Wilkes College
Commencement, May 17, 1987
Citation for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters

SAMUEL HAZO

Samuel Hazo, as teacher, editor, and poet, you have helped bring men and women in touch with themselves. Drawing upon personal and spiritual roots in the Holy Land, and from a sense of time linking you with the ancient Assyrians as well as with your grandchildren's grandchildren, you have drawn from the full canvas of our human drama to make the daily experiences of each of us part of the universal. Magna Cum Laude graduate of Notre Dame University and Doctor of Philosophy in English from the University of Pittsburgh, you have spent nearly three decades at Duquesne University where you have been student, English Professor, Dean, and Director of the International Poetry Forum. Focusing your talents and energies on your adopted city, you have helped make Pittsburgh a city of poetry. Pittsburgh in return has named you her poet. A Marine Captain who knew the Korean War, a member of corporate boards who knows and understands the captains of industry as well as the workingmen, an entrepreneur of culture who has helped secure support for art as a necessity of life, you have helped bridge the marketplace and the mind. Reader of your own poems throughout America and the world, you need no text to read from because your poetry is you. Conscious and sharing of your role as son, husband and father, your poetry helps make vivid for the rest of us those relationships we take the most for granted. You underscore our connectedness not only with those closest to us but with those who lived thousands of years ago and those who have yet to be born.

As we join with others, who even this weekend seek to pay you honor, we recall your challenge to your freshmen to "dare life as lovers dare the dark and learn less stubbornly than blinded soul that light comes from within or not at all." For our graduates today we recall your challenge to a son:

After you learn that governments lie and happiness is undefinable and death has no patience, you'll understand me. Meanwhile the ignorant but well informed will try to keep you mute as a shut book.

Forecasters of the best and worst will hurry to retreat infallibly into the future.
Ministers who talk on cue with God will weight you down like serious furniture.
Assume that what you lose to such distractions you will gain in strength.
By then you'll learn that all you know will help you less than how you think.

By the power vested in me by the Board of Trustees and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I confer upon Samuel Hazo the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.