You were born into a proud family, headed by your grandfather, Senator Andrew J. Sordoni, which has played a major role in the history of the Wyoming Valley over this past century. You were only in your early twenties when your father's sudden death placed upon your shoulders responsibility for the fortunes of the extensive Sordoni interests. When your peers were still sowing their wild oats, your great energies and intellect were corralled by the demands of running a major construction company and a telephone company. Perhaps the very demands of corporate responsibility at such a tender age helped channel and deepen your interest in the arts, particularly your love of jazz.

Stimulated by your mother's love of painting—she was herself an artist who had attended the Art Students' League—you joined with her in establishing the Sordoni Gallery of Art at Wilkes College. For nearly a quarter century the Sordoni Gallery has been the premier fine arts program and facility in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Demonstrating a model of creative philanthropy, you have nurtured the Sordoni Gallery and its gifted directors. Never imposing your own tastes—which embrace the art of American popular culture from the early to mid-twentieth century—you have helped the Gallery discover and develop special emphases in its collection and provided funding both for special acquisitions and exhibitions. On three occasions you have brought together art and jazz with Sordoni Gallery exhibitions and concerts at the Darte Center uniting the art and music of Bob Haggard, Mel Powell, and Pee Wee Russell and George Wetling.

In your business career, in concert with your brothers, you not only secured the growth and success of Sordoni Construction Company and Commonwealth Telephone; you also helped lead a generation of business and civic leaders after the flood to bring back the Wyoming Valley and invest in its future. In a similar way, you have provided state-wide leadership to the business and political communities of the Commonwealth, symbolized by your active role in the Pennsylvania Society.

For all your vaunted toughness as a businessman, it is your tender nurturing of others that we honor today. With your splendid wife, Dr. Susan Ford Sordoni, who must be considered the prime example of your exquisite taste and your powers of persuasion, you have raised a spectacular family of talented, dedicated young Sordonis ready to project the Sordoni gifts and enthusiasms into the 21st century. In your support of Susan's own new career as a doctor of medicine, you have demonstrated the nurturing role, par excellence.

With your generous support, both moral and financial, of jazz musicians, you have frequently helped gifted individuals overcome personal adversity and fulfill their creative potential. You are indeed the patron saint of jazz. With your collaborator, Hank O'Neal, you have through Chiaroscuro, a jazz recording company, assembled the major jazz artists of our time to perform at their best and thus preserve for posterity the quintessential American art form in all of its glory. As Johnny Costa was dying from leukemia, you brought together from around the country the perfect combination of musicians to play with him, a task which took many months to accomplish. The result was one final brilliant Costa performance preserved for posterity. Your friend Dick Hyman said it best: "Andy Sordoni has a rare and precious talent for helping nice things to happen."

You have been enabled by your life circumstances to help others, many others, achieve what they most desire and are able to achieve. Artists, musicians, comedians, illustrators, even gallery directors and college presidents, have enjoyed your passionate endorsement of their goals, of their talents. At the Friars' Club, on jazz cruises, in Sordoni Gallery exhibitions with first class catalogues, and in more than a decade-and-a-half of "Jazz at Wilkes" concerts, you have demonstrated your gift for nurturing others and making nice things happen. For combining your personal passions with your philanthropy, you have made our world and our university more beautiful.

It is a distinct personal pleasure for me, by the power vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University and by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to hereby bestow upon you, Andrew J. Sordoni III, the degree Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.