We Remember
Halley’s Comet of 1910

Their Personal Remembrances of The Comet of 1910 and 1986

With Relevant, Timely Newspaper Accounts, And Reminiscent Images of the Occasion from Newspapers of the Day.

Compiled, Edited by Ronald J. Gardner
FURTHER COPYRIGHT INFORMATION:

Usually, all Copyright for Articles, Audio-Video, Printed and Digital Materials, Speeches, Commentary, etc., resides with those Authors or those holding that Copyright — the “right to copy” (or not copy/publish) that Work. Such Works can be presented by others freely and within the parameters of the Copyright Act of 1976, Title 17, U.S.C., § 107, regarding “fair use,” which allows limited use of copyrighted material to reproduce, report, teach, or criticize, or for scholarship or review, and offered non-profit, without requiring permission from the Copyright holders, with proper Attribution of the Author(s) and Source(s) plainly mentioned.

However, happily enough, the events in this Book occurred in the Year 1910, and sources relied upon published their news reports concurrently; thus their published accounts are well beyond the (continuously varying) “copyright” laws applying to such Works. Many thanks for the Public Library for maintaining such “aging, aged” publications, for we today to learn of our ancestral, historical past.

And yet while the precise text of other Sources belongs to them, and while they deserve, and get, the “credit,” your Editor here claims for himself a Copyright for his own commentary, the textual arrangement and the edited text of these personal commentaries of those remembering Halley’s Comet of 1910 & 1986.

Permission is granted to the user hereof to quote portions of this Book, provided when so done there is accurate quotation, reference, and citation accompanying that usage, to permit the Reader thereof to know of and find that source.

Please cite as, i.e.,:
"Ronald J. Gardner, We Remember Halley’s Comet of 1910 (Gardner.Christogenea.org, 2009).
We Remember Halley’s Comet of 1910

Preface
The Historical Background of Halley’s Comet of 1910
Local & Distant Newspaper Accounts of the Arrival and Passing of Halley’s Comet of 1910

Their Personal Remembrances of
The Comets of 1910 and 1986

Dr Alice Kinninger
Mr Gordon McNary
Mrs Edna Cree
Mr Carr Beebe
Dorothy & William Keller
Mr Laurence Thompson
Mrs Adah Gillan
Mr Everett Jackson
Mrs Dale (Rosita) Merwin
Mrs Maud Coleman
Mrs Edith Korherr
Mrs Margaret Freeman
Mr Harold A. Nobel
Mr Gordon Plummer
Mrs Dale (Rosita) Merwin

Reminiscent Images of the Occasion,
as found in Newspapers of the Day
(found in the accompanying online links)


“Did the Earth Miss the Comet’s Tail by 197,000 miles?” The New York Times, Saturday, May 21, 1910, p. 4.

“Poor Mother Earth: A Study in Physiology” (two images), The New York Times, Sunday, May 22, 1910, Picture Section, Part One, p. 16.
PREFACE

Compared to what the Reader of this book will soon know, the view of Halley’s comet of 1986 was more than comparatively a poor one. Yet, by reading, and “listening,” to the comments of these several octogenarian citizens that will follow the newspaper accounts of Halley’s Comet of 1910, the Reader will have seen Halley’s Comet many times, comprehending it with the mental discernment that exceeds the mortal eye.

There are 15 people represented here, including one whom we might consider as an advocate for young children. As a means of measuring the knowledge and accuracy of those interviewed against the actual occurrence and related events, relevant newspaper articles and reports are presented, which were also commonly available to the general public of 1910.

Mr and Mrs Keller were neighbors of the Editor. Mr McNary and Mr Jackson were found through an article about them by R.H. Growald, a reporter for The San Diego Union. Mrs Merwin is Mr Jackson’s sister. Mr Thompson was found when seen in a Union photo-article. Mr Beebe is an acquaintance of your Editor. Mary Hettinger, of the Fleet Space Theater’s public relations department, recommended talking to Mesdames Kinninger, Cree, Freeman, Coleman, Korherr, and Savage, as well as Mr Plummer. Mr R.R. Shelby, of the San Diego Gas and Electric Company arranged contact with Mr Nolan and Mrs Gillan. The Editor offers grateful thanks to all involved, especially for those so elderly men and women who kept their memories.

