FALL HAPPENINGS

Homecoming Court
The Hurricanes played their homecoming game Saturday, November 1st, with a 38-16 victory over George Mason University. Court members included: Theresa Cephas (Homecoming Queen); Quinones McCall (Homecoming King); Jackie Elder-Donevan (Homecoming Princess); Ronnie Armstrong (Homecoming Prince); Verneisha Silver; Courtney Martin, Jordan Minter, Nathan Hackney, Teresa Brooks, Tramaine Land, and Jasmine Davis.

Haunted Hall
Louisburg College hosted a Haunted Hall for students on October 29th. The student turn-out was amazing — approximately 300 students attended the event! Organized by Student Activities, the second floor of Franklin Hall was decorated with several themed rooms, including a graveyard, chophouse, witches’ chamber, and vampires’ lair. Several of the student life staff, one faculty member, and our auditorium manager participated as actors to help make this event a success.

Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Program
Louisburg College and the United States Army intend to initiate an ROTC program beginning with the spring 2009 term. The College has been working with Col. Douglas Still for the past three years to realize this program. ROTC will be offered as an elective course (MSL101) and will be hosted by the ROTC program at North Carolina State University under the direction of LTC. Kenneth Ratashak. In addition to the classroom offerings, participating students will have the opportunity to be involved in the Ranger Challenge Team, Color Guard Team, Scabbard and Blade Honors Club, and much more! A link on the Louisburg College website will be posted soon with more detailed information about this program and its many benefits.

Louisburg College Cares
Residence Life sponsored a Breast Cancer Awareness program on October 16th in the Alumni Room. Students were invited for ice cream sundaes and received information about breast cancer prevention. Approximately sixty students attended the event. In addition, a fundraiser for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Research foundation was held during October. Staff and faculty were able to donate money in exchange for a pink ribbon and the opportunity to wear denim to work.

The College also hosted a candlelight vigil in memory of victims of Domestic Violence on October 23rd on the steps of Main building. The vigil was sponsored and facilitated by Safe Space, Inc., Franklin County’s domestic violence shelter.
One of the truths of teaching the humanities to many freshman and sophomore college students is their lack of common historical knowledge I have always taken for granted. So I often find myself teaching history right along with literature. With this in mind, I asked my resident expert if he would come in and give some background on the B-17s so my students could understand the poem’s stark truth.

In his meticulous way, he began to research the B-17s, starting specifically with the Memphis Belle, as that plane had served as the vehicle for a film of the same name a few years ago. He’d actually seen and toured the plane that had been used in the film as it had landed at the Scott Air Force Base in Illinois just prior to his retirement. However, that plane was not a “pure” B-17 for reasons that elude me. He spent hours watching and rewatching the film, stopping and starting, trying to get the perfect scenes to demonstrate to the students what the plane’s strengths were and its one terrible weakness—that tiny ball on the underbelly that could only hold a man 5’4” or shorter, who was curled into near fetal position once he inserted himself into the ball turret.

If the door jammed, if something went wrong and the crew could not get the gunner out and something happened to the landing gear, necessitating a belly landing, the gunner died, scraped and crushed by the heavy aircraft above him. This actually happened twenty-three times during the war, I learned during a conversation with one of the “Aluminum Overcast’s” flight crew.

Cliff went on the Internet, tracking down information on the real crew of the Memphis Belle,
and what happened to the B-17s which had survived the war. Every evening for a week, he immersed himself in data about the B-17s and their contribution to the nation. He found stories about why planes were christened by what names or given specific nose art; he learned tales of heartbreak, wonder and heroism. Finally the night before class, I asked, “Have you re-read the poem?” He looked guilty—I recognized that look: he’d gotten caught up in more interesting stuff and missed the main point! “Read the poem—it’s only five lines long!” I advised.

To say he made an impression on my students is like saying it gets a bit muggy in North Carolina in August. Thirty students were mesmerized by the film clips, by the immediacy of the action, by the vulnerability of the plane—especially the ball turret gunner’s position. That Veteran’s Day became one I will never forget.

