

# Thompson and Uhlenbeck Receive National Medals of Science



Photograph courtesy of Krishnaswami Alladi.

**John G. Thompson**

On November 13, 2000, President Clinton announced the names of twelve individuals to receive the National Medal of Science, the nation's highest honor for achievements in research in science and engineering. Among those honored were two mathematicians, JOHN G. THOMPSON and KAREN K. UHLENBECK.

Thompson is the Graduate Research Professor of Mathematics at the University of Florida, Gainesville. He is considered one of the foremost group theorists of all time, and his name is associated with one of the monumental achievements of the twentieth century, the classification of all finite simple groups. He was awarded the Fields Medal in 1970.

Uhlenbeck holds the Sid W. Richardson Foundation Chair in Mathematics at the University of Texas at Austin. She made pioneering contributions to global analysis and gauge theory that resulted in advances in mathematical physics and the theory of partial differential equations. She is



Photograph courtesy of Karen Uhlenbeck.

**Karen K. Uhlenbeck**

considered a founder of geometry based on analytical methods. She is also a leader in encouraging young women to study mathematics.

The National Medal of Science was established by Congress in 1959. It was intended to be bestowed annually by the president of the United States on a select group of individuals deserving of special recognition by reason of their outstanding contributions to knowledge in the physical, biological, mathematical, or engineering sciences. Congress expanded this definition in 1980 to recognize outstanding work

in the social and behavioral sciences. In 1962 President John F. Kennedy awarded the first Medal of Science to the late Theodore Von Karman, professor emeritus, California Institute of Technology. Including the twelve 2000 winners, 386 have been awarded the Medal of Science. Since 1995 the following mathematical scientists have received the medal: Felix E. Browder, Ronald Coifman, Leo P. Kadanoff, Richard Karp, Cathleen S. Morawetz, Louis Nirenberg, Stephen Smale, and S.-T. Yau.

A committee of twelve scientists and engineers is appointed by the president to evaluate the nominees for this award. The National Science Foundation (NSF) administers the National Medals of Science for the White House.

*—Compiled from NSF press releases*