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History of Naval Postgraduate School

Naval Postgraduate School Historical Highlights

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2009

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Sanders, John

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## **Naval Postgraduate School Historical Highlights, 2009**

### **January**

Just three years after Pearl Harbor and while the nation was still at war, Captain Herman Spanagel proposed Congressional legislation to give the Naval Postgraduate School degree-granting authority. Spanagel's letter to the Chief of Naval Personnel on January 13, 1945 stated, "It is recommended that the necessary legislative action be initiated with a view toward formal recognition of the Postgraduate School as an institution of higher learning, and the acquisition of authority to award appropriate Masters' and Doctors' degrees to its graduates." The Chief of Naval Personnel approved and the House and Senate subsequently passed H.R. 4412 and S. 1493, respectively, in November 1945. The landmark legislation was an important building block in the World War II transformation of NPS.

### **February**

Following a cross-country, 3,000-mile move involving three million pounds of gear – from wind tunnels and thousands of books to office and classroom furniture and delicate lab instruments – the Naval Postgraduate School held a formal dedication ceremony of NPS-Monterey on Feb. 16, 1952. Secretary of the Navy Dan Kimball and Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz were among the dignitaries and speakers for the ceremonies.

### **March**

On March 20, 1944 – more than 13 months before victory in Europe and 17 months before victory in Japan – Vice Admiral William Pye, president of the Naval War College, convened a Navy Department board to plan for post-war growth of the Naval Postgraduate School. There were six voting members on the board, four admirals, one Marine Corps general, and the president of Northwestern University. The board's recommendations led to the subsequent purchase of the Hotel Del Monte in Monterey and the post-war move of NPS from Annapolis.

### **May**

Admiral Arleigh Burke won the deep respect and admiration of shipmates, American citizens and political leaders for his daring naval exploits and expertise. A 1930 NPS alumnus, he served an unprecedented three terms as Chief of Naval Operations at a critical time in world history.

In May 1959, he spoke to students and faculty at the Naval Postgraduate School and noted: "This year we mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of this splendid school. In 1909 ten students in Marine Engineering constituted the first class in the Navy's postgraduate school program, a program which has grown and expanded over the years.

"The naval leaders of fifty years ago showed great perspective and foresight in seeing the need for advanced technical and scientific knowledge among naval officers. They

recognized that ships and naval weapons were becoming more complex, that their proper employment at sea would require officers who were familiar not only with the age-old profession of the sea, but who could also understand and could use effectively the complex weapons of the years to come.

“We in the Navy today are the inheritors of that legacy of wisdom.”

Admiral Burke retired from active service in August 1961. In April 1985, the Navy placed its order for construction of the new guided missile destroyer, USS Arleigh Burke (DDG-51).

### **June**

After using the Hotel Del Monte under emergency requisition authority during World War II, the Navy proposed a purchase of the hotel to provide a new campus for the Naval Postgraduate School. The Navy's actions came on the heels of the 1944 Pye Commission report which recommended post-war growth of the university and the 1945 Spanagel Commission identified the Del Monte as the most suitable site. Authorizing legislation was passed by the Congress in 1947 but the appropriations did not come until the following year. Finally, on June 15, 1948, Captain Frank Watkins presented a U.S. government check for \$2.13M to the Del Monte Properties Company and Deed Number 1933 was recorded by Monterey County.

### **July**

Admiral Michael Mullen, a 1985 Naval Postgraduate School operations research alumnus, was sworn in as the Chief of Naval Operations on July 22, 2005, becoming the third NPS graduate to hold this position. The other alumni who became the Navy's top officer were Admiral Arleigh Burke (NPS class of 1930, ordnance engineering), who served as CNO from 1955-1961, and Admiral James Watkins (NPS class of 1958, mechanical engineering), who held the position from 1982-1986. Admiral Mullen was subsequently appointed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 2007 and is the first Naval Postgraduate School alumnus to hold this post.

### **August**

Lt. Bill Kern was named head football coach of the Del Monte Pre-Flight School team in August 1943. Kern, an All American tackle at the University of Pittsburgh and head football coach at Carnegie Tech and West Virginia University, subsequently guided the Pre-Flight School cadet team to a remarkable 7-1 season and a No. 8 ranking in the nation's college football polls. The Del Monte team toppled traditional California powerhouses such as Cal and USC and several of the team's stars -- Len Eshmont, Paul Christman, Parker Hall, Jim McDonald, Ed Cifers and Ray Bray -- became standouts in professional football after the war.

The Navy requisitioned Hotel Del Monte during the World War II mobilization and officially commissioned the Del Monte Pre-Flight School in February 1943. During the war, the Navy began to negotiate a purchase agreement with Del Monte Properties

Company. Congressional appropriations later paved the way for the Naval Postgraduate School's move from Annapolis.

### **September**

The Naval Postgraduate School has operated under several academic calendars, from a traditional semester system in the early years at Annapolis to a five-term schedule in the 1960's after the move to Monterey. The contemporary four-quarter, 48-week academic system was implemented in 1967 following a study chaired by Dr. Wilbert F. Koehler, dean of programs.

Koehler issued a report titled, "Timely Curricular Changes and Academic Innovation at the Naval Postgraduate School," in September 1967 following the transition to the new quarter system. In the report, he explained the rationale for the shift from a five-term to a four-quarter academic operations plan.

"Within a period of ten months the feasibility, preparation and decision to convert to a Quarter Plan of Operation were completed," Koehler noted. During that time, the institution's academic leaders determined that the conversion "would not increase the officer students' time to complete their curricula, would not sacrifice academic quality, and would not increase operating costs." The full report is available in the Dudley Knox Library.

### **November**

Officers in the Navy's first formal advanced education class converged on Annapolis in November 1909, seven months after the Secretary of the Navy had established the School of Marine Engineering via an executive order. That early school would evolve into today's Naval Postgraduate School.

The first class was comprised of ten students – eight lieutenants and two ensigns. All of these officers would have significant careers in the Navy and four would become flag officers. Two would earn four-star status. One student, Lt. Samuel Murray Robinson, would accomplish something that no other officer had achieved in the storied history of the U.S. Navy: he would become the first engineering duty officer to be promoted to four-star rank.

*Historical Highlights are provided by the Dudley Knox Library.*