
Mathematics People

Hastie Awarded 2014 Parzen Prize

TREVOR J. HASTIE of Stanford University has been awarded the 2014 Emanuel and Carol Parzen Prize for Statistical Innovation for his “pioneering, influential, and outstanding research in statistical methodology and computational methods for statistics, including principal curves, generalized additive models, object-based computations for statistical models in S and R, least angle regression, graphical lasso, the elastic net for variable selection, and many other contributions to statistical methods; leadership in developing computational methods at the interface of computer science and statistics for the analysis of large data sets and for statistical learning.”

Hastie received his PhD from Stanford University in 1984 and has been professor of statistics and biostatistics at Stanford since 1999. He is a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, the South African Statistical Society, and the Royal Statistical Society. He is also a member of the International Statistics Institute. The prize is awarded in even-numbered years to North American statisticians who have made outstanding and influential contributions to the development of applicable and innovative statistical methods.

—*From a Parzen Prize announcement*

2014 Rosenthal Prize Awarded

The 2014 Rosenthal Prize for Innovation in Math Teaching has been awarded to RALPH PANTOZZI, a teacher at Kent Place School in Summit, New Jersey. He was awarded a cash prize of US\$25,000. The annual Rosenthal Prize for Innovation in Math Teaching is designed to recognize and promote hands-on math teaching in the upper elementary and middle school classrooms.

—*National Museum of Mathematics announcement*

Sloan Research Fellows Announced

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has announced the names of the recipients of the 2015 Sloan Research Fellowships. Each year the foundation awards fellowships in the fields of mathematics, chemistry, computational and evolutionary molecular biology, computer science, economics, neuroscience, physics, and ocean sciences. Grants of US\$50,000 for a two-year period are administered by each Fellow’s institution. Once chosen, Fellows are free to pursue whatever lines of inquiry most interest them, and

they are permitted to employ fellowship funds in a wide variety of ways to further their research aims.

Following are the names and institutions of the 2015 awardees in mathematics: BEN ADCOCK, Simon Fraser University; RICHARD BAMLER, University of California Berkeley; JACOB BEDROSSIAN, University of Maryland, College Park; BORIS BUKH, Carnegie Mellon University; JONATHAN CHAIKA, University of Utah; JIAN DING, University of Chicago; JÖRN DUNKEL, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; DAVID GERAGHTY, Boston College; JENNIFER HOM, Columbia University; TASHO KALETHA, Harvard University; LIN LIN, University of California Berkeley; EMMY MURPHY, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; VIVEK SHENDE, University of California Berkeley; ANDREW SNOWDEN, University of Michigan; JACOB TSIMERMAN, University of Toronto; VLAD VICOL, Princeton University; MELANIE M. WOOD, University of Wisconsin, Madison; HAU-TIENG WU, University of Toronto; TING ZHOU, Northeastern University; XINWEN ZHU, California Institute of Technology.

—*From a Sloan Foundation announcement*

National Academy of Engineering Elections

The National Academy of Engineering (NAE) has elected a number of new members and foreign associates for 2015. Following are the new members whose work involves the mathematical sciences. INGRID DAUBECHIES, Duke University, “for contributions to the mathematics and applications of wavelets”; DAVID J. SROLOVITZ, University of Pennsylvania, “for theory and simulation of microstructure and properties of materials and leadership in computational materials engineering”; DOROS N. THEODOROU, National Technical University of Athens, “for statistical-mechanical-based strategies and simulation algorithms to predict the structure and properties of polymers and zeolites”; MICHAEL J. TODD, Cornell University, “for contributions to the theory and application of algorithms for continuous optimization”; DAVID D. YAO, Columbia University, “for understanding of stochastic systems and their applications in engineering and service operations.” Elected as foreign associates were R. ALLAN FREEZE, R. Allen Freeze Engineering Inc., “for numerical modeling, stochastic subsurface hydrology, risk assessment, and optimization for groundwater engineering”; and MARTIN VETTERLI, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, “for development of time-frequency representations and algorithms in multimedia signal processing and communications.”

—*From an NAE announcement*

Virginia Halmos (1915–2015)

On January 19, 2015, in Los Gatos, California, the mathematical community lost one of its most enthusiastic and generous supporters, Virginia Halmos. She was the widow of the well-known mathematician, editor, author, and teacher, Paul R. Halmos, who died in 2006. She had turned ninety-nine in December.

