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Cal Poly Names 2007 Honored Alumni, Distinguished Service Award Recipient

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly recognized eight outstanding alumni at its annual Honored Alumni Awards & Grand Reunion Banquet, held during Homecoming 2007.

Each year, Cal Poly honors one individual from each of the university’s academic colleges: Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences; Architecture and Environmental Design; Education; Engineering; Liberal Arts; the Orfalea College of Business; and Science and Mathematics. The Honored Alumni Award is the highest honor bestowed upon university alumni by the Cal Poly Alumni Association.

In addition, one graduate is selected to receive the Alumni Association Distinguished Service Award, given for exceptional service to Cal Poly and the Alumni Association. This year marks the ninth presentation of the Distinguished Service Award.

This year’s Distinguished Service Award went to Robin Baldwin (B.S., Animal Science, ’54). Baldwin came to Cal Poly from Ann Arbor, Mich., in 1947 to pursue a degree in what was then called animal husbandry. During his tenure at Cal Poly he served as a yell leader, rodeo clown, member of the Glee Club and member of the Poly Royal Board.

Baldwin has been a member of the Cal Poly Alumni Association since 1954 and has served on the Board of Directors off and on since 1962. He has held numerous offices and positions, including historian, regional vice president and president. In 1987, he received the distinction of Board Emeritus status. A current resident of Fresno, Baldwin enjoyed a long career that included agricultural sales, teaching and real estate appraisal. Robin and his wife, Patty, have been married 53 years.

Cal Poly’s 2007 Honored Alumni are:

College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences
Omer King Jr., (B.S., Soil Science, ’56). After graduating from Cal Poly, King went to work for the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. He worked for the state in a variety of capacities, including as a field representative for the Division of Soil Conservation, budget analyst and management analyst for the Department of Health Care Services, supervisor of the Management Analysis Unit, and chief of administrative services for the Water Resources Control Board.

While at Cal Poly, King was an original member of the university’s ROTC Battalion when it was formed in 1952. He served for many years in both the U.S. Army Reserve and the U.S. Air Force Reserve, retiring with the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1982. His decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal and the Air Force Commendation Medal. King and his wife of 52 years, Claudia, live in Reno, Nev.

College of Architecture and Environmental Design
Mark Haselton (B.S., Architectural Engineering, '63). Haselton is the president of Continental Concrete Structures Inc. Founded in 1975, the company provides advanced technology engineering and construction services throughout the Southeastern United States.

In 1963 he and three classmates designed and constructed a highly unique post-tensioned, curved concrete blade sculpture in Poly Canyon – the first significant CAED student project in that location. In 2005 he took the lead in inspiring an interdisciplinary team of Cal Poly students to construct a “new” post-tensioned structure in Poly Canyon.

Haselton became a commissioned officer upon graduation from Cal Poly, eventually attaining the rank of captain in the U.S. Army. As a combat veteran, he was awarded the distinguished Silver Star medal, the military’s third highest award for valor. Haselton and his wife, Pamela, live in Alpharetta, Ga.

College of Education
Marilyn Hamilton (B.S., Home Economics, '71, Credential, '72). Hamilton is the inventor of the Quickie wheelchair, which revolutionized wheelchair mobility for the disabled. After graduation she began teaching high school home economics. An avid sportswoman, she was injured in a hang gliding accident in 1978 and was paralyzed from the waist down. Impatient with her bulky wheelchair, and unable to continue playing tennis, she and two friends designed and built an ultra light wheelchair out of aluminum tubing, weighing only 26 pounds.

She co-founded Motion Designs in 1979 and began manufacturing the Quickie wheelchair. When a folding model was introduced in 1983, sales skyrocketed. Hamilton competed in wheelchair sporting events and became a two-time national tennis champion and a member of the U.S. disabled ski team. Her tennis wheelchair now stands in the Smithsonian Museum.

A tireless spokesperson for the disabled, she founded “Winners on Wheels,” a program to inspire young children confined to wheelchairs. In 2005 she was inducted into the National Spinal Cord Industry Association Hall of Fame. In 2004 she was honored with a Minerva Award, given to women who have made extraordinary contributions to California in the arts, health and sciences, community activism, business and technology, motherhood, innovation, education and lifetime achievement. She is a resident of Carmel.

College of Engineering
Kevin Neifert (B.S., Mechanical Engineering, '84). Neifert is vice president and chief engineer for Raytheon’s Space and Airborne Systems (SAS) Division. A $4-billion division, SAS is the leading supplier of radars and electro-optical systems for fighters, surveillance aircraft and satellites. Prior to his position with Raytheon, Neifert served as division director and deputy business segment leader of Transformational Space Systems at The Boeing Co.’s PhantomWorks unit, where he oversaw the development and execution of new space and launch programs.

He has held numerous positions at Boeing, including chief engineer for several space program projects. In 2005 he was awarded the Silver Medal of Merit by the National Management Association for outstanding leadership in management. Neifert earned a master's degree in mechanical engineering from the UC Berkeley. He and his wife, Ramsey, live in Irvine.

College of Liberal Arts
Robert Mayhew (B.A., Political Science, '82). Mayhew is vice president for DMB Associates Inc., where he oversees the planning, development, marketing and management of the company’s commercial properties. DMB is a diversified real estate investment and development firm with holdings throughout the Western United States.

Mayhew was previously a vice president at Newhall Land in Valencia. He earned an MBA and a Master of Real Estate Development from the USC. He is co-chair of the Cal Poly Dean’s Council for the College of Liberal Arts, an advisory board member for the University of Southern California LUSK Center, an advisory board member of the Arizona State University College of Design and Master of Real Estate Development Program and a member of the Urban Land Institute. He and his wife, Sharri, live in Scottsdale, Ariz.
Orfalea College of Business
Lori DeMatteis (B.S., Business Administration, ’85). DeMatteis has enjoyed a 20-year career in international marketing, business development, sales and technology. Currently the assistant vice president of Worldwide Communications for Saytyam Computer Services Ltd., she is responsible for building the company’s cable communications practice globally, in addition to product marketing, alliance development and sales activities.

Saytyam Computer Services is a leading global consulting and information technology services company with 40,000 employees and $1.7 billion in annual revenues. In addition to work, DeMatteis is an active Rotarian, a member of the Board of Directors for California Women in Cable Communications, and serves as a member of the Dean’s Advisory Council for the Orfalea College of Business. She earned an MBA from Santa Clara University. DeMatteis and her husband, Larry Levy, live in San Ramon.

College of Science and Mathematics
William Fenical (B.S., Chemistry, ’64). Fenical is currently the Distinguished Professor of Oceanography and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Skaggs School of Pharmaceutical Science at UC San Diego. He earned a master’s in organic chemistry from San Jose State University and a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from UC Riverside.

He joined Scripps in 1973 as an assistant research chemist. Fenical has long recognized the untapped potential of the world’s oceans for biomedical applications. As part of his research, he developed new methods and tools to obtain ocean sediments as well as new methods for sifting through the samples, culturing the microorganisms, identifying them, and screening them for their anticancer and antibiotic properties. His interests have focused on the undeveloped field of marine microbiology and the utilization of his marine microorganisms as a source for new drug discovery.

His most important recent work involves the discovery of new drug-producing actinomycete bacteria residing in deep ocean sediments. Two new drugs resulting from the discovery are currently in clinical trials for cancer. He is the co-founder of Nereus Pharmaceuticals. He has received numerous awards and honors, including the 2006 Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Society of Pharmacognosy. He and his wife, Fran, live in Del Mar.

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