 13:11

The Erskine I knew was a place where I could grow up. When things didn’t go my way, I did not have the opportunity to run home because I lived 525 miles from the campus. If a professor or someone else said something that I considered “offensive,” the last thing I would have done is run and tell my parents! There were no cell phones, no email, no texting – so my conversations with my parents consisted of an occasional letter and phone call. This was fine! Those were the days when our parents dropped us off at school, told us to “be good and have fun,” and then actually left us to grow up! They weren’t deserting me – they actually trusted and respected the people in Due West and knew I was in good hands.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28

The Erskine I knew treated everyone equally and welcomed everyone. No one drove fancy cars that I remember. I never knew who was on scholarship (academic or financial aid) and who wasn’t. No one paid attention to what denomination you were. No one cared what your father did - I had been on campus two years before I realized that Nancy Pittenger’s dad was a minister! Baseball players were the first real “Yankees” I had ever been around – and they fit right in our little town. Many soccer players were recruited from Trinidad. My roommate for two years was Catholic and so were others on campus. Once a week an Abbeville priest came over to hold “Mass” for the Catholic students – it was held ON CAMPUS in Watkins Student Center. This unity was never truer than on the Interim trips I took. Sweet Sally Creel led us in Devotions one night on a train in Italy in January 1985. Her mother had secretly packed her Bible and devotion book in her luggage. Now THAT is a something to remember and learn from!

Speak the Truth in Love. Ephesians 4:15

The Erskine I knew was a place where you were not allowed to get away with too much! I had been on campus less than a month my freshman year when I was called to Genie McDill’s office. She was the Dean of Women and gave me a kind, yet stern, lecture about my recent behavior and some of the choices I had been making. I took to heart what she said because it was said in love and in my best interest. I will never forget her words to me: “You have more personality in your little finger than most people have in their whole body. But it is up to you how you use that personality.”

Twice (at least) I had to appear before the Student Judicial Council for excessive notices. Each time it was taken seriously and each time I was punished accordingly. But I am sure that Robin

Elliot still called me “Sugar” or “Honey” as she gave me those notices!!

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

The Erskine I knew was a place where we supported each other. How much we all went through those four years in Due West – but we did it together! I will never forget gathering together in the halls of Bonner after Whitney Tillman’s dad died suddenly. We prayed for her and her family and Heather Crowley led us in The Lord’s Prayer. The entire Erskine family mourned with Paul through Paula Moore Dillingham’s illness and death. As we gathered in Farmville, Virginia at her funeral, it felt like old times – except we knew it would never be the same without our dear friend.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

The Erskine I knew was a place where we learned to forgive others. Unkind words were spoken to each other at times – it was bound to happen in such constant close quarters. Sometimes we got in trouble for kissing the boyfriend of one of our friends! Relationships at Erskine were not the kind that you could ever “escape” which forced you to face problems head on. How many times did we offend a friend or classmate? Yet it was a safe place to make mistakes. Patrick Robinson did eventually forgive me (I think) for causing his air conditioner to fall out of his dorm room.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

Most of all, the Erskine I knew was a place where “Opposites Could Attract.” Who would have thought that a brainiac (EBK Scholar no less!) country boy (Neil Jones, class of 1985) would end up falling for a party girl from the city who barely graduated (me!) – and then live happily ever after? (I really wasn’t that bad of a student – but it was cloudy the last few weeks before graduation and I still had not taken my required Astronomy constellations test!! Thankfully it cleared up the last possible day!)

