

Distinguished Achievement Citation

Mary E. King
Class of 1962

Today we acclaim Mary King for wholehearted and effective participation in many facets of progress toward a more equitable and peaceful society.

Since her undergraduate days, Mary has joined and originated efforts to correct some of this country's most egregious wrongdoings. A founder of the Student Committee and Race Relations during on-campus years, after graduation she traveled to the southern states to become totally immersed in the Civil Rights Movement as a member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. Those months of struggle and danger are described in vivid and moving detail in her book, Freedom Song, published in 1987, a widely praised personal account of the Movement.

Experiences and observations during civil rights days awakened in her a realization of societal barriers to equality for women. Thus, when her association with SNCC came to an end, she devoted her energies to working to improve the lot of American Women.

Later, she was appointed by President Carter to the position of Deputy Director of ACTION. As such, for four years, she directed the Peace Corps, Vista, the Foster Grandparents Program and other national volunteer service programs.

Currently executive director of the U.S.-Iraq Business Forum, she has visited 80 developing countries in its endeavor to open markets for American products in the Third World. The organization, with membership of 48 major U.S. firms, strives to counteract some of the widespread American misperceptions about the Middle East.

President Carter described Mary as a person "who has sensitivity and a courage that is absolutely superlative." Indeed, in all her making-a-difference commitments, she exhibits physical and moral bravery, demonstrating that loyalty and courage are personal attributes she prizes above all others. In recounting the terrors that were the daily companions of civil rights activists in the South of the '60s, she said "Since we all must die, the question is not how you die but how you live." Mary King has been willing to die for her beliefs.

Ohio Wesleyan audiences frequently have the privilege of hearing directly from Mary accounts of her travails, triumphs and convictions, for she is generous in fitting her Alma Mater's speaking requests into her crowded calendar. In recent years, she has appeared at the podium for Summerweek (1977), Commencement (1980) and National Colloquium (1988). Always, her powerful ideas are expressed with quiet, thoughtful eloquence. Mary is a convincing apostle of the causes she espouses.

We celebrate the accomplishments of alumna Mary King --activist, author, business executive, civil servant-- whose contributions toward a better America continue in a significant way the historic and noble Ohio Wesleyan tradition of service to humankind.

May 20, 1989

