Distinguished Alumni Honored: UB Law Alumni Association Recognizes Six for Their Accomplishments

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Distinguished alumni honored

An “exceptionally select group of highly distinguished honorees,” in the words of Dean Makau W. Mutua, collected Distinguished Alumni Awards on May 5 at the UB Law Alumni Association’s 47th annual dinner. Awards were presented to five alumni of the Law School and to one non-alumna. Buffalo City Court Judge E. Jeannette Ogden ’83, president of the Law Alumni Association, served as master of ceremonies.

The honorees, whose acceptance remarks were printed in booklet form, were:

**Hon. Jeffrey S. White ’70**, for his conscientious and diligent performance in the judiciary. White is a U.S. District Court judge in the Northern District of California. Ronald Hayes Malone, a partner in a San Francisco law firm, presented the award. “This is truly an inspired choice,” Malone said. “Jeff White was one of the very best trial lawyers in America, having tried more than 100 jury trials without one loss. I don’t know anybody in the country who knows more about how to effectively, honestly and conscientiously try a lawsuit.

“On the bench, he is a judge who cares passionately about justice. He calls the balls and strikes with accuracy and with fairness, and he treats everyone with respect, courtesy and compassion. Perhaps most important, Jeff White is simply a wonderful human being. I think he is simply what we all aspire to be.”

White said in his remarks: “When UB Law School admitted me, it took a chance on a poor kid from Brooklyn with a thirst to learn how to use the law to serve the community. UB Law and its world-class faculty inspired me and taught me well. I have always followed the directive of my trial advocacy instructor, that a prosecutor should be held to the highest standards of ethical and public responsibility. On the bench, I have always held the prosecutors who appear before me to that same high standard.”

For a Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner slideshow, go to www.law.buffalo.edu/forum/spr09/alumniDinner.asp
U B Law Alumni Association recognizes six for their accomplishments

Brent L. Wilson ’76, for his leadership by example as a private practitioner, Wilson is a partner in the Atlanta firm Elarbee, Thompson, Sapp & Wilson, LLP.

Presenting the award was Richard F. DiGiacomo ’76, a classmate of Wilson’s and a vice president of the Law Alumni Association. “He has received awards that are too numerous to mention,” DiGiacomo said. “But this award is especially noteworthy because Brent is a great example for us, whether in town or out of town, as to how to stay connected to this Law School, which has meant so much to all of us.”

In his remarks, Wilson said: “By some beautiful twist of fate, I arrived at UB in my second year of law school after beginning my legal education in Georgia. I was embraced by the UB Law family, including students, faculty and staff, and the people of Western New York.”

Lynn A. Clarke ’83, for her many contributions to the betterment of our community. Clarke is principal court attorney with the New York State Supreme Court.

In presenting the award, Judge Ogden said: “Lynn is a person who makes community service happen. All of the hours that she has devoted to community service have been an act and a labor of love. We are very proud that Lynn decided to engage in a labor of love by serving our community.”

Clarke, in her remarks, said: “It seems curious to be acknowledged for activities which, for me, were labors of love. The community endeavors I have pursued have primarily involved recognition and protection of human and legal rights, preservation of history, participation in our political process and helping those who are less fortunate, causes all dear to my heart. I feel privileged to have been able to work on community issues which are important to me.”

Elizabeth B. Mensch ’79, for her commitment to public service. Mensch is SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor Emerita at UB Law School.

In presenting the award, Dean Mutua said: “There are four things that define who Betty Mensch is: humility, excellence, brilliance and dedication. I have never met anyone who was more self-deprecating and unassuming, yet so substantial. No matter how much she knows and no matter how little you know, Professor Mensch always made you feel comfortable.”

In her remarks, Mensch said: “The single most constant feature of UB life was also its greatest source of challenge and renewal: the always new, always lively class of first-year students who unfailingly filled our classrooms every fall, determined, three years later, to join our community of UB Law alumni – the real UB Law community. Every year I would marvel at the richness of experience and freshness of perspective they brought to us. It was a privilege to teach them, and a privilege to be part of the UB community to which they brought constant renewal.”

Anna Marie Cellino ’81, for her exemplary performance in business. Cellino is president of National Fuel Gas Distribution Corp.

Paula M. Ciprich ’85 noted that Cellino began with National Fuel Gas as a law clerk, then an attorney, and detailed her accomplishments in improving customer service, promoting cost and quality control, and serving as corporate secretary. “Anna Marie has incredible energy, focus and business judgment,” Ciprich said. “She has been an outstanding mentor and friend, and I can think of no one who deserves this recognition more.”

In her remarks, Cellino said: “I have many fond memories of my years at UB Law School and am very appreciative of the time spent with my professors and the legal training that I received. That education certainly assisted me in achieving my success at National Fuel. I have been fortunate to have both a successful career and a very fulfilling personal life. I am thankful to my husband, Ross, and my six beautiful children, who have encouraged me in my career and continue to bring much love, joy and laughter into my life.”

Hon. Sharon S. Townsend, for outstanding service to the community by a non-alumna. Townsend is administrative judge for the 8th Judicial District of New York State Supreme Court.

Hon. Erin M. Peradotto ’84 introduced the honoree: “Her roles as a Family Court Judge, supervising judge of the Family Courts of the 8th Judicial District, and now administrative judge have given her a unique opportunity to use her talent and ability to make a positive difference in countless lives. And she has done it one day at a time, one person at a time. She is a person who clearly understands the impact of individual efforts, and has recognized that her words and actions have afterlives.”

Townsend said in her remarks: “I have felt that I belonged to UB Law School since I arrived here in Buffalo 30 years ago this month as a recent graduate of the University of Connecticut School of Law. That first summer, my husband, Bradlee, and I would ride our bicycles to UB Law School for our daily bar review course. It was there that we met such wonderful and warm people as Fran ‘Cheech’ Lerro and Tom Black, both successful alumni who have given back to the Law School community many times over and have become our dear friends and colleagues.”

The Distinguished Alumni Awards dinner committee was co-chaired by DiGiacomo and Mark J. Stuhlmiller ’99. Also on the committee were Robert L. Boreanaz ’89, James W. Grable Jr. ’96, Margaret P. Gryko ’77 and Catherine E. Nagel ’98.