Virginia Pritchett was born into a business and professional family in Omaha. Her father was a broker and an uncle a prominent attorney for the Union Pacific Railroad, with headquarters in Omaha. The uncle achieved the high social position of King of Aksarben (Nebraska spelled backwards), a philanthropic organization that still sponsors the annual Coronation Ball, a high spot in Omaha's social season. Her mother tragically died young of Huntington's disease, something that Virginia could have inherited but thankfully did not. Her early years were spent playing the privileged role of a girl who spent her summers with a great aunt who lived at New York's St. Regis Hotel and her winters at the Huntington Hotel in Pasadena, equally fashionable and warmer than Omaha.

When it was time to go to college, the family chose Vassar, where she became interested in logic; after graduation she moved on to Brown University, where she studied logic and the foundations of mathematics. At that time Brown was particularly hospitable to mathematicians who were fleeing Europe during the latter part of the Depression and the beginning of World War II, so it was a time when many great mathematicians passed through Providence—Bers, Feller, Hurewicz, Loewner, Pólya, Szász, and some who, like Tamarkin and Neugebauer, stayed on. By that time Virginia's family fortunes had waned with the Depression, and she often told about the ridiculously meager funds that were available to graduate students in mathematics in the late Depression. In 1945 she abandoned the degree program and married Paul Halmos. Together they followed his long career at such important mathematical centers as Chicago and Michigan (Ann Arbor). She was not the least bit embarrassed, though, when she described herself as a "housewife." While in that role, she never forgot her graduate school experience in a first-class institution like Brown. There and in stimulating visits to Princeton and other such institutions across the United States, as well as Europe and South America, Virginia and Paul met and developed close relationships with great mathematicians, especially John von Neumann at the Institute for Advanced Study, whose notes provided the basis for one of Paul's most successful books, *Finite Dimensional Vector Spaces*. On their way to Uruguay they were on the same ship as Richard Feynman, with whom they became good friends. Invited to dinner at Trinity College in Cambridge, Virginia was seated next to J. E. Littlewood at high table, an encounter that left a lasting impression. She lived long enough to be one of the last of her generation who could talk about firsthand encounters with legendary figures in mathematics. She had some regrets, however. She never met Hardy—he died in 1947—but based on his *Apology*, she became a lifelong admirer.

After spending short periods at University of Hawaii and UC Santa Barbara and a longer stay in Bloomington

at University of Indiana, Virginia and Paul finally made their way back to California sunshine in 1985 to join the faculty at Santa Clara University. Paul was still teaching and by then editing the *American Mathematical Monthly* and a couple of book series for Springer. He remained very professionally active. Initially, when they arrived at Santa Clara, Virginia was rather aloof and reserved, somewhat shy, but as time went by, she began to branch out and took part in politics and civic activities.

During the late 1990s, she and Paul started giving generously to mathematics—including several million dollars to the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) to develop the Carriage House Conference Center, a showplace center for lecture series, small meetings, workshops, and such, adjacent to the MAA headquarters in Washington and to the AMS offices there. This Conference Center was recently named the best conference center of its size in the United States. Simultaneously, they funded the J. L. Doob Prize given by the AMS for mathematical exposition, and only weeks before she died, Virginia added significantly to that endowment. It is named for Paul's dissertation advisor at the University of Illinois. Paul was Doob's first PhD student (1938), with MIT's Warren Ambrose his second, in 1939.

Virginia's philanthropies burgeoned, extending to several funds for scholarships, grants to faculty, prize funds, and other activities, all in the support of mathematics at one of the professional organizations or at Santa Clara University. Influenced by Warren Ambrose's oft-expressed aversion to prizes and such that are named for a donor, most of these carry the names of others, not of either Paul or Virginia.

After Paul's death Virginia (or "Ginger", as her best friends called her—a translation of the Hungarian word "gyomber" (ginger), which Paul used) stayed closer to her apartment at a senior residence, due largely to macular degeneration that eventually made her legally blind. There was no more riding around town on a bicycle. Nothing slowed down her mind, however. She most enjoyed her Scrabble games, but she also kept up on just about anything going on in the world. I don't recall ever telling her on my arrival for a visit something I thought newsworthy that had happened that day, that she did not know already.

She was endlessly fascinated by the group around G. H. Hardy at Trinity. Over the past year she knew I have been working, with a couple of colleagues, on a G. H. Hardy reader. Because she could no longer see the words on a page, I read draft chapters into a recording device, and she listened to them again and again. I visited her the Saturday evening before she died. She asked, "How is the Hardy project coming along?" We exchanged some Hardy stories. The last two I told her made her laugh heartily. I had not heard her laugh in months, but she found these very, very funny. When her Scrabble partner arrived, I left. Thirty-some hours later, on Monday morning, I returned only to be told that she had died twenty minutes earlier—in her sleep—with three close friends with her until the end.

—Gerald Alexanderson