

Auburn Astronomical Society

Biographical Profiles

Essential Information

First Name: Michael

Last Name: Lewis

City: Alexander City

State: Alabama

ZIP: 35010

Telescope(s): Meade 127ED f/9 Apo; Celestron C9.25 SCT; Celestron Celestar 8 SCT

Area(s) of special interest: Participating in public observing events

Optional Information

1. Are you a seasoned amateur astronomer or just getting into the hobby?

I have been an observer since the spring 1996 appearance of Comet Hyakutake. The amazing circumpolar comet prompted me to join my local astronomy club at that time (Northern Virginia Astronomy Club, "NOVAC") and buy my first telescope, a Celestar 8 SCT from Company 7 in neighboring Laurel, Maryland. Over the next 18 years, I acquired more telescopes and became an active observer within NOVAC - one the largest astronomy clubs in the country. I regularly participated in the club's numerous public observing programs in the Washington, DC area as well as jointly conducting a summer "Night Skies" program in Shenandoah National Park in Virginia from 2001 to 2006. In 2005, I was appointed by the NOVAC board to secure a number of VIP speakers for the club's 25th anniversary, including John Dobson, Al Nagler, Richard Berry, Phil Harrington and even Mobile, Alabama native Rod Mollise. I've written articles for the NOVAC newsletter and remain an active member even though I have returned to my home state of Alabama. I'm also a volunteer for the International Dark-Sky Association.

2. What was your first experience that attracted you to astronomy?

Around 1976 my father borrowed a family friend's orange tube Celestron 8 SCT and we gazed upon Jupiter and its moons. It was a magical experience that kindled an interest in astronomy that has stayed with me ever since.

3. Tell us a little about your family members; spouse? kids? siblings? significant other?

I am married and my wife and I have one son, age 12, who is also an active observer with two telescopes of his own.

4. Can you tell us a little about your formal education?

Attended Alexander City State Junior College and graduated Troy University in 1986 with a major in broadcast journalism.

5. Do you have any pets? What kind? How Many?

One pet, my son's year-old bearded dragon.

6. Where do you work? If you're retired, what was your occupation? If you're still in school, have you chosen a career?

Presently working as communications director for an Alabama-based political campaign. Prior to that, I worked in Washington, DC for 26 years as press secretary for four different Members of Congress, three of whom were from Alabama.

7. Besides astronomy, what other hobbies do you enjoy?

During my high school years, I earned my Novice Amateur Radio "ticket" after taking a night course at the Alabama Highway Department office in Alex City. I have been a licensed "ham" since 1980 and hope to upgrade to "Extra" in the near future. I also enjoy photography and travel.

8. What was your first or favorite car?

First car was a 1976 Chevrolet Malibu which I bought from my grandparents for a few hundred dollars.

9. What was your first or most interesting job?

My first jobs were in broadcasting. I worked on air at the former WRFS and WACD radio in Alexander City, at WTBF radio and WIGC/WRJM radio in Troy, and as a news reporter at WTVY TV 4 in Dothan prior to moving to Northern Virginia in 1987. I love radio broadcasting and would love to work again on the air.

10. Tell us about your favorite vacation.

Visiting my wife's home country of the Philippines with our son in 2007. Lots of dark skies in the countryside and a healthy interest in astronomy too.

11. Have you ever lived in some other part of the U.S. or another country? Where? When?

Northern Virginia (Metro Washington, DC) from 1987 to 2014

12. Would it be OK to publish this information in *Astrofiles* and to create a "Vita" page for you on the AAS web site?

Yes

13. This is your space. Tell us anything else about yourself that you'd like to share.

Spending time with John Dobson in September of 2005 prompted me to focus more of my observing energy toward sharing my telescopes with others. I hope I can help continue his legacy, if only in some small way, by finding new opportunities to lead others to discover the mysterious beauty of the heavens above.