

# John Louis Perdrix (1926–2005)

Australia lost one of its leading experts on the history of astronomy with the passing on 2005 June 27 of John Louis Perdrix, in Dubai after a relatively short battle with cancer.

John Perdrix was born in Adelaide on 1926 June 30, and after completing his schooling at Xavier College in Melbourne attended Melbourne Technical College where he studied chemistry. Initially he worked in industry,

but in the early 1970s he joined the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. Shortly after, the Division of Minerals and Geochemistry relocated to Perth, and John spent the remainder of his working life there.

From his teenage years, John had a passion for astronomy, and honed this through the Astronomical Society of Victoria. A long-time Councillor, he served as President in 1960–1961 and again in 1967–1968. While living in Melbourne he also was a member of the Victoria Branch of the British Astronomical Association, which existed from 1951 to 1963, serving as Secretary/Treasurer from 1954 until the group's demise. After moving to Perth, John continued his role as a catalyst for local astronomy by founding the Astronomical Society of the South West. He also was a co-founder and stalwart of the triennial National Australian Convention of Amateur Astronomers (NACAA).

At the international level, John was member of the BAA (joining in 1953) and a Fellow of the RAS. He was also a member of the IAU and active in Commission 41 (History of Astronomy), a rare distinction for an amateur astronomer. Throughout his life, he was a strong advocate of close amateur-professional relations.

John's principal astronomical passion was the history of astronomy, and over the years he published a succession of research



papers, mainly about aspects of Australian astronomy. These included key papers on Melbourne Observatory's Great Melbourne Telescope, and on the Australian branches of the BAA (see references).

Apart from editing the *Journal of the Astronomical Society of Victoria* for many years and producing various NACAA proceedings, between 1985 and 1997 John issued the *Australian Journal of Astro-*

*nomy* through his own publishing house, Astral Press. From 1998, Astral Press also produced the *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*, until this journal was transferred to James Cook University in early 2005.

Always the consummate gentleman, John possessed a sharp intellect and a keen sense of humour. When cancer was diagnosed this did not deter him and he continued to pursue his astronomical interests.

With the cancer seemingly in remission in early 2005 he decided to make a long-anticipated trip to St Petersburg, and was returning to Australia when the illness aggressively reappeared. He was taken off the aeroplane at Dubai, and died peacefully in Rashid Hospital three days later. He was just three days short of his seventy-ninth birthday.

John was wonderful company and a dear friend, and will be greatly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing him. Our condolences go to his six children, Louise, John, Timothy, Fleur, Lisa and Angella.

## Wayne Orchiston

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## References

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