

## **Biographical Information**

### **Michael F. A'Hearn**

At the University of Maryland, Michael F. A'Hearn is a Professor Emeritus and Research Professor of Astronomy, having retired as a Distinguished University Professor of Astronomy in 2011. His research has emphasized the observational and experimental study of comets and asteroids and what they can teach us about the origin of our own planetary system. He has also taught a wide variety of courses in astronomy.

Dr. A'Hearn has played leading roles in observational studies of comets and asteroids including many of the early measurements of asteroid diameters via occultations and the most extensive survey of the composition of comets from ground based observations. He has worked extensively with telescopes in orbit dating from the earliest days of ultraviolet astronomy. Using observations at all wavelengths, he participated in the first discovery of several molecules in comets and he has used the chemical composition to study the origin of comets. More recently he was the principal investigator for NASA's Deep Impact mission, the only mission ever to target a high velocity impact at any of the solar system's small bodies, excavating a crater in the nucleus of comet Tempel 1 on 4 July 2005 that was tens of meters deep and some 40-50 meters in diameter. He was subsequently the Principal Investigator for NASA's EPOXI mission, which studied extrasolar planets and flew past comet Hartley 2 in November 2010. He is a member of two instrument teams on ESA's Rosetta mission and is the PI for the Small Bodies Node of NASA's Planetary Data System.

Dr. A'Hearn holds a BS in physics from Boston College (1961) and a PhD in astronomy from the University of Wisconsin (1966). He has authored more than 200 papers in refereed scientific journals in addition to a variety of other articles. NASA has twice awarded him the Medal for Exceptional Scientific Achievement (2006 and 2012) and in 2008 he received from the American Astronomical Society's Division for Planetary Science the Kuiper Prize for a distinguished career in planetary science. He has taken leadership roles on several panels for the National Research Council of the National Academies, including chairing the Mitigation Panel of the Committee to Review Near-Earth Object Surveys and Hazard Mitigation Strategies.