**P. Mark Wilson**  
**Class of 1983**  
**March 18th**

### **The Erskine That I Know**

I came to Due West, a naive 18 year-old boy. I lasted two years before dropping out. After three years of toiling in the real world, I returned (so Dr.Crenshaw's theory certainly applied to me!)to work in the Public Relations office, and as a Resident Director of Robinson Dorm (it was a men's dorm then) and as a student, determined to finish what I had started five years earlier. I graduated and remained employed at the school till the spring of 1992. I left a married man and considered myself lucky to work under Bill Lesesne, Lee Logan and Dick Haldeman and to call them friends (they remain my friends to this day). I always considered myself fortunate to have been taught by great professors like Dr. Bill Kuykendall, Dr. Jim Gettys, Dr. Lowry Ware, Dr Ben Farley, Dr Bruce Carlock, Dr. Wilbur Reames, Dr Jan Haldeman and many, many more. I was priviledged to work with great coaches like Red Myers, Dr. Harry Stille, Ralph Lundy, Vardon Cox, Gene Alexander, Monty Wooley and Robbie Hicklin. Each and every one of them had a profound impact on my life. Erskine provided me an education, both in and out of the classroom. I learned valuable life lessons at Erskine and my faith grew stronger through my relationships with these people. I also met my wife of 19 years while at Erskine, Through my 14 years there and to this day, I believe in the mission of Erskine College. I was witness to hundreds upon hundreds of students coming to Erskine as wide-eyed teenagers, I watched them grow and mature, I saw them learn from their mistakes and I saw them mature into educated young people, prepared to face the challenges of adulthood in the modern world. This will always be what Erskine is all about.Just like most of you, I bleed maroon and gold. This is my school and I will not stand by and watch others attack her or change her. Be forewarned, I will fight for her, because just like you, Erskine will always be a part of me.

**Lisa Senn  
Class of 1981**

**An Alumnae's Memories of Erskine College**

Over a year ago, the Erskine PR department sent out an appeal for Alumni memories to potentially be used in Erskine promotional materials. This is what I sent in. I was so happy about where Erskine was in its progress at that time, and so very, very pleased at what Erskine had done for our children while students there. What follows is one story of hundreds if not thousands that Erskine graduates could write.

I am posting it in an effort to try to provide something totally upbeat. We need to remember that the current students at Erskine are trying desperately to have that wonderful Erskine experience we alumni had. We need to help them, through our prayers and support, and by being as upbeat, gracious and dignified as possible in the face of Erskine's current situation. A lot of the language on this site has veered toward an ugliness to which we cannot allow ourselves to descend.

Erskine College means the world to my husband Mark and me. My family are all ARP's, and my parents met at Erskine and married while still students. They brought me home as a newborn to "Vetville", a set of tar paper "shacks" originally situated behind the college for vets going to school on the GI bill. My Dad went on to Erskine Seminary and was given an honorary doctorate by Erskine in the mid 80's. He has set up a scholarship in the family name at the Seminary.

I graduated in 1981, and my two brothers, Robert Joseph Robinson, Jr. and John Patrick Robinson, graduated behind me. In the generation before us, besides my mother, Mary Alexander Robinson, and my father, Rev. Dr. Robert Joseph Robinson, my mother's sister, Jenny Alexander Bush graduated from Erskine, her sister Martha Alexander Kisiah attended before she left to get married, and my Dad's sister, Marie Carson Robinson graduated from Erskine.

In the most recent generation, my husband and I have sent our two precious children to Erskine: William Robinson (Rob) Senn, class of 2009, and Mary Alexander (Mary Alex) Senn, class of 2011. Mary Alex wore my "Carnegie II" tee shirt from 30 years ago when I was a freshman, the day she moved into her own room in Carnegie II August 25, 2007. My children have friends at Erskine whose parents were my friends when I was there. That is part of the beauty of Erskine's pull on its alumni.

Mark and I think Erskine is the best possible place we could have sent our children for their college education. The campus is beautiful and safe, the caliber of their fellow students, both academically and personality/integrity-wise is far above-average, and our children are learning/learned in an academically rigorous and challenging environment. Top it all off with the fact that all of the above is occurring in a wholesome, gracious Christian atmosphere, and what more could one want?

When I graduated from Erskine, I went to law school. I wanted to be an attorney in large part because in high school I had served as the denomination's youth representative to the Erskine Board. There I observed and became enthralled by that great attorney and jurist, Jean Galloway Bissell. I wanted to be just like her, admiring her ability to condense tense or difficult issues into manageable problems and concisely provide excellent options to handle same. At USC Law School, Erskine alumni had a pretty large presence. I don't know that I could have managed my

first year without the help of those alumni who handed down their study notes and techniques to me, just as earlier alumni had helped them, and I in turned offered my help to those coming behind me. My first job as a law clerk while in law school was given to me by an alumnus previously unknown to me, who saw my eyes light up at the sight of his Erskine diploma just before my interview started. To this day in my law practice, I regularly call on my Erskine friends who are lawyers for assistance, referrals, etc. The Erskine Network is alive and well in the legal community.

I could go on and on but I am sure you get the picture.

Erskine: The Best Place to Be, by Lisa (Robinson '81) Senn

(The following is reprinted from The ARP Magazine's July 1997 issue. Mrs. Senn is an attorney in Newberry.)