One of the scenes he’d chosen featured actual WWII footage of B17s in combat. This heartrending black and white film showed the planes being shot down, while all around “the black flak and the nightmare fighters,” as the poem says, harried them silently. Providing an eerie background commentary, grieving families, sweethearts, and friends read letters written to the Memphis Belle’s commander thanking him for writing to tell them personally that their loved ones had died honorably. As I unabashedly wept, I realized that my strong, quiet husband had stood to read the poem. He looked down at the page, but could not see it because of his own tears. I asked if he wanted me to read it. He swallowed and said, “I think you’re going to have to.” I took the book gently from his hands and in between sniffs and tears read the five lines which end with this disturbing image: “When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.” What an impression those young people walked away with that day: to witness a man who was far too young to have lived when those planes flew be so moved by the sacrifice and the will to serve. I fell in love all over again. How could I not? How could the students not see the power of literature in a way I could never give them? This had been such a beautiful experience for me and for him, that when he discovered during his research that a group called the Experimental Aircraft Association toured the country once a year with a restored B-17G, we looked for schedules. Finally, as I was Christmas shopping on the internet, looking for B-17 models, I found the 2008 Itinerary, and they were going to be in Spokane in late May. My college roommate, Cathy, lives an hour and twenty minutes away in Pullman, Washington. The timing coincided with our 34th anniversary week. We checked our various schedules and discovered it was a perfect time for all three of us. I gave him a flight on “The Aluminum Overcast” restored B-17 G for Christmas. So, that spring evening in May presented the crescendo of months of anticipation. I had so hoped it would not be a letdown, and as I looked at the plane sitting there gleaming in the sporadic setting rays of sunlight, I knew it would not be. I saw a rival for my affections right there. She was a Greta Garbo of planes; she came out when she wanted and only when she wanted and her admirers respected that air of condescension. The nose art might be of a slightly risqué 1940’s pin-up girl sitting on a lightning bolt, but the plane was a lady down to her last gleaming rivet.
SACs Update

A visiting team from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACs) was on campus October 21-23 to review our progress on fifteen items in the areas of financial resources, financial stability, faculty, academic support services, student support services, and technology. The visiting team reviewed our Fourth Monitoring Report, requested and examined approximately thirty-seven additional documents, and interviewed twelve individuals.

The Commission recognized that Louisburg College has made substantial progress, and the chair of the visiting team from the Commission stated at the exit interview that the team members were “impressed with the progress” the College has made. Dr. Donna Wilkinson, Vice President for the Commission and the Commission’s staff person assigned to Louisburg College, stated that there is a “presence of good trends” at the College. The Commission’s visiting team took a conservative stance and did not recommend releasing the College from the probationary status at this time.

This Commission’s uncertainty, verbally relayed to the interim president, Dr. Rodney Foth, revolves around two issues: the 2008-2009 enrollment decline and the budget cuts made related to the enrollment decline. The College continues efforts to return enrollment to the levels experienced during the previous three years, and to guarantee that the 2008-2009 fiscal year results demonstrate to the Commission our financial stability. Through our 2008-2009 accomplishments, Louisburg College will again show the Commission our worthiness of being released from the imposed sanction.

The College sent a response to the comments and recommendations of the visiting team to the Commission on November 14. The Commission will announce its action with Louisburg College on December 9 at its annual conference in San Antonio, Texas. Dr. Foth anticipates that the Commission’s December 2008 action with Louisburg College will be a continuation of accreditation for “just cause,” a continuation of probation for twelve months, and the submission of a Fifth Monitoring Report including the audits for fiscal year ending May 31, 2009. In this audit, the College must again demonstrate to the Commission its financial stability.

The anticipated action mentioned above and the multiple positive comments received again indicate that the College is taking the right course of action. We have made great progress and are financially stable, and with your continuing prayers and financial support, the 2008-2009 fiscal year will again be solid for Louisburg College.

For questions or concerns, or to submit news ideas for the next edition of Hurricane Headlines, contact Amy McManus, director of publications and media relations at 919.497.3330, or email amcmanus@louisburg.edu.

Related by faith to The United Methodist Church, Louisburg College is committed to offering a supportive community which nurtures young men and women intellectually, culturally, socially, physically, and spiritually.