

*it's with a heavy heart that I pass along the [sad news](#) that pioneering astronomer Jerry Nelson, UC Santa Cruz professor emeritus of astronomy and astrophysics, died Saturday, June 10, at his Santa Cruz home.*

*Jerry was known worldwide for his innovative telescope designs. He was the first to propose the revolutionary segmented mirror design of Keck Observatory's twin 10-meter telescopes, and his legacy will live on in the planned Thirty Meter Telescope.*

*Jerry had been with us on campus since 1994—he also was founding director of our Center for Adaptive Optics—and was among those who contributed to the international acclaim of our Astronomy and Astrophysics Department. His work empowered astronomers throughout UC system. I truly believe he owns a piece of all discoveries made on the Keck telescopes over the past 20 years. His design was genius.*

*The honors he received are considered the most prestigious in his field: membership in the National Academy of Sciences, the Benjamin Franklin Medal in Electrical Engineering, and the Kavli Prize in Astrophysics, which is astronomy's Nobel Prize.*

*Jerry was also a good friend—personable, collegial, and modest for someone of such renown. I will miss our conversations, his easy-going smile, and those loud Hawaiian shirts he always wore.*

*He will be dearly missed by his wife Jocelyn, his family, friends, colleagues, and students.*

*A [symposium](#) to honor Nelson was already in the works for July 13-14 in Santa Cruz, and will feature talks by many of the eminent astronomers who worked with him over the years. The gathering will now serve as a memorial celebration of his life.*

*Ad Astra, Jerry.*