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OBITUARY

JOHN PETER PHILLIPS
1949–2011

If we wanted to describe Peter using only two words we might choose "Indefatigable Scientist", his incredible productivity would certainly bear it out. But we would be forced to add: good friend, admired teacher, loving husband, a human being of many qualities, an enthusiast of classical music and archaeological sites, and many other interests besides.

He started his research career in his native England, obtaining his PhD in Astrophysics in Imperial College (University of London) in 1978. Afterwards he worked in various postdoctoral positions, holding Research Fellowships in Imperial, Queen Mary College (University of London) and the European Space Agency, ESTEC, Netherlands. He was a Visiting Professor in the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias, Spain before relocating to Mexico to work in the Instituto Nacional de Astrofísica, Óptica y Electrónica, Puebla, where he met Maru, his wife for 14 years, with whom he lived a happy and full life.

In 1997 he moved to Guadalajara, Mexico, where he created a research group in Astrophysics based in the Instituto de Astronomía y Meteorología at the Universidad de Guadalajara. He continued to work there for the rest of his life as a *Profesor Investigador Titular B* and the head of the group.

In Guadalajara he enjoyed one of the most successful periods of his academic life, publishing approximately 70 papers in international refereed journals between 2000–2010, and 4 more by April 2011. In total he published more than 150 papers in international refereed journals (more than 200 papers in total) with more than 1600 citations. He was named 'International Scientist of the Year 2004' by the International Biographical Centre of Cambridge, England.

His principal research interest was in planetary nebulae. According to a poster by Jiménez Fragoso in the 2009 National Astronomy Conference (Mexico) he was the world's 4th most productive researcher in this field. He made many important contributions, such as determinations of PNe distances, and radial density profiles. His other areas of interest included star formation, HII regions, supernova remnants and galaxies such as M82. He also analyzed large samples of such objects using new data from *Spitzer* and *Akari*.

Peter was from the county of Yorkshire in the north of England and displayed all the traditional grit and determination of Yorkshire people in his efforts to create, support and expand the new group of astronomers in Guadalajara, which now has 6 researchers included in the Mexican National System of Researchers. He was very proud to be awarded level III in this System in 2010, although sadly had little time to enjoy this distinction.

He supervised two successful PhD students in Spain and one in Mexico; one more student is now well advanced in his thesis. His students learnt an enormous amount from him, and his daily and constant supervision demanded the best work from them and their continuous improvement.

Although he liked to work in a quiet environment, he had a loud voice and a strong and contagious laugh; he was good company on social occasions, although he often preferred to work. There were many times when he told us the rather improbable story that when he was studying for his PhD in Imperial College he knew the musician Brian May, at that time a fellow student of his doing a PhD in infrared astronomy, who invited him to be keyboard player in the group Queen (Peter did not accept).

He died on 29 April 2011, at the age of 61, leaving his wife, Maru, and his mother and sister in the UK.

Simon Kemp, Silvana G. Navarro, & Luis J. Corral