

## Dr. Robert Harrington

Dr. **Robert Sutton Harrington** was an astronomer with the United States Naval Observatory. He had multiple theories on Planet X over the years including [The Location of Planet X](#) 1988 and [The Search for Planet X](#) 1991. He based his theories on the movements of the outer planets and a possible influence from an unknown body in the solar system.

These published and publicly available papers by the Naval Observatory astronomer are even referred to by some Planet X proponents as “NASA internal documents”!

Oddly, it is his death that the Planet X crowd refer to more often than his theories. This seems to stem from a white paper written by [Neil Freer](#) titled [The Alien Question: An Expanded Perspective](#).

In this white paper [Freer](#) wrote:

“It is interesting that Harrington dispatched an appropriate telescope to Black Birch, New Zealand to get a visual confirmation, based on the data leading to the expectation that it would be below the ecliptic in the southern skies at this point in its orbit. On Harrington’s early death the scope was immediately called back --- as one observer noted, “almost before he was cold”. “

**Neil Freer** is an English professor who has written several books about the works of Zecharia Sitchin.

*Zetataalk* takes this a step further saying:

“A Phil Schneider assassination is evident, as is the death of Robert Harrington”.

[In Blindsided](#), **Mark Hazlewood** says:

“What obvious message do you think was sent to Sitchin, Van Flandern and anyone else in the know, when Harrington suddenly met with an early death at the same time the scope was being pulled back? Sometimes an early death is meant to accomplish more than just keeping one person quiet. “

Yes, more conspiracy theory on the cover-up of Planet X. The easy explanation why no astronomer or scientist will support the silly Zeta planet.

Zetataalk recently added a new page on Harrington with a rambling conspiracy theory and the usual reference of “his cohorts sang whatever tune the CIA wanted” to justify why astronomers no longer feel that a Planet X exists.

The truth of the matter is that [Robert Harrington](#) died January 23, 1993 of esophageal cancer. Nothing mysterious or sinister about this. There is also no evidence of a telescope being dispatched to Black Birch, New Zealand. The United States Naval Observatory already had an observatory at Black Birch.

In his book [Genesis Revisited](#), Sitchin says:

“On January 16, 1990, Dr. Harrington reported at the American Astronomical Society meeting in Arlington, Virginia, that the U.S. Naval Observatory team has narrowed its search for the tenth planet to the southern skies and has announced the dispatch of a team of astronomers to the Black Birch Astronomic Observatory in New Zealand.”

Note: this was 3 years before Harrington’s death.

**Harrington** in his 1991 paper [The Search for Planet X](#) wrote about the search already being underway and it would continue from New Zealand.

Why New Zealand? Harrington’s latest calculations showed that if Planet X existed it would be in the region of Centaurus and Hydra, a region which is too far south for Tombaugh to have searched in the 1930s. This is also NOT the location of the Zeta Planet X. Not even close.

Are we looking at dishonesty here? Or simply more poor research? That is difficult to say. What is obvious is that the Planet X crowd does like to take the truth and twist it to suit their needs.

**Robert (Bob) Harrington** died on Jan. 23, 1993 after a short, but determined, battle against esophageal cancer. He left his wife, Betty, two daughters, a sister, and his parents.

Bob was born near Newport News, VA. His father was an archeologist, and Bob often recounted going on "digs" with his family in the States. He attended schools in Richmond, VA, and graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School there in 1960. Afterwards, he went to Swarthmore College, (previously attended by his mother and aunt and uncle). Bob stated that he was interested in astronomy from such an early age that he couldn't remember the onset.



#### [Asteroid \(3216\) Harrington](#) (1980 RB)

Discovered 1980 Sept. 4 by E. Bowell at the Anderson Mesa Station of the Lowell Observatory.

Named in honor of Robert S. Harrington, astronomer at the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington and director of the program to determine parallaxes and proper motions of faint nearby stars. A leading investigator on the orbital characteristics of Pluto's satellite and the mass of Pluto, he has made observational and theoretical studies of the motions of the planets and satellites and likely evolutions leading to the current distribution of the planets. He has also investigated the possible existence of another principal planet in the solar system.

