



THE HONORABLE
DANIEL L. COOPER '57

“The Distinguished Graduate Award speaks to the exceptional leaders whom I have attempted to follow and to emulate.”

The tireless efforts of the Honorable Daniel L. Cooper '57 vastly improved the nation's veterans disability compensation processes.

As the under secretary for benefits at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Cooper instituted extensive changes to improve the delivery of those benefits. He also had direct oversight of the very successful Veterans Loan Guaranty Service, with foreclosure rates well below the national average; the improved and increased Servicemen's Group Life Insurance Program; and the modernization of the GI Education Bill.

That vital work was accomplished well after Cooper's retirement as vice admiral from a Navy career capped with service as commander of the Submarine Force, Atlantic Fleet, during which he worked closely with submarine and strategic commanders of NATO nations to improve water space management, submarine safety and classified operations execution during the Cold War.

Cooper, who also served as assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Undersea Warfare, was commanding officer of PUFFER (SSN 652) as it successfully tested the new Mk 48 ADCAP torpedo. Then in 1973, during transit home from a six-month deployment, PUFFER was directed to immediately return to WestPac to execute a highly classified mission reporting directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

After retirement from the Navy in 1991, Cooper became the vice president and general

manager of the Nuclear Services Division for Gilbert Associates Inc. He also served as a director and vice chairman of the board for USAA, president of the Naval Submarine League and on the advisory boards for the Applied Research Lab of Penn State University and the Applied Physics Laboratory of The Johns Hopkins University.

In 2001, the secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs asked Cooper to chair a task force studying ways to improve the veterans disability claims process. Upon completion of that study, he was nominated by President George W. Bush and confirmed by the Senate to serve as under secretary for benefits and was subsequently granted the title of The Honorable Daniel L. Cooper. In April 2002, he was sworn in. He served six years, longer than any predecessor in the position.

Cooper's awards include the Department of Veterans Affairs Exceptional Service Award, three Distinguished Service Medals, two Legion of Merit Medals and four Meritorious Service Medals.

He currently is working to develop the America's Heroes First Foundation. He and his wife, Betty, live in Wyomissing, PA. They have two children and six grandchildren. Daughter Amy is married to Captain Jeff Hughes '83, USN. Their son, Ensign Stephen Hughes, USN, graduated from the Naval Academy in 2010. Daughter Cynthia is married to Captain Donald Rose, USCG.