All of us can point to pivotal moments in our lives-times that seem to crystallize before our very eyes into highlights of our personal history. But what about all those moments in between-the daily humdrum that fills the rest of our time?

Looking back on my days at Erskine College, I realize that in a lot of ways it was the mundane, average weekday that made Erskine such a wonderful experience.

Take a trip with me down Memory Lane: Waiting at the cafeteria doors for supper, milling about with friends; sitting on the beds in friends' rooms in the dorm discussing the meaning of life and counseling with each other; driving to what is now known as Lou & Perry's in the wee hours of the morning for a cheeseburger on Texas toast.

In class, the cafeteria, the dorm, listening, allowing and being allowed to have different opinions without condemning; walking to class in the spring studying the new green life on the trees and realizing yet again the incredible beauty of God's creation; greeting each person who passed by in the friendly atmosphere of Due West; learning to respect others' need for quiet and privacy, particularly during test times

These memories and so many more were not earth-shattering moments in my life. Rather, they were what made up the days and weeks of my tenure at Erskine.

The safe, learning Christian environment in which I was sheltered for four years allowed me the freedom to make mistakes and to grow intellectually, morally and spiritually. I value very highly the ability to express myself and to feel confident that the person or persons to whom I reveal my thoughts do not condemn, even when my views are not shared.

At Erskine I felt encouraged to explore intellectually. The beauty of the situation was the confidence I felt that, if in my inexperience or immaturity I strayed too far down the wrong path, Erskine had professors I could trust to gently prod me back in line.

Material was not spoon-fed. We were encouraged to think for ourselves. Learning was not simply memorizing and returning the same information to the professor by rote.

This realization of the value of the method by which I was taught at Erskine did not come in a sudden moment of awareness but grew out of a gradual understanding of and admiration for one

of the quiet strengths of an excellent college.

While a student at Erskine, I was just that, a student, taking in information and growing daily in so many ways, for the most part blissfully unaware of the machinations involved in my journey.

The irony is that although the majority of my days at Erskine were unremarkable in themselves, my four years there taken as a whole were pivotal to the molding and maturing of the person I have become. Because of the nurturing space I was afforded while I teetered between the remnants of my childhood and an awakening adulthood, Erskine was the best possible place to be at that time in my life. My time there was joyous!

I firmly believe the Erskine experience is the most appropriate college experience for most college-bound students. Erskine may not be in a big city or have a huge budget, but it has a beauty and value as an institution of Christian higher education that transcend those facts.

**Harris Murray  
Class of 1977  
April 12th, 2010**

**Erskine Forever Connected in Jesus Christ**

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

Yes, I am one of the “sleeping giants” of Erskine alumni that has been awakened by the current crisis facing the College and Seminary due to the actions of the Moderator’s Commission of the ARP Synod. Since I first heard of the crisis, I have followed it through the news, a Facebook page “Alumni for Erskine,” and through web alerts via Google, which have alerted me to news of this situation from a variety of sources, including newspapers, higher education websites, etc. Since I first heard of the crisis, I have lifted Erskine College, its faculty, staff, students, board members and alumni in prayer: “Thy will be done.”

I do not presume to know God’s will in this situation, although I sincerely pray that His will is in line with my own. I attended Erskine College in the mid to late 1970’s by default. I had been accepted at the University of Alabama, had a roommate and was ready to depart. Erskine was the only other college to which I had applied, primarily because my family drove through Due West on a regular basis to visit my grandmother in Ware Shoals, but also because my uncle attended Erskine and two of my father’s cousins met and married at Erskine years before my time. Due West seemed a quaint town, and its nearness to Ware Shoals pulled at my heart – I was very close to my grandmother. Circumstances changed my heart and mind about the University of Alabama.....

I ARRIVED AT ERSKINE BY DEFAULT, BUT I NOW KNOW IT WAS GOD’S PROVIDENCE WORKING IN MY LIFE BEFORE I EVEN REALIZED IT THAT BROUGHT ME TO DUE WEST.

