

**Elizabeth Spencer**  
**Doctor of Letters**

Few would deny that the American South is the source of much of the richest and most meaningful literature of our century. Elizabeth Spencer has contributed to that cultural wealth nine novels, five collections of short stories, and one play, and her memoir, *Landscapes of the Heart* was published this year. One UNC scholar has called her "one of the handful of truly eminent Southern writers." Eudora Welty writes of her as "a very important American artist" and Shelby Foote describes her novels and short stories as "admired and praised for the perception and writing skill they demonstrate."

Born in the Mississippi Delta town of Carrollton, Elizabeth Spencer grew up amid the beauty, and the backwardness, of the small-town Southern life of the day. She describes her childhood as "a time of enchantment and love." But it was also a way of life that included what she described as the "ugly system" of segregation and racial oppression. These conflicting strands enrich her highly praised novel "A Voice at the Back Door" while a later work, "The Salt Line" demonstrates her deep understanding of the forces of change at work in the South.

Elizabeth Spencer resides in Chapel Hill and has taught in this University's creative writing program. Her play *For Lease or Sale* was produced in 1989 by the PlayMakers Repertory Company. Five of her short stories have received the O. Henry award and she has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She received the North Carolina Award for Literature in 1994 and is today honored with the degree of Doctor of Letters.