2009 Alumni Awards

Kudos for BU’s Distinguished Alumni
Four alums honored at Alumni Weekend ceremony

By Cynthia K. Buccini

The University celebrated the achievements of four alumni during the sixty-third annual Distinguished Alumni Awards ceremony on Saturday, October 24. The event was a highlight of Alumni Weekend, which drew 3,000 alums to campus.

“We are honoring a very special and elite group of individuals,” President Robert A. Brown said at the ceremony, held in the George Sherman Union Metcalf Ballroom.

Three alumni received Distinguished Alumni Awards, the highest honor BU presents to its graduates: Martha Coakley (LAW’79), the attorney general of Massachusetts, who recently ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate seat held by Edward M. Kennedy (Hon.’70), who died in August; Young-Jae Han (GSM’79), chair and CEO of DPI Holdings Company; and Thomas Insel (CAS’72, MED’74), director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). In addition, Michael Medico (CFA’94), an actor and the founder and executive producer of the Hot in Hollywood benefit, received a Young Alumnus Award.

Steven Hall, associate vice president for alumni relations, welcomed alumni, family, friends, faculty, staff, and students, and David Hollowell (ENG’69,’72, GSM’79), president of the Boston University Alumni Council, made opening remarks. In sixty-three years, Hollowell said, the University has presented Distinguished Alumni Awards to more than 350 alums who have made a difference in their communities, in their professions, and to BU.

Coakley was elected Massachusetts attorney general in 2006, the first woman to hold the post. She earned a B.A. at Williams College and a J.D. at BU. After practicing civil litigation in Boston, she became a Middlesex County assistant district attorney in 1986, later heading the office’s child abuse prosecution unit. In 1998, Coakley was elected Middlesex County district attorney, a position she held for eight years.

She said one of the lessons she learned at the School of Law is that speaking and advocating for people is a form of power and authority. Most recently, she said, she was proud to have been a voice for homeowners facing foreclosure. Her office, which had been investigating subprime lending and securitization markets in Massachusetts, announced last May that Goldman Sachs had agreed to provide approximately $50 million in relief to homeowners and pay an additional $10 million to the state. “The issue of power and authority and who has it and who wields it has always been important to me,” she said.

Han earned a B.A. in business administration at Yonsei University in Korea and an M.B.A. at BU.

Thomas Insel (CAS’72, MED’74), accepting congratulations from fellow Distinguished Alumni Awardee Martha Coakley (LAW’79).

Michael Medico (CFA’94), recipient of a Young Alumnus Award, with his mother, Dorothy Medico.

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He joined DPI Holdings Company after returning to Korea and became CEO in 2000. He has been chair of the BU Alumni Association of Korea since 2005 and of the BU Asian Alumni Association since 2008. Han, a 2008 recipient of the Graduate School of Management Distinguished Alumni Award, spoke of the large gatherings the groups have hosted, including the Boston University Asian Alumni Festival and Business Forum. At those events, he said, he is struck by the achievements of Asian alums.

Insel earned both a B.A. and an M.D. in the BU Seven-Year Liberal Arts/Medicine Integrated Program. He said the program enables students to explore areas outside the sciences; Insel majored in English. He attended BU during a time of unrest, recalling that he was among the students who’d taken over Marsh Chapel to provide sanctuary to a soldier who’d gone AWOL. Such experiences taught students to question authority, he added. “I left BU with a very good sense of how to do that.”

Medico earned a B.F.A. in acting and studied at the British Drama Academy. He has performed off-Broadway and in regional theater and has appeared on television in *Law & Order*, *Sex in the City*, and *The New Adventures of Old Christine*, and in films, including *Kiss the Bride*, *Parental Guidance*, and *Life’s Too Good*. The Hot in Hollywood celebrity fundraisers have raised more than $500,000 for AIDS organizations in three years. Medico and Hiko Mitsuzaka (COM’02) produce the blog HotterInHollywood.com.

Han recalled that when he learned about being given the award, “I was embarrassed,” and wondered whether he deserved it. He accepted the award on behalf of all of the BU alumni clubs in Asia.

After completing his medical internship and residency, Insel held research and administrative positions at NIMH and conducted research in adult obsessive-compulsive disorder and in social neuroscience and behavior. From 1994 to 2002, he was the W. P. Timmie Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Emory University’s School of Medicine and an adjunct professor in the Emory psychiatry department. He became director of NIMH in 2002.

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Medico said that at BU he not only learned how to act, but how to communicate, listen, and explore. “My time at BU was heaven,” he said.