Columbia Celebrates Commencement on 250th Anniversary

BY COLIN MORRIS

IT was Columbia's second rainy commencement in a row. But a few showers did nothing to dampen the celebratory spirit of the University's 250th-anniversary celebration, which marked the role played by four civil rights attorneys in the seminal Supreme Court ruling: Robert Carter, Oliver Hill, Louis Pollak and Jack Weinstein were all awarded honorary degrees and presented the University's 250th-anniversary Medal for Excellence.

And in moving recognition of the 50th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, the University marked the role played by four civil rights attorneys in the seminal Supreme Court ruling: Robert Carter, Oliver Hill, Louis Pollak and Jack Weinstein were all awarded honorary degrees.

As each school's graduates officially received their degrees, students roared or followed time-honored traditions (SBPA students, for instance, waved their flags of national origin). It was one of the largest classes in Columbia's history—10,909 candidates participated this year—and the joy was contagious.

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Three Columbians Elected To Prestigious American Philosophical Society

Columbia’s President Lee C. Bollinger, University Trustee Gerry Lenfest and Acting Vice President and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Ira Katznelson were recently elected members of the prestigious American Philosophical Society.

This year, the organization announced 42 new American members and seven foreign members. The inductees were appointed to five classes: mathematics and physical sciences; biological sciences; social sciences; humanities; and the arts, professions and leaders in public and private affairs. The society honored both Bollinger and Lenfest, chairman of the Lenfest Foundation (see story, this page), for their lifetime accomplishments as leaders in public and private affairs and Katznelson for his contributions to social sciences.

Other members elected this year include Stephen Breyer, associate justice, Supreme Court of the United States; Donald Graham, chairman and chief executive officer of the Washington Post Co.; Colin Lucas, vice chancellor of University of Oxford; and author and historian David McCullough.

The American Philosophical Society, which was established in 1743 by founding father Benjamin Franklin, is the oldest learned society in the United States. Chartered for the purpose of “promoting useful knowledge,” early members included George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, James Madison and John Marshall.

Other notable members have included John James Audubon, Robert Fulton, Charles Darwin, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Robert Frost and George Marshall.

Today the society has 909 elected members, 765 of them from the United States and 144 from more than two dozen foreign countries, representing the leading thinkers of the times. Since 1900, more than 200 members of the society have been awarded the Nobel Prize.

University Trustee Gerry Lenfest, Law School chairman, said: “Our foundation is delighted to join in a partnership with Columbia’s Earth Institute that will have a tangible impact and bring distinction to Columbia as a global university.”

A prior $15 million gift from Lenfest allowed the Law School to open a new student residence in 2002.

“Gerry Lenfest’s extraordinary new gift addresses two of his personal priorities that also are of great significance to the University, strengthening top centers of research and making a difference in the world today,” said President Lee C. Bollinger.

To that end, Columbia and its world-renowned Earth Institute are uniquely positioned to wed science and public policy to solve some of the world’s most complex and daunting environmental problems.

“With the Lenfest Foundation as a strong and generous partner, the Earth Institute aspires to provide practical and timely answers to some of the world’s most pressing problems,” Earth Institute Director Jeffrey Sachs said. “Our scientific base is very strong, our network is wide and deep throughout the world, and our New York base is ideal for global consensus building. We are grateful to Gerry Lenfest for

Lenfest Gives $15 Million Gift to Earth Institute

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