

Dr. E. Margaret Burbidge elected 1981 president-elect of AAAS

October 21, 1980

Dr. E. Margaret Burbidge, director of the Center for Astrophysics and Space Sciences at the University of California, San Diego, Friday (Oct. 17) was elected as 1981 president-elect of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world's largest scientific organization.

Dr. Burbidge will assume her duties as president-elect during the AAAS meeting in Toronto, January 3-8, 1981. She will take over from the current president Dr. Allan Bromley, professor of physics at Yale, in 1982.

Her selection to head the 130,000 member organization makes her the third member of the UC San Diego faculty to be elected AAAS president in the last six years.

Dr. Roger Revelle, one of the founders of the campus and currently a professor of political science, was president in 1974, and Dr. William D. McElroy, former chancellor and presently professor of biology, headed the organization in 1976.

Dr. Burbidge, one of the world's foremost astronomers and a former president of the American Astronomical Society, becomes only the third woman president of the organization in its 122-year history. Dr. Mina Rees, a mathematician, was the first woman chosen for the honor in 1971, and famed anthropologist Dr. Margaret Mead, headed AAAS in 1975.

The British born Burbidge earned her Ph.D. at the University of London Observatory and spent five years at the University of Chicago before joining the UC San Diego faculty as an associate physicist in 1962. Prior to her stay at the University of Chicago, she spent two years as a research fellow at the California Institute of Technology.

She took a leave of absence from UC San Diego to spend 1972-73 as director of the Royal Greenwich Observatory in England.

She and her husband, Geoffrey, currently on leave from UC San Diego to head the Kitt Peak National Observatory in Arizona, shared the Warner Prize in astronomy in 1959. She was president of the American Astronomical Society in 1976-78, the first woman ever to occupy that post.

In 1964, Dr. Burbidge was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London and was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1978.

She is an observational astronomer whose current research interests revolve around the study of quasi-stellar objects (quasars) and the physical properties, energy sources and radiation mechanisms of active galaxies.

In addition to her teaching and research, Dr. Burbidge is director of the Center for Astrophysics and Space Sciences, founded at UC San Diego in 1979 as the campus' newest organized research unit.

In a statement prepared for Science magazine, the official publication of AAAS, Dr. Burbidge said she was seeking the presidency because of her "desire to help impart the excitement and wonder of science to the public and a belief that we must look at the problems society is facing now, and the problems of support for science."

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