Astronaut Alumni Star in Air and Space Week

By Barbara Honegger

More U.S. astronauts are graduates of the Na-
vail Postgraduate School than any other gradu-
ate school in the world. One astronaut returned to
their alma mater in August for a Centennial Sa-
lute to Aeronautics and Astronautics. Astronaut
Week, part of the university’s continuing year-
long 100th anniversary celebration, honored the
history and heritage of NPS contributions to
aviation and space exploration.

Joining the astronaut faculty members
National Reconnaissance Office Aerospace
Chair retired Navy Capt. Dan Bursch and Space
Systems Professor Dr. Jim Newman for a star-studded week of seminars, lectures and special events were current astronauts Navy
Capt. Alan Poindexter and Steve Frick; and former astronauts retired Navy Capt. Winston
Scott, and Ken Reightler, Jr., retired Navy Cmdr.
and former NPS meteorology laboratory in-
structor Mario Runco; retired Marine Corps
Col. Dave Hilmers, M.D.; retired Marine Corps
Lt. Col. Carlos Noriega; and the group’s senior
astronaut, Rusty Schweickart. Former astronaut
Tom Jones, Ph.D., joined the group one of the
two days by himself.

Frick and Poindexter are active astronauts,
with the latter slated to command STS-131
next year. The former, who graduated from
the school, accompanied him and is the NPS alumnus of the dual-meteorologist team, work at NASA
Headquarters in Houston.

“Director of the Space Systems Academic
Group Professor Rudy Panholzer has been
calling for an increase in the number
of U.S. civilian students, who could be
sought help from NPS a few years ago
and we knew bring to NPS … and we knew bring
the leading-edge capabilities they
lead in. They’re finally been able to fulfill his dream of
visiting all of us astronaut grad students back to NPS,”
said Poindexter.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to come
back,” agreed Frick, who was Poindexter’s com-
mander on STS-122. “This is a great school
that really allows you to expand your horizons,
and that means a lot coming from an astronaut.”

The historic and information-packed week
kicked off with a “Wear Your Flight Suit to Work”
Day, Aug. 8; a special guest lecture by former
Lockheed “Skunkworks” Chief Engineer Alan
Brown on the history of the company’s Stealth
aircraft design program, and an astronaut re-
ception on the Quatersdeck, Aug. 5; an NPS
Astronaut Symposium where Schweickart and
guest former astronaut Tom Jones detailed their
decade-long effort to protect the Earth from dev-
astating impacts of extraterrestrial asteroids like
the one that wiped out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago, and a spacecraft survivability panel fea-
turing the pioneering research of retired NPS
Prof. Emeritus Robert Ball; a candid and lively
evening with astronaut spouses on the common
interests in space and projected photos taken from the Space
Shuttle and International Space Station onto the
walls of the Barbara McNitt Ballroom, Aug. 7;
and finally an California International Air Show dinner
that evening, also in the ballroom, where the as-
tronauts joined 14 members of the Navy’s Blue
Angels flight demonstration team; and the parti-
ipation of a number of the astronaut alums at
the Air Show, Aug. 9.

Hilmers received a master’s degree in electrical
engineering from NPS in 1979; Reightler, Scott,
Frick and Poindexter all earned master’s degrees in aeronautical engineering, in 1984, 1980, 1994
and 1999, respectively. Dmitriyev and Panholzer
were awarded an M.S. in computer science in 1990, and Bursch received his master’s degree in engineering sci-
ence in 1991.

Until recently, Bursch held the record for the
longest continuous duration in space by an
American astronaut, 196 days. He record was
eclipsed in April 2007 by another NPS astro-
naut, retired Navy Capt. Mike Lopez-Alegria,
who completed an expedition of 215 days. Other
U.S. Space Program alumni include the second
American to orbit the Earth, Mercury 7
astronaut retired Navy Cmdr. M. Scott Car-
penter and retired Navy Capt. Eugene Cerman,
commander of Apollo 17 and the last man to
walk on the moon.

As Carpenter reported during a recent telecon-
ference with NPS leadership and Space Systems
Academic, the school’s strong faculty and students, “It’s won-
derful that the Naval Postgraduate School has such a strong space program, for both engineers and operational students, and that the magic of space flight has caught on here.”

“NPS continues to be on the forefront of edu-
cating Americas astronauts,” said Alumni Rela-
tions Office and Centennial Planning Head quar-
ter Director Kari Miglani. “As a leader in space
education and research, NPS paves the way for
future astronauts to pursue their dreams.”

For more information about NPS Air and Space Week and other Centennial events, go
to www.nps.edu/100.
Kuali Financial System Goes Live October 1

The Naval Postgraduate School is leading the way as an early adopter among its higher education colleagues by implementing a cost-effective alternative to vended ERP software—the financial system developed in the community source model. The Kuali Financial System (Kuali) means “work” or “humble utensil that plays an important role in the kitchen” in Malaysian. It will go live at NPS on October 1, after three years of preparation and planning by NPS financial leadership team.

The Kuali Financial System (KFS) is adapted from a financial system created by Indiana University and an initial core of the University of Hawaii, the University of Arizona, and the eSmarter Group, a software consulting and implementation company founded in Phoenix in 2002 to support cooperative software efforts. This initial core group received a $2.5 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and additional support from the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO).

With an October 1 go-live date, NPS will be joining Colorado State University and San Joaquin Delta Community College in adopting KFS during calendar 2009.

At NPS, KFS will run “parallel” to other management information systems, such as DORS and DMAS, during FY 2010. Concurrently, NPS will develop all reports needed for academic and administrative reporting, fully integrate KFS with data from the Navy’s official systems, and ensure that everyone is trained and comfortable in using the work tool that is an integral part of KFS. A series of informational townhall meetings are being held in Ingersoll 122 September 1-4 for anyone interested in learning more about KFS. All interested parties are encouraged to attend to receive an overview and demonstration of the Kuali Financial System. No sign-ups are necessary to attend a townhall meeting and meeting times are available at http://intranet.nps.edu/Announcements/Poings/Kuali.html.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen was inducted into the NPS Hall of Fame during an all-day ceremony Aug. 11, 2009. Mullen, an NPS graduate who received his master’s degree in operations research in 1985, is the school’s 11th Hall of Fame inductee and the first alumnus to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Special guests at the ceremony included retired Adm. Thomas Fargo, former commander of U.S. Pacific Command; retired Adm. Jay Johnson, former chief of naval operations; and retired Adm. Henry Mauz Jr., former commander of U.S. Atlantic Fleet and a fellow Hall of Fame member.

With an opportunity to speak to the entire NPS student body, Mullen then took the time to thank service members in the audience and called on them to take what they’ve learned at NPS to their next assignments to instill the excitement for change. He also urged students to study leadership in a time of change, “because it is often the most difficult and rewarding kind of leadership.”

The NPS Hall of Fame was established in 2001 to recognize the accomplishments of the school’s most distinguished alumni and friends who have made the highest contributions to society, the nation and the school. Other NPS Hall of Fame members include retired Marine Corps Gen. Michael Hagee, former Commandant of the Marine Corps; retired Adm. Wayne E. Meyer, the founder of the AEGIS technology and former Secretary of the Navy Thomas E. White.