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Don Bonsper, NPS Professor of the Year,
Recipient of the 2001 Rear Admiral John Jay
Schieffelin Award, for Excellence in Teaching

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Don Bonsper, NPS Professor of the Year
Recipient of the 2001 Rear Admiral John Jay Schieffelin Award
for Excellence in Teaching

The greatest praise for a teacher is the respect and appreciation of a student. Although there are many excellent teachers at the Naval Postgraduate School, only one is singled out as the NPS Professor of the Year.

Don Bonsper, a senior lecturer in the Defense Resources Management Institute at NPS, is this year's recipient of the Professor of the Year award, the Rear Admiral John J. Schieffelin Award for excellence in education. A retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel, he joins a long list of NPS faculty members whom students have selected for this honor.

The ballots of current students and recent alumni described Bonsper as an extraordinary teacher. The students overwhelmingly indicated that Bonsper's teaching style and methods make him one of the best teachers they have ever encountered.

"He first grabbed our attention with a relevant joke or story, and then incorporated that story into the lesson. There was never any snoozing in his classes because the participants always wanted to know what he had to teach us," one DRMI participant said.

"Aside from being competent, I think his ability to relate to all students is great, not to mention his good sense of humor," said another. "He easily captures and retains the students' attention by using his humor, relevancy, and superior communications skills. Mr. Bonsper is a consummate teacher, very personable, and uses wit to engage the student making the learning process real and practical."

It has been said time and again by those who've been in Bonsper's company, "His patient, yet effective humorous delivery, allows all types of learners to absorb and apply the theory easily and correctly," according to a recent NPS student. "He thoroughly covered the materials, and made difficult subjects easy to understand. His professional dedication is noteworthy. He's one of the best -- if not the best -- teacher I've ever met."

Bonsper was selected from a group of 222 NPS faculty members, all of whom were eligible for the award this year. Schieffelin Committee Chairman Prof. David Lamm said, "Committee members use balloting data only and are unaware of the identity of the faculty member. The ballot information is ranked several times through a series of methods designed to select the winner."

All eligible NPS faculty members are put on a ballot that is mailed to all current students and recent NPS graduates. Corresponding numbers on the ballot identify those faculty members who are eligible for the award. All ballots are returned with the respondent's personally ranked professor identified only by number and voter. These nominations are then put through a rigorous process of narrowing down the choices to the most deserving candidate.

In addition to a plaque, Bonsper will receive a \$3,000 cash award. A portion of the award is contributed by the NPS foundation from an endowment to support teaching excellence.

Prof. Kent Wall, a longtime friend and colleague of Bonsper, said, "He has a unique ability to capture the attention of an audience and to make his subject matter interesting while keeping learning fun." Wall has known Bonsper since he initially began teaching as a military professor. "I think Don is most deserving of recognition for his

efforts here with us. Our emphasis is not on training job-specific skills, but rather on the concepts, techniques, and issues that pervade defense resources management and decision making tenets in most mid-management through executive level positions. Don has proven himself to be an excellent speaker with a clear message to give our participants.”

Bonsper refers to his teaching style as his way of reaching the class, and making everyone desire to see what he has to offer next. “DRMI is a team effort,” he said in response to how he is able to be effective with his teaching methods. “Other faculty and I usually tell stories about each other and play off one another in the classes, tying in the lesson and our participants. I enjoy what I do. It is humbling to get an award that says that I am good at what I enjoy doing.”

Bonsper, a 1970 NPS Operations Research graduate and 1965 graduate of the Naval Academy, was also a Fulbright Scholar to Costa Rica in 1966. He served in a variety of command and staff assignments, including tours in Vietnam, Okinawa, Venezuela, and Panama, prior to his retirement from active duty in 1985. He accomplished much in his 20-year Marine Corps career. Five years after graduating from NPS, Bonsper completed the Command and Staff College of the Marine Corps and was awarded the Silver Star for service in Vietnam.

As an operations research analyst, Bonsper served with the Marine Corps Development Center where he worked in the field of long-range planning. In 1985 he received two awards for his written combat memoirs published by the Marine Corps Gazette. He joined the DRMI faculty in July 1982 while still in uniform. After he retired active duty, he continued teaching at NPS. Today, he serves as the international

programs coordinator for DRMI and has taken the program to many countries around the world.

Since its inception DRMI has conducted professional education programs in analytical decision-making and resources management for military officers and civilian officials of the United States and 151 other countries.

The institute's curriculum provides a multi-disciplinary program that encourages participants to develop an understanding of concepts, principles, methods, and techniques drawn from the economic reasoning, management theory, and quantitative reasoning and then apply them to the effective and efficient allocation of scarce defense resources.

“DRMI courses are taught by a team of faculty members selected for their educational background, professional experience, and willingness to innovate within a curriculum designed to achieve the mission set forth by the Secretary of Defense” he said. “All of the Institute's faculty members are part of the Naval Postgraduate School, and are even more a part of a close team of teachers who work with mid-level and senior military and government decision makers of many countries.”

To find out more about the John J. Schieffelin Award, visit www.nps.navy.mil/Saward/JJSAward.htm. The website includes a list of award winners from 1970 to present.