

HALLEY'S COMET AS AT 15.3.1985. GMT 21hr.30m. + 0h
LaN54Lo W1.

Local Sidereal Time= 8.95 hours. Az= W 106 Alt=28

RA= 4.86 hours: Dec= 14.16°. Culminates at 17h24m

ALT=50 degrees.

Rises at 10hr 3m

Sets at oh 45m.

According to this information supplied by the YORK
Astronomical Society Halley's Comet is or was on the
co-ordinates given above seen near ALDERBARAN. In the
vicinity of the comet are star groups of ORION and RIGEL.
It is at the moment not clear from this map where the
comet is to appear next. Hopefully it is heading for ORION
so at any case, keep watching. If anyone out there can send
us a plot chart showing where we should look for it. That
would be most helpful. Editor. Thanks to Martin Dawson
and for ALGOL, which contained the above information.

*****ONLY 14 MILLION YEARS TO DOOMSDAY*****

In Gene Duplantier new magazine called DEWE, No.1
1985 which we received on the day I typed this, May 9,
is this interesting bit on Halley's Comet by Roger
C. Moldander called: ONLY 14 MILLION YEARS UNTIL
DOOMSDAY. (Thanks Gene this came just in time for this
article): =note due to length, we have shortened it).
Halley's Comet appeared in 1066, on the eve of the
Norman invasion of England. It cuts a striking figure
in a contemporary tapestry woven to celebrate the con-
quest, altogether more moving than our 1910 photograph
of its last visit. (article about comets in general)

In fairly short order-we may find -say, in 14 million
years time-we may find ourselves similarly transfixed.
Not, mind you, by Halley's comet. This "friendly" visitor
has been tracked since 240BC., we enlightened moderns have
no reason to fear it. But scientists have recently made a
case for periodic cycles, of perhaps a million years each,
in which a billion-odd comets flash through the solar sys-
tem, with odd of two dozen direct hits on the Earth, throwing
enough dust into the upper atmosphere to block out the sun
and thus destroying life forms on the surface. Sounds fam-
iliar? Like the nuclear winter we could bring on ourselves.
But turn away from the doomsday clock now set by atomic
scientists at four minutes to midnight. The Doomsday clock
has been set forward, from 5 billion years to 14 million,
not by any human malice or intent. The cause is uncertain,

but the evidence for the battering that the Earth has taken
at intervals is undeniable:

There are peaks of cratering in its crust and peaks of ex-
tinction of its species (75% of all species in worst cases)
that coincide roughly every 26 million years in our planet's
history. And we are almost halfway through the current
breathing space.

There are two bodies of thought about the cause. One
postulates a sister dwarf sun, which at its closest approach
to our sun is every 26 million years shakes comets loose
from (area well outside our galaxy-editor)-from the Oort cloud
on the outer fringe of the solar system, and hurles a barrage
of them through our neighbourhood.

The other cites a period of about 31 million years and ex-
plains the cycle by the periodic movement of the solar system
through the plane of the Milky Way galaxy.

The binary star theory is more aesthetically satisfying-
the death star is called Nemesis after the Greek goddess who
persecutes the "excessively rich, proud, and powerful." The
dinosaurs are the best known ruling class to fall victim to
such persecution, and they disappeared in relatively short
order 65 million years ago. The classical overlay works well
if you remember that the Latin roots of our word "disaster"
are "evil star." Whatever the cause, the effects are enorm-
ous. Imagine a million years in which all eyes on Earth turn
towards the heavens, where perhaps a billion "dirty snowballs"
are flashing by. Quite a show, until the most disasterous
of the likely two dozen direct hits.

The ancients may yet be right in making comets a portent
of disaster in the affairs of men. But we will kill the Earth
long before the universe gets to it. What this latest news
flash from the science front demands is a major rethinking
of the cosmos and our place in it. It seems that we might
start with rethinking what defense means, in a cosmos where
our worst enemy is decidedly not other human beings.
We must think in terms of the Earth. We might need a star
wars system to save us from the death star. We might want
a battle station orbiting Pluto, maybe a brace of them around
Jupiter a dozen orbiting the sun. And we have only got 14
million years to bring it off.

Too bad it isn't a 100 years. It might concentrate the mind
to prepare for the universe pitching rocks at us in the year
2084.