God’s providence is a deep theological issue. I think perhaps we can only understand and grasp it in hindsight as we experience it in our lives. Let me share with you what happened in my life at Erskine:

I met the dearest six friends of my entire life. Thirty-three years after our graduation, we gather yearly for a reunion and remain in touch with each other throughout the year by email and phone calls. We call ourselves the “Seven Sisters.” Each of us is a committed Christian, nurtured in part by our shared experiences at Erskine College and through the love and care of faculty and staff that embraced us, allowed us the opportunity to grow through learning and fellowship, and encouraged us to THINK about our lives and how we might use them post-Erskine. GOD’S PROVIDENCE brought us together at that time in that place.

I learned to think, to grapple with personal issues and challenges, to question my life and faith: all of these were accomplished within the realm of a community of educators who were always available. Of particular importance to me was the College chaplain, Lee Kennerly, for whom I worked as work-study student. Lee and I remain in touch with each other to this day. GOD’S PROVIDENCE brought me among people who allowed me to question, to think, to grapple. I learned to embrace people who were different from me. Yes, I tended to hang out with people most like me, but Erskine College brought me in contact with people from different cultures, different races, different social/cultural/economic backgrounds. I learned to “meet the world” in

a small microcosm called Due West. GOD'S PROVIDENCE introduced me to a larger world than I had previously experience. That prepared me for every job I have ever had, all of which have involved meeting and working for and with people from a variety of backgrounds.

I had the blessing of being allowed to begin the journey toward adulthood and self-sufficiency under the direction and guidance of genuine and committed people like Dr. James Knight, Miss Frances Caldwell; Rev. Lee Kennerly, Professor Zelda Oates, Reba Stille, Doug and Glenda Cotton (former houseparents in Carnegie), Bill Kuykendall, Paul Watson, and so, so many others. GOD'S PROVIDENCE brought those people into my life.

Those are just a few of the blessings I received by my attendance at Erskine College. My life today is what is in in large part because of the years I spent in Due West, learning to love and to be loved, learning to think and to explore, learning to grow and change. GOD'S PROVIDENCE and nothing else brought me to Erskine College and I remain ever thankful for His plan, which in retrospect was far better than my own.

I fully support the actions of the board members and the Alumni Association in response to the actions of the Moderator's Commission of the ARP Church. I deeply regret that events caused this rift, but I believe that Erskine College is a strong academic institution that promotes Christian values while allowing students the grace they need to develop and claim their own faith. My prayers will continue to be with the Board of Trustees and all members of the Erskine family that value the environment under which so many alumni have thrived.

May God, IN HIS PROVIDENCE, shine His grace and wisdom upon you as you move forward in the challenges ahead. May the LIGHT OF HIS TRUTH come shining forth with unquestioned and unquestionable brilliance as you deliberate and discern the direction He is leading you. May GOD GIVE YOU GRACE AND STRENGTH to bear up under pressure and to fight the good fight, run the race, and remain faithful to Him in and through all things.

I remind you, in closing, of David's words when he faced a giant: "For the battle is the Lord's." David's complete and utter allegiance to God's will, in my studying, is based on his experience of GOD'S PROVIDENCE in his life prior to this epic moment.

"May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; may the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

Sincerely,  
Harris (Cheatham) Murray  
Class of 1977

**Mary Elizabeth Todd**  
**Class of 1974**  
**June 2, 2010**

**A Letter to the Members of the ARP Synod**

Dear Members of the ARP Synod,

It has been thirty-six years since I graduated from Erskine. I have done much with my life since the day I left the campus as a student for the last time. It was only four years of my now fifty-eight years. They should not have carried so much weight in my life, but they have.

The odd thing is that my going to Erskine almost did not happen. I had dreams of being a journalist. I loved to write and I wanted to investigate and write serious news for some magazine. University of Georgia was my choice because it was known as a school good in journalism. I was accepted and ready to go, but life intervened in the form of three much older brothers. My second choice they again intervened. Out of frustration, I dug in my heels and said I am going to Erskine. It was one of the best choices in my life.

I came to Erskine as someone who had knowledge of the Christian faith but one who was not a Christian. I was raised first in the Baptist faith. In my early teens, my mother, who was raised Methodist, brought our family to a small but loving Methodist Church in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. While I lived in the mountains, I found that Christians came in various denominations. I attended school with children whose families attended what is commonly known as the “snake handlers”. I had friends that were primitive Baptists and others that attended the Church of God. I heard so many mixed messages that even that very loving Methodist Church could not reach me. So by the time I decided to go to Erskine, I was well on my way to being a person with no connection with any religion.

