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MEDIA RELEASE

WRITER DAVID BERGEN TO RECEIVE HONORARY DEGREE

Distinguished Manitoba novelist David Bergen to receive an Honorary Doctor of Letters

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – JULY 30, 2007

WINNIPEG, MB – Highly acclaimed author **David Bergen**, renowned at home and abroad for his writing, is being recognized for his contributions to the Canadian literary landscape with an **Honorary Doctorate Degree** from **The University of Winnipeg**.

Bergen – a graduate of The University of Winnipeg – is an accomplished award-winning writer. Since his graduation, Bergen has made a literary splash by winning awards from the moment he started publishing. Among his list of awards, Bergen earned one of Canada's most prestigious honors – **The Giller Prize** – for *The Time in Between* in 2005.

“David is a consummate writer,” says **Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, President of The University of Winnipeg**. “His perseverance and dedication to his art form is extraordinary. The impact of his work is worth recognizing and what the future holds for him is as limitless as his creativity.”

Bergen's first book of short stories – *Sitting Opposite My Brother* – earned him the coveted **Hirsch Award** in 1993. Since then, he has written four highly celebrated novels that have earned him numerous awards. His first novel, *A Year of Lesser*, earned him a **New York Times Notable Book** honor and was the winner of the **McNally Robinson Book of the Year Award**. *The Case of Lena S* won the **Carol Shields Winnipeg Book Award** in 2000, and was a finalist for the Governor General's Award for Fiction, The McNally Robinson Book of the Year Award and the Margaret Laurence Award for Fiction.

Bergen is one of nine people who will receive University of Winnipeg honorary degrees at a special convocation ceremony on Sept. 14, 2007. He is the second individual to be named an honorary doctorate degree recipient. The other is **Raymond McFeeters**. The university will announce the other recipients in the weeks leading up to its **40th Anniversary Homecoming Event**, slated for **Sept. 13-16**. To register for Homecoming, please visit <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/fortieth-index>.

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Located in the heart of downtown, The University of Winnipeg is a compact, diverse, multicultural academic community committed to access and excellence. Home to more than 9,200 full- and part-time students, UWinnipeg has been ranked by our graduates in the Top Ten of all Canadian universities when asked about their “Entire Educational Experience” (Maclean's Graduate Survey, June 2006). The Globe & Mail 2006 Report Card gives The University of Winnipeg an overall 'A' grade in the areas of quality of education, teaching quality, class sizes, faculty-student interaction, and the availability of faculty outside classroom hours. Find out why. Visit www.uwinnipeg.ca

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Backgrounder:
DAVID BERGEN, AUTHOR

David Bergen is a highly acclaimed author, recognized at home and abroad for his literary work. He is modest and down-to-earth, often spotted around the University on his bicycle riding to his writing studio located in Winnipeg's historical Exchange District.

The moment Bergen started writing and releasing his words into the world, he was acknowledged for his talent.

"Of his generation, he is probably Manitoba's most prominent writer," says Neil Besner, Associate Vice-President, International at The University of Winnipeg. "Every book he has written so far has won him an award."

Bergen's short story, *How Can Men Share a Bottle of Vodka?* won the CBC Literary Prize for Fiction and was short listed for a National Magazine Award. His first book of short stories, *Sitting Opposite My Brother*, earned him the coveted Hirsch Award in 1993 and his first novel, *A Year of Lesser*, earned him a *New York Times* Notable Book and winner of the McNally Robinson Book of the Year Award. *The Case of Lena S* won the Carol Shields Winnipeg Book Award in 2000, and was a finalist for the Governor General's Award for Fiction, The McNally Robinson Book of the Year Award and the Margaret Laurence Award for Fiction. Most recently Bergen was awarded one of Canada's most prestigious literary awards – the Giller Prize – for *The Time in Between*.

Bergen graduated from The University of Winnipeg in 1985 with a Bachelor of Education degree and prior to that he attended Red River College and earned a diploma in creative communications.

"I came here after Red River," explains Bergen with a smile. "I came here because I felt I needed to explore more, I needed to ask more questions and the University gave me that opportunity."

"He is special because he is an artist," says Besner. "He doesn't let a sentence go until he's got it – he's a beautiful stylist. He cares about language, he cares about character, he's a true craftsman – a writer's writer."

Bergen served as Writer-in-Residence at the Winnipeg Centennial Library in 2002-2003. In that role his advice was, "Good writing requires hard work, tenacity, perhaps a novel idea and a bit of luck. Ultimately, I want a story to be honest. I want the voice to be genuine and unpretentious, to offer me a view into a world that is fresh and whole. I want to be surprised, and I do not mean in a gratuitous manner."

Although known for his skill in writing, Bergen has worked in many trades. He was a brick-layer's assistant, carpenter, orderly and a full-time high-school teacher. He also spent time doing volunteer work abroad.

"I spent three years in Thailand," explains Bergen. "I was teaching English to Vietnamese refugees that were immigrating to Canada."

He also spent some time in Vietnam, where he gathered the threads he needed for his award-winning novel, *The Time in Between*.

This world traveler is a Manitoban, born in Port Edward, British Columbia. He is the fourth of six children raised in a devout Mennonite household and arrived in Niverville, Manitoba at the age of 12. Married to a fellow Manitoban Mary Loewen, they have four children, two of whom presently attend The University of Winnipeg.

Bergen's achievements as a writer and his commitment to community are being recognized by his alma mater. The University of Winnipeg will honor David Bergen with an Honorary Doctorate of Letters at a Special Convocation on September 14, 2007.
