

EDWIN MILTON YODER, JR.

Edwin Milton Yoder, Jr., returns to this campus today on the one-hundredth anniversary of the publication of The Daily Tar Heel, and almost four decades after his own distinguished career as a journalist begun as its co-editor. Those undergraduate years also earned for him a Phi Beta Kappa key. A native of Greensboro, he went on from this University to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar.

He began his career as a journalist, first with The Charlotte News, and then The Greensboro Daily News, where he eventually became associate editor and director of the editorial page. Following a move to Washington, D.C., in 1975, he became editorial page editor for the Washington Star. In 1982 he became a syndicated national columnist for the Washington Post. He also had academic appointments at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Georgetown University. Two years ago, he became a professor of journalism at Washington and Lee University—continuing to publish his twice-weekly column. He received a Pulitzer Prize for excellence in editorial writing in 1979. He has received the University's Distinguished Alumnus Award and has been elected to North Carolina's Journalism Hall of Fame.

In his political and social columns, he has had a special interest in the life of his native South, even as he looks beyond it to the larger world. His columns are as likely to treat the fiction of Flannery O'Connor and Thomas Wolfe as government inside the Washington Beltway. George Will has said of him, "He husbands his passions and invests them in questions of law and literature and other relatively lasting things. That is why he elevates journalism to the level of literature." In one of his essays from his recent book entitled The Unmaking of a Whig, Edwin Yoder speaks about the growing powers of the American press as it increasingly arrogates to itself an almost divine authority. "Vox auctoris, vox Dei," he derisively defines it. He goes on to add, "The press should establish some standard of self-disciplined accountability." Few journalists in the second half of this century have more rigorously held themselves to such care and scrutiny in the exercise of their craft than the journalist we honor today with this honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.