1958 Football Team to Receive Norton Medal, UB's Highest Honor, at Commencement

Honorary degrees to be presented to Nobel Laureate, comedy writer during May 10 ceremony

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BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The University at Buffalo's 1958 football team, which made history when it rejected a post-season bowl bid because two African-American team members would have been prohibited from playing, will receive the Chancellor Charles P. Norton Medal, UB's highest award, during the university's 163rd general commencement on May 10.

During the general commencement ceremony, SUNY honorary degrees will be awarded to Nobel Laureate Herbert A. Hauptman and comedy writer Alan M. Zweibel, B.A. '72.

Irene Zubaida Khan, secretary general of Amnesty International, and J. Mason Davis Jr., J.D. '59, a practicing attorney who played a key role in the desegregation of Alabama in the 1960s, will receive SUNY honorary degrees during the UB Law School's 120th commencement on May 23.

The Norton medal is presented annually in public recognition of a person who has, in Norton's words, "performed some great thing which is identified with Buffalo...a great civic or political act, a great book, a great work of art, a great scientific achievement or any other thing which, in itself, is truly great and ennobling, and which dignifies the performer and Buffalo in the eyes of the world."

The 1958 team won the Lambert Cup -- the trophy for the top-rated small school in the East -- with an 8-1 record. Team members unanimously declined a bid to the Tangerine Bowl -- at that time the only bowl bid in UB's history -- after being told they couldn't bring African-American players Willie Evans and Mike Wilson because it would violate a rule of the host Orlando, Fla., school district prohibiting blacks and whites from playing on the same field.

Evans and an as-yet-unnamed team member are expected to accept the Norton medal on behalf of the team.

A co-recipient of the 1985 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, honorary degree recipient Herbert Hauptman is widely regarded as the most influential scientist ever to have lived in Western New York.

After more than 20 years at the Naval Research Laboratory, Hauptman moved to Buffalo in 1970 to join the UB faculty and the Medical Foundation of Buffalo, now known as the Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute (HWI). Under his leadership, HWI -- a major research partner of UB -- has earned an international reputation as one of the world's leading research centers in bioinformatics.

Hauptman used mathematical procedures known as "direct methods" to determine the atomic arrangement of crystal structure based on its diffraction pattern, which earned him and his research partner, Jerome Karle, the Nobel Prize.

Hauptman and his colleagues recently developed a revolutionary procedure employing supercomputers to numerically solve unknown molecular structures -- a discovery with monumental implications for therapeutic drug design and the treatment and prevention of critical...
diseases.

One of the best known and most highly acclaimed comedy artists of our time, Alan Zweibel is an accomplished writer, performer and producer. He has earned distinction in virtually every aspect of the entertainment industry, from stand-up comedy to television and movies to theater -- both on and off Broadway.

He currently is finishing his next Broadway show, tentatively titled "Sunday Nights at 8:00," and is doing a television pilot with Bob Newhart. His new book, "Clothing Optional: And Other Ways to Read These Stories," a collection of short stories and essays, has just been published by Random House.

Irene Zubaida Khan is the first woman, first Asian and first Muslim to head Amnesty International, the world's largest human rights organization. Appointed Amnesty's secretary general in August 2001, she has led the organization through challenging developments in the wake of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. She has confronted a post-9/11 backlash against human rights, broadening Amnesty's work in economic, social and cultural rights, and initiating a process of internal reform to enable the organization to respond rapidly to world events. She also has sought to bring a strong focus to the issue of women's human rights and violence against women.

J. Mason Davis Jr. was the first African American to practice as a senior partner in a major Alabama law firm, Sirote & Permutt. As the attorney for a number of students who participated in the widely publicized Huntsville lunch counter sit-ins during 1961 and 1962, Davis played a key role in the desegregation of Alabama. He argued a series of appeals and won every matter at the Court of Appeals. As a result of those legal victories and others, the State of Alabama desegregated all public facilities, including its schools.

The University at Buffalo is a premier research-intensive public university, a flagship institution in the State University of New York system and its largest and most comprehensive campus. UB's more than 28,000 students pursue their academic interests through more than 300 undergraduate, graduate and professional degree programs. Founded in 1846, the University at Buffalo is a member of the Association of American Universities.