Wilkes University
Commencement, May 29, 1993
Citation for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science
PAUL ANTHONY WENDER

Paul Anthony Wender, native of the Wyoming Valley and the outstanding graduate of the Wilkes College Class of 1969. According to your Wilkes mentor, Dr. William Stine, you have the greatest pair of hands in the Chemistry laboratory he has ever seen. You went on to Yale University where you completed your Ph.D. in 1973. Your teaching career began during your senior year at Wilkes and developed during your graduate study at Yale. In 1974 you assumed your first full-time teaching and research role at Harvard University where you remained until 1981. You then went west to Stanford University where after more than a decade you have just been appointed the Bergstrom Professor of Chemistry. Teachers and students alike regard you as an outstanding trainer of graduate students and as one of the most creative synthetic organic chemists in the world. Like your mentor at Harvard, Dr. Robert Woodward, you have the art of being able to share chemistry with scientists and laymen alike, bringing clarity and enthusiasm to the task. These special gifts have come together in your Stanford laboratory where you and your large international team of colleague students are working around the clock to synthesize Taxol, a compound found in the bark of the Pacific yew tree. Taxol has been proven effective in treating breast and ovarian cancer. The National Cancer Institute describes it as the most promising drug in fifteen years in the war against cancer. Your challenge has been to discover efficient means of synthesizing Taxol in the laboratory, using sources other than the rare Pacific yew, so as to produce sufficient quantities of the drug at a manageable cost to help all those who can benefit. As a researcher you are at the very frontier of science where chemistry and biology meet, with the potential for synthesizing compounds that can turn cancerous cells back into normal cells. You have compared this extraordinary effort to the climbing of Mt. Everest. The goal is not just getting your research team to the top but also the several hundred thousand people a year who, without the treatments you are close to making possible, will lose their lives. This race to save lives that so inspires you also promises major insights into our understanding of cell behavior and how human intervention can alter that behavior when cells become cancerous and multiply out of control. Your alma mater is not the first to honor your work, since you have already received some of the most prestigious chemistry awards in the world, but it does claim to be the proudest in celebrating your fundamental accomplishments in behalf of the health of your fellow human beings. In the presence of the graduating class of 1993 and by the power vested in me by the Board of Trustees and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I confer upon you, Paul Anthony Wender, the degree of Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.