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# **João Evangelista Steiner (1950–2020)**

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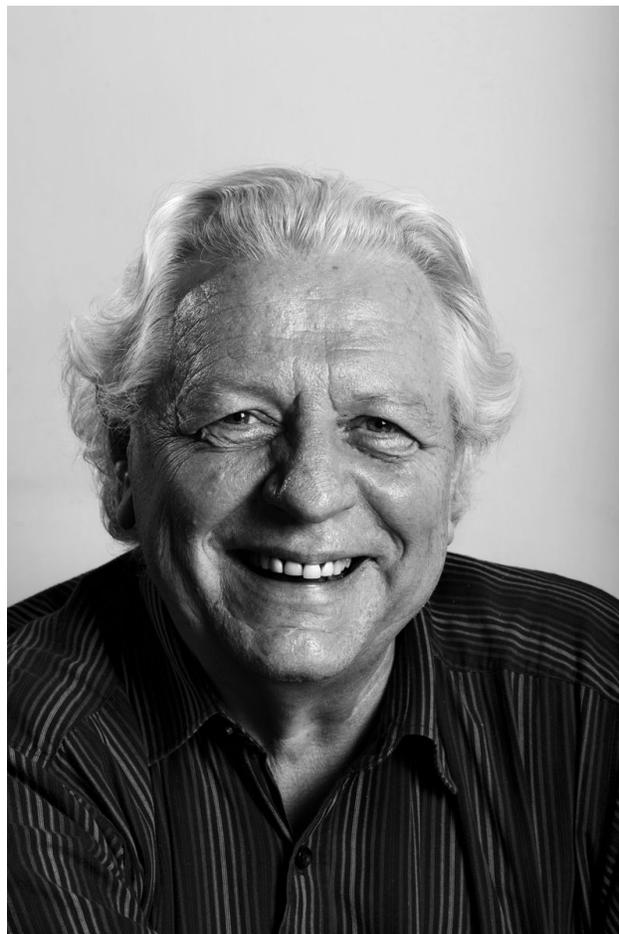
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**João Steiner, a Brazilian astronomer who dedicated his life to developing and promoting science and education died on September 10, 2020, at the age of 70.**

João Evangelista Steiner was born to a family of farmers in São Martinho on March 1, 1950, a small town in the state of Santa Catarina in the south of Brazil. He had an inquisitive and curious mind, and his passion for nature and natural sciences led him to study Physics as an undergraduate at the University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil. Believing that the universe was the best laboratory for the study of Physics, he continued his studies at USP, obtaining his Master's degree in Astronomy in 1975 and his Doctorate in Astronomy in 1979. He conducted post-doctoral research at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, where he interacted with observers, theorists, and instrument builders.



*Credit: Léo Ramos Chaves/Pesquisa FAPESP*

Steiner was a professor at the Institute of Astronomy, Geophysics and Atmospheric Sciences (IAG) at USP, where he carried out important research in quasars, active galactic nuclei, and cataclysmic variable stars. He leaves a legacy of dozens of young scientists that he inspired, guided, and supervised.

Steiner occupied leadership roles in several scientific organizations in Brazil, including Director of the National Laboratory of Astrophysics (LNA, after the Portuguese), Secretary of the Ministry of Science and Technology (MCT), Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies (IEA-USP), President of the Brazilian Astronomical Society (SAB), and Director of Space and Atmospheric Sciences of the National Institute for Space Research (INPE).

In addition, he was a member of the administrative council of the National Center for Energy and Materials Research (CNEPEM), a member of the Brazilian National Academy of Science, a member of The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), and an honorary member of the American Astronomical Society. He was awarded the Order of Rio Branco in 2001 by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, in 2010, the Ministry of Science and Technology awarded him the National Order of Scientific Merit.

Throughout his career he developed international partnerships that were fundamental for the Brazilian and international astronomical communities, including the Southern Astronomical Research Telescope (SOAR), the Gemini Telescopes, and more recently, the Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT). Being a visionary, Steiner understood the value of investing in the future of astronomy. He had a pivotal role in securing Brazil's participation in the GMT through the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP). At the time of his death, he was the coordinator of the GMT FAPESP Project.

Two of his recent projects focused on science education and outreach. Acknowledging the role that teachers play in promoting science, Steiner spearheaded a program to train school teachers in science across Brazil. He also had a weekly program on the USP radio station entitled "Entender Estrelas" ("Understanding the Stars"), which reached lovers of astronomy all over Brazil.

Steiner died of a heart attack during a morning walk in São Martinho, the farmland he loved, surrounded by beautiful mountains and a burbling river with crystalline water.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 45 years, Eliana, their sons Renato, Ronaldo and Eduardo, their daughters-in-law Cosima and Natália, and two grandchildren, Johanna and Bernardo who were the joy of his life. He is deeply missed by his family, friends, and all those whose lives he touched. His energy, determination, and enthusiasm were contagious. He truly was a force of nature, and our world is emptier without him.

## References

- <https://www.iag.usp.br/joaosteiner>
- <https://www.iag.usp.br/noticia/joao-steiner-nota-falecimento>