

## Goodbye Margherita Hack, "The Lady of the Stars."

Chiara Morucci (July 01, 2013)



"The lady of the stars " Margherita Hack, a famous Italian scientist and astrophysicist died in Trieste, on June 29th, at the age of 91.

On June 29th, after being hospitalized for a week due to heart problems, the famous Italian scientist and astrophysicist, Margherita Hack died, at the age of 91.

Margherita was born in Florence and in 1945 she graduated from the [University of Florence](#) [2] in physics. Margherita's passion for stars and astrophysics brought her to write her thesis on the Cepheid variables.

Afterwards, she decided to follow her passion for astronomy and in 1964 she became a full time astronomy professor at the [University of Trieste](#) [3], which she remained until she retired in 1998. During her lifetime she wrote academic science books as well as articles for prestigious international



astronomy magazines.

In 1978 she founded the bimonthly magazine [“L’Astronomia”](#) [4](The Astronomy) and later on, together with Corrado Lamberti she directed the scientific magazine “Le Stelle” (The Stars).

She was the first Italian woman to hold the position of Director of the Observatory of Trieste, from 1964 to 1987. This prestigious position brought her to international recognition. She was a member of prestigious European and American scientific observatories such as [ESA](#) [5] and [NASA](#) [6].

Margherita was internationally renowned for her scientific studies on stars and asteroids which is why she was called “The lady of the stars.” Her research was fundamental for the spectral classification of many stars and the asteroid 8558 Hack is named after her. She was blessed to be endowed with the ability of explaining complicated astronomic and scientific concepts in a way that everybody could understand it.

Some time ago, in an interview Margherita declared: “I’m an atheist in the sense that I do not believe in God, I do not believe in the afterlife. I believe that the soul is our brain. It’s impossible to scientifically prove either that God exists, or that God does not exist. The idea of God does not convince me. I prefer to believe that there is matter and that matter has the properties we observe.” “When I pass away, if I meet God, I will tell him I was wrong” she added.

Margherita was not only a great physicist but also a liberal activist. She waged battles to legalize abortion and divorce in Italy. She had been an important voice for gay rights. Italian President Giorgio Napolitano said: “Ms. Hack had been a high-level personality in the world of scientific culture and at the same time, she represented a strong example of civil passion, leaving a noble fingerprint in public debate and in the dialogue with citizens, she is an example to be followed.”

Emma Bonino, the current Italian Foreign Minister gave the last goodbye to Margherita with these words: “With Margherita, vanishes not only a great scientist, but a free spirit, deeply and intellectually honest.”

Goodbye “Lady of the stars,” hope you are finally among your beloved stars now, and that you are enjoying this new journey while you are certainly very missed down here on earth.

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[4] <http://www.eanweb.com/rivista-astronomia/>

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[6] <http://www.nasa.gov/>