

Bowdoin College

Commencement 1992

One of America's leading writers of historical fiction, **JAMES A. MICHENER** has published more than 30 books. His writing career began with the publication in 1947 of a book of interrelated stories titled *Tales of the South Pacific*, based upon his experiences in the U.S. Navy where he served on 49 different Pacific islands. The work won the 1947 Pulitzer Prize, and inspired one of the most popular Broadway musicals of all time, Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific*, which won its own Pulitzer Prize.

Michener's first book set the course for his career, which would feature works about many cultures with emphasis on the relationships between different peoples and the need to overcome ignorance and prejudice. Random House has published Michener's works on Japan (*Sayonara*), Hawaii (*Hawaii*), Spain (*Iberia*), Southeast Asia (*The Voice of Asia*), South Africa (*The Covenant*) and Poland (*Poland*), among others. Michener has also written a number of works about the United States, including *Centennial*, which became a television series, *Chesapeake*, and *Texas*. Since 1987, the prolific Michener has written five books, including *Alaska* and his most recent work, *The Novel*. His books have been issued in virtually every language in the world.

Michener has also been involved in public service, beginning with an unsuccessful 1962 bid for Congress. From 1979 to 1983, he was a member of the Advisory Council to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, an experience which he used to write his 1982 novel *Space*. Between 1978 and 1987, he served on the committee that advises that U.S. Postal Service which stamps to print. In 1977, he was decorated with the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor the United States Government can bestow. In 1983, he received an award from the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities for his longstanding and continuing support of the arts in America. Michener is a *summa cum laude* graduate of Swarthmore College (Class of 1929). He recently purchased a summer home in Brunswick, Maine.

Honoris Causa, DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS