

CATHERINE HARDEE

FORMER QUIZ BOWLER PLAYS THE BIG GAME

LU Honors alumna Catherine Hardee recently brought academic recognition of Liberty and glory and honor to God into the homes of millions who watched her on television. She finished her run as four-time *Jeopardy!* champion on September 29, 2014, earning \$97,201. Hardee was recognized for her academic prowess during Liberty's convocation on September 25, 2014.

During her first two years at Liberty, Hardee was a member of the LU Debate Team, which has held Number 1 rankings in our nation. However, "her real love and passion was for Quiz Bowl," so claims Dr. Nutter, Director of Honors and Coach of LU's Quiz Bowl. "She competed for four years—two years as an under-graduate student and two years as a graduate student as she pursued an M.A. in history." She was the Most Valuable Player for three of the four years she was on the Quiz Bowl team, leading LU into the National Intercollegiate Championship Tournament in Chicago last spring semester and earning five wins. LU's Quiz Bowl finished 20th in the country



Host Alex Trebeck and Catherine Hardee on *Jeopardy!*

out of 103 teams in this their first appearance at the Nationals, thanks in part to Hardee's vast reservoir of knowledge. Both the Debate Team and the Quiz Bowl helped prepare her for the success she enjoyed on *Jeopardy!*

"For me," Catherine said, "*Jeopardy!* was a dream come true. I have watched the show most faithfully since I was in middle school, and I could hardly believe it was really happening when I heard the theme music start and Johnny Gilbert said my name! I was incredibly nervous, but somehow

I was able to think clearly despite that feeling. I have to credit the contestant coordinators, because they do a great job ensuring the contestants are comfortable and relaxed. The entire day (*Jeopardy!* films five shows per day, so it is quite a whirlwind!) was surreal, but the fun part is the fact that you are surrounded by others who are feeling the same thing, which is a great icebreaker. Everyone who is there to compete is very friendly, despite the fact that you might have to go up against the same people in a few hours."

Hardee took the online test for *Jeopardy!* five or six times and went to in-person auditions three times before the audition last March that got her on the show. She said, “I’m so glad I kept at it, and I’m so thankful for the preparation that I got from the Honors Program at Liberty.”

When asked if she had any opportunity to witness during this

experience, her response was “I hope that I was able to make all who were there and those who viewed the show, question their assumptions about people of faith, and about Liberty specifically. In the course of conversation, several people were very surprised to learn that I had been homeschooled, and that I had graduated from Liberty.” Catherine’s victory was a testimony

to her hard work and persistence, as well as to the reality that faith and intellectualism can complement each other for God’s glory.