Bulletin of the AAS • Vol. 53, Issue 2

Lowell R. Doherty (1930–2021)

The Santa Fe New Mexican

Published on: Dec 17, 2021

DOI: 10.3847/25c2cfcb.02616f18

License: [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC-BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

**Lowell Doherty died on Saturday
March 20, 2021, at age 91.**

Lowell R. Doherty, age 91, died March 20, 2021 in Santa Fe, New Mexico, living the last several years of his life with Waldenstrom's Disease, Myasthenia Gravis, and heart problems. He was born the only child of Barbara and Ralph Doherty in San Diego, California where his mother instilled in him her love of the night skies. He ultimately spent his life exploring the universe, retiring as Professor Emeritus of Astronomy from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. As he liked to say, his professional life covered the era of Sputnik to the Hubble Space Telescope.

Photo courtesy of The Santa Fe New Mexican.

Doherty graduated from Hoover High School in San Diego, where he was class valedictorian, going on to UCLA where he was one of the university's first Physics-Astronomy graduates. There he graduated with high honors and was awarded a Phi Beta Kappa key. He then received his Master's and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor where he was a University Fellow, a NSF Pre-Doctoral Fellow and elected to Sigma Xi. He was a Lecturer and Research Fellow in Astronomy at Harvard University and ultimately a Professor of Astronomy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he served as department chair for several years. He was also a Visiting Professor in Astronomy at the University of Hawaii-Manoa one year.

His career was focused on teaching university classes and doing astronomical research. Through the Space Astronomy Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin, he was involved with NASA grants and did research involving cameras on board the X-15 airplane, photographing stars high above the Earth's obscuring atmosphere. Other work involved interpretation of data from the Orbiting Astronomical Observatory and the Hubble Space Telescope. He was elected a Fellow of the American Association of

the Advancement of Science and was a member of the American Astronomical Society, International Astronomical Union, and the Royal Astronomical Society.

Lowell was always curious. He loved to travel, he loved to hike, he loved playing tennis, and he loved life. One of the high points of his sporting life was hitting a hole in one the first time he played golf with his father-in-law. He loved the outdoors and enjoyed spending time with his wife and family at their rustic cabin in Black Earth, Wisconsin. After moving to Santa Fe in retirement, he volunteered for many years in Collections at the Museum of International Folk Art. He was also appointed by former Governor Gary Johnson as a trustee of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science in Albuquerque.

Lowell was a student, a teacher, a friend, a confidante and a loving husband, father, and grandfather. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Rosalind; two sons, Keith (Jacqueline May) and Paul; four grandchildren, Alexandra, Catherine, James, and Reid; and sister-in-law Annette Olson.

Text and photo used with permission, adapted from [the original article by the Santa Fe New Mexican](#).