



Burgum, Michels Awarded Honorary Doctorates

The University of Mary recognized two outstanding leaders in their communities and professional fields with honorary doctorates at Commencement 2006. Doug Burgum, Fargo, ND, and John Michels, Spokane, WA, were each awarded a Doctor of Leadership honoris causa “for significant community contributions and responsible search for service and truth.” An honorary degree is the highest honor given by the university beyond the granting of earned degrees.

John M. Michels

John M. Michels has been a leader throughout his life. His intellect, creativity, insightfulness, and caring have earned him respect and recognition as a military intelligence officer, research engineer, scholar, and cultural preservation/human rights advocate.

A New England, ND, native who resides with his wife, Norma Jean, in Spokane, WA, Michels earned a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from Gonzaga University in 1954. He then became a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army, with service in the 101st Airborne Division, 77th Special Forces, and Ft. Bragg Intelligence School. Michels’ first civilian post was as a design physicist with Allis-Chalmers Mfg. Company’s Nuclear Power Division. This was followed by a 30-plus-year tenure at The Boeing Company, during which he earned a master’s degree in electrical engineering from Seattle University.

Retired from Boeing since 1995, Michels earned his doctorate in leadership and organization from Gonzaga in 1996. He recently has been active in helping to preserve the German-Hungarian ethnic culture of the former Habsburg Empire in Eastern Europe. He has written and facilitated the publication of eight books relating to the ethnic history of the Germans in Yugoslavia, including several published in conjunction with the University of Mary Press.

Part of a 2002 American delegation to the World Organization of the Danube Germans meeting on reparations and human rights, Michels also works with the Banatski Forum on economic cooperation and is on the board of the Danube Swabian Foundation. He has received a Gold Service Honor and a Cultural Award from the U.S. Danube German Organization.

“As a scientist and researcher, John Michels has produced work of immeasurable value;” asserts Welder. “With interests ranging from nuclear research to the furtherance of peace for Central Europeans, he has truly distinguished himself in the responsible search for and service of truth.” Combining his scientific and cultural perspectives, Michels observes that ethics are a natural part of life and suggests that an education that incorporates them — such as U-Mary offers — can only be to a student’s advantage.