

CONVERSATIONS UNLIMITED - MONDAY, Dec. 23, 1985

INTRO UP AND UNDER

Hi, everybody. The Christmas season turns our attention to the skies. There is the symbolism of a Supreme Being above us. And, of course, the Star of Bethlehem is portrayed in the Nativity scene. And this year, for the first time in three-quarters of a century, our attention is on the skies because of Halley's Comet. That celestial phenomenon is coming closer to our planet as it makes its first pass in the solar system since 1910. With us today is Dr. Roger Knacke, an astronomer at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and the head of one of the ~~six~~ International Halley Watch teams. Dr. Knacke, I've discovered that Comet Halley has two seasonal connections -- the 14th century fresco by Giotto, called "Adoration of the Magi," which depicts a comet at the birth of Christ, and the important date of December 25 in the year 1758 when the prediction of Sir Edmond Halley was proved correct. Although that comet has been recorded for perhaps 30 passes now, over more than 2,000 years, it was only 200 years ago that the name Halley's Comet was given. It's fascinating history, isn't it!

INTERVIEW ROGER KNACKE:

- What is a comet: Greek kometes (hairy stars)
- Theories of origination
- Some of Comet Halley's background
 - Giotto's painting: mathematically wrong?
 - German Johann Palitzsch confirms Halley's prediction
 - Halley's research; relation to Isaac Newton
- Research of 1910 and preparations for 1986

14:00

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10:43
10:56
~~10:56~~ 11:10

We'll take a short break now. When we return, we'll be talking with Dr. Roger Knacke about his work, and the work of scientists around the world, in following Comet Halley. Please stay with us.

BRIDGE MUSIC UP AND UNDER

Hi, everybody. I'm Al Oickle, and I'm at the State University of New York at Stony Brook with Dr. Roger Knacke, an astronomer who heads up the infrared study group of international scientists. They have been hard at work for years now, preparing for the current pass of Halley's Comet. In fact, Dr. Knacke, you saw the comet many months ago.

INTERVIEW DR. KNACKE:

- His project, and the team's makeup
- Scientific space probes: two Soviets, two Japanese and the Europeans' "Giotto."
- U.S. role
- Redirection of existing missions in space
- What kinds of studies will follow accumulation of data?
- What can laypeople expect to see? Where?
- Next time around: 2061.

29:00

OUTRO