2001 Honored Alumni

The Honored Alumni Award is the highest honor bestowed annually by the university's alumni association to recognize alumni from the six academic colleges and the university's teacher education center who have proven themselves exemplary in their fields or in service to the university. (Photos by Patrick Swadener)

**COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE**

"I continue to this day to be indebted to [former Foundation Director] Al Amaral and Cal Poly for initiating a lifelong interest in finance and its impact on a business organization."

— James Errecarte (AGBM '70)

James R. Errecarte is president of SunWest Foods, which processes and markets rice, walnuts, almonds, and pistachios. He also owns SunWest Milling Company and is a partner in Northland Farming Company. He has served as a member of the Agribusiness Management Advisory Council since 1994, and is the current chair. He is a former faculty member of Cal Poly's Agribusiness Management Department, and a lifetime member of the university's President's Round Table.

**COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**

"Cal Poly taught me to see solutions in three dimensions and then not be afraid to apply what I saw."

— Lee Dempsey (IT '73)

Lee Dempsey is a founding director of Service 1st Bank in Stockton and Tracy, and a founder and current director of The Business Council of San Joaquin County. From 1978 to 1999 he was owner and CEO of Valley Electric Co., an electrical supply and factory automation distributor in Sacramento, Stockton, Modesto, and Merced. He has served on the Rockwell International/Allen Bradley Distributor Board and on the board of trustees for Stockton's Lincoln Unified School District, and was an active member of the advisory council for Cal Poly's Industrial Technology Department.

**COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN**

"Cal Poly's hands-on learning, generally not available at other institutions, is one of the hallmarks of its continuing success in producing capable graduates."

— Rob Rossi (ARCH '76)

Rob Rossi has developed a variety of award-winning projects in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. He was a city of San Luis Obispo planning commissioner and director of the Foundation for Community Design and the Private Industry Council. He has served as a member of the Cal Poly President's Round Table, the President's Cabinet, the Foundation for the Performing Arts Center's board of directors, and the CAED Centennial Campaign Steering Committee. His Rossi Foundation contributes to local nonprofit ventures.
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

"One of the most significant roles that Cal Poly played in my life was opening the curtain to theater. I was encouraged to design and build costumes, empowered to manage the box office and publicity, and given the responsibility to be a stage manager."

— Mary LaVenture (JOUR '77)

Mary LaVenture has worked for more than 25 years in the fields of theater and costuming, first as a Cal Poly undergraduate and then at Disneyland as a mask-maker and milliner. She is the headdress coordinator at the Pageant of the Masters in Laguna Beach and an expert in Civil War and Victorian costumes for stage and film productions. She consults on Disney international development projects, and is a frequent speaker at Cal Poly theater classes and professional costume associations. She has also served as one of the architects and board members for FANS, Cal Poly’s theater support group.

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

"[Cal Poly’s] diversity in educational offerings afforded me a well-rounded background that has contributed to my success."

— Gary Bloom (CSC ’82)

Gary Bloom is president and CEO of VERITAS Software Corporation and serves on its board of directors. Previously he was executive vice president of Oracle Corporation, where he oversaw product development of Oracle’s database and application server technology, data warehousing products, and the organization of Oracle’s technology on more than 90 hardware and software programs. He also led Oracle’s worldwide marketing, support, education, and alliance organizations, and was responsible for mergers and acquisitions, global information technology, and the Oracle Venture Fund.

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

"[Cal Poly instills] an overwhelming desire to both teach and learn. It is this concept of moving from student to teacher that is the most important lesson I learned."

— William Allison (BIOCHEM ’77)

William Allison (BIOCHEM ’77) is president of Litton Data Systems’ integrated logistics division. Previously he was vice president of engineering, where he was responsible for divisionwide reorganization and management oversight. He served as vice president and general manager of the division’s operations in Ocean Springs, Miss., helping Litton earn, under the Excellence in Mississippi program, the 1995 Quality Commitment Award and the 1996 and 1997 Quality Award for Excellence. He has given to the College of Science and Mathematics at the Centennial Society level for several years, and donated a laser optics table valued at $107,000 to the Physics Department.
Along with a strong academic program, I was able to participate in student government, be a counselor during WOW week, and join several campus organizations. My varied experiences at Cal Poly have served as a strong foundation for my life.

