

Discoverer of the Artificial Radioactivity

Irène Joliot-Curie

[12 September 1897 - 17 March 1956]



Special Scientific Achievements

Nobel Prize for Chemistry 1935
(together with her husband Frédéric Joliot).

Artificial preparation of isotopes from stable elements.

Investigation of application of radioactive substances for medical purposes.

Member of several foreign academies and of numerous scientific societies (e.g. member of the *Comité National de l' Union des Femmes Françaises*, and World Peace Council).

1897 - 1914 Irène Curie is born in Paris on September 12, daughter of the famous parents Marie and Pièrre Curie. Early Irène shows an extraordinary interest and talent in physics and mathematics, promoted by her parents. She receives private lessons. Fruitful discussions with her mother contribute to her development.

1914 Irène Curie studies mathematics and physics at *Sorbonne* in Paris.

1916 - 1918 During World War I she interrupts her studies and assists her mother. Together they develop the fleet of mobile x-ray facilities and examine wounded soldiers at the front.

1918 - 1925 At the Radium Institute in Paris, Irène works as assistant of her mother and completes her doctoral dissertation on the alpha rays of polonium.

1926 Irène marries Frédéric Joliot - an assistant of her mother's. Both spend long hours in the laboratory.

1927 Birth of their daughter Hélène.

1932 Birth of their son Pièrre.

1934 Irène and Frédéric Joliot focus on the application of radioactive substance for medical purposes. They present the creation of an artificial radioactive element, an isotope of nitrogen.

1935 The Joliot-Curies win the Nobel Prize for Chemistry for their discovery of artificial radiation by bombardment of alpha particles on various light elements.



1936 Irène Joliot-Curie is appointed Under-secretary of State for Scientific Research and the first woman in the government of Léon Blum (a union of communists, socialists, liberals and trade unions).

1937 Irène becomes professor in the Faculty of Science at the *Sorbonne*. Her area of research is uranium fission.

1946 - 1956 Irène becomes director of the Radium Institute in Paris.

1946 - 1952 Irène Joliot-Curie works as Head of Commissioner for the French Atomic Energy Commission.

1956 Irène Joliot-Curie dies on March 17 of leukemia caused by years of radiation exposure at the age of 58.