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We Made It! NPS Celebrates 100 Years of “Excellence Through Knowledge”

By Barbara Honegger, Military Affairs Journalist

With flying banners and ribbon cuttings, the Naval Postgraduate School exuberantly celebrated its Centennial Kick-Off and Alumni Reunion Weekend, May 22-25.

Launching the four days of historic 100th-year anniversary celebrations was President Oliver’s State of the University address, followed by Provost Leonard Ferrari’s overview of the university’s first century of world-class, military-relevant research.

“Thank you for joining us on this special day as we celebrate the 100th year anniversary of the Naval Postgraduate School,” Oliver told the audience in King Hall. “As we honor NPS’ past and celebrate its current accomplishments, the future before us promises even more and greater contributions to our nation’s security and the world’s prosperity. While we reflect on our past and the many lessons it has taught us, this is a time to challenge and inspire the future. Congratulations to the Naval Postgraduate School. Let’s work together to continue our course of accomplishment and growth over the next 100 years.”

Following the presentations, visiting alumni and students, faculty, staff moved to the Ingersoll courtyard for the dedication of the new NPS Centennial Timeline – 48 large panels displayed along the entire length of the outside of Root Hall covering all aspects of NPS’ history from its founding at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1909 to the unveiling of the Timeline itself.

“This was a monumental team effort that drew from every corner of our campus,” Oliver said in christening the impressive two-dimensional display. “The initiative and leadership for this historic project came from Kari Miglaw, Director of both our Centennial Program and of Alumni Relations. This campus will be forever in her debt because this permanent Timeline will continue to serve as a remarkable and enduring gift.”

“It was a privilege to work on this [Timeline] project with Erica Olsen, whose words brought a long and complex history into focus, and Matt Rose, whose inspired design brought the project to life,” Miglaw said from the podium. “Together we feel honored to have worked on such an historic and significant enterprise highlighting NPS’ amazing history.”

Other highlights of the first Centennial Weekend day were the Alumni Open House at the newly renovated Dudley Knox Library, a ribbon cutting and historic retrospective celebrating over half a century of NPS computing by the NPS Information Technology and Communications Services (ITACS), a Battle of Midway lecture by the School of International Graduate Studies, guided tours and open houses of the university’s schools and research institutes and the Center for Homeland Defense and Security, and a State of the NPS Foundation address by Foundation Executive Director retired Rear Adm. Merrill Ruck. The day was capped by an NPS exhibit and reception at the Monterey Maritime and History Museum with a presentation by NPS Historian and Library Special Collections Manager John Sanders on “NPS’ Hidden History.”

Saturday kicked off with an alumni golf event and was capped by the ‘Jewel in the Crown’ of the four-day ‘weekend,’ the festive Centennial Gala ball and dinner in the Barbara McNitt Ballroom in Herrmann Hall. President Oliver opened the Gala by inducting only the tenth alumnus out of over 60,000 NPS graduates into the NPS Hall of Fame – former Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Michael Hagee (Electrical Engineering, 1969).

“General Hagee was and is a tireless advocate for military higher education,” Oliver told the guests at the sold-out black tie event. “As Maj. Gen. Mel Spiese, who is on our Board of Advisors, said so well, ‘General Hagee is a model of advanced education in the armed forces and the value it brings to the service member and the service.’”

After enjoying a sumptuous dinner at elegant tables with Bird of Paradise centerpieces, revelers danced away the night until almost midnight.

Saturday’s earlier festivities were an alumni golf event, jet lab tours and two presentations on early NPS history by Sanders at the Maritime and History Museum. Sunday’s events included the presentation of colors, Service of Remembrance in Christ the King Chapel and breakfast in Herrmann Hall, and a talk on “NPS in Monterey” by Sanders at the Museum in Monterey.

On Monday, NPS flung open its gates to the Monterey community for a special Centennial rendition of its popular annual Memorial Day Concert on the Lawn. Master of Ceremonies NPS Communications and Marketing Director Alan Richmond kicked off the outdoor festivities with the Monterey Bay Symphony on the theme “NPS: Honoring Heroes and Traditions.”

“Thank you all for being part of the kick-off of our Centennial Year of the Naval Postgraduate School,” President Oliver told the crowd of thousands on a colorful sea of picnic blankets and beach chairs on the lawn in front of Herrmann Hall. “I am proud to be the president of this special institution at this very special moment in its history. Today we open our doors to our friends and neighbors, and invite you all to discover us.”

Congressional District 17 Representative Sam Farr read from John Steinbeck’s “East of Eden” as the orchestra played a piece by the same name and guests perused information tables manned by local non-profit organizations. Children gleefully participated in a host of special kids’ events, the schools and research institutes held informative open houses, and Glasgow Hall and the Dudley Knox Library both held rededication ceremonies.

Oliver’s words at the Gala serve as a fitting capstone to the historic weekend.

“These extraordinary celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the Naval Postgraduate School signal the beginning of a year-long tribute to the legacy that has been created by this wonderful institution over a full century of its life. We honor NPS for the magnificent university it has become and the even greater university it will be 100 years from now.”



CDR Bernard La Fianza (ret.), class of '71, and wife Helga La Fianza sitting next to the Centennial Timeline that runs along the exterior walls of Root Hall.



Naval Postgraduate School President Daniel Oliver gives a festive and rousing welcome to hundreds of Monterey Peninsula music lovers at the Memorial Day Concert on the Lawn on the final day of the four-day NPS Centennial Kick-Off and Alumni Reunion Weekend, May 25.