

Mike Simon

September 28, 1940 - April 18, 2025

Mike was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia when it was still a free country. His parents, Ivan and Jarmila, were born there when Prague was still a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Ivan and Jarmila both earned doctorates in Physics at Charles University. Weeks before the Communist takeover that would last for 40 years, Ivan bribed officials with paintings by his father to allow the family to leave for a “one year” postdoc. Mike age 8, his five-year old sister Helen, and his parents arrived in Boston in February, 1948 in a huge snowstorm. The Charles River reminded them of their beloved Vltava.

Mike completed his education at Boston Latin, Harvard, Cornell, and Cal Tech. He arrived at Stony Brook in the fall of 1969 with his first wife Martha Nichols who took a position in Chemistry at Brookhaven Labs. Their son Dan spent his infancy sleeping in a file cabinet drawer in Mike’s office in Earth and Space Sciences. Mike served as Chair of the department from 1980 to 1983. He married Anne Byrnes, Director of Stony Brook’s University Counseling Center “to help him survive being Chair.” From 2006 until his death Mike worked as a Research Associate in the Department of Astrophysics, at the American Museum of Natural History. One of the many things he loved about the AMNH was being within walking distance of the New York Philharmonic. Mike had always kept detailed notes on every performance he heard over more than 50 years. Another was sharing an office with Steve Soter, a friend of 60 years.

Mike was a very modest person. It was true that he rode his bike to work, dug for clams in Conscience Bay and played the piano “not very well.” He said he didn’t know how many academic papers he had written (maybe somewhere over 200?) and continued to publish after his retirement in 2008. His last first author publication was Simon et al., 2019, *Astrophysical Journal*, “Masses and Implications for Ages of Low-mass Pre-main-sequence Stars in Taurus and Ophiuchus”

His last co-author paper was Tofflemire et al., 2024, *Astronomical Journal*, “Sites of Planet Formation in Binary Systems. I. Evidence for Disk-Orbit Alignment in the Close Binary FO Tau”

Mike is survived by his wife Anne, his sister Helen, his son Dan and Dan's wife Mary, and three grandchildren, Katherine, Clare and Tom.

Mike did not want a memorial to be held for him. He said that the conference he organized and held on campus in the Wang Center in June, 2011 would be his memorial. All of his Ph.D students presented at "Mike's Event". There is a photograph in his department office along with the champagne bottles from their dissertation defense celebrations.

About a week before his death Mike prepared a card for Anne to complete. The image is a drawing his father did sometime in the 60s when astronomers were still going up in small planes.