

John H. Conway Receives Nemmers Prize

JOHN H. CONWAY, von Neumann Professor of Mathematics at Princeton University, has been awarded the 1997–98 Frederic Esser Nemmers Prize in Mathematics from Northwestern University.

The Nemmers Prize in Mathematics is awarded to scholars who display “outstanding achievement in their discipline as demonstrated by major contributions to new knowledge or the development of significant new modes of analysis.” The prize carries a \$100,000 stipend and is presented every other year to a scholar who displays work of lasting significance in mathematics.

In connection with the receipt of the award, Conway will spend a period of residence at Northwestern, during which he will present a public lecture and interact with students and members of the faculty.

Conway, one of the preeminent theorists in the study of finite groups and one of the world’s foremost knot theorists, is the author of more than 10 books and more than 130 journal articles on a wide variety of mathematical subjects. He has also done important work in number theory, game theory, coding theory, tiling, and the creation of new number systems. The system of “Surreal Numbers”, which he invented, is the subject of a popular book by computer scientist Donald Knuth.

Conway is also widely known as the inventor of the “Game of Life”, a computer simulation of simple cellular “life”, governed by simple rules which give rise to amazingly complex behavior. It was popularized by Martin Gardner’s columns in *Scientific American* in the early 1970s and has had a large number of devotees ever since. Conway may well have the distinction of having more books, articles, and Web pages devoted to his creations than any other living mathematician.

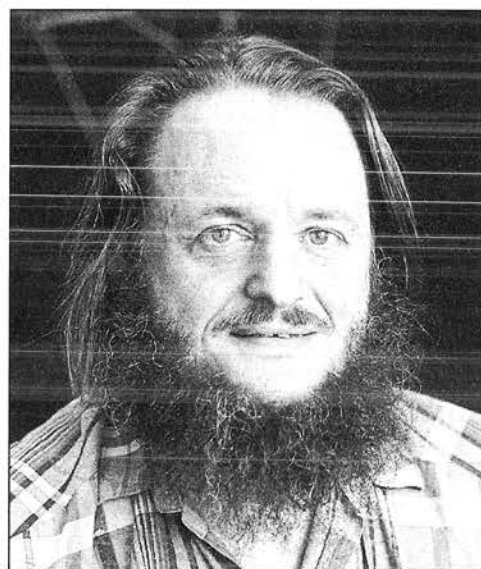
Conway was educated at Cambridge University and served as a professor of mathematics there prior to joining Princeton in 1986. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society and received the Pólya Prize of the London Mathematical Society.

Northwestern University awards Nemmers Prizes in mathematics and in economics. The 1997–98 Erwin E. Nemmers Prize in Economics was presented to Robert J. Aumann. Initiated in 1994, the prizes were made possible through bequests from the late Erwin E. Nemmers, a former member of the Northwestern University faculty, and his brother, the late Frederic E. Nemmers, both of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The 1998 selection committees were composed of faculty members from the University of California at Berkeley, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Yale University, and Northwestern.

Previous recipients of the Frederic Esser Nemmers Prize in Mathematics are Yuri I. Manin (1994) and Joseph B. Keller (1996).

Consistent with the terms of the Nemmers’ bequests, past recipients of the Nobel Prize and current or former full-time members of the Northwestern University faculty are ineligible for a Nemmers Prize.

—from Northwestern University news release



Photograph by Robert P. Matthews, courtesy of Princeton University.

John H. Conway