

BOWDOIN COLLEGE  
Commencement 1990

VANCE BOURJAILY, writer and legendary teacher, member of the Bowdoin Class of 1944, you stand today not far from the library steps where the hero of your novel *Confessions of a Spent Youth* sits alone brooding one night "as light snow falls on his insentient shoulders from the cold night sky of a New England spring." The war interrupted your education, though not your writing, and in some sense your novels and short stories have formed an extended -- and much praised -- meditation on the lives of those Americans who were young in the 1940s. *The Man Who Knew Kennedy*, *Brill Among the Ruins*, and *Now Playing at Canterbury* will be read for years to come to understand mid20th-century America. You have proved, moreover, a generous writer, devoting much of your career to teaching the craft of writing to others -- most famously at Iowa, and afterwards at Arizona and Louisiana State universities. Bowdoin feels privileged to have your papers in our archives and your name on our rolls, and with much pride we inscribe you, *honoris causa*, DOCTOR OF LITERATURE.