Alumni in the News: Summer & Fall 2009

Headliners | Career Moves | Serving the World | Passings

Headliners

**Sturckow Has a Blast as Shuttle Commander**

Colonel Rick Sturckow (B.S., Mechanical Engineering, 1984) commanded the Space Shuttle Discovery on his fourth trip to space. The Discovery blasted off Aug. 29 on a mission to dock with the International Space Station, and returned to Earth safely Sept. 11. Sturckow, 48, flew combat missions during Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and then went on to become a test pilot. He became an astronaut in 1994 and made his first space shuttle flight four years later on the first assembly mission for the International Space Station. He credits one of his Cal Poly professors for encouraging him to join the Marines and become a pilot – instead of a race car mechanic. *Photo courtesy NASA.*

Read the AirForceTimes story on the liftoff
Read the San Diego Union Tribune Story on Sturckow
Read the San Diego News 6 Story on Sturckow and the mission

**Chamitoff Selected for Future Space Mission**

Cal Poly alum Gregg Chamitoff (B.S., Electrical Engineering, 1984) is heading to the International Space Station for the second time. Chamitoff will be a mission specialist on the crew for space shuttle mission STS-134, headed for the International Space Station in summer or fall 2010. NASA announced the crew assignments for the mission in early August. In addition to his Cal Poly degree, Chamitoff earned a master's degree from the California Institute of Technology, a second master's degree from University of Houston Clear Lake and a doctorate from MIT. He served aboard the International Space Station for six months in 2008 and came to Cal Poly to talk about his experiences in spring 2009. *Photo courtesy NASA.*

Read the story on Newsblaze.com
Read the story on SpaceRef.com
See Cal Poly Magazine's video interview with Chamitoff aboard the space station in 2008

**'52 Alum Receives Award at National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association Roundup**

Alum Cotton Rosser (B.S., Animal Science, 1952) was honored this summer at the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA) Finals Rodeo in Casper, Wyo. Rosser, of Marysville, Calif., was on the Cal Poly Rodeo Team during his time on campus. He won Reserve All Around Cowboy at the first NIRA Championship Rodeo. He had transferred to Cal Poly in 1950 and went on to win the 1950 Reserve National Finals NIRA Championship in Bull Riding that year, too. *Read the full story in the Gridley Herald*

Chuck Liddell is UFC, Cal Poly Hall of Fame Honoree - and Dancer

Former UFC champ Chuck Liddell (B.S.,...
Business Administration, 1995) was inducted into the Ultimate Fighting Championship Hall of Fame in July. In August, Liddell and alums John Wood and Alex Spanos were among Cal Poly Hall of Fame honorees announced by Cal Poly Athletics. Liddell, Alex G. Spanos (Aeronautical Engineering, 1942, Honorary Doctorate, 2004), former Mustang wrestler John Wood (B.S., Political Science, 1970) are among this year’s Cal Poly Athletics Hall of Fame class. Photo Courtesy ABC.

Read the story in the SLO Tribune | Read the Cal Poly Athletics News Release

As if being a UFC and Mustang Athletics Hall-of-Famer wasn't enough, Liddell will is now facing a whole new kind of competition — on the hit ABC TV show “Dancing with the Stars.” The show pairs celebrities with professional dancers in a weekly dance-off to the ultimate title of DWTS champs. Liddell made his dance debut Sept. 21.

See the KSBY News interview with Liddell about "Dancing with the Stars" Read the UFC blog about Liddell's entry to the "Dancing with the Stars" arena See the YouTube Video of Liddell's Dancing with the Stars Debut Sept. 21

Urban Dictionary and the Cal Poly Grad Who Started It Going Strong

Aaron Peckham (B.S., M.S., Computer Science, 2005), who founded the Urban Dictionary Web site as a Cal Poly undergrad, has been all over the news this summer — on two coasts. The New York Times did a feature story on Urban Dictionary and the mega-hit it's become. The Web site now lists some 4 million words and gets about 2,000 new submissions per day. An army of volunteer editors sorts through it all. "Unlike most media (it's) made and used by actual young people — in droves," notes the Times story.

Peckham was interviewed by the Boston Globe for a feature on how his site and its users are defining towns and their images. Many of the most-read entries on Urban Dictionary are about cities and towns around the world, written with emotions that run deep, Peckham told the Globe. Out West, the Pasadena Weekly wrote about how Peckham filed a friend of the court brief in a lawsuit that won a recent victory for online freedom of speech.

