The College’s 138th Commencement saw the most notable change in tradition since 1971, the year President Hedley Reynolds acceded to the seniors’ request to move the exercises from the Lewiston Armory to the steps of Coram Library.

This year, 450 graduates and some 2,000 guests heard not one long keynote speech but, instead, brief remarks by all four honorary degree recipients: Rita R. Colwell, former National Science Foundation head; David Levering Lewis, Pulitzer prize-winning historian of race and class in America; Milton L. Lindholm ’35, beloved dean emeritus of admissions; and John C. Whitehead, chair of the agency directing Lower Manhattan’s post-9/11 rebuilding.

In past years, “we were bringing these very distinguished people to campus, and no one else was getting a chance to hear from them except a few Trustees at dinner,” President Elaine Tuttle Hansen explained after the ceremony.

In her introduction, Hansen cited Middlemarch author George Eliot in conveying a reluctance to lose touch with the departing class. “Who can quit young lives after being long in company with them,” Hansen quoted Eliot, “and not desire to know what befell them in after years?”

Of the honorands, third in speaking order but first in listeners’ hearts was Milt Lindholm ’35, age 92. The former dean of admissions won big laughs with a joke about stranded Bates, Bowdoin, and Colby alums, but struck deepest with a simple reminder: “Cherish the memories of the four years that you have been here. Rejoice in the friendships you have made. ... Keep in touch.”

Lewis was by far the most provocative speaker. He cautioned against accepting the “Faustian bargain” of surrendering liberty for security’s sake. “The Homeland Security state and its Justice Department handmaidens, Patriot Acts I and II, may well leave our civil liberties as maimed as the New York cityscape,” Lewis said, to applause.
Congratulations to the Class of 2004!

By Henry and Cathy Roberts P'04
Co-Chairs, Bates Parents & Family Association

We are now looking back at Bates and Commencement 2004 with fond memories, and realize what a privilege and pleasure it has been to be a part of the Bates community since our daughter Sarah was an incoming first-year in September of 1996. We have enjoyed working on behalf of Bates in the BPFA for the past four years, and we will continue to be an active part of the Bates community! We hope you will as well — just as our sons and daughters are beginning the next chapter in their relationship with the College, so too are we now parents of alumni! For many reasons, this is just as exciting as receiving that “fat envelope” in the spring of 2000 and watching our child make the decision to come to Bates.

We encourage you too to say in touch with Bates, with your financial support to the Parents Fund, the endowment, or other Bates programs; by talking to high school students you know would be a good fit for the Bates community; and/or through career counseling and networking, offering internships or shadow experiences to students and alumni. All of these things help maintain the high-quality Bates experience for current students and alumni, and ensure that Bates will continue to be a top choice for top students — and a worthy investment of our children’s time and effort, and, yes, of our tuition and philanthropic dollars!

If you’ve been involved in the BPFA, stay involved! Let the office know how to stay connected with parents of alumni.

If you haven’t been involved, today is a perfect day to start — on any level: talk to a teenager, help a Bates grad, and continue to support the Parents Fund and Bates, in honor of your son or daughter who has accomplished so very much these past four years!

SUMMER GREETINGS

The honorary doctor of humane letters bestowed on Dean Emeritus of Admissions Milt Lindholm ’35 was his third degree from Bates, joining his bachelor’s in religion and a master’s in education, in 1939. The only other living alum to hold three Bates degrees is Geneva Kirk ’37, longtime Maine educator and Lewiston-Auburn community leader, with a bachelor’s in French, master’s in education (1948) and honorary doctor of laws (1993).

The Class of 2004 comprised 450 members, of whom:

• 358 earned bachelor of arts degrees and 92, bachelor of science degrees
• 238 were women and 212, men
• 55 were political science majors, 50 were psychology majors and 47 were economics majors (the three most popular majors)
• 48 came from Maine

For Commencement texts, photos, and streaming video:
www.bates.edu/commencement.xml

DID YOU KNOW?

The dais party included (from left) Mace Bearer and Professor of Sociology Sawyer Sylvester; honorands Rita Colwell, David Levering Lewis, Milton Lindholm ’35, and John Whitehead; college Chaplain Kerry Maloney; and President Elaine Tuttle Hansen.
Graduates’ triumphant walk up to the Coram Library steps capped a Bates Commencement ceremony that encompassed a new tradition, some provocative words from a Pulitzer Prize winning historian, a salute to a favorite son of Bates and a wealth of good feelings.

(more inside)