Wilkes University
Commencement, January 16, 1997
Citation for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science
DONALD EDWARD BURKE

Donald Edward Burke, Director of Discrete Power Product Development at the Harris semiconductor facility at Mountaintop, you are a native of the province of Nova Scotia in Canada. You earned the Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering in 1954 from the Technical University of Nova Scotia. You began your engineering career at Canadian General Electric where you specialized in electronic power conversion systems for aluminum refining and electrochemical processes and for large variable speed drives in the steel industry. Recruited in 1963 by our late friend and Wilkes trustee, Roy Pollack, to join him at the new RCA plant at Mountaintop, you came to the United States and Northeastern Pennsylvania as Application Engineering Leader for Thyristors and Rectifiers. Thus began a career in which you have provided leadership continuity for the product design engineers at the Mountaintop facility, now owned by Harris, that has helped make this plant a world leader in the field of power electronics engineering. You did leave the Mountaintop plant in 1967, taking your group to RCA Headquarters in Somerville, New Jersey, where you remained until 1976. Thereafter you brought the Device Development Engineering group back to Mountaintop where you have remained through good years and bad. Here you demonstrated to RCA with the help of your colleague and Wilkes engineering graduate Ray Ford how to put design and manufacturing together, an efficient synthesizing of functions that has helped keep the plant at Mountaintop a world leader in the power engineering industry with the Advanced Development of Power MOS transistors. By 1985, the plant had caught up with its power electronics competitors when GE bought out RCA. GE then brought its Power Semiconductor Product Design from Syracuse to Mountaintop under your leadership and later added a similar group from their facility at Triangle Park. After Harris Semiconductor purchased the plant there was a lengthy period of intellectual property litigation. When this was resolved, partly through product redesign, the groundwork you and your team had prepared since 1976 really paid off. In the last five years the Harris MOS products have flourished, representing a sea change in technology process and product. Harris is now the number two producer of these products which are key components in such U.S. and European automotive applications as ignition systems, alternators and anti-skid braking. The power system of the Space Station will be controlled by unique Power MOS Harris products designed to resist the impact of charged particles in space. In addition, a new generation of warships for the U.S. Navy will be based upon New Power Electronic Building Blocks from Harris. The world wants ever more power and the smaller, lighter, more efficient power switches you have developed are at the center of the new technologies. Because of its quality work and your leadership, your team has earned unusual independence to be innovative and creative in the midst of three successive corporate cultures. The present exciting expansion plans at Harris Mountaintop are based upon the high quality and innovative design and manufacturing of products your engineers have developed. Many of the engineers you have hired and trained are graduates of Wilkes University. When we celebrate the Wilkes partnership with RCA/GE/Harris at Mountaintop, we are really celebrating your continuous leadership of this engineering team. Today we recognize your contributions to the success of a critical high technology industry in power engineering, to a key company in that industry, and to the role that company is playing in creating dramatic new economic opportunities for Northeastern Pennsylvania—all with the help of talented Wilkes-educated engineers. We are grateful that you and your wife Terry came and stayed in the Wyoming Valley, raising five wonderful children, including two Wilkes nursing graduates. It is an honor and a pleasure, and by the power vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University and by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to bestow upon you, Donald Edward Burke, the Doctor of Science Degree, Honoris Causa, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.

Congratulations, Dr. Burke.