Photo courtesy UrbanDictionary.com

Read the Boston Globe story - if you want some insight into Meffa and Swellesley and how cross-town rivalries and community reputations are showing up on Urban Dictionary
Read the New York Times story - for its interview with Peckham and observation on how the site is both a reflection and an influencer of pop culture

Math Alum is Now a Scientist On the Cutting Edge of Cancer Research

Eric Schadt (B.S., Mathematics, 1991) is one of the nation's leading scientists researching new ways to battle cancer and other complex diseases. In the world of science, he's now as famous for his brilliant new takes on the causes of disease as he is for his Silicon-Valley fashion style (rumpled polos and khakis). He credits the Air Force with sending him to Cal Poly after a shoulder injury bounced him from an elite rescue squad. Because his scores in an aptitude and an intelligence test were off the charts, the Air Force sent him to Cal Poly. He credits his time on campus with helping him to discover mathematics and genetics. In addition to his Cal Poly degree, he earned a doctorate in biomathematics from UCLA.

Read the New York Times profile on Schadt and his work

Career Moves

Alum is Named Director of Caltrans

Cal Poly alum Randell H. Iwasaki (B.S., Civil Engineering, 1982) took the reins of the California Department of Transportation on July 31. Iwasaki, 49, of Elk Grove was selected as one of Government Technology's "Doers, Dreamers and Drivers" for 2009. "Randy brings a tremendous amount of knowledge and practical experience at Caltrans to this position," said Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, "and I am confident he will be an effective director. He shares my commitment to updating and investing in our state's infrastructure to
meet California's growing needs and to create jobs at a time when we need them most." In addition to his Cal Poly degree, Iwasaki earned a master's in Civil Engineering from Fresno State. *Photo courtesy Caltrans.*

Read the story on GovTech.com

**Alum Elected to California State Bar Board of Governors**

Cal Poly alum Clark Gehlbach (B.S., Mechanical Engineering, 1989) of Roseville was among five attorneys chosen to serve three-year terms on the State Bar's Board of Governors. Gehlbach, 43, won the District 1 seat. He is a Placer County deputy district attorney and a board member of both the Auburn Union Elementary School District and the Placer Public Employees Organization. In addition to his Cal Poly degree, he earned his law degree at the UC Hastings College of the Law.

Read more on the State Bar Web site

**Alumna's Firm Makes the Cover of Landscape Architecture Magazine**

Arterra, a landscape architecture firm co-owned by alumna Vera Gates (B.S., Landscape Architecture, 1984), was featured on the cover of the January 2009 issue of Landscape Architecture magazine. Gates founded Arterra, a San Francisco-based design studio, in 2003 with business partner Kate Stickley. Arterra designs contemporary, resource-efficient residential gardens. Gates aims to preserve and restore native habitat; provide food, passive heating and cooling; and manage site water. *Photo Courtesy Landscape Architecture Magazine.*

Go to the January edition of the magazine

**Alum Named One of Alabama's 'Super Lawyers'**

F. Lane Finch, Jr. (B.S., Business Administration, 1984) was recently named to the list of 2009 Alabama Super Lawyers. The designation places him among the top 5 percent of Alabama's practicing lawyers. Finch specializes in business litigation and works in the Birmingham offices of Haskell Slaughter Young & Rediker. In addition to his Cal Poly degree, he earned his law degree at Hastings in 1987.

See more in the Birmingham News

**Business Alum Named One of NorCal's 'Superlawyers'**

L. Stuart List (B.S., Business Administration, 1984) made the Law & Politics 2009 list of Northern California's "Superlawyers." List is with the firm of McDonough Holland & Allen in Sacramento. The Superlawyers list is compiled through peer nomination and research. Only 5 percent of the Northern California Bar received the distinction. List practices estate planning and probate law, focusing on complex estate issues, preparing revocable and irrevocable trusts, assisting in formation and succession planning of family owned business entities, post-death administration of complex trusts and estates, and preparing estate and gift tax returns.

Read the story on Sacramento dBusiness news

**Bio Alum is Assistant Director at Santa Barbara Zoo**

Alan Varsik (B.S., Environmental and Systematic Biology, 1984) became the Santa Barbara Zoo's assistant director at the beginning of the year. While a student at Cal Poly, Varsik took a class in ornithology and has been inspired by condors ever since.

More on Varsik in the Santa Maria Times

**New NanoLogix Science Advisory Board Includes Engineering Alum**

NanoLogix, Inc. has announced the creation of its Science Advisory Board to help evaluate and target research and development efforts for products. The new NanoLogix Science Advisory Board Members include Chris Novak (M.S., Electronic and Electrical Engineering, 1998), NanoLogix director of Intellectual Property. He is a registered patent attorney and is licensed to practice law in several states. He earned his law degree from Marquette University, where he also earned a bachelor's in mechanical engineering. Novak is currently working toward a degree in biotechnical science.

