



Marian Nedra Whitehead, Professor Emerita of the Department of Physics, Passed Away September 19, 2018



Marian N. Whitehead, Professor Emerita of the Department of Physics, passed away September 19, 2018. She was a member of the faculty from 1964 to 1985. She served as Department Chair from 1969 to 1971.

Marian Nedra Whitehead

September 5, 1923 – September 19, 2018

Marian Nedra Whitehead, a particle physicist at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and Stanford Linear Accelerator in the 1950's and 1960's, and professor of physics at East Bay State University from 1964-1984, passed away peacefully on September 19, in Oakland, California, just after her 96th birthday.

Dr. Whitehead was a graduate of Reed College (1945), and earned her masters at Columbia University, and her doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley (1951). At that time she was one of the few women in nuclear and experimental physics. Her research was part of the worldwide effort in physics that changed understanding of elementary particles.

Marian Whitehead's career included a year as a post-doctorate fellow in the Louis Alvarez physics group at UC Berkeley, two years on a Fulbright-Hays post-doctoral fellowship in Bologna, Italy, a year at the Stanford Linear Accelerator where she was in charge of the health physics group. Both as a researcher and [teacher](#), Dr. Whitehead was highly appreciated for her boundless energy, her authoritative presence, and her adherence to high standards in research and teaching. She was particularly known for her ability to listen attentively to her students, and she loved the diversity and energy in the Hayward State student population.

While at East Bay State University, Dr. Whitehead met research physicist, Burns MacDonald. Married for 43 years, their life together included frequent travel. Her retirement at age 62 started a new phase as Burns took a job in Los Angeles. In 1992, they returned to their home and friends in Oakland, including the weekly "Wednesday Night" supper group that has been meeting since they were all grad students at Cal.

Marian Whitehead was an active bird watcher, Sierra Club member and hiker, a member of the Unitarian Church in Los Angeles, and an influential member of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at UC Berkeley. She served on OLLI's first curriculum committee and designed a peer-led study at OLLI, called TEO (Teaching Each Other).

Dr. Whitehead was the daughter of two Los Angeles high school teachers. Her older brother, Theodore Carleton Whitehead, an administrator at Reed College and fundraiser for the Sierra Club, passed away in 2007. She is survived by her husband Burns Macdonald.

Published in San Francisco Chronicle on Jan. 31, 2019

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