— Nancy DePue (ENGL '67, MA ED '78)

Nancy L. DePue (ENGL '67, MA ED '78) is superintendent of schools for the Arroyo Grande Lucia Mar Unified School District. Previously she served as interim superintendent of schools in Lucia Mar and assistant superintendent for instruction and area administrator of Arroyo Grande High School. She taught mathematics in the Gifted and Talented Education program, English/mathematics at Arroyo Grande High School, sixth grade at North Ocean High School, and elementary and high school in Florida. She is a member of the Lucia Mar Educational Foundation's board of directors, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Association of Mexican-American Educators, and the Association of California School Administrators.

The Cal Poly Alumni Association Distinguished Service Award is presented to an individual who has given extraordinary service, leadership, and/or volunteerism to either Cal Poly or the alumni association.

— Richard O’Neill (ASCI ’48)

Richard O’Neill has supported the Cal Poly Alumni Association and Cal Poly Athletics for more than three decades. His support of CPAA alumni activities in Southern California—including hosting the annual alumni barbecue there—has generated more than $100,000 in student scholarships, and has engaged many friends for the university.

His personal and financial commitments to athletics were the catalyst for the creation of a fund-raising program that today brings in nearly $1 million annually for student-athlete scholarships. His efforts and particular interest in funding scholarships have allowed the Cal Poly athletic program to double the number of scholarships over the past decade and enabled the university’s athletic teams to compete in top Division I programs. In 1987 he was inducted as a charter member of the Cal Poly Athletics Hall of Fame for his leadership and dedication to the program. He served on the “Building the Advantage” Capital Campaign Steering Committee, which raised funds to renovate Mott Gym, establish a scholarship endowment, and build the new sports complex.

O’Neill is a successful land developer, restaurateur, and horse breeder, as well as a strong supporter of the Democratic Party, having served as the party’s state chairman from 1976 to 1981.
Power Team for ISS

Working together as senior design engineers of the Electrical Power System on the International Space Station (ISS), (left to right) Richard Edwards (EL '61), Jerry Counts (EL '66), and Donald Carlson ('74) stand beside a model of the 500-ton ISS, which is undergoing assembly by astronauts in space for a target completion date of 2003. To collect energy, the EPS uses almost an acre of solar cells (the winglike features visible in the model). To deliver almost 100 kilowatts of continuous power, four tons of batteries are used to store energy for the 30 minutes of darkness each orbit. The first of four giant power modules was attached to the two-year-old station in preparation for the arrival of the Laboratory Module this year.

Building a Foundation

The Newman Catholic Center invites Cal Poly students to volunteer their time for humanitarian efforts such as this spring project in Tijuana, B.C., Mexico, where they mix concrete, stack blocks, and build walls for a family home. Their labor of conscience is part of a program of social justice spearheaded annually by the center, highlighting cultural differences, racial prejudice, and individual responsibilities. A recent event was a visit by Sister Helen Prejean, author of Dead Man Walking.

Walking. The center is also focusing on strategic planning to improve facilities, expand social programs, develop outreach efforts, and continue enriching the spiritual lives of students, faculty, staff, and the community. "A top priority," said Newman Center Director Sister Theresa Harpin, "is reaching out to the thousands of Cal Poly [alumni] who benefited from Newman and are now making their mark in society. We need their knowledge, guidance, support, and spirit as we solidify our own Friends of Newman Catholic Center Alumni Chapter." Cal Poly alumni with an interest in Newman activities are encouraged to contact Director of Development Kathy Smith at 805/543-4105.

(Photos courtesy the Newman Catholic Center)
Members of the Class of 1950 gather for dinner at the Monday Club during Homecoming 2000. Shown left to right are: Mary Armstrong, Bill Armstrong (ASCI '50), Donna Culver, her grandson Christopher Culver, Pearl Thoma, Bud Thoma (EE '50), and reunion chair Byron Culver (PE '50). (Photo courtesy Cal Poly Alumni Relations office)

Nashville guitarist and alumnus Bill Cooley (BIO '75) accompanies singer Kathy Mattea on tour at a February concert in the Performing Arts Center's Christopher Cohan Center. He is also busy playing with Hal Ketchum and in various recording sessions with singer-songwriters like Danny O'Keefe, and has released his first solo album of original guitar music, "Unraveled." Influences on Cooley include Leo Kottke, Albert Lee (a backup guitarist in Emmylou Harris' band), and Merle Haggard. From 1985-88 Cooley was the lead guitarist for Reba McEntire, and in 1990 he began working with Mattea. (Photo by Kraig Erickson/Mustang Daily)