

Armistead Jones Maupin, Jr.
Doctor of Letters

Armistead Maupin, Carolina Class of 1966, grew up in Raleigh. As an undergraduate here he wrote a column for the *Daily Tar Heel* and was elected vice president of the senior class. After graduation, Maupin worked at WRAL-TV in Raleigh before enlisting in the United States Navy. He served as an officer in the Mediterranean and with the River Patrol Force in Vietnam. Returning home in 1970, he won a top award from the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge under the sponsorship of Senator Jesse Helms. Maupin worked as a reporter in Charleston, South Carolina, and then with the Associated Press in San Francisco. In 1976, while at the San Francisco *Chronicle*, he launched the groundbreaking work that would propel his literary career for almost four decades. *Tales of the City* began as a serialized novel—perhaps the most successful example of that genre since Charles Dickens—eventually becoming a sequence of nine globally bestselling books. In 1994, “Armistead Maupin’s *Tales of the City*” became a controversial PBS miniseries whose vocal opponents included Maupin’s former champion Jesse Helms. The miniseries earned record high ratings and a Peabody Award, broadcasting’s most prestigious honor. Maupin’s other novels include *Maybe the Moon* and *The Night Listener*. Today, when same-sex relationships are commonly part of popular culture, it is perhaps difficult to remember the way in which *Tales of the City* empowered its early readers and shattered barriers. More than any other work of fiction, the *Tales* novels set a precedent for the inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in mainstream American literature as folks who experience the same foibles, follies, and desire for love that lie at the heart of the human condition everywhere.

As a senior class officer, Maupin was instrumental in the erection of a memorial sculpture to Thomas Wolfe, inscribed with this quotation from *Look Homeward Angel*: “O lost and by the wind grieved, ghost come back again.” Now Armistead Maupin comes home again to Carolina, accompanied by his husband Christopher Turner, to receive our highest honor, the degree of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa*.