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Kevin C. Hurley (1942–2021)

Celia Beasley

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**Kevin Hurley died on Friday,
December 24, 2021, of cancer.**

Dr. Kevin Hurley, 79, of Berkeley, passed away on December 24, 2021 after being diagnosed with incurable cancer. Kevin was a prominent astrophysicist and devoted husband, father and grandfather.

Kevin was born in 1942 in New York. He and his mother, Anitra, moved to California, where he attended Lick Wilmerding High School in San Francisco, followed by Berkeley High School, where he graduated in 1960 (despite having failed his physics class). He then attended the University of California at Santa Barbara from 1960–1963, did a year in Göttingen, Germany, then transferred to University of California at Berkeley where he received a bachelor's degree 1966, followed by a Ph.D. in 1970, both in Physics.

Photo courtesy of Celia Beasley.

In December of 1965, as a Teaching Assistant in the Physics Department at UC Berkeley, Kevin first spoke on the phone with Janet Strauss, a setup for the blind date that followed in April of 1966. They married in 1969. In 1972, Kevin and Janet moved to Toulouse, France, where Kevin was first a post-doctoral student and then Maître de Recherche (Research Physicist) at the French National Science Organization, as well as a visiting professor at Paul Sabatier University. Their two daughters, Sabine and Alison, were born and raised in Toulouse.

In 1987 Kevin and his family returned to Berkeley where he joined the Space Sciences Laboratory at the University of California at Berkeley and became one of the lab's most prominent researchers in the field of high energy astrophysics, including gamma-ray bursts. Kevin was known for his foundational discovery of the transient repeating burst sources, which are now accepted by the astrophysical community as Magnetars, sources of major interest in today's era of time-domain astronomy. He founded the Interplanetary Network (IPN), which uses spacecraft in both Earth-orbit and elsewhere

in the solar system to establish the locations of gamma-ray bursts. He was the principal investigator for the solar and cosmic gamma-ray burst experiment aboard NASA's Ulysses mission. Over the course of his career, he authored or co-authored over 450 articles in refereed journals, books, and conference proceedings and received many honors and awards, including multiple awards from NASA. In 2018 he transitioned from full to part time at SSL and worked there every morning until a few weeks before his death.

In his rare spare time, he delighted in time with his family, and enjoyed a passion for wildlife photography, travel, old cars and spoiling his granddaughters whom he loved very much. He most recently reconnected with what he termed “my twelve-year-old self” by setting up his electric trains from his childhood as well as many purchased in France in a computerized, high-tech layout that he was in the middle of perfecting when he died.

Kevin was cremated at Pacific Interment in Emeryville. He is survived by his wife Janet, daughters Sabine and Alison, and Sabine's daughters, Mila and Lena Rose.

Adapted, with permission of the author, from [the original family obituary](#).