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Diplomat-Turned-Poet Recounts Adventures Overseas And "Retirement" Career as a Writer

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Sept. 5, 1995

Contact: Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181***Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*****Diplomat-Turned-Poet Recounts Adventures Overseas And "Retirement" Career as a Writer***Cent
Locals***Editor's Note:** Poet Gordon King grew up in Beason, Ill.

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--For 25 years, Gordon King's literature was diplomatic cables filed from far-flung locales like Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. Now his literature is poetry, crafted in a loft study in Camden, Maine.

King, a 1943 Illinois Wesleyan University graduate, joined the U.S. State Department in 1947, on the eve of the Marshall Plan to rebuild postwar Europe, and at the birth of the Cold War. After retiring from the diplomatic corps in 1974, he launched a second career as a writer of short stories and poetry. His 32-poem collection, "Oh To Be Loved Like This," was published in 1994 by the Conservatory of American Letters in Thomaston, Maine.

How King bridged the sharply contrasting worlds of high-stakes diplomacy and literature is a tale recounted in the Fall, 1995, edition of *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*. The article, "Titan, Statesman, Bard: Beason, Illinois Kid Goes from IWU to Career as a Diplomat, and Retirement as a Poet," is by Bob Aaron, IWU's director of public relations. A copy of the article is attached to this news release.

The article chronicles King's early days as a diplomat, when a perilous trek through the Khyber Pass and a snowstorm brought him to the U.S. embassy in Kabul and an assignment in Tehran after a CIA-engineered coup, as well as diplomatic stints in Pakistan, West Germany, Washington, D.C., and England.

Now King and his artist wife, Josephine deBeauchamp reside in Camden, Maine, sharing their art.

"I am so amazed by the parallels between our two arts," King said, noting his wife's studio is two floors below his writer's loft. "She is a marvelous critic of my work and I do the same with her painting. It's wonderful."

IWU, founded in 1850, has a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. The university's endowment is

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valued at more than \$100 million. A \$25 million Center for Natural Science Learning and Research opened Aug. 28. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 164 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition. *101 of the Best Values in America's Colleges and Universities* calls IWU "undoubtedly one of the finest small colleges in the country," adding, "Illinois Wesleyan has surged to national prominence on the basis of its reputation as a school with a rock-solid academic program."