

Famous radio astronomer Frank Drake dead at 92: Pioneer of modern-day search for extraterrestrials is called a 'titan in life' by his daughter who said he died peacefully at home

- Frank Drake, a radio astronomer, died Friday at the age of 92
- His daughter, Nadia Drake, shared the news on her website, calling her father 'a titan in life'
- Drake is known for his work in the search for extraterrestrial life, along with the Drake Equation that calculates the probability of finding life in space
- Drake is survived by his wife, Amahl Shakhshiri Drake, of 40 years and his five children

By [STACY LIBERATORE FOR DAILYMAIL.COM](#)

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Frank **Drake**, a radio astronomer known for his pioneering efforts in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI), died at the age of 92 peacefully at his home in Aptos, **California** on Friday.

His daughter, Nadia Drake, shared the solemn news on her website, writing that her father 'was beloved by many, and for many reasons, but above all, today I celebrate his humanity, his tenderness, his gentle spirit. A titan in life, Dad leaves a titanic absence.'

The astronomer is widely known for the 'Drake Equation' he formulated in 1961 to estimate the number of communicative extraterrestrial civilizations that might be detectable in our galaxy, which is done by looking at increasingly unlikely factors, from the average rate of star formation, through to the fraction of planets that go on to develop intelligent life.

Drake also made a name for himself in 1974 when he created the first interstellar message ever transmitted deliberately into space from Earth, known as the 'Arecibo

message,' which was delivered through radio waves from Puerto Rico's now decommissioned Arecibo Observatory that collapsed in 2020.

Drake is survived by his wife, Amahl Shakhshiri Drake, of 40 years and his five children.



Frank Drake died Friday at the age of 92. His daughter Nadia (right) shared the heartbreaking news with the world. Frank pioneered the modern-day search for extraterrestrial life

'My husband Frank was a great human being—I really could write pages about him, but maybe that's a job for later. His professional greatness was well-documented and known publicly,' Amahl shared on Nadia's website.

'Being married to him, I began to notice his greatness on a much smaller scale—how he treats his family, his gentleness, his kindness, his witticism, his tenderness, and above all, his boyish love of life and how he projects excitement to everybody around him.'

Drake was born on May 28, 1930 in Chicago, Illinois and was the eldest of two.

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At age eight, he started to believe that human civilization came about by chance and that there had to be other life somewhere out in the universe, according to [FamousScientists.org](https://www.famousScientists.org).



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Drake secured his first job at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory at Green Bank, West Virginia in April 1958, and two years later he launch 'Project Ozma,' which was the first effort to use radio transmissions to hunt for aliens - although none were detected Here he is in 1962

From there he set out to learn as much as he could, visiting science museums, completing chemistry experiments and building radios.

He received a Navy scholarship at the age of 17 that allowed him to attend Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York where he majored in engineering physics.

However, Drake took an astronomy class as a sophomore and when he looked at Jupiter through a 15-inch telescope, he was amazed by the wonders of the beautiful moment - many close to him say this was a life changing moment.

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After graduating with honors in engineering physics, Drake decided to become an astronomer.

However, he first had to finish time in the Navy, as part of the stipulations for his scholarship, where he was tasked with managing electronics on board the Albany, the Sixth Fleet's flagship.



Drake also made a name for himself in 1974 when he created the first interstellar message ever transmitted deliberately into space from Earth, using the Arecibo Observatory that collapsed in 2020. He is pictured in front of the device before it crashed

After his military career came to an end, Drake attended Harvard University and fell in love with radio astronomy, as he felt this was the technology that would first detect or make contact with an alien civilization.

After graduate school, Drake secured his first job at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory at Green Bank, West Virginia in April 1958, and two years later he launch 'Project Ozma,' which was the first effort to use radio transmissions to hunt for aliens - although none were detected.

While there, Drake also found that Green Bank's receiver could detect an equivalent radio telescope at a distance of 12 light years from Earth, which could pick up signals from 30 star systems, including some with stars similar to our sun.

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Drake worked to refine the methods for the detection of signals of extraterrestrial intelligence throughout his career. He had always hoped to find signs of life during his own lifetime.

Drake continued to pursue his interest in the detection of extraterrestrial life and investigating radio telescope designs that optimize the chances of success for SETI.

How the Drake Equation is used to hunt aliens

The Drake Equation is a seven-variable way of finding the chance of active civilizations existing beyond Earth.

It takes into account factors like the rate of star formation, the amount of stars that could form planetary systems, the number potentially habitable planets in those systems.

The equation includes recent data from Nasa's Kepler satellite on the number of exoplanets that could harbor life.

Researchers also adapted the equation from being about the number of civilizations that exist now, to being about the probability of civilization being the only one that has ever existed.

Researchers found the odds of an advanced civilization developing need to be less than one in 10 billion trillion for humans to be the only intelligent life in the universe.

Unless the odds of advanced life evolving on a habitable planet are astonishingly low, then humankind is not the only advanced civilization to have lived.

But Kepler data places those odds much higher, which means technologically advanced aliens are likely to have existed at some point.

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