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People Profile: Joe Lee

Editor

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Born and raised, family, etc: I was born in Jackson, MS in 1965. I'm the oldest of two children. We moved from Jackson to Morristown, NJ, in 1970. We returned to Jackson in 1973. We were there three years before moving for a year to Leake County, MS. From there to Starkville, MS, in 1977. I went to high school and college in Starkville, graduating in 1987. I lived in Tuscaloosa, AL, for six months in 1987 before returning to Starkville late that year. I left for Jackson, MS, in 1991. I've been in the Jackson area since, except for an eight-month period in 1996-1997 when we were in Meridian, MS (long story).

Education: I'm a 1983 graduate of Starkville High School. I'm a 1987 graduate of Mississippi State University with a degree in Communication (Radio/TV emphasis).

First job: I worked part-time for a couple of months at a small record store in Starkville called The Turntable. I did no serious damage to the store or customer base, although a Rubik's Cube was stolen while I worked there. It was there for decoration, and the manager was quite upset—he wondered what else was taken, since the cube sat one foot from the cash register. The store closed that summer, unfortunately. The manager told me later that the stolen Rubik's Cube had nothing to do with it.

Professional career and activities: I wanted to be the next Casey Kasem when I was in high school. I begged the area radio stations to hire me and landed a position with the locally owned and operated Starkville station in 1982. I made a career of radio into my mid-twenties, then moved into cable television as a commercial writer/producer in Jackson in 1991. I moved into broadcasting television several years later, working at a post-production writer/producer, and eventually, as a weatherman. I'm a fill-in weather anchor at WAPE-16 in Jackson (ABC). I got back into radio in Jackson in 1997 and worked part-time at a Jackson station until late 2002. I've also written freelance articles for several Jackson-area newspapers and other publications, and I write free lance brochure copy as well.

My novel, On The Record began in 1997. Since I was still working full-time in television, it wasn't until 2000 before I devoted full-time work to it. I started my own publishing company, Dogwood Press, in 2002, and released the novel in August, 2002. Marketing the book is my full-time job. I'm at work on a second novel, and I'm hopeful that it will be released sometime in 2004.

In my spare time: I work from home and take my five-year-old son John and from school. My wife Leslie is a prosecutor with the Mississippi Attorney General's office. Spending time with them is my top priority and favorite use of spare time. I also read a lot, and I'm a diehard Atlanta Braves baseball fan. I listen to a lot of music, and I play racquetball a couple of times a week and occasionally play in tournaments.

Favorite books: The Quiet Game from Greg Iles; The Prince of Tides from Pat Conroy; The Bonfire of the Vanities and A Man in Full from Tom Wolfe; Presumed Innocent and Personal Injuries from Scott Turow—those are some of my favorite novels from the last two decades. But Bull for by Jim Bouton had a profound impact on my writing. This was a major best-seller in 1970—it's a diary of a year spent playing baseball in Seattle and Houston by a washed-up major leaguer who was at the end of his career. It's candid, humorous, descriptive and an amazing history lesson and time capsule. I've read it many times and learned more about writing from the approach than one might imagine.

Pet peeves: Houseguests who pull half a dozen condiments from the refrigerator while making a sandwich in my kitchen and fail to put them away when the sandwich is complete. People who circle parking lots endlessly instead of cutting the engine and walking an additional twenty-five feet.

Philosophy: Never forget your humble beginnings.

Most meaningful career achievement: 1) Being a good husband and father. 2) Being a published author.

Quirks: I enjoy being photographed with mascots (i.e., Chick-Fil-A cow).

The book industry in five years: The number of books bought online will skyrocket. More and more authors will self-publish.