

Features

Halley's Comet sparks interest

By Jonathan Martin
Features Editor

Many phenomenons exist today that intrigue people the world over. One of these phomomena that intrigues people the most is Halley's comet.

Because comets have not been studied in depth, not much is known about them. Although Halley's Comet has been observed by people through telescopes for hundreds of years, it only passes in its orbit near earth once every 75 years.

Halley's Comet has not been observed by anyone since 1910. The science communities around the world will make sure that they make a thorough study of the comet, especially in January and again in March.

One of the most educated people on comets at Elon College is

Dr. Frank Harris, associate professor of physics.

He spoke on Monday at a lecture sponsored by the Honors Program about Halley's Comet and comets in general and about how one may observe the famous comet.

"Halley's Comet is no more exciting than other comets," said Harris. "Halley's comet is just one of 100 comets that visit us periodically."

Harris said that "no one really knows" where comets come from, but he added that astronomers beleive comets represent material of which the solar system was formed.

A comet consists of a nucleus and a tail. The brightness of a comet is controlled by the amount of material in the nucleus that can be vaporized to make a tail. The tail of a comet always points away

from the sun which will make the head of Halley's Comet appear to be chasing the tail when it passes by the earth again in March.

One of the the surprising



aspects about the study of this comet around the world is the fact that the United States does not plan to launch a probe to study it. Many European countries and the Soviet Union are sending probes

that will pass through the tail of Halley's Comet and gather data.

Harris pointed out that in 1985, NASA sponsored a project named ICE (International Cometary Explorer) that launched a probe to fly through the tail of a comet. He said that this was the first human artifact to fly through a comet. The data is now being analyzed.

The comet can best be seen during January after sunset in the southwestern sky. However, Dr. Harris pointed out that a crescent moon is in the area of the sky that the comet is in which gives off a lot of light making it difficult to see the comet.

He said that the comet will soon begin to round the sun and won't be seen again until March in the southeastern sky just before sunrise. The comet will be the clearest below the equator.

Because the comet is not as close to earth as it was in 1910, it is not as spectacular. According to Harris, it only looks like a "fuzzy star with a tail."

Many superstitions are connected with Halley's Comet. It is depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry in connection with the conquest of England by William the Conqueror in 1066. It is also the great comet of 1456 that had caused a great panic among Christians because it was thought to be associated with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks.

Comets are mostly studied today by amateurs which are responsible for discovering many of them. Harris added that whoever discovers a comet has that comet named after him or her.

Elon student enjoys pubs from another perspective

By Charles Lawrence
Special to the Pendulum

Elon students that travel to England have a chance to enjoy their pubs. Known for their ale and atmosphere, English pubs are interesting to visit. When I lived in England, I had a chance to view pub life from the other side of the counter—the working side.

Situated an hour from London in a small farming village in South Oxfordshire, the pub I worked in was frequented by locals and a fair amount of tourists who kept the conversation interesting.

Here, under the eye of my boss, Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick, I learned the pub trade. Members of his family had been in the trade for hundreds of years, so I had a good teacher.

He taught me how to keep the ales and lagers at the proper temperature, how to manually tap the kegs, how much beer to order, and how to keep the pub in good working condition.

There is a saying in England that "the people make the pub." Mr. Fitzpatrick was a jolly man who was always ready with a joke for the customers which brought him more business. I have never been in a place where complete strangers started spontaneous conversation with each other so easily.

The local rugby club used the pub as a watering hole after their home matches. On many Saturday afternoons, the ale would flow and the pub would be filled with the loud singing of bawdy songs.

Working in a pub doesn't exactly pay well. The British equivalent to the dollar is about \$2.60 an hour. Money tips are not given in pubs unless food is served. If the customer feels obligated, he will offer to buy the bartender a drink. To refuse the offer might be considered impolite, so the proper reply might be, "Yes, I'll have a half (pint). Thanks."

English people are very polite and it was a pleasure to deal with the general public there. Since each pub is different, I often travelled in my spare time to other pubs in the area.

Small country pubs had the best-kept ale, the best food, and the best atmosphere. It is interesting to be in a place that is structurally the same as it was 400 years ago. A roaring fire, good friends, good food and a pint of beer in comfortable surroundings can make a pub visit a memorable experience.

If you want to visit one of these pubs, you had better hurry. They are being replaced by modernized versions of pubs such as the ones in London. If you go to England, take time to go out of your way and visit a country pub. I know you'll enjoy it.



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