Minor Planet Circular (1986 Sept. 18): 11160

At Swarthmore he naturally came under the influence of **Peter van de Kamp** and **Sara Lippincott** of Sproul Observatory, and consequently was well-schooled in the classical techniques of photographic astrometry, including observing with the 60cm refractor, as well as measuring and reducing the results. His first published scientific paper (jointly with van de Kamp) was a study of the quintuple system Xi Scorpii.

In 1962 Bob accompanied van de Kamp to a summer institute at Wesleyan University, where he performed the duties of a teaching assistant, and where he met W.H. Jeffreys, then a graduate student, who was soon to become Bob's thesis advisor.

Following his 1964 graduation from Swarthmore with a B.A. in Physics, Bob enrolled in the graduate program in astronomy at the University of Texas in Austin. There his interests quickly turned to theoretical dynamical astronomy under the tutelage of Jeffreys. While Bob retained a strong interest in this subject throughout his entire career, he made many contributions to other astronomical fields, and, in addition to Jeffreys, was especially influenced at Texas by H. Smith and D. Evans.

Following the award of his doctorate in 1967, Bob applied for a job with the Nautical Almanac Office of the U.S. Naval Observatory, because, as he explained, that organization represented interests closest to his own. Unfortunately, the Nautical Almanac Office had no positions available, but V.M. Blanco, then director of the Astrometry and Astrophysics Division, quickly offered him a position. He remained in this organization and its successors throughout the rest of his career.

Bob initially took part in the routine photographic double star program, and also observed asteroids with the 38cm astrograph.

Bob was married in 1976 to Betty-Jean Maycock, who holds a doctorate from the University of Maryland, as well as being an Olympic gymnast (Rome, 1960), and a gold medalist in the goodwill competition in Moscow in 1961. Two daughters, Amy and Ann, were born of the union.

Undoubtedly, if asked, Bob would point to his work in dynamical astronomy as being not only his most significant contribution, but also as being the most fun. Beginning with his very first paper, and continuing until nearly his last, Bob was concerned with the dynamical interactions in multiple star systems. The extensive numerical integrations required by this work entailed use of a great amount of computer time on the slow machines then available. Consequently, Bob often was found loading programs or retrieving results at all hours of the night or day, as well as on weekends and holidays.

Within a few years of his arrival, Bob was put in charge of the plate measurements and reductions for the extensive parallax program being carried out with the 155cm reflector in Flagstaff, and therefore was a coauthor of many series of publications dealing with parallaxes and proper motions of faint stars. Today this effort largely defines both the lower main and white dwarf sequences of the HR diagram. An important by-product of this work was the detection of a number of unseen companions through their perturbations of the visible stars.

Considerations on the stability of the solar system led Bob to collaborate with **T.C. Van Flandern** in studies of the dynamical evolution of its satellites, and to an eventual search for "Planet X", conjectured to lie beyond Pluto and to be responsible for small, unexplained, residuals in the orbits of Uranus and Neptune. Late in his career Bob seemed quite skeptical of such an object, however.

Nevertheless, the program instituted at Flagstaff to photograph the outer planets and their satellites led to the spectacular discovery in 1978, by **J.W. Christy**, of Pluto's satellite. Bob's inspired guess that the period of revolution matched the already known period of light variation resulted in rapid determination of the orbital elements, and hence the mass of both planet and satellite.

Bob's eclectic astronomical interests led to papers on:

- galaxies
- sunspot areas
- solar-wind flows
- archaeoastronomy
- earth tides
- distribution of comet orbits
- positions of minor planets
- and even the geodetic coordinates of the Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory...

He served as a joint editor of four books, was a member of the AAS, the IAU (where he served on four commissions), the Planetary Society, and the Society of Sigma Xi. He also served on the astrometry team for the International Halley Watch, and on the local organizing committee for the 20th General Assembly of the IAU.

Although he accepted administrative duties in his later years, Bob was not very comfortable doing bureaucratic work. He was much happier doing science, and was always a cheerful and helpful influence on his colleagues. He was a popular speaker about astronomy in his local school system, as evinced by the many teachers from there that attended his funeral.

Those of us who worked with him know we were privileged, and we shall miss him.

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