



# NAPS: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

**T**he Naval Academy Preparatory School (NAPS) in Newport, RI, is the fourth oldest school in the Navy (classes began in 1915) and is quite possibly the most travelled. It has lived in Newport, RI; San Francisco, CA; Norfolk, VA; San Diego, CA; back to Newport, RI; Port Deposit, MD; and back to Newport, RI, where it remains. Thousands of Naval Academy alumni have completed their year at NAPS, as have a few Coast Guard Academy graduates.

While informal preparatory classes began in 1915, the first official NAPS classes were established in 1920 following a provision signed by Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels. The provision allowed for nearly 100 ineligible midshipman candidates from the fleet to

gain entrance to the Naval Academy and an allowance by then-Undersecretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, for a preparatory school to be founded with the sole purpose of preparing sailors and Marines for entry to the Academy.

Established with the mission of enhancing “midshipman candidates’ moral, mental and physical foundations to prepare them for success at the U.S. Naval Academy,” the Naval Academy Preparatory School includes a 10-month course of instruction emphasizing mathematics, physics, English composition, chemistry and information technology.

While academic development is the main focus of the NAPS program, the importance of athletic success is equally emphasized. The “whole person”

approach that NAPS uses to ensure the development of each midshipman candidate is showcased outside of the classroom through the NAPS program of 11 varsity athletic teams known as the “Naval Rams.” Each midshipman candidate is expected to demonstrate improved physical fitness throughout the academic year, and the program provides daily opportunities for candidates to receive individual and team physical training.

In conjunction with academic preparation, the intense military, physical and character development programs produce quality graduates armed with the tools necessary to succeed in life at the Naval Academy and beyond. Further adding to the developmental training provided by the NAPS faculty and staff is the leadership and support provided to NAPSters by prior enlisted sailors and Marines. The Class of 2016 accepted 222 NAPS candidates, 27 were prior enlisted.

### **Today’s NAPSters, Tomorrow’s Midshipmen**

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Jin Park ’17 relocated to Beverly Hills, CA, with his family when he was five years old. Following graduation from high school in 2010, Park had hoped to attend the Naval Academy. However, the status of his United States citizenship made him ineligible. Unable to attend the Academy, Park enlisted in the Marine Corps and was later nationalized. Park’s commanding officer offered him a recommendation letter to the Naval Academy, and he was successfully accepted into the NAPS program in December 2011.

When asked how the NAPS program has prepared him for life at the Academy, Park replied, “I understand

that the most valuable leaders come from the Naval Academy, and I believe that the Naval Academy Preparatory School is a great foundation for midshipmen to become future leaders in the Marine Corps and Navy. I’m taking this as an opportunity to start over and create a new base for me to become a future leader.” In addition to the opportunity NAPS has provided Park to “start over,” the program has also provided him with a new family. Park stated, “NAPS is definitely a new family for me. We all have the same heartbeat, we do the same things and we never leave one another behind. Whenever someone falls down, everyone falls down. We learn from our mistakes, and we’re moving forward.”

The new family feeling that Park describes experiencing with his NAPS classmates is echoed by his fellow NAPSter, Toneo Gulley ’17.

Gulley, a recruited athlete out of high school, received collegiate offers to play football at several schools including Akron University and the Naval Academy. With a mother in the Navy, a strong desire to travel the world and an interest in engineering, the Academy was at the forefront of his preferred school choices. Because of his academic performance in high school, Gulley was told that before he could join the USNA Class of 2016 he would first have to attend and successfully graduate from the

NAPS program. After enlisting the help of a former NAPS graduate who works with his mother, Gulley learned as much as he could about the preparatory program before he ultimately decided to attend.

“One thing I’d really like to reiterate is what Park said about this being one really big family. I noticed it most because I recently lost a family member, and I relied on the NAPSters,” said Gulley.

Aside from growing as a team, Gulley and Park have also noticed personal academic developments while attending NAPS. Gulley said, “It teaches us a lot about time management and communication skills with professors and fellow students. It’s a lot of growing up. I know NAPS has helped us out.”

### **NAPS Alumni**

Following its informal establishment nearly 100 years ago, the NAPS program and its graduates have flourished.

Of those NAPSters in the classes of 1988 to 2012, 77.87 percent graduated, and the average class graduation rate for those years was 79.85 percent. Joseph Moreno ’93 is thankful to be included in that percentage.

Uninterested in attending college following his high school graduation, Moreno enlisted in the Marine Corps. Several years after enlisting Moreno was approached by a Marine Corps captain and member of the Naval Academy Class of 1970. The captain took six

### **Athletic and Scholarship Programs**

The Naval Academy Foundation provides another path to the Academy through its Athletic and Scholarship Programs. Recognizing superiority in athletics, the comprehensive scholarship program ensures that the Academy has the best scholar-athletes in the nation by providing one year of post-high school education to qualified young men and women. For more information visit [www.usna.com/asp](http://www.usna.com/asp).

