

Donald Osterbrock, astronomer, dies at 82

January 29 2007

Donald Osterbrock, former director of Lick Observatory in California and author of a textbook on gaseous nebulae, has died at 82.

Osterbrock suffered a fatal heart attack on Jan. 11, his family told The New York Times.

Osterbrock's first major contribution to astronomy occurred while he was a graduate student at the University of Chicago in the early 1950s. He was part of a team that traced the spiral shape of the Milky Way.

After several years as a professor at the University of Wisconsin, Osterbrock became director of Lick Observatory on Mount Hamilton in 1973. He remained in that position until 1981 and served as a professor at the University of California in Santa Cruz from 1973 to 1992.

Osterbrock's textbook, "Astrophysics of Gaseous Nebulae and Active Galactic Nuclei" (1989), was published in 1989. A revised edition with astronomer Gary Ferland came out in 2006.

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