



## HONORARY DEGREE CITATION

*Timothy Egan*

**DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS**

As a young man growing up in the Pacific Northwest you discovered two great passions: a love of the written word, and a reverence for the epic landscapes of the American West and the people who inhabit them. Those twin springs of inspiration have produced through you a body of work in journalism and narrative history that brings to life the ancient relationships between people and the land, and deepens our appreciation for the lessons the past can teach us about living well in the future.

It was perhaps unsurprising that your first big break in journalism would come while covering the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska for The New York Times—staying in a fisherman’s spare bedroom while writing for the front page every day was something you were born to do. Since then you have won acclaim reporting for The New York Times on environmental, political and social issues, sharing a Pulitzer Prize in 2001 for your work on the series “How Race is Lived in America.” As a regular columnist on The New York Times’ website you continue to provide a distinctly western perspective on American life to our nation; as a regular contributor to BBC radio you represent that perspective on our country to the world.

Your extraordinary talent for grounding compelling human narratives in deep research and factual investigation has found a similarly broad and appreciative audience in your books. Your National Book Award winning work, “The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl” is history at its most engaging, masterfully relating an environmental catastrophe that altered American history to the daily lives, hopes and struggles of ordinary people. “The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire that Saved America,” tells not only the story of how the Forest Service rose from the ashes of the nation’s greatest wildfire, but how the quintessentially western struggle over how to use our land began and continues to this day.

For your award-winning contributions to the literary legacy of the West, to our understanding of the interplay between human and natural worlds, and to the national dialogue on issues ranging from race to campaign politics, Western Washington University is proud to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.

DATED this 17th day of March, 2012.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Shepard".

Bruce Shepard, President

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dennis Madsen".

Dennis Madsen, Chair, Board of Trustees