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congratulations

Dickason honoured by Athol Murray College of N.D.

By Bobbi Yanko

WILCOX, Sask. — “The smallest thing I can say about him is that he gave me my life,” said Dr. Olive P. Dickason, award-winning journalist, author, historian, and honoured alumna of Athol Murray College of Notre Dame. “This award belongs to Father Athol Murray.”

Dickason’s alma mater honoured her May 21 with the 2004 Notre Dame Humanitarian Award, which is given to individuals who possess a deeply rooted belief in God, outstanding personal values, who are ready to take responsibility for their own lives and able to serve the true needs of society, Canada and the world. Past winners include the Right Honourable John Diefenbaker, Rick Hansen, and Frederick W. Hill.

Dickason grew up in the bush. When the Second World War broke out the young Métis woman journeyed to Winnipeg to help the war effort. The only job she could find with her Grade 10 education was selling magazine subscriptions, and that was where she heard about Notre Dame College in Saskatchewan. She met Pere Athol Murray, pastor of St. Augustine’s Parish in Wilcox, and his inspiration changed her life.

“He wasn’t interested in educating girls at all, but he decided to take me in,” said Dickason to a crowd of Notre Dame alumni and students. “I wasn’t the only one; he did that for many of us.”

Dickason who is professor emeritus at the University of Alberta and adjunct professor at the University of Ottawa as well as a Member of the Order of Can-

ada, was born in 1920 of English and French Métis heritage. After obtaining her BA at Notre Dame College in 1943, she worked as a journalist for 24 years at the Regina Leader-Post, the Winnipeg Free Press, the Montreal Gazette and, most notably, Toronto’s Globe and Mail, where she won numerous writing awards. At age 50, after raising three daughters and through the continued encouragement and inspiration of her mentor, Pere Athol Murray, Dickason returned

to academia, obtaining her master’s in Canadian history in 1972 and completing her PhD at the University of Ottawa in 1977. She taught at the University of Alberta from 1975 until her retirement in 1992.

A leading Canadian historian known for her research and documentation of Aboriginal history, Dickason authored the first accurate portrayals of Canada’s development as a country. Her works — including Indian Arts in Canada, The Myth of the Savage, Be-

ginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas, and Canada’s First Nations: A History of the Founding Peoples — have provided an accurate historical basis for future historians to build on.

“She took the initiative to learn what Athol Murray called the skills of a free person,” said Notre Dame President Terry O’Malley. “She took a risk and dreamed big.” Dickason’s dream and Pere’s faith in her dream changed the course of Canadian history.



Yanko

HUMANITARIAN AWARD — Notre Dame College Humanitarian Award winner Dr. Olive Dickason is flanked by traditional dancers Jocko McHugh (left) and Cameron Keetenay.