

Thousands Return for Alumni Weekend

CGS' 60th anniversary, SON event are big draws

By Cynthia K. Buccini



When Andy Cohen was a College of Communication sophomore, he threw himself into an assignment for his news-writing and reporting class: write a feature on one of his idols.

He picked the soap opera actor Susan Lucci, landed an interview, and headed to New York for the meeting. It wasn't his best moment. "I have the audiotape of the lunch," said Cohen (COM'90), Bravo TV executive vice president of development and talent. "It's just a terrible interview. I'm humiliated listening to it to this day. I interrupted her the whole time; I kept mentioning my mother."

KRISTYN ULANDAY



Norman Stolack (ENG'62) and his wife, Pat, are joined by a surprise guest during the Taste of BU lunch event on the BU Beach.

The episode was embarrassing, but the assignment from Norman Moyes, now a COM professor emeritus of journalism, taught Cohen to think big. "I didn't know I would end up at CBS News for 10 years, meeting all my idols along the way, and become the ringleader of a reality soap opera," said Cohen, who also is executive producer of *The Real Housewives* franchise. "Dr. Moyes taught me to just go for it. What's the worst that can happen? That really opened up a whole thing for me—and I was never short on confidence—where I thought, there's a door, I want to walk through it."

Cohen recounted the anecdote to a crowd of alumni, faculty, and students last September after receiving a 2012 COM Distinguished Alumni Award.

KALIMAN ZABARSKY



College of Communication Dean Thomas Fiedler (COM'71) (from left) with COM Alumni Award winners Andy Cohen (COM'90), Colleen McCreary (COM'95), Orlando Bagwell (COM'74,'77), and Jason Sarlanis (COM'05).

The ceremony was part of Alumni Weekend, which drew thousands to the Charles River and Medical Campuses for reunions, parties, luncheons, panel discussions, and special celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of the College of General Studies and the 60th anniversary of the first graduating class of the now-closed School of Nursing.

The weekend culminated in the Celebration of BU, featuring the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra and appearances by celebrities such as Cohen. The event was the public launch of the Campaign for Boston University, BU's \$1 billion comprehensive fundraising effort. (See page 14.)

Shadi Daher (SDM'90,'94), president of the BU Alumni Council, said he couldn't help but notice the high level of energy, joy, and optimism throughout the weekend. "People who haven't been back in decades are really just blown away," he said.

Three other alums received awards at the COM ceremony: Orlando

Alumni Weekend featured the Celebration of BU at Agganis Arena, with aerial dancers provided by Feld Entertainment, music by the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, and a performance by the BU Figure Skating Club.



MELODY KOMYEROV

Bagwell (COM'74;'77), a documentarian and director of the Ford Foundation's JustFilms initiative, which supports filmmakers whose work addresses urgent social issues; Colleen McCreary (COM'95), chief people officer at the social gaming company Zynga; and Jason Sarlanis (COM'05), vice president of original programming and series development at E! Entertainment Television.

Other schools and colleges also presented alums with awards throughout the weekend. At the CGS 60th anniversary celebration, nearly 175 people

WEB EXTRAS
Watch a slideshow about Alumni Weekend and see a list of Alumni Award winners at bu.edu/bostonia.

looked on as Dean Linda S. Wells gave Alumni Achievement Awards to Lucy Halperin Zaro (CGS'75, SMG'77), president and CEO of Tee Pee Olives/Italica Imports, and Lawrence Nichter (CGS'71, CAS'73, MED'78), a clinical professor of plastic surgery at the

University of Southern California and the University of California, Irvine, and founder and president of the nonprofit Plasticos Foundation, which surgically repairs deformities in children around the world.

Lisa Stern (CGS'85, CAS'87) participated in Alumni Weekend for the first time this year because she wanted to celebrate her college's anniversary. She described her two years at CGS as "the most important and best years of my

four-year career at BU." She graduated from BU summa cum laude and went on to earn a doctorate in experimental psychology from Cornell University. "I firmly believe my education here at CGS was the foundation that allowed me to do what I did academically," said Stern. "It was a phenomenal education, with phenomenal teachers, many of whom had a major impact on my life both professionally and personally."

Earlier in the day, more than 50 SON alums and their families gathered for breakfast at the Faculty & Staff Dining Room in the George Sherman Union. The school closed in 1988 because of declining enrollment and a move by Massachusetts to establish nursing programs at the state colleges, at a lower cost than BU's program.

Alums like Wendie Howland (SON'73) attended the event to reconnect with classmates and former professors. They remembered their BU education with fondness and pride. Howland said she learned that "there isn't necessarily only one way to do something, and if you have a scientific or evidence-based reason to do something, then you should do that. I've carried that with me for 40 years.

I don't see that as much in a lot of nursing education now, unfortunately."

The nursing alums also remembered the dismay they felt when the school closed. "I was astonished," said Howland. "It was really unbelievable. This was a school of nursing that, at the baccalaureate and graduate level, was consistently rated in the top three academic nursing programs in the country year after year."

Caroline Jo Dorr (SON'60;'66), who taught at the school for 24 years, described the closing as "a tremendous loss." Still, she was happy to be among former colleagues and students at the breakfast. "It feels wonderful to be back with people who had similar experiences," she said.

Other alumni felt the same way. Madeline Brown (PAL'43) came to celebrate her 69th reunion. By 11 a.m. on Saturday, she had already attended a tea for alums of the now-closed College of Practical Arts and Letters and a breakfast for Golden Terriers (those who graduated from Boston University 50 or more years ago). "When I came here, none of this was here," she said, swinging her colorful cane in the direction of Kenmore Square. "Only the College of Business Administration."

Brown said she tries to return to campus for Alumni Weekend every year; she enjoys the camaraderie she finds among her classmates. "They love it so, even though it's changed," she said of the University.

Erin Penha (COM'08) attended Alumni Weekend for the first time. "I never knew why alumni were important," she said, "but I started to learn as I got older and worked. I've been paying attention to the value of my degree, and I realize that alumni participation and fundraising do play a role in the rankings. I also have relatives who followed in my footsteps and go to BU, so I felt a responsibility to get more and more involved."



College of General Studies Dean Linda S. Wells (from left), Ellen Teitel (CGS'98, COM'00), and Professor Peter Busher at the CGS 60th Anniversary Brunch. Wells had Teitel as a student before she became dean.

TIA CHAPMAN