Wilkes University
Commencement, May 26, 1990
Citation for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters

FLORA LEWIS

Flora Lewis, you have long analyzed the flow and direction of world events for your op-ed page readers in The New York Times. Native of Los Angeles and graduate of UCLA in 1941 and the Columbia School of Journalism in 1942, you began your active career in the midst of World War II writing for the Associated Press, first in New York, then in Washington, and then at War's end in London. For the next decade you observed at firsthand the reconstruction of Western Europe and reported your sightings to readers of Time, The London Observer, The Economist of London, France-Soir of Paris and The New York Times Magazine. You then penetrated the Iron Curtain and lived and reported from Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe for the Washington Post. By the time you signed up with The New York Times as Chief of their Paris Bureau in 1972, you had already established a reputation for reporting from the critical trouble spots of the world, whether Viet Nam during the war, the Middle East during the Six Day War, or Chicago and Miami during the 1968 political conventions. Only the third person to write the Foreign Affairs column in The New York Times (the others being Anne O'Hare McCormick and C. L Sulzberger), you have sought to keep the big picture in focus, what in your college days might have been called a geopolitical view. Personally known to the major leaders of the world during your nearly half century of reporting, you have not dwelt on the personal minutiae of their lives or spotlighted your contacts with them. Rather you have portrayed the force shaping them, the options emerging for their nations or regions and the qualities of leadership—negative or positive—they have brought to their responsibilities. Independent, indefatigable, determined, serious, you have always decided where you must go to better understand the world. At present you are experiencing the singular pleasure of covering the ending of the Cold War, the demise of Communism as a viable ideology, and the breakup of the Soviet Union's dominance of her Eastern and Central European neighbors, coming complete circle from your earliest foreign assignments at the end of World War—when you watched the imposition of that Soviet system and Communist ideology on Eastern Europe. Wilkes University is delighted to join the legion of journalistic organizations, foreign governments, and several of our sister colleges and universities, in recognizing your extraordinary public teaching career. As we commit ourselves to increase the global awareness of our students, we recognize in your career the impact of one finely trained mind in one determined person to spread understanding throughout the world of where we as human beings are heading. By the power vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I hereby confer upon you, Flora Lewis, the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters Honoris Causa, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.