

OBITUARY



ROSARIO PENICHE GARCÍA
1944 – 2000

Dr. Rosario Peniche García died of cancer last February 20, 2000 in México City.

Rosario worked for 30 uninterrupted years at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), mostly at the Instituto de Astronomía.

She decided to become an astronomer while very young and began her professional studies in 1962, getting her B.S. degree in 1968 with the thesis “Modelos de interiores estelares con técnicas de relajamiento”. This same year she assisted in the determination of the site for the Observatorio Astronómico Nacional in San Pedro Mártir, B. C. She completed her doctoral studies in the Facultad des Sciences in Nice, France and in 1984 presented her dissertation, “Etude Photometrique et Spectroscopique des Variables Delta Scuti”, which obtained honors (Tres honorable).

She began her astronomical career in the field of studies related to the Solar Wind, then studied stellar spectroscopy and finally, in 1979, joined the Variable Star Group which was then being formed in the Instituto de Astronomía. Her support in this group was fundamental in its development, not only due to her great observational and computational ability, but also for the special care she dedicated to each of her duties. The renown of the group increased so much that its field of action was extended outside the National University,

developing both national and international relations with investigators in the field, such as, M. A. Hobart and de la Cruz in the Universidad Veracruzana, Ings. Manuel Ríos, senior and junior from the Universidad de Zacatecas, T. E. Margrave from the University of Montana, USA, A. Yamasaki, University of Tokyo, Japan, the Variable Star Group from Ege University Observatory in Turkey, the Group from the Instituto de Astrofísica de Andalucía, Spain, the Short-Period Variable Group from the Konkoly Observatory in Hungary, and the Variable Star Group from the Nice Observatory in France. She collaborated, observed and published with each group. Recently the study of variable stars had been extended to include RR Lyrae, Cepheids and W UMa type stars. At her suggestion, a photometric study of open cumuli had been initiated in order to analyze the differences between variable stars and constant stars of the same age, chemical composition and metallicity and, in the long term, the degree of chemical enrichment of the Galaxy through the composition of each cumulus, with age, movements and Ap phenomena abundance determined for each one.

There were many collateral astronomical actions, including: function tests of the rapid photometer in MacDonald, USA, observations with the telescope located in Zacatecas, México and in the Observatories in Sierra Nevada and Calar Alto in Spain, and with the telescope at the Guillermo Haro Observatory in Cananea, México and the Haute Provence Observatory in France. She actively participated in the acquisition of the Danish spectrophotometer for the National Observatory.

Her teaching career started in 1967, the year in which she began working as a teaching assistant in the Facultad de Ciencias, UNAM where she continued teaching courses throughout her academic career.

However, Rosario's principal work cannot be measured in numbers: scientific articles, conference presentations, thesis supervisions, contributions to books in such quantity and quality that she was accepted into the National Researchers System (SNI) from its founding in 1984 and into the Mexican Science Academy in 1991, but rather, as Claudio Firmani, one of her first advisors kindly wrote me: *"I conserve in my memory a recollection of Rosario's profound humanity. She had a strong and at the same time sweet temperament, and both tenacity and honesty emanated from her actions. Her life wasn't easy, and it was in the difficult times when her love of life and serenity were most evident. If I think about the turbulence to which we are submitted daily, the manner in which she faced life, always with wise decisions, denoted her interior tranquility."*

This opinion is widely shared by her friends and students. We saw our lives enriched through knowing her.

Rosario, I will hold you always in my heart.

José H. Peña