Wilkes University
Commencement, January 15, 1998
Citation for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science
LESTER SAIDMAN, M. D.

From childhood a resident of Kingston and graduate of Kingston High School in 1934, you went to Temple University for both your A.B. and your M.D. degrees received in 1938 and 1942 respectively. After completing your internship at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, you went directly into World War II, serving in the Pacific Theater in Hollandia, the Philippines and Japan. Returning home, you established a family practice in Noxen in 1946. To expand this practice and provide comprehensive health care to the community, you helped establish the Lake Noxen Clinic in 1954. From there you established two more clinics in Shickshinny and Freeland, under the auspices of the Rural Health Corporation of Luzerne County which you founded in 1970 and directed until 1975. You frequently saw patients at each clinic every day, many of whom could pay you only in food products or some other form of barter. You were the traditional family doctor to a large and dispersed population of your humble fellow citizens. You also became associate medical director of the clinic for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, treating garment workers who would come by bus on weekends from all over the Northeast to the clinic on South Washington Street in Wilkes-Barre. Your overarching concern for the future of health care practitioners in the Wyoming Valley was reflected in your initiative to establish the first Physicians' Assistant Program in Pennsylvania and the innovative Wilkes-Hahnemann program to prepare family practice physicians, more than seventy of whom are now practicing in our region. Your long-term affiliation with Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, beginning with your own internship before the war, has included the position of Director of Medical Education, in charge of internships and externships; Chair of the Emergency Room Committee which in 1968 began round-the-clock emergency care, often provided directly by you at all hours of the day and night; President of the Medical Staff for two years; and, of course, doing teaching rounds with virtually all interns and residents who trained at General Hospital. Appropriately there is a Saidman Hall at the hospital. Your teaching role characterizes your relationship with younger colleagues, whether at General Hospital or in your own practice with the Linden Medical Group, including physician colleagues who are graduates of Wilkes. On another occasion when Wilkes honored you, your son, Dr. Bruce Saidman, who is in an oncology practice with your son-in-law and Wilkes graduate, Dr. David Greenwald (both of whom you helped inspire to become physicians), applied to you what Yale University says in stone of Dr. Harvey Cushing: "an inspiring teacher and a master of the art of healing." Also a writer and artist, you wrote short stories to help put yourself through medical school and still are a master of caricature in drawing. A collector of everything from cartoons and American antique banks to Judaica, including both the European and American experience of the Jewish people, you have also been a generous supporter of the State of Israel. Twice a Founder of the Hadassah Hospital in Israel, you have also created an endowment at Temple Israel to secure a new Torah scroll and helped fund an elevator for the handicapped at the Jewish Community Center. At the center of your life has always been your family, first your beloved late wife, Bertha, your four children-Sheila, Bruce, Alan and Carol, and your twelve grandchildren, who find in you their confidant as well as, like so many thousands of others over the decades, their family doctor. I am both pleased and honored, by virtue of the power vested in me by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and by the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University, to bestow upon you the degree Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.