

## *Astronomy and Me*

Since I was a young boy, I have been attracted by the fantastic world of astronomy. Those dots of colour, as I used to say, always caught my attention. In reality, they were planets and stars. I was curious as to how they could stay up there without falling, how they shined, why they were there, who had made them...

Little by little I grew up, and the passion I had for knowing and discovering everything about this science grew along with it. As the years passed, I learned what stars and planets were, why they shined, and other doubts appeared.

Years later, I learned what the solar system was, why and how it formed, what its star was, in which galaxy it could be found, how the universe was formed, and much more. I was also interested in curiosities about the universe such as meteor showers, eclipses, the birth of stars...

I am completely fascinated by images of the universe; they are simply astonishing.

Since some time ago, astronomy has become a hobby to which I dedicate a large amount of time. I watch documentaries on the internet, I read books about the universe, I look for photographs, etc.

I think that if every person should dedicate themselves to what they like most, then I would like to dedicate myself to astronomy.

The problem is that here in my town, there aren't any resources available for me to be able to dedicate myself to this science. It is not situated at a very high altitude, there aren't any places where one can observe the firmament, and there aren't any associations that dedicate themselves to this or that help young people get involved in this field.

A few days ago, I discovered that there is a small observatory in my town, but it is private and not public. I decided to go to the house of the man who owns the observatory to ask him about how it functions and if he could show it to me.



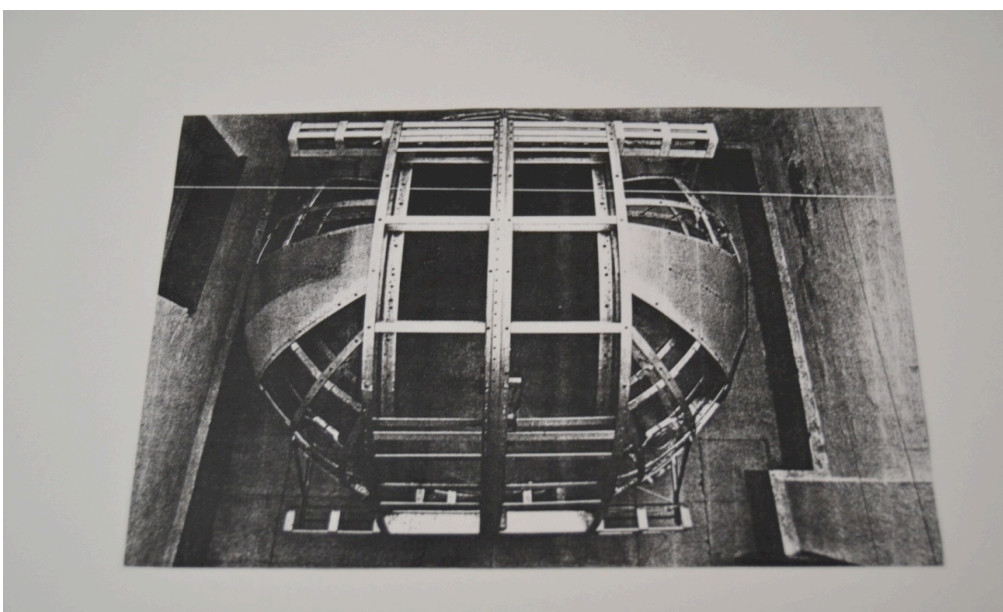


There in his house, the man told me about how he built the observatory with his own hands and by his own means. It is situated on "Calle Trafalgar" (Trafalgar Street), in Guadix (province of Granada), Spain.

The man's name is Dr. José López Gómez, a professor of molding and casting who is now retired. From a very young age, Dr. José has shared the same interests as me. His first toy was a telescope that his parents gave him as a birthday present. As he grew, his passion for astronomy became greater and greater. However, his dream was not just to be an astronomy hobbyist; his dream was to build his own observatory, which he did in his free time and financed out of his own personal funds.

The first step was to design it, create the structure of the dome, for which he bought 1,000 metres of flat connecting bars. When it was finished, a large crane lifted the dome to place it on the base, which he also designed, located on the roof of his house. It took 12 years to finish the project.

Once the structure was made, he completed all of the electrical work and mounted his own telescope. The observatory, made of aluminium and heat insulation, measures three metres in diameter.





According to Dr. José, the only things he bought were the optics and the mirror for the telescope. The rest of the pieces were custom-made in the town's workshops. The assembly process was expensive and toilsome, but satisfactory. As such, his project ended. He had completed his dream. From that moment, given that he was already retired, he decided to dedicate himself entirely to his passion, astronomy.

Since he was young Dr. José has been part of the astronomical association of Sabadell, for about 40 years more or less, and with that group he has visited many different observatories, both national and international, and he has been to many conferences given by astronomers here in Spain. He has also given a few small conferences about this topic.

Nowadays, Dr. José goes up to his observatory every night and spends 4 or 5 hours contemplating the wonders of the universe. He searches for nebulas, comets, and stars, and he studies celestial bodies.

This is the story of Dr. José López Gómez, an astrophile who has fulfilled his dream of fully dedicating his life to astronomy, even though he didn't study this science.

Much like him, I also want to dedicate my life to astronomy. I have learned from him that even though there aren't many means available here where we live, even if it takes a long time and a lot of effort, anything can be accomplished when one wishes to do so.

Astronomy and I seemed like an incompatible match, but after hearing this story I believe that everything can be accomplished, and that is what I am going to attempt.