I had attended church all my life, but the Bible classes that Dr. Kuykendall and Dr. Watson taught especially began to reach me. I have always had a deep love of history. I had not known what a deep and rich history that the Bible had. I had not understood that these were stories of people that once lived. I began to open up to what I was hearing. Neither Dr. Watson nor Dr. Kuykendall mentioned their private beliefs unless they were presented with a question. Despite this, I knew that they were both devoted men who loved not just religion but their God. You could see it in the passion for the ideas and facts that they presented to their students. Also in the caring the entire staff had for the students that have attended Erskine. Even after all these years when I have seen my previous professors they express an interest in my life and show gladness in their expression at seeing me again. The feeling is mutual.

In my sophomore year I accepted Jesus as my savior. I also after doing some soul searching chose to major in Bible at Erskine. I would also have a second major in Behavioral Sciences. I tease and say that my other major was pool shooting. I do not know if I would have found Christ if I had went to my first choice or even my second choice of schools. I don't think I would have, and by the time I left college, my heart may have harden so much that I would not have ever listened to the knock on the door of my heart by Christ. What also occurred was that I was surrounded by students who like me were searching and those who had found Christ. As much as the professors taught me about Jesus by their example, it was my fellow students who gave me the most. We loved and supported each other. There was a group of us that started every day with prayer. I had a prayer partner, and Monday thru Friday we met to pray after supper. Some

of our prayers were foolish but at the time they mattered to us. We were like little children trusting our Heavenly Father to answer us.

From Erskine, I took away a deeper faith because I searched, questioned and found answers. At Erskine, I found friends that are of the lasting kind. They are the jewels of my life. At Erskine, I learned that if an answer is not easily found, search harder. When I became a foster care worker, this knowledge helped me aid over 600 children that passed thru my caseload during my 28 years with the Department of Social Services. From Erskine, I took away a sense of purpose for my life and always to continue learning.

One specific event that Erskine's teaching methods aided me was when I had a crisis of faith. In 1997, I had a monumental crisis of faith. What I faced at that time was what happens when people neglect their job and innocent individuals are hurt with no chance of reversing the damage. I felt all the anger and frustration a person could feel. I could have easily fallen into the "Where were you God?" syndrome, but I didn't. After the initial pain dissolved, I was able to look objectively at the situation. I felt a deep sadness. It came to me at that time the deep meaning of the shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept. (John 11:35)" For I felt the deepness of that sorrow, instead of a diminishing faith, my questioning brought me to a deeper faith. For that I think Erskine's many teachers for showing me a way to answer even the most difficult of questions.

It was only four years of my life, but those four years have brought light to all the days in my life since I left as a graduate of Erskine College, and I suspect they will do so the rest of the days of my life. I will be forever thankful for the experience.

Ever in Christ's Love,

Mary Elizabeth Todd

**David A. Danehower**  
**Class of 1974**

**A Plea to the Members of the ARP Synod**

Dear Members of the ARP Synod,

As an Alumnus of Erskine College I appreciate the opportunity to tell you a little about my time at Erskine and what I believe Erskine College has been and remains today. It is my fervent hope that you will find the beauty that is Erskine in what I write. If that is the case, then I hope we can join together in making Erskine College the truly national model of what a Christian liberal arts college can and should be! I am not an ARP myself, and so I write this with some trepidation. My mother, however, was and remains an ARP in her heart. She came from a long line of ARPs including the Moffatt, Grier, and McCaw families. My great great uncle David Moffatt, the 1<sup>st</sup> Latin professor at Erskine, wrote the motto. As an academician myself, I try and live both my private and professional lives according to that motto – “Scientia cum moribus conjuncta” – knowledge joined with morals.

I arrived at Erskine from the Delta of eastern Arkansas, where I was a member of the local Presbyterian Church, and was immediately and totally immersed in my new college *home* and surroundings. I really believe the key to Erskine is its size and the “*family*” relationships that develop between friends, teachers, administrators, and townspeople. You hear this said about Erskine all the time. Well, in my humble opinion I think you “have to be there” to *truly* appreciate Erskine’s uniqueness.

I studied chemistry at Erskine under two great teachers – T.E. Lesslie and James A. Knight, but the list of professors and the “Erskine family” who helped shape my life is much longer than just those two names! I am a better and more Christian man for those many wonderful relationships! My advisor and Physics Professor in College was Professor G. G. Parkinson. Dr. Parkinson was as fine a Christian gentleman as I have ever known. He had been a superb athlete during his youth and he was ramrod straight. You sat up in your chair with “G.G.” came into class! The truth of the matter is that I got more than one stern lecture from Dr. Parkinson during my time at Erskine. And I am a much better man for it!

