

## CONVOCATION & REUNIONS 2007

# Record Number of Alumni Return to Quad

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A COMBINATION OF ESPECIALLY WELL-attended class reunions and popular public events helped make the 2007 Convocation and Reunions the largest ever at Yale Divinity School, prompting organizers to erect a huge festive tent at the top of the Quad to accommodate over 400 alumni from all over the world.

“The volunteers on the reunion planning committees worked the phones, calling their classmates to encourage them to attend the reunions. The class of '52, in particular, had a great turnout of alumni and guests for their 55th year reunion,” says Director of Alumni Relations Carmen Germino '07 M.Div.

“And, of course, having Peter Hawkins give the Lyman Beecher lectures was a huge draw. He has a very dedicated following among YDS alumni.”

Hawkins, currently a professor of religion at Boston University, in the fall of 2008 is set to rejoin the faculty at YDS, where he previously taught from 1976 to 2000. He was joined at Convocation by another popular lecturer, Linda Thomas, a

professor at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, who gave the three Nathaniel Taylor Lectures.

The record number of attendees strained the Divinity School's capacity, especially for group events that drew participants together. “Because Marquand Chapel couldn't fit everyone for the lectures and worship services, we used Niebuhr Hall as an overflow space and showed a broadcast there,” says Alumni Office Senior Administrative Assistant Erin O'Roak. Convocation, held from October 8 to 11, spanned a period of unseasonably warm weather, thus validating the decision to hold some receptions and a luncheon under the enormous tent. “A lot of people liked the tent,” says O'Roak. “So many of the activities were inside that the tent was a way for them to get some fresh air.”

For returning alumni, one of the week's highpoints was the gala Alumni Awards Banquet, held at the New Haven Lawn

Club, one of the city's swankest venues for large events. The banquet also served as a draw for returning alumni, some who came from places as far away as England to honor classmate awardees. The evening was both inspired and inspiring as graduates uplifted the experiences of Will D. Campbell '52 B.D., Frederick H. Talbot '57 M.Div., Joseph C. Hough, Jr. '59 B.D., Otis Young '57 B.D., and Rita Ferrone '83 M.Div.

Campbell, the recipient of the Award for Peace and Justice given in memory of late Yale University Chaplain William Sloane Coffin '56 B.D., is a particularly exceptional example of a graduate who managed to successfully find the balance between academic excellence and the divine call to service in a troubled world. Campbell's most notable books, *Brother To A Dragonfly* and *Cecelia's Sin*, both speak to his experience as a socially conscious man of faith in the segregated American South. Campbell lived out the gospel by gracing civil rights protests, sit-ins, and strategy meetings with Martin Luther King Jr., as well as escorting black high school students through violent racist mobs.

“If it hadn't been for Will Campbell and others like him – but Will, primarily – it would have been a lonely time in the 1950s and 1960s in the Southern Baptist Church,” commented Hough, as he accepted his own Alumni Award for Distinction in Theological Education. Hough, the current president of Union Theological Seminary in New York City, said that all of his endeavors to both fundraise and address racial issues in faith-based institutions began not only with the witness of Will Campbell, but also during his time at Yale Divinity School. He cited his time at YDS as “the beginning of my own special liberation from an exclusive Christianity that rejected the possibility of the face of God to other religious traditions.”

Other honorees included Ferrone, who was given the Alumni Award for Distinction in Congregational Ministry for her leadership and writing in the Christian Initiation movement that flowed out of Vatican II. She shared the award with Young, a retired United Church of Christ minister who worked for the rights of women, lesbians, African Americans and gays. Talbot, a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and diplomat from Guyana, garnered the *Lux et Veritas* Alumni Award for a storied career on two continents.



Rita Ferrone '83 M.Div. speaking at the Alumni Awards Banquet