Let me open by saying thank you to the Alumni Board of Directors and to you the Alumni Association for allowing me the opportunity to represent you as Alumni President. To represent the 11,000 + alumni of our institution is truly an honor and privilege.

I look forward to working again with Buddy Ferguson and Ann Hawthorne in our alumni office. Buddy is a valuable asset to Erskine. Nobody loves Erskine more than Buddy.

I've been asked: “What's your agenda?” I don't have any single agenda item but to serve the institution and its alumni. There are, however, two areas that cause me to be concerned and those are Alumni Participation and Institutional Governance.

Alumni participation and closeness has always been the foundational to the Erskine spirit, but this has suffered in recent years. I want to work to see it improve. Erskine alumni have an abiding love and concern for the Institution and its future. We all came here as young men and women, and when we left Due West to start our lives, we each took a part of Erskine with us in our hearts. Many of us had parents and grandparents who did the same. Many of us have sent our children here so they too would grow as people and come to cherish this place like we do.

You see, we are stakeholders in Erskine. Stakeholders in its past and stakeholders in its future. And Erskine needs us, perhaps more now than ever. Together, our collective experiences and the contributions that we make, including, crucial financial support, is needed to help Erskine grow as an academic institution.

In the days to come Erskine will need support from its Alumni Association. It is my hope that the Board of Trustees, the Administration, and the ARP Church recognize and acknowledge how important Alumni are as stakeholders in Erskine's future.

As to my second area of concern - Institutional Governance. The Alumni Position Statement clearly indicates that we do not seek to govern this institution. Ours is a supporting role. And we fully recognize that the BOT has the responsibility to govern the college and seminary. A key area where we can offer support is by identifying and recommending effective candidates to serve on the BOT. We ask that these candidates be given fair and equal consideration by the ARP Church. I believe that solid trustee candidates should have demonstrated that they truly care for Erskine's wellbeing. We need trustees who are leaders in the fields of Higher Education, experts in Financial Planning, Business People and Attorneys. We need folks who have already shown a willingness to serve Erskine through their work on the Alumni Board, the Board of Counselors, the Flying Fleet Club, the Parent Council — and through the various other avenues of support for the college. We need people who can keep confidentiality, regardless of their political leanings. And we need people who have given sacrificially to Erskine and the Annual Fund — long before their names were presented as trustee candidates. When trustees are appointed by the Church that have never contributed to the Institution, never served on the Alumni Board, never served on the Board of Counselors or Flying Fleet Club, that will obviously raise questions from the alumni as to whose best interests are they serving?

My personal view is that a graduate of Erskine who spent four years of his/her life living the traditions and principles of this Institution, who has historically contributed to the college either through volunteer work or monetarily would be far more loyal, far more motivated and far more prepared to serve Erskine as a Trustee regardless of their church politics. We need diverse, dedicated, and qualified people to serve Erskine as a Trustee.

Your presence here today tells me how much Erskine means to you. Today we gather here to celebrate the Erskine Spirit. That Spirit that binds all of us and makes kindred souls of us even if we come from very different places and backgrounds.

In closing I want to thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your Alumni President. May God Bless You and may God Bless Erskine College.