Wilkes University
Commencement, January 26, 1995
Citation for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science
CHARLES N. BURNS SR., M.D.

Charles N. Burns Sr., member of the first class of Bucknell University Junior College, matriculating in 1933 and graduating in 1935, before receiving your B.S. degree in biology in 1937 from Bucknell University, then becoming the first B.U.J.C. graduate to earn an M.D. degree after completing Thomas Jefferson Medical College in 1941, you have served your chosen field of Urology as researcher, surgical instrument inventor, professional peer leader, historian and, most of all, caregiver for more than fifty years to your fortunate patients in your native Wyoming Valley.

Taking advantage of the new junior college, which offered the hopes of an education to talented young people of the Wyoming Valley still suffering from the impact of the coal strike of 1926 and the economic depression of 1929, you committed yourself to a life of learning and serving, just as over the course of your eventful career you would focus on being a producer rather than a consumer. Under the inspirational guidance of Dr. Peter P. Mayock of Wilkes-Barre, a pioneer in urological surgery, you began a career in Urology, a field you have helped shape and permanently influence with your invention in 1952 of the Burns Bridge, a two-way valve or endoscopic convertible bridge allowing non-incisional exploration and surgery of the bladder and prostate, a device that continues to be employed even with modern laparoscopic surgery. The recognition in 1994 of this major contribution by the American Urological Association in San Francisco, even though you had not taken time to patent your invention, is a testament of your professional peers' high regard for your contributions. The invitation in 1974 by the New York Urological Society to be their guest speaker to the Royal College of Surgeons in London on successful surgical techniques for testicular cancer was earlier recognition of your special place in this key medical specialty. More significant for your alma mater in honoring you this day is your dedicated service as doctor to your fellow citizens of the Wyoming Valley. After your tour of duty as a surgeon with the 104th Infantry Division in World War II, including treatment of American soldiers wounded in the Battle of the Bulge just fifty years ago, you decided to come home to practice medicine. Along with your urological practice which continues more than twenty years beyond when many doctors retire, you have served as president of the Luzerne County Medical Society and its Professional Service Bureau, of the Nesbitt Memorial Hospital Medical Staff and of the N. E. Pennsylvania Urologic Group. You have served on the Boards of Directors or Trustees of Mercy Hospital, Wilkes University and, revealing your love of golf, the Wyoming Valley Country Club. These local responsibilities are matched by your service to state and national professional associations in your field, the Pennsylvania Medical Society (which honored you for fifty years of practice in 1991), the American Medical Association and the American Urological Association and its Mid-Atlantic Section.

Wilkes University claims a special relationship with its first Golden Colonel. In addition to your service on the Board of Trustees and the University Council, you received the Eugene S. Farley Memorial Alumni Award in 1993. Your name will be permanently linked with the campus because of the Burns Alumni Tower and Carillon, which created a beautiful gathering place for the most stirring ceremonies at Wilkes and which you made possible through a very special gift. It remains a source of pleasure for many of us that you were joined on that brilliantly sunny day of its dedication by your devoted wife, Mary, and your son and medical partner, Dr. Charles N. Burns Jr. Your continuing generosity to Wilkes ranks you near the very top of all alumni in your benefactions to your alma mater.

As a symbol of hard work and caring, of Irish warmth and wit, of production more than consumption, we honor on this 26th day of January 1995 for a lifetime of intelligent service, one of our earliest and one of our greatest alumni. By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University and by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I hereby confer upon you, Charles N. Burns Sr., the degree of Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.