I also had wonderful teachers in English, history, Bible, biology, and philosophy. The professors I had in these courses challenged me to think for and express myself as well. They guided me during a critical time in my development – that guidance was both intellectual and spiritual. And I am a better man for it! I recall with special fondness my German Professor, Hans Engler, who just recently retired after long service to Erskine. Herr Engler taught me a good deal of German, but he taught me much, much, more about the horrors of war and the wisdom of peace. You see, Dr. Engler had been a small boy in Berlin in WWII. And then I think of administrators like Reverend Dr. Chap Lauderdale, President Stanyarne Bell, Bill Lesesne, Frances Cardwell, or President Joe Wightman. I’ll always remember Dr. Wightman serving up my eggs to me on my first morning at Erskine! You won’t see that at NC State where I now work! These Godly men and women were strong guiding influences on me. And I am a much more moral man, a more spiritual man, and a more learned and wiser man for it!

During my life, and perhaps because of my time at Erskine, I have developed an interest in genealogy. For that reason, I have read quite a bit about the history of the ARP Church and Erskine. I find the early history of the Church to be fascinating. Those Scots who founded the ARP faith are part of my family tree. My ancestral home (Moffatt, Scotland) is not too far from

Gairney Bridge, where the Associate Presbytery was formed in response to corrupt doctrines and tyrannical practices of the Scottish Church. The story of the “free offer of the Bible” is a story of courage in the face of those who would seek to limit one’s access to the Word of God! My ancestors were a feisty lot and I hold their principles dear.

When my ancestors came to the fledgling colonies, they ultimately merged with the Reformed Church. In a short time thereafter, the southern branch of the ARP faith founded Erskine Seminary and then Erskine College – the oldest private liberal arts colleges in SC. One of the things I think is truly marvelous and unique about Erskine College and Seminary is that it has existed from its very beginnings as a place where students and faculty from many faiths, including most importantly and historically the ARP Church, can come to learn in an environment that is tolerant of different beliefs and provides an academically challenging curriculum in the liberal arts. In my opinion, it has been and remains a place where faith and learning are indeed integrated.

Now, I’d be the first to admit that integration is not always perfect! To return to my memories of Erskine College, I and my Erskine classmates varied in our faiths and in our behavior. In that respect, Erskine College is something of a microcosm of the worldly macrocosm. There were clearly people at Erskine who were more religious than I was. There were also folks that were less religious. But we respected one another, indeed cared for one another, and I think we all emerged from our college careers and went out into the world as better people, strengthened in respective faiths and morality to different degrees, and prepared to engage the world. Not everyone leaves the town of Due West as an ARP, but the great thing is that people from many faiths can come together and think about, learn, and grow in their relationship with God. This is the historical legacy of Erskine College. A legacy that I believe with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my soul continues to this very day.

God bless,

David A Danehower

**Betty Bigham Hunt**  
**Class of 1965**  
**June 2, 2010**

**What Erskine College Means to Me**

Erskine was the only college I wanted to attend, and it turned out to be the best place for me. As is true with many freshmen, I did not know what major I wanted to pursue. As a voice student and member of the Choraleers, I was encouraged mightily by Tom Owen and John Brawley in the direction of a degree in music education with voice being my major applied. Music majors started out taking music theory so I was already a semester behind. Dr. Brawley gave me a test of first semester theory to take over Christmas break and then some person of power (maybe Dr. Parkinson) gave me credit and I started in with second semester Music Theory. How amazing! This would never have happened in a large university. Singing with the Choraleers was a wonderful experience and studying voice with Tom Owen was just fine. Along the way I sang in the choir at the Due West ARP Church and even directed a junior choir. All of my singing over the years has been a special gift to use to glorify God. For thirty years it was a blessing to teach the children and youth of our church the joys of singing in worship and also to lead an amazing group of adults in bringing glory to God through music. Friends I made at Erskine continue as some of my closest friends forty-five years later, so I say with a strong voice: Thanks be to God for leading me to Erskine College in 1961.

