

In keeping with the very high stature of this award, it was being named after a person who embodied its meaning: John R. Koenig Lifetime Achievement Award. The first award was presented posthumously to Mr. John Koenig's family.

John was a technical giant in the fields of advanced materials development and characterization. He had a profound ability to understand fundamental material problems and could recall data and programs dating back decades that were useful to solve current programmatic challenges. He was customer focused, a problem solver, and always kept an eye out on developing new, world-class technical capabilities.

John was an Air Force Captain before joining Southern Research in 1973. In 1980, after a brief return to the Air Force research labs, he continued his 39 year journey with Southern Research as Director of the Materials Research Department. Following his long career with Southern Research, he worked as a consultant investigating methods to develop and test new advanced materials with multiple space applications.

John was a long-time collaborator with NASA who recognized him for numerous technical achievements over the years. In 2006, John received a Silver Snoopy Award, an award given by NASA astronauts for contributions that improve the success and safety of space flight. The award was tied to that year's launch of STS-121, a shuttle mission that tested new safety technologies adopted after the Columbia accident. At his retirement ceremony, John was referred to by NASA as a "national asset" and was praised for his work with NASA Marshall Space Flight Center on research and development initiatives, space flight component development, and critical analysis efforts.

John was presented with NASA's Director's Commendation Certificate for his expertise in high temperature materials and was recognized by several current senior managers at NASA who credited him as being a mentor to their own careers, as well as to the community. John was recognized by defense contracting giants like Orbital ATK (now Northrop Grumman) where he was instrumental in materials development for improved safety and cost reduction on the Space Shuttle's solid rocket boosters.

John received several other prestigious awards and recognitions throughout his career, including the AFRL Robert T. Scheartz Engineering Achievement Award and was named a semi-finalist for the Air Force's Charles J. Cleary Scientific Achievement Award for outstanding research contributions. He also served on high-level NASA investigation boards that explored the causes of accidents, including the 2003 Columbia shuttle incident, and formulated solutions and strategies to prevent future problems. He authored many technical papers and presentations, organized sessions at national and international events, and chaired international committees and working groups. He served on the NSMMS committee for many years.