Marines, including Moreno, to base education at Camp Pendleton where he explained that the NAPS program was an officer program being offered to them specifically because of their age and good performance. Age was a factor because, at the time, NAPS candidates could not be older than 22 (the age constraint was lifted in 1996).

Moreno spent close to eight months considering the captain's offer. He hadn't performed well academically in high school and knew college would be difficult. He ultimately decided that rejection was the worst that could come from applying to the Academy and that rejection was better than regret. He applied in the spring of 1988, and by

late May he received word that he had been accepted.

By July 1988, Moreno had orders, and he left camp Pendleton for NAPS in Rhode Island. The preparation NAPS provided him academically was tremendous. "It prepared me on so many levels, academically especially," explained Moreno. "I'd been out of high school for almost three years when I got to NAPS so I hadn't used things like algebra, chemistry and geometry. I really felt like the program made my mind much sharper. It provided me with much better test taking skills. When I took the SATs in high school, I think I scored about a 950 out of 1,600 and at NAPS I scored an 1,120."

Moreno believes his service years not only assisted him in maturing academically but as a leader as well. In fact, during one parent's weekend the mother of Moreno's plebe roommate approached his own mother and shared her appreciation for the guidance her son received from simply having a prior enlisted Marine as a roommate.

"If I'd gone straight to the Academy I truly doubt I would have made it through," said Moreno. "I really believe that NAPS was the key."

Fellow NAPS alumni Michael Castagnero '80 agrees. "If you would have asked me this 20 years ago, I don't know how much I would have appreciated the experience,"

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said Castagnero. “You know, you appreciate it more the longer you go on in life. I have four kids who graduated college from different schools. I can say that none of their experiences compare to the experience I had at NAPS and the Academy. If there is any institution that really wants you to succeed and goes above and beyond the call of duty, it’s the United States Naval Academy.

I cannot say enough about the people or the atmosphere I experienced at the NAPS program.”

Every NAPSter has a story. The paths that bring them to the program are never the same, and their experiences are as diverse as their backgrounds. However, there is one issue that evokes very similar responses from both current NAPSters and alumni. When asked what

advice NAPSters had for individuals contemplating attending the NAPS program, all replied with the same overall message... “do not be discouraged, and do not give up.” Captain Castagnero stated it best... “Do not feel discouraged if they send you to the prep school. It’s a wonderful stepping stone toward a successful life at the Academy. I wouldn’t trade the experience for the world.”



*NAPS 45th Reunion students, staff and guests*

## A Return to Bainbridge—NAPS Class of 1967 45th Reunion

*By Commander Robert A. Capra '71, USNR (Ret.)*

Against the backdrop of an unpopular war in Southeast Asia, growing unrest at home and a draft that would tear at our nation’s heartstrings, we were volunteers at a time when wanting to serve was considered unwise and unappreciated. We were all active duty sailors and Marines, some straight from jungle or highland combat, the brown-waters of Vietnam, or coastal waters of gun-line and air-combat support. A few were fresh out of boot camp, but all had volunteered to serve, many against the best wishes of family and friends. For those only days removed from armed conflict, there would be no banners or bands to welcome them home, no waving flags, no airport greeters and no “thanks for your service.” It was a different time; but it was our time. We embraced the challenge and opportunity orders to NAPS would afford. Of the 198 reporting, 109 would gain acceptance to the Naval Academy. Two would enter West Point. For the 87 that did not gain admission, most were handed return tickets to Vietnam or other support elements.

With the exception of three years between 1943 and 1974, the once grand Tome School on the grounds of the Naval

Training Center, Bainbridge served as the Naval Preparatory School and a springboard to many noteworthy service careers. It is a good bet all who knew the privilege of attending NAPS at Bainbridge are likely to admit that to this day, when crossing the Susquehanna River, they crane their necks to catch a glimpse of the bell tower. Sadly, time, tide, base closure and vandalism have extracted a heavy toll. While Tome Memorial Hall stands tired and worse for wear, on 13 October 2012 she was alive and vibrant. Towering above us with arms wide open, her bell long since removed but her heart still beating, she welcomed us home. As the NAPS Class of 1967 gathered for one final march-on, the long-awaited return to NAPS was on! As it would be our good pleasure to have our former commanding officer, a company officer and former instructors in attendance, we seized the moment to thank them for all they did for us so many years ago. The reunion was a check off the bucket list, a weekend to remember and an experience the class will continue to share with NAPSters old and new at [www.naps1967.com](http://www.naps1967.com).