**H. Paul Dove, Jr.,  
Class of 1966  
April 2010**

**Erskine Teachers and Administrators Who Touched My Life**

Dear Friends,

Please know that I deeply appreciate your continuing to fight the good fight for the Erskine we know and love. As a 1966 alumnus and 1969-1974 member of the faculty (I was head librarian), I saw firsthand the strong leadership and devotion trustees provided to our college. I remember working with Chap Lauderdale to present the McCain Library addition idea to Trustee Ned Sloan and how that materialized. I remember the strong leadership Bill Stuart, Emmett Davis and many others brought to the board during these years.

I remember influential teachers such as Bill Kuykendall, Dr. Parkinson, Dr. Sloan, Mr. T. D. Brown, Bill Ellison, Dr. E. G. Boyce and Mrs. Marie Boyce (my library mentor), Felix Bauer, Margaret Cubine, Clyde McCants, Martha Long, Mr. Pressley, Cal Koonts, Jim Knight, Jim Gettys, Dr. Allison, Dr. Ruble, Dr. Morris, Dr. King, Dr. and Mrs. John Miller Grier (my major professors), Miss Frances Cardwell, Dr. Lesesne, Dr. Wightman, Dr. Ware, Bob Ackerman, Dr. Romein, Luther Mundy, Paul Watson, Zelda Oates, Miss McClure, the Owens, Shirley Lampton, Mr. Smith, Bill Baker (for whom I worked for three upper-class years as a biology lab assistant), Miss McDill, Red Myers, Coach Stille, Joe Stukes, and many more whose examples have been lifelong role models for thousands who have passed through Erskine's portals.

During my student years the Due West ARP Church was strongly supportive of us ARP students, and there are also fond memories of Sunday School and choir there. As returnees to Due West, we served as advisors to the YPCU there during the early seventies. I was even elected a deacon in that church.

You have a formidable role ahead of you, and I pray that you find the courage and strength to uphold for future generations what Erskine has been for so many past generations, my own included. As a 35 year veteran of SACS teams across the southeastern United States, I am only too aware of what Synod's misguided actions will do to accreditation and the very future of our school.

Please do not hesitate to let me know any ways in which I can be of assistance. I will keep you and our college in my thoughts and prayers and depend on you to "hold in trust" the institution that I believe has served our God and our faith so nobly and effectively for these many years, since 1839.

Sincerely,

H. Paul Dove, Jr.,  
Professor Emeritus and Dean of the Library (retired), Francis Marion University

**Dr. Grace L. Hill  
Class of 1952**

**A Letter to the Erskine Board of Trustees**

*Note: This letter was originally to be a joint one sent by my husband, Leo H. Hill, Esquire, class of 1949, and me. Leo died April 21, 2010. He was making final edits to this letter the night before his death. We met at Erskine and raised our family in the Greenville ARP Church.*

Dear Members of the Board:

We wanted to write to encourage you to continue to stand and defend Erskine from an insidious and continuous onslaught against academic freedom.

A dissatisfied faction, who primarily came in to the church from outside were they were a disruptive fringe, have infiltrated the ARP church, its committees, publications, and Synod. Very aggressive, vocal, articulate and persistent, they now seek control over Erskine College. This is an apparent attempt to make it into a different college, one that caters to their agenda and narrow dogmas to the exclusion of Erskine's historic mission and generally accepted academic standards for a liberal arts education.

They seek control by decimating the Board of Trustees, dictating which faculty or staff is to be hired or fired, requiring various unreasonable litmus tests, demanding the teaching of creationism denying evolution, and ordering strict adherence to their perception of religious doctrine to the exclusion of curiosity, debate, and general knowledge.

They would usurp the historic powers of the Erskine Board of Trustees and leave it with little autonomy. The most recent example is when, in violation of the statutory law, they fired fourteen members of the Board and replaced them with new members of their own kind. The Erskine Alumni Association and several of the disenfranchised trustees filed a law suit and are vigorously fighting to contest this unprecedented abrupt and illegal action.

The College incidentally is a distinct and separate corporate body that owns all of the College assets and posses legal authority to operate and manage the College. The ARP church is another separate body with authority only to name the Board of Trustee membership as their terms expire on a staggered basis.

An investigative committee populated by persons of the same persuasion (most of whom never attended Erskine), armed with a preconceived agenda, deceptively claimed the need was triggered by concerns of current students. Yet, an analysis of the student statements shows these to be a heavily biased unrepresentative small group of students voicing the same vague, coached, non-specific themes, such as:

Teaching is not biblical, but secular.