Read the story on NanoWerk

**Flowsserve Names Ag Business Alum Vice President**
Flowserve Corporation, a leading provider of flow control products and services for the global infrastructure markets, has named Paul W. Fehlman (B.S., Business Administration, 1988) vice president for financial planning and analysis and investor relations. Fehlman has served as Flowserve's treasurer since 2005. In addition to his Cal Poly degree, Fehlman earned an MBA from Cornell University.

Read the story on Globe Investor

Alum Named Managing Partner of International Law Firm's Silicon Valley Office

International law firm Nixon Peabody LLP has named Gregory P. O'Hara (B.S., Business Administration, 1984) managing partner of the firm's Silicon Valley office. He is a partner in the firm's energy and environmental practice, focusing on cleantech startups, project development, corporate counseling and finance, and permitting. He has extensive transactional and energy regulatory experience. He also represents companies in the energy, chemical, and manufacturing markets in complex litigation and disputes.

Read more on O'Hara

Alum is Central Coast Winemaker of the Year

Alum Austin Hope (B.S., Fruit Science, 1996) was named the Central Coast's Winemaker of the Year at the California Mid-State Fair in Paso Robles. After earning his degree from Cal Poly, Hope joined the family business as assistant winemaker. Earlier this year he launched his own new label called Candor. He also announced the new name and identity of the parent company — Hope Family Wines — that includes his labels Treana, Liberty School, Westside and Austin Hope. In March he opened his first tasting room to the public. His Candor merlot also won Best Red Wine in the California Mid-State Fair wine competition.

Read The SLO Tribune story on Hope

Alumna is Cattlewoman of the Year on the Central Coast

Chris Jennings (B.S., Animal Science, 1992) of Paso Robles was presented the Cattlewoman of the Year award at the California Mid-State Fair. Jennings is an active volunteer in many areas. She chairs the Beef Ambassador contest and the Environment and Animal Care committee. She is now chairwoman of the Cattlewomen's grants and scholarships committee.

More on Jennings in the SLO Tribune

Saving the World

June Grad Biking from Alaska to Argentina for Charity

A recent Cal Poly graduate is embarking on a 15,000-mile solo bicycle ride from the northern tip of Alaska to the southernmost point of South America. David Sacher (B.S., Business, 2009) is setting out on a 10-month bike trip that starts in the Alaskan wilderness and goes through tundra, deserts, jungles and across plenty of borders to reach his final destination in Tierra del Fuego. Follow Sacher's trip on his website: www.earningthehorizon.com.

Read the full story on Sacher in The San Luis Obispo Tribune | See the KCOY News story

Passings

Well-Known San Diego Architect Homer Delawie

Influential architect Homer Delawie died June 26 of complications from Parkinson's disease at San Diego Hospice — a building he designed. He was 81. Delawie attended the (then) newly-created school of architecture at Cal Poly and graduated in 1951. He became Cal Poly's first licensed architect and went on to design many well-known spots in San Diego, including the fountain plaza at Balboa Park and portions of SeaWorld and the San Diego Zoo. His family has suggested memorial donations go to Cal Poly's College of Architecture and Environmental Design.

Read the news obituary in the San Diego Union-Tribune

LA Times Obituary: Navy Commander Duane Wolf

Engineering alum and Navy Reserve Cmdr. Duane Wolfe (B.S., Construction Management, 1980) was killed by a roadside blast on duty in Iraq in May. He had signed up for a tour of duty in Iraq after more than 30 years of service in various reserve units in the Navy and a career as a civilian deputy commander at Vandenberg Air Force Base. His memorial services, held at Vandenberg on June 2, were attended by hundreds and covered extensively by Central Coast
Search and Rescue Team Leader Meadows Killed in the Line of Duty

Central Coast Search and Rescue Team leader Christopher Meadows (B.S., Business Administration, 2007) was a Cal Poly graduate, a Central Coast paramedic and search and rescue volunteer. Meadows, 24, was killed in an ATV roll-over while responding to a call for medical help on the Oceano Dunes during Memorial Day weekend.

KSBY story on Meadows’ funeral

Want More Alumni In the News?

Subscribe to Cal Poly Update, the monthly e-newsletter for alumni, parents, and friends -- and read the Alumni in the News column every month. If you do not already receive Cal Poly Update, it is most likely because the university does not have your current e-mail address. Click here to subscribe to Update.