**Rosalind Franklin** 

Birthdate: July 20, 1920- April 16, 1938

Degrees conferred: PhD from Cambridge University, 1945

Biographical Essay:  
Born in London, Rosalind Franklin showed early signs of extreme intelligence, knowing that she wanted to be a scientist since age 15. During her time at Newnham College in Cambridge, she achieved Second Class Honors in 1941 which is the equivalent to a Bachelor’s Degree today. She went on to research coal porosity (which was the basis of her thesis for her PhD) at the British Utilisation Research Association.

In 1946, she began working in Paris studying crystallography and x-ray diffraction with Jacques Mering at the Laboratoire Central des Services Chimiques de I’Etat. This experience and research led to her discovery of the double helix/structure of DNA, otherwise known as “the secret of life”. In 1951 she began working at King’s College London. While studying DNA structure using x-ray diffraction techniques, she and her student Raymond Gosling discovered that there were two parts to the DNA: a dry “A” form and a wet “B” form. They took pictures of the DNA structures and the wet “B” form became famously known as Photograph 51 for being critical evidence of a double helix.

Unfortunately to her disadvantage, conflict with her colleague Maurice Wilkins led to her discredit of the discovery. Without her consent, Wilkins shared Photograph 51 with scientists James Watson and Francis Crick which completed their own research with their own DNA model. They used the information gathered from Photograph 51 to publish their famous structure of DNA in 1953 for which they received a Nobel Peace Prize for in 1962. Franklin ended up leaving King’s College and returned to her studies of coal at Birkbeck College where she published 17 works on viruses and set the stage for structural virology. In 1958, Franklin died from Ovarian Cancer at the age of 37.