Creationism is biblical and is not being taught.

Professors are politically liberal and are destroying faith of students.

The themes illustrate these students, who have yet to be exposed to a full educational odyssey, do

not understand that meaning of a liberal arts education or the necessity for academic freedom any more than those who now seek to manipulate them.

As the investigation committee continued, it has been reported that it took more the form of a mean, rude inquisition that wrongfully assumed the role of both prosecutor and judge bent on reaching a pre-determined conclusion. The final report charged the entire board with mismanagement and breach of its trust responsibilities. Yet, in response to the report, the Synod only removed a handpicked fourteen of the thirty-three members. Such arbitrary and capricious conduct cannot withstand serious scrutiny.

All of this happened after a series of special meetings, giving little time to respond and ignoring contrary facts made plain by others. Subsequently, the Synod packed the Board with members of the investigative committee and others known for their “ultra-conservative” views. Interestingly, the current Moderator, who had originally appointed himself to the committee in spite of an obvious conflict of interest, now appointed himself to the Board. This faction is in reality far from being “conservative,” for they care little about preserving Erskine history, church philosophy or academic freedom. Instead of conserving, they are vindictively pushing forth a narrow agenda of their own making, destroying and uprooting policies and beliefs that have for more than a century enabled Erskine to successfully marry the standard teachings of a liberal arts education and Christianity.

It is no coincidence that this faction of ultra-conservatives, by recently blocking the Search Committee’s choice for a new president, are now in a timely position to control the selection of the next president.

In an obvious effort to piggyback and bolster its contentions, the investigation committee references prior studies by other church committees. These are different times; the past studies addressed different concerns, primarily the church itself as well as suggesting guidelines for the College. None of these recommended that the Synod take control of the College and none attacked the standards of a liberal arts education.

Instead, the following language is found in the 1977-1978 Statement of Philosophy:

“Freedom of inquiry should prevail.”

“The instructional focus should be on insight and comprehension, as opposed to information only, and should place emphasis on flexible and innovative approach to teaching.

“Along with providing strong majors in different fields, the curriculum should address the development of the whole student.”

“At the same time, there must be intellectual stimulation and open dialogues; and creative individualism should be fostered.”

Why is it when some group comes along thinking it has captured Truth in a bottle, that academic freedom is immediately put at risk? It seems there are some who would do away with the whole Protestant Reformation and set themselves up as a new Pope. The “Age of Reason” needs a revival and not a retreat into a contrived ivory tower constructed by those who want isolation from reality and immutable boundaries.

There is a certain volatile and explosive nature about truth. It defies confinement and breaks out when new revelations come and when man's preconceptions and insights are improved. Long held traditions, beliefs and opinions get turned around when man's finite wisdom is enhanced with new revelations from God.

God not only gave us salvation, but intelligence – and doubts, so that we may have faith. History is full of “Eureka” experiences as mankind realized its errors. Cosmic changes have occurred. History is also full of tragic consequences that follow when one side, always zealously sure of the absolute infallibility of their beliefs, seeks to muzzle the truth and learning.

Academic freedom allows us to think, compare, debate, explore, and grow. This is a special God-given blessing and it is necessary for a liberal arts education.

When the self-anointed “conservatives” see the world “Liberal” in “Liberal Arts Education,” they turn pale, blanch white, and assume it is to be a leftwing political conspiracy belching forth foul political doctrines, if not socialist of community propaganda. What a warped perception that is!

We need to be heard to boldly say: Let us not be led astray from the Christian education Erskine has always championed. Let us remember the very reasons we broke from the state church. The progress came because we would not stand for a denial of freedoms amid demands of conformity and control.

“You shall know the Truth, and It shall set you free” (John 8:32) is not only a promise, but an instruction. The Truth is we are at great risk of losing Erskine College to a bold, audacious, aggressive militant few.

The ultimate solution is to urge caution and reason in the selection of representatives to the Synod. The churches need to send only those who will stand up for Erskine because its future is at risk. These representatives need to understand this dispute and its consequences. They need to stand up for Erskine and its heritage, and speak up and vote to conserve what Erskine has meant to an untold number of graduates.

As Daniel Webster once said of Dartmouth, “It is a small college, but there are those that love her.”

Sincerely,

**Grace Lucille Garrison Hill, Ph.D.**