

# Look closely, it's the Return of the Comet!

by Lutfalkabir Khan

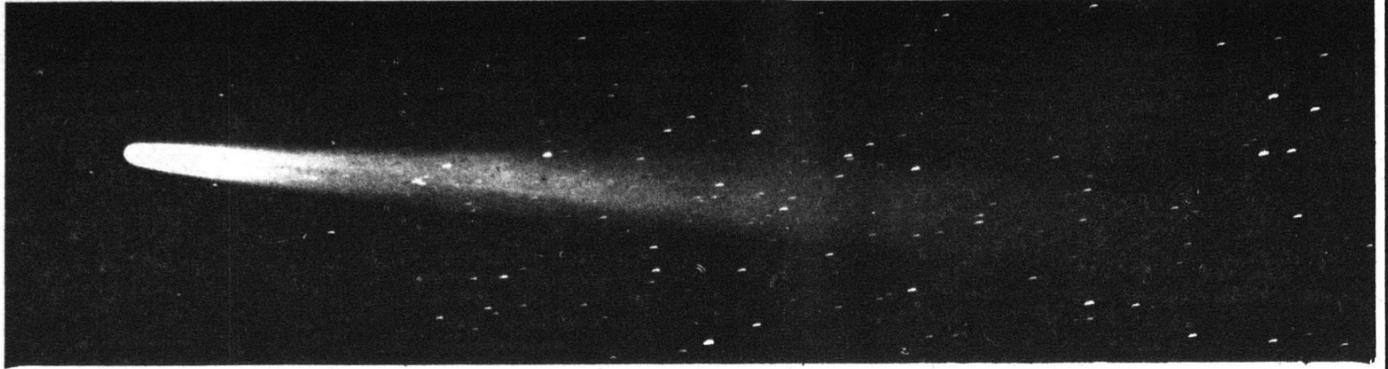
Look up to the sky! If you miss this chance of seeing Halley's Comet, you may never see it again in your lifetime.

Astronomer Stephen Edberg delivered a lecture on 'The Return of Halley's Comet', in SUB theatre on Monday, Oct 7. Edmonton Space Sciences Foundation sponsored the lecture.

Edberg is a member of the International Halley Watch formed specifically to observe and record the reappearance of the famous comet.

Halley's is not the most spectacular of comets, but it is certainly the most famous. It has been recorded since 240 B.C. It has appeared thirty times ever since. It became famous when Sir Edmund Halley studied it at 1682 and predicted that it would return 76 years later in 1758. It did return in the winter of that year after Halley's death. It was named after him in his honour.

1985 is the first time in history closely by European, Soviet, Japanese and U.S. space probes. Hope-



fully many mysteries surrounding the comets will be cleared up after these expeditions.

Though the tail of the comet is the most spectacular astral object, it is 'the closest thing to nothing that still is something'. All the gas particles of a typical comet's tail could easily fit a ordinary suit case.

That is why even though the Earth passed through the tail of Halley's Comet in 1910 nothing terrible happened. But many people were seized by a comet-mania. 'Anti-

Comet pills and masks were in vogue those few months.

This year the comet won't be that spectacular unless viewed from Australia or the south seas. Edmonton is so far north that viewing the Comet without telescopes would be impossible until December, when a large pair of binoculars will be sufficient. From Dec 1 to 15 it will be fuzzy star in the constellation Pisces.

The best time to see the comet with unaided eye is from Dec. 28 to

Jan. 15. If someone braves the cold temperatures and ventures out to the south-west of the city, the comet will be seen as a faint star without much of a tail, low in the south-west horizon, in Aquarius. A 7 X 50 binocular would give 4° tail (in 1910 it was 90°!).

While Edberg did not support Fred Hoyle's theory that comets come to drop off dangerous viruses into the atmosphere, he thought the explosion, 1500 times more powerful than the Hiroshima blast,

in Siberia in 1908, may have been caused by a small comet, the nucleus of which vapourised as it spread through our atmosphere.

Edberg also advised the comet enthusiasts not to be fooled by department store ads for giraffes (long telescopes) with very long necks for better viewing of the comet. He said if a good reflector telescope with at least 80 mm aperture can't be afforded, a pair of good, wide binoculars (7x50 or more) is enough.



Photo Ron Damant  
First comes age four, then next thing you know you're paying off student loans.

## Bids: for the cut-throat

by Ann Grever

The newest competitor in the games market is the updated version of *Monopoly* called *Bids* that was invented by an Edmonton school teacher.

"This is the 1980's version of *Monopoly*" says Drew Brimacomb, the game's inventor.

The game is aimed at the Yuppie market. "It's cut-throat and competitive... you have to be perceptive and smart. The fluke factor is reduced."

"Most games you buy now are glitz covered and come down to just rolling the dice. This game uses strategy."

The game's rules are similar to *Monopoly*. Properties the players land on are bid on. With a set of three a player can develop their properties with stores. Other fea-

tures include a Trading Post square, Liquor rights and Parking rights squares.

Brimacomb says the game is taking off. In April he started to sell them and sold out the first 500 almost immediately.

"I'm excited because some games never even make it through the front door in many stores. I've never had a major store turn it down and I'm just a local guy."

Right now the game is selling in 41 stores, including the Bay, Woodward's and various hobby shops.

How does *Bids* compare to incredibly successful *Trivial Pursuit*? "*Trivial Pursuit* is on a liteline. Sooner or later they'll run out of questions. The luster had gone away and there are too many games."

"*Bids* changes all the time. There is no game plan that works all the time."

What's it like to play? Well, if you're the type who's sick of getting beat in *Trivial Pursuit* by people who know the capital of Equador, this game could be your chance to get even.

The bidding does make this game more exciting than *Monopoly*. The game gets brutal when the weaker players get wiped out by high rents. Unlike *Monopoly* the game doesn't have to drag on. Whether the game lasts one hour or five, the winner is determined by elimination until the last player is left with all the money and property — Ghermizian style.

Commerce students will love it.

## Search for artificial intelligence

OTTAWA (CUP) — Researchers at the University of Ottawa are hoping to tighten the connection between the human brain the computer.

While books and the mind are the only two current "knowledge source systems," a research team headed by Douglas Skuce is devel-

oping what they hope will be the third — Skuce said they are trying to develop a language "halfway between English and computer language" so computers with large data resources can provide users with specific information on given topics — a computer system that researchers can use for answer-

ing specific questions.

"We're taking information retrieval one step further," said Skuce, a U of O computer science professor.

Skuce said the language barrier and limited computer abilities restrict the possible applications of computers. "People think and want to communicate in natural languages. Computers don't," he said.

The research in expert systems — a technical component of 'artificial intelligence' — will mainly have commercial spinoffs, although there may be other uses, Skuce said.

While much of the \$881,000 research grant has been provided by Cognos, a private Ottawa software firm, Skuce said there is more to his group's two year grant than commercial considerations.

"This work is in that grey area of pure research and product development," he said.

The first applications will likely be Cognos software. "There's a big commercial market for that," he said.

While most companies sponsoring research "have to be pretty sure there's a product on the way," Skuce said Cognos understands "there is no guarantee that a product will come out of this."

Although little research has been done on artificial intelligence, Skuce said "we'll all benefit from this in ways that otherwise would not have been possible."

Other funding sources for the project include the National Research Council and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council.

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