

Margaret Burbidge chosen as one of four recipients of the Sesquicentennial Medal by Mt. Holyoke College

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ASTRONOMER MARGARET BURBIDGE HONORED BY MT. HOLYOKE COLLEGE

Dr. E. Margaret Burbidge, director of the Center for Astrophysics and Space Sciences at the University of California, San Diego and one of the world's most renowned astronomers, will be honored by Mt. Holyoke College in Massachusetts on the occasion of its 150th anniversary November 8.

Burbidge has been chosen as one of four recipients of the Sesquicentennial Medal to be presented at Mt. Holyoke's Founder's Day celebration. The other three honorees are: author Eudora Welty; Simone Veil, past president of the European parliament, and Eddah Gachukia, an educator and organizer of the Nairobi Forum which closed the United Nations Decade for Women.

All four women are being honored "for making significant contributions to human understanding." Each will receive a special medal designed specifically for the occasion.

Mt. Holyoke is an undergraduate liberal arts college for women which calls itself "the oldest continuing institution for women's higher education in the country." It was recently in the news when one of its faculty members, Joseph Brodsky, won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Burbidge is known for research that has contributed substantially to our basic understanding of outer space. Her work has earned her an international reputation and numerous distinguished awards, including the National Medal of Science in 1984, probably America's most prestigious scientific honor. She holds 11 honorary degrees.

Burbidge is probably best known for her research on the nature of quasars, distant mysterious star-like objects that, unlike ordinary stars, emit radio signals; for her theory of how stars produce heavy elements; and for her investigations-of the properties of galaxies, in particular for measuring their mass, rotation and elemental composition.

She is the co-principal investigator on the faint object spectograph, which will be aboard NASA's space telescope when it is launched. The instrument was designed to analyze the chemical composition of quasars, bodies in distant galaxies and other extremely faint objects in space.

Burbidge, one of a handful of faculty members appointed University Professor by the University of California, is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Philosophical Society and a fellow of the Royal Society of London. She was president of the American Astronomical Society from 1976-78 and president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world's largest scientific organization, from 1982-83.

Among the many honors bestowed upon her are the Catherine Wolfe Bruce Medal from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific; and, from the American Astronomical Society, its highest honor, the Henry Norris Russell Lectureship.

Burbidge, who was born in Davenport, England, earned her B.S. and her Ph.D. from the University of London. She joined the UCSD faculty in 1962 and was named the first director of the Center for Astrophysics and Space Sciences in 1979. She took a leave of absence in 1972-73 to serve as the first woman director of the Royal Greenwich Observatory in England.

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