Decades at the Helm: APS 2023 Convention Honors APS Founding Executive Director Alan G. Kraut

May 25, 2023

Above: APS Founding Executive Director Alan G. Kraut on May 25, after receiving a special proclamation for his years of service to psychological science and APS.

The 2023 APS Annual Convention is the association’s 35th such gathering, held only months after the 1988 launch of APS itself. The following August, a young developmental psychologist named Alan G. Kraut became the association’s first executive director, going on to lead it through dramatic growth and influence over the next 26 years.

A commemoration in honor of Kraut helped kick off APS 2023—May 25–28 in Washington, D.C.—with the presentation of a special proclamation from the APS Board of Directors, which was originally slated to be presented in 2020 but delayed due to COVID-19. In remarks during the opening ceremony, APS President Alison Gopnik (University of California, Berkeley) recounted many of Kraut’s contributions
to APS and to psychological science more broadly, including the development of APS’s journals and increased federal support for behavioral science research and training, before welcoming him to the stage for brief remarks.

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“APS’s emergence as the leading organization for psychological science across all areas simply would not have happened without [Alan],” Gopnik said. “The Association and the field will be forever in your debt.”

The full proclamation:

WHEREAS, APS was established as the American Psychological Society in August 1988 by a vote of 400 psychological scientists; and

WHEREAS, for its first year APS was an all-volunteer group, with membership files stored in one Board member’s bathtub, the APS Newsletter (later the Observer) assembled at another’s home, and the first APS convention planned at still another’s; and

WHEREAS, Alan Kraut was hired in August 1989 as APS’s first employee; and

WHEREAS, Kraut consolidated the various operations of the organization and created APS’s first professional office (albeit over a liquor store in a dicey section of Washington, DC); and

WHEREAS, within a year or two APS was what Kraut described as the “fastest growing scientific society in the known universe,” with more than 5,000 members, flagship journal Psychological Science, a successful annual convention, and several agenda-setting summits (and an office above a magic shop in a better neighborhood); and

WHEREAS, within that same period, thanks to Kraut’s uniquely effective advocacy, APS became widely recognized as a forceful voice for psychological science in the policy arena; and

APS Founding Executive Director Alan G. Kraut shown promoting the 2015 APS Annual Convention in New York City.
WHEREAS, in the ensuing decades APS continued to grow on all fronts: membership, publications, convention, and impact on policy and public awareness of our science; and

WHEREAS, Alan Kraut retired from APS in December 2015 after nearly 30 years at the helm; and

WHEREAS, while Kraut’s accomplishments are too numerous to list here, his legacy is an international organization that today is more than 30,000 members strong, that through all of its activities protects and advances the interests of psychological science across all the areas within this diverse field (and still nicer offices); and

WHEREAS, it is clear that APS would not have become what it is had it not been for the early and sustained dedication, energy, and humor of Alan Kraut during his decades at the helm;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board bestows on Alan G. Kraut a special APS Lifetime Achievement award in recognition of his service and leadership of the Association.

“Let me say how wonderful it is to be here and see the accomplishments of APS,” said Kraut. “I can’t help but think that our founding mothers and founding fathers, some of whom are here tonight, would be so proud of the growth and accomplishments that together we’ve made.”

See the 2015 Inside the Psychologist’s Studio with Alan Kraut and Robert Levenson.

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