

Notes for Michael Leonard Wilson

I was born in Houston, TX, in early 1953, the first child of Don and Audrey (Gathright) Wilson. They were only in Houston for a short time, while Dad was getting some initial training for his new job with Sohio Petroleum. In the spring of 1953, we moved to Wyoming, where Dad worked on a seismic crew exploring for oil. Over the next several years, we lived in several small Wyoming towns. In 1956, my sister Cathy was born. In December 1958, Dad resigned from Sohio and we moved to Albuquerque, NM, where Dad went to work for his father (my grandfather) at Walker Radio Company. I was five years old when we moved, almost six. I lived with my parents and sister through grade school, high school, and college at the University of New Mexico. During college, and a little bit in high school, I worked part-time in the family business, Walker Radio Company.

After graduating from UNM in 1975 with a double major in math and physics, I went on to graduate school at the Physics Department of the University of California in Berkeley, CA. When I started research for my dissertation, my adviser was professor Joseph Silk, who was a well-known cosmologist. After some initial work on formation of galaxy clusters, my main research was on inhomogeneities in the early universe and how they led to anisotropies in the cosmic microwave background radiation. I completed my Ph.D. in physics in December 1981 and went to a postdoctoral position at Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, MD. The Infrared Astrophysics group at Goddard was involved in developing the COBE (COsmic Background Explorer) satellite, which was going to measure the very anisotropies I had been studying theoretically. John Mather and George Smoot later won the 2006 Nobel Prize in Physics “for their discovery of the blackbody form and anisotropy of the cosmic microwave background radiation” using COBE. I could have been involved in that, but I did not stay on after the two-year postdoc ended, instead deciding to move back to Albuquerque in December 1983.

Through friends and acquaintances, I found work with a company called SPECTRA Research Institute, working on a contract with Sandia National Laboratories to help with the Yucca Mountain Project. I was working on hydrology, radionuclide transport, and other aspects of performance assessment for the project, that is, analysis of whether it would be safe to store radioactive waste underground at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. This work obviously had nothing to do with my expertise in astrophysics and cosmology. However, the work was interesting in its own way; I learned a lot about other fields, and I liked the people I worked with on the project. I even met my wife there, when she worked in the Yucca Mountain performance-assessment group for a while. Mary Lynn Green and I were married in the back yard of Mary’s house in 1987.

Sometime in 1988, Mary moved on to a different job within Sandia Labs, and in May 1989 I moved from SPECTRA Research to a technical-staff position at Sandia. They had been interested in hiring me before that, but Sandia policy prevented them from hiring me into the same group with Mary. The change in employer made little difference to my work, as I continued to work on Yucca Mountain performance assessment for many more years, until I finally moved to a different job within Sandia in February 2002. Both of our children were born during this period, Claire in 1991 and William in 1995. In November 1993 we moved into a new house that Mary designed and had built in the unincorporated part of Bernalillo County a few blocks outside the Albuquerque city limits. From early 2002 to early 2015, I worked on a number of other projects within Sandia, mostly having to do with risk assessments of various kinds. In the last several years, I was also doing work on verification and validation of computer codes. I retired from Sandia at the end of March 2015.

As you can see from the preceding, I have always been big on learning, and I especially love math and physics. In my work, I have done a lot of computer programming and analysis, but I am not a computer

expert by any means. Some of my scientific publications can be found at <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Michael-Wilson-48> .

When I was growing up, I was in cub scouts and boy scouts, and it was an important part of my life – I especially loved backpacking in the wilderness (and we have some great wilderness in New Mexico). I also was an adult leader for several years when Will was in the scouts. I am glad that my kids like hiking and camping and being in the out-of-doors, and I am happy that, at age 71, I am still able to get out and do hiking and backpacking (though not as far or as difficult as I used to be able to do). My other hobbies have included reading (especially science fiction) and photography (nothing serious, but I do love good photographs, especially of beautiful scenery) and genealogy. Much of what I have learned about genealogy and family history is posted at <http://wilsonfamilytree.org> . I have also posted a number of documents, both old ones and ones I have written, on the Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/@mike87122> . I have been able to spend a lot more time on genealogy since I retired, as well as becoming active in the Albuquerque Genealogical Society, <https://abqgen.org> .



1953



70 years old, February 2023

On the following pages are a few of my favorite photographs.



A beautiful double rainbow, August 2006



Sunrise on Mount Taylor, January 2008



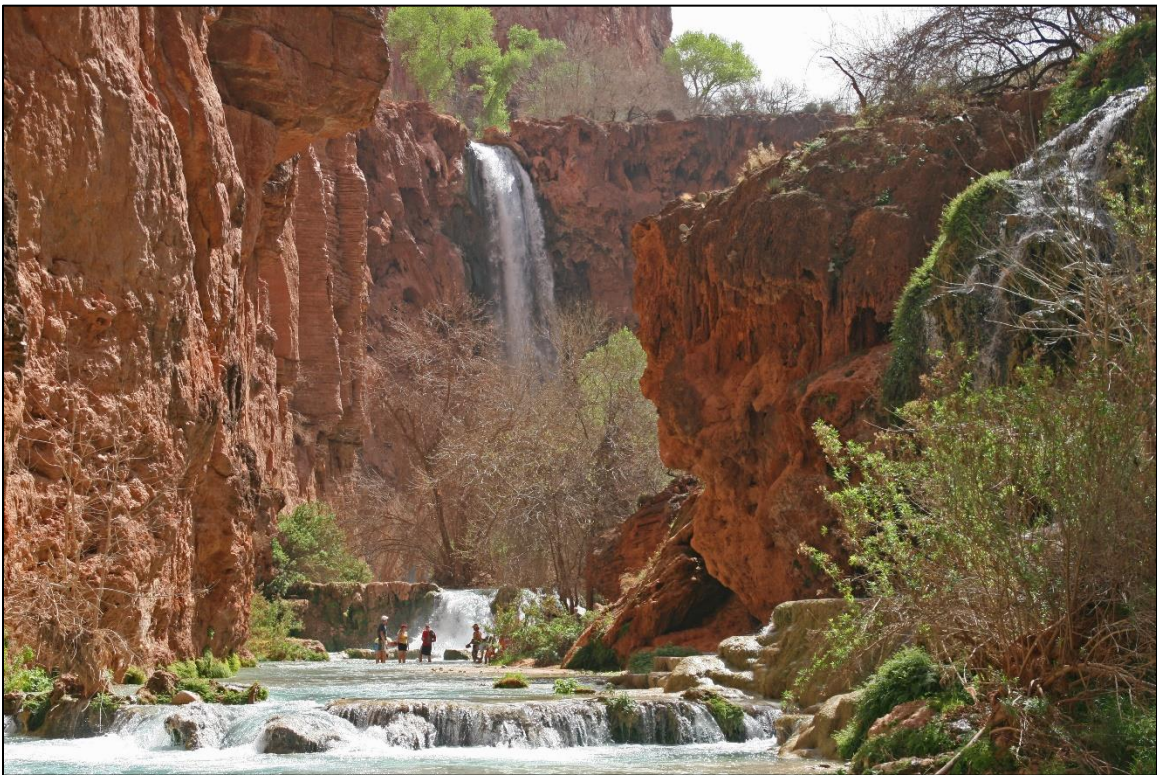
Hamilton Mesa in the Pecos Wilderness, June 2010



Double rainbow at Philmont Scout Ranch, July 2010



Near Hurricane Hill in Olympic National Park, July 2012



Mooney Falls in Havasu Canyon, Arizona, March 2013



Bandelier National Monument, May 2015



Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, October 2017