

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Laurier will recognize women of distinction at fall convocation
Noted author Carol Shields and local business leader Betty Sims granted honorary degrees

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WATERLOO (Ont.) — Wilfrid Laurier University will recognize two women with similar backgrounds for their vastly different achievements during the fall convocation ceremony. The University will confer honorary degrees on Pulitzer-prize-winning author Carol Shields and local business leader Betty Sims during the ceremony that begins at 1:30 p.m. on October 29 in the Waterloo Recreation Complex.

Coincidentally, both American-born women met their Canadian husbands in Europe and later moved to Canada. Both raised families of five children before finding success in their chosen fields — Shields as an author of novels, poetry and short stories, and Sims as a business administrator who developed a small aerospace company into an international competitor.

"We decided it was a wonderful twist of fate that both of them found professional success in addition to their strong family commitments," Laurier president and vice-chancellor Bob Rosehart. "We think that's a great message for today's young people."

Shields was to accept an honorary doctor of letters degrees and address the graduating class, but is now, unfortunately, unable to attend in person. Meg Shields will receive the degree and deliver her mother's convocation speech. Sims will accept an honorary doctor of laws degree.

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Betty Sims is no stranger to Laurier, having served for 12 years on the Board of Governors – three of those as chair. Born in Brunswick, Georgia, Sims earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Duke University in 1956. She met Peter Sims of Kitchener while traveling Europe as a student and the two married in 1957. Sims spent the next 19 years raising her family and volunteering for groups such as the Canadian Federation of University Women and the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Association.

With their youngest child in school, Sims' husband suggested she take her considerable organizational skills to Chicopee Manufacturing. She installed the aerospace company's first computer system, rose to vice-president of administration, then general manager and, in 1984, president and general manager. She is now retired, but retains her interest in community affairs; she currently chairs the board of Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro Inc.

Carol Shields was born in Oak Park, Illinois, and earned a bachelor's degree in English, with a minor in history, from Hanover College. She married Donald Shields, whom she met in England while on a student-exchange program, and immigrated to Canada in 1957 when he began teaching at the University of Ottawa. She earned a master's degree, specializing in Canadian literature, while in her 30s.

She turned to teaching at the age of 40 after her first book, *Small Ceremonies*, was published, and has taught at several Canadian universities in addition. She has also served as chancellor of the University of Winnipeg. Her literary works include *Larry's Party*, *The Stone Diaries* and *Swann*, as well as an array of plays, poems and short stories. *The Stone Diaries* won the 1993 Governor General's Literary Award, the 1995 National Book Critics Circle Award and, in 1995, the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Laurier confers honorary degrees in recognition of outstanding scholarly, creative or professional achievement or distinguished public and community service. The degrees are presented at the beginning of Laurier's convocation ceremonies, following the invocation but before the conferring of earned degrees and diplomas.

The University has awarded 186 honorary degrees since 1961.