

British astronomer Patrick Moore dies at 89

December 9 2012, by Gregory Katz



In this Dec. 29, 2000 file photo, British astronomer and broadcaster Patrick Moore at his home in Selsey, West Sussex, England. British astronomer and broadcaster Sir Patrick Moore has died, aged 89, his friends and colleagues have said, on Sunday, Dec. 9, 2012. (AP Photo/ Kirsty Wigglesworth/PA File)

(AP)—British astronomer and broadcaster Patrick Moore died Sunday, according to friends and colleagues. He was 89.

He died at his home in the coastal town of Selsey in southern England, according to a statement released Sunday. No specific cause of death

was given, but he had heart problems and been confined to a wheelchair.

Moore was well known for his long-running BBC television show "The Sky at Night," which was credited for popularizing astronomy with generations of Britons. He had presented the show for more than half a century.

The statement said he was briefly hospitalized last week when it was determined no more treatment would help him. Instead, his wish to spend his final days at home were honored.

"Over the past few years, Patrick, an inspiration to generations of astronomers, fought his way back from many serious spells of illness and continued to work and write at a great rate, but this time his body was too weak to overcome the infection which set in a few weeks ago," the statement said.

It was signed by various staff members and friends, including Queen guitarist Brian May. May said Moore was irreplaceable and had stirred millions through his broadcasts.

"Patrick will be mourned by the many to whom he was a caring uncle, and by all who loved the delightful wit and clarity of his writings, or enjoyed his fearlessly eccentric persona in public life," May said.

In its obituary, the Daily Telegraph reported that Moore believed he was the only person to have met the first man to fly, Orville Wright, as well as the first man in space, Russian Yuri Gagarin, and the first man on the moon, the late Neil Armstrong.

Moore, who received a knighthood in 2001, had recently celebrated the 55th anniversary of his program. He only missed one episode, because of an illness caused by food poisoning. He was known for his trademark

monocle and his occasional xylophone performances and his frequently professed love of cats.

He wrote dozens of books using a 1908 typewriter he received as a gift when he was 8.

Moore had long expressed an interest in traveling into space, but said he wasn't medically fit to do so—he said he was so large that a special rocket would be needed.

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