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SUNY Geneseo Compass

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January 26, 1984

Professor Emeritus will deliver May 12 Commencement Address

Harding first SUNY faculty member to receive honorary degree nod

Dr. Walter R. Harding, whose scholarship and teaching of the ideals of Henry David Thoreau have earned him a place in the world's literary community, will receive an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from the State University of New York this spring. Harding will be the first SUNY faculty member to receive the distinction.

Dr. Harding, Distinguished University Professor of English, Emeritus, will receive the degree at SUNY Geneseo's 118th Commencement Exercises at 10 a.m. on May 12, in the Wilson Ice Arena. Dr. Harding retired from the Geneseo faculty on Jan. 1, 1983 after a 44-year career as a teacher and scholar.

For the fourth time in history, SUNY

will be awarding a limited number of degrees in 1984 to outstanding individuals recommended by campus Presidents, faculties, and an eminent Statewide Selection Committee. Harding's nomination was forwarded to the Board of Trustees by College President Edward B. Jakubauskas and the Faculty Advisory Committee to the Commencement Steering Committee, chaired by Martin Fausold, professor of history.

The honorary degree will be the second awarded at a Geneseo Commencement. James Jeremiah Wadsworth, former Ambassador to the United Nations, whose family name is synonymous with the history of the Genesee Valley, received a Doctor of Laws at the College's 1982

Commencement.

While Harding has called Geneseo home since 1956, his scholarship has reached far beyond the Genesee Valley. The secretary of the Thoreau Society since its founding in 1941 and the editor of the Thoreau Society **Bulletin**, he has authored or edited 20 books on the life works of Thoreau - the most noted one is **The Days of Henry Thoreau** (Knopf, 1965). Dr. Harding has also served as the Editor-in-Chief of **The Writing of Henry D. Thoreau**, 1965-1973, a multi-volume work published under the aegis of the National Endowment for the Humanities and Princeton University Press.

The NEH, which annually selects noted scholars in respective fields to offer extended summer seminars to college faculty members, perennially invites Dr. Harding to offer a Thoreau seminar at Concord, Mass. A large percentage of his seminar students have published work they began under his direction.

"As an eminent scholar whose work has greatly enriched the study of Thoreau, Walter Harding is a truly worthy recipient of this honor," said.

Dr. Jakubauskas. "His selection reflects well on Dr. Harding and the College and I know his many colleagues at Geneseo are very proud that he will be recognized in this way."

Dr. Jakubauskas also expressed appreciation to the Faculty Advisory Committee to the Commencement Steering Committee for its role in recommending Dr. Walter Harding as a Geneseo honorary degree nominee.

As the secretary of the Thoreau Society, Harding has corresponded with famous literary and political figures on the influence of the author on their lives and careers. A recent note from Former President Jimmy Carter joined similar letters from George Bernard Shaw, Frank Lloyd Wright and Albert Einstein on a wall in Harding's Groveland home.

Dr. Harding graduated from Bridgewater (Mass.) State College in 1939, received his M.A. from the University of North Carolina in 1947 and his Ph.D. from Rutgers University in 1950. He was the Principal of the Northfield (Mass.) School from 1939-41, and a faculty member at Rutgers University (1947-51) and the University of Virginia (1951-56) before coming to Geneseo.

