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Keep the Spirit of Hope Alive

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Alumna tells graduates

Keep the spirit of hope alive

When Ruth (Musunu) Tit Manyaka ’69 began writing a young woman on the opposite side of the world, she could not imagine how her life would change.

Manyaka was reunited with her friends and mentors Allen and Margaret (Cook) Anderson, both ’47, and friend and former college roommate Carol (Smith) Hooser ’68 of Kearny, Ariz., when she traveled from Africa to give the commencement address to the class of 2007. Calling Anderson her “spiritual father,” Manyaka said he was instrumental in bringing her to Linfield.

Manyaka, the daughter of an American Baptist pastor and a teacher, was raised at a mission station in the Congo. She later met and married Raphael Tit Manyaka, a graduate student in engineering from Cameroon. Eventually they returned to Cameroon, where Manyaka taught biology at a secondary school in Douala, the country’s capital, and raised four children.

Following her retirement from teaching in 1999, she spent last January Term working with her and others, calling them Linfield’s ambassadors to Africa. “I believe these young people had an experience that cannot be overstated in the context of the Cameroon,” Manyaka recalled to students at the commencement address and then visited with a number of friends from her Linfield years.

“We’ve set a goal to serve mankind. No action is too small to go unnoticed. Say no to prejudice, no to war, no to indifference,” she said.

Manyaka was reunited with her friends and mentors Carol (Smith) Hosler ’68, who were instrumental in bringing Manyaka to Linfield from the Congo. Manyaka presented the commencement address and then visited with a number of friends from her Linfield years today,” she added. “We believe if we can combat poverty, we empower people to fight ignorance and disease.”

WEH has organized an agricultural project for women, growing food crops and livestock and helping find markets for the produce as well as improving the diet of local families. They have identified 800 orphans and provide school materials for nearly 400. They are training local villagers to address common diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. The biggest challenge they face is HIV/AIDS, Manyaka said, with many believing that it is due to misfortune or evil spells.

WEH’s hardest work has been to provide medical services in that conflict, as well. The First World War found McMinnville College graduate and army Lieutenant Leonard Hopfield, class of 1912, among the 167 McMinnville College men who were veterans of the conflict, with at least six killed in the line of duty. Good Samaritan Hospital to provide medical services in that conflict.

Though founded prior to the American Civil War, McMinnville College’s place on the frontier insulated it from that terrible conflict. No records have come to light of any founders or students serving for either the Union or the Confederacy. Oregon Baptists did split over pro- and anti-slavery factions, with McMinnville College subscribing to the anti-slavery cause.

The first recorded alumna to die during combat – Bertie Clark and Frank Hibbs – participated with at least 17 other McMinnville College students in the Spanish-American War of 1898. Eleven nurses and two interns left the Good Samaritan Dispensary to provide medical services in that conflict, as well.

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Approaching the sesquicentennial

Linfield in the war years

(Rob Reynolds photo reproduction)

This plaque, listing the names of Linfield students and alumni who were killed in World War I, was hung in Memorial Hall. The name of Hubert A. Santo was subsequently added.

No records can be found of alumni lost in the Korean War, the first for which draft deferments became available for college students. Films of Korean War soldiers being treated during a 1952 chapel program to bolster Linfield’s turnout for the unusual Red Cross Blood Drive.

College draft deferments continued during the Vietnam War-era, but became controversial and were ended by a draft lottery among all selective-service registrants in December of 1969. By this time the country was deeply divided on the conflict, and the student-rights movement came to the fore at Linfield as across the country. According to Linfield Bulletin records, which may not be exhaustive, at least five alumni died in Vietnam. They were Army Captain Richard Goss ‘54, Army Lieutenant Ralph Leroy Williams ’62, Navy Lieutenant Stephen Richardson ’63, Navy Lieutenant Wayne Alan Armstrong ’63 and Army Lieutenant Paul H. Eklund ’63.

Eklund received posthumous awards of the Bronze Star Medal and the Silver Star Medal.

The most recent Linfield graduate to die in defense of country was Army First Lieutenant Erik McCrae ’01, who died in Baghdad, Iraq, on June 4, 2004. English Professor Lex Runciman published a fitting tribute to McCrae in the fall 2004 edition of The Linfield Magazine.