

## Last look at Comet Halley

by Lutful Kabir Khan

Comet Halley has not been very generous with our generation. The tiny fuzzy cotton ball in the southwestern sky is a far cry from the bright giant that swept through the sky in 1910.

On April 20, 1910, the comet achieved a spectacular tail arc of 90 degrees (that's half of the sky folks). But this year 20 degrees is the most the tail would get and even then it would be visible from only the southern latitudes.

For Albertans, this week is the very last for a binocular-aided view of the comet. After Jan. 15, the comet will be lost beneath the horizon. When it returns again sometime in March, the comet will be too faint to find without the aid of expensive telescopes.

Since anyone over 20 has a very slim chance of seeing the comet again when it comes back in 2061, this week is the very last for Albertans for a fair and inexpensive look at the ever mysterious comet.

The first step to find the comet is to acquire a pair of 7x50 binoculars (average cost \$70). If you can coax and cajole a pair of 11x80 binoculars from an astronomer friend, it's the absolute best equipment for viewing Halley's Comet. Shopping mall Hallescopes are of no use at all, so beware of all the tantalizing ads.

For photographers, the best equipment is a camera with a bulb setting, a fast (F2 or faster) 50 mm normal lens, cable release, a sturdy tripod and fast film. Slide film (Fujichrome 400) or Kodak Tri-X Pan pushed to 1600 ASA and developed in Diafine are best. Be sure to take one or two daylight shots at the start and end of the reel so that you have a reference for cutting and mounting the slides.

The next step is to go out of the city. Going southwest away from the glow of any city, big or small, is good. West of Devon, Pigeon Lake

or a vantage point chosen near Highway 39 would be best for people from Edmonton. Choose an obstacle-free sight well before sunset. Set up tripod, binoculars or camera, put on warm clothes and watch the sunset.

Just as it begins to get dark in the early evening, hunt the southwestern sky for the very bright planet Jupiter.

Jupiter would be a bright yellow-tinted 'star' low in the southwestern sky. It should be very easy to find since, in the absence of the moon, it would be the brightest celestial object.

Around 6:15 - 7:30 p.m., a little above and south of Jupiter should be the Halley's Comet. It would be very hard to find using the naked eye because of the glow of the horizon, but using a 7x50 binocular, it should be found in three or four tries.

The tail of the comet would be about 2 degrees (about one quarter of the width of a binocular field of

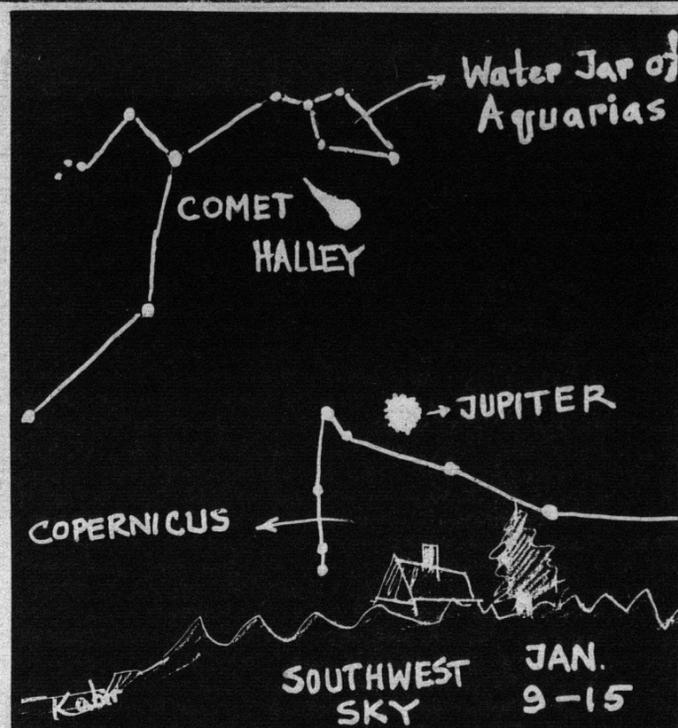
view). It would look like a fuzzy dim star with a short smudgy tail extending upward, tilted to the south.

To photograph the comet, fortunately it is not always necessary to find the comet. Once you have found Jupiter, keep it on the lower middle of the viewfinder. The comet is bound to be on the upper left of the frame.

Focus on infinity, put on the widest aperture, (F2 or faster) and press the cable release. Try using exposure of 5 sec., 10 sec., 15 sec. up to about 1 minute and then go down in 5 sec. steps. With a little luck some of the shots will record Halley's Comet in all its fuzzy dimness.

This weekend is the very best for the sunset rendezvous down southwest. But remember that after Wednesday, January 15th, Halley's Comet can be considered gone from the Alberta sky.

Special thanks to the Space Sciences Centre



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## Quiz: Transportation 500

Please answer the following multiple choice questions.

### 1. What is a Student Pak??

- Four monthly transit passes (January - April) sold for \$122.00
- Something available only to post-secondary students.
- A package only sold three times a year (September, January, May)
- All of the above

### 2. How does a Student Pak save you money?

- Allows unlimited travel, not just to classes.
- Buying monthly passes individually would cost more (\$136.00).
- You never need pocket cash to take a transit trip.
- All of the above.

### 3. Where is a Student Pak available?

- The Bookstore, SUB
- Campus Drugs, 8623-112 Street
- Churchill LRT Station, 99 Street/102A Avenue below Sir Winston Churchill Square
- All of the above

### 4. What is the right choice for student transportation.

- Use Edmonton Transit.
- Buy a trimester "Student Pak".
- Save as much extra cash as possible.
- All of the above.

Answers: 'd' for each question  
congratulations, you've passed the test!

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