Your Editor today, October, 2009, looks back upon those days and conversations, and finds a particular contentment in knowing that while these Observers of Halley’s Comet of 1910 may not be with us now, their words and their memories are presented here, for future generations to read and remember.

While some of the people interviewed knew that their relatives or friends had also been interviewed, they did not know the nature of the questions asked of them, and prompting was minimized, and usually only by a mere reference or word of similarity. While the interview with these Comet Observers did not exactly follow the pattern found in these remembrances, but rather were edited to make a more flowing and connected commentary, it was your Editor’s desire then, and here satisfied, that the memories of these very elderly people, spoken in their own words, were to be faithfully presented. And they have been.

PLEASE NOTE: The dates indicated in the newspaper accounts are those of the actual newspaper dates, which usually represent reports of the (several) previous day’s events.
We Remember Halley’s Comet of 1910

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
of HALLEY’S COMET of 1910

From: The San Diego Union & The New York Times

The last time Halley’s Comet swooped past the earth, in the test of our sincerity, was in 1910. President William Howard Taft had succeeded Teddy Roosevelt, who was touring Europe with his famous grin, making friends with the Kaiser’s Germans and insulting the Pope by not visiting awhile in Rome. President Taft wasn’t doing much better at home as the chief executive, when measured by editorial standards. The pressing social issues of the day were the proposed federal income tax, the tariff, labor unions, and trust-busting, while the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance armed for war.(1)

In Chicago, hundreds of women were refusing to pay a local personal property tax levied upon them when they received the forms in the mail. “No Vote, No Tax,” was their war-cry.(2) Mark Twain had just passed away. (He had said he was born when The Comet arrived, and he would leave when it came past again, 76 years later; and he did, within days of its arrival). There were riots in Brooklyn over an employee (union) strife at a furniture manufacturing company.(3) To a tobacco sales company with a nation-wide chain of stores, business prosperity was measured by the number of cigars sold or not, and the stock market might be accurately predicted thereby.(4)

The death of Edward VII., King of Great Britain and Ireland since 1901, created the need for vast news coverage of the apparently monumental mourning by the European royalty and their subjects, the immense state funeral, and the introduction of the world to King Edward’s successor and eldest surviving son, George V.(5)

It was a time when the world was amidst an unusual peace — with the exception of conflicts in the Middle East and a revolution in Nicaragua,(6) with similar war-like unrest in Columbia, Peru, and Africa.(7) The bright side was that asparagus was in season, replete with recipes on half-and full-page advertisements.(8)

In local news, where most of our Observers did not yet live, San Diego had become the meat center for the Southwest, and a newly formed oil corporation, intending to develop the oil fields in the entire county, solicited the monied public to join in with them at 15 cents per share, in quarter-page ads.(9)

The census was a main issue and taken seriously. A well-known attorney of that time said San Diego must now prove their claim of a population of 50,000, so he offered to set up tents and tables downtown to help register those who were missed at home by the census-takers.(10)

Plans for the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 in San Diego, California, were being assembled,(11) while a heavyweight boxing prize-fight (i.e., for money, not sport) was being opposed by the local clergy. It was the Caucasian James J. Jeffries, the former undefeated heavyweight champion, coming out of retirement as “The Great White Hope,” vs. the Negro...
Jack Johnson, the reigning professional heavyweight champion, accompanied by his White female companion(s); a competitive match later moved to Reno, Nevada.(12)

A local company suggested San Diegans “keep your money in San Diego. Why pay enormous freight costs on Eastern (products) when we offer you an honest made home product equal in quality to any (similar product) in America.”(13)

In Kensington, a new San Diego area neighborhood, home lots were selling rapidly and “prices would soon be raised in (this) suburb.”(14) Land sales were booming in nearby Coronado and east San Diego’s more distant neighborhoods of Encanto, as well, and Grossmont, planned “to be the home of many noted artists of the footlight world.”(15)

The Comet was to be far more brilliant than the human history it was about to encompass, even more brilliant in celestial magnitude than during its much earlier 1835 showing. The last easily visible comet in 1910’s recent memory was the “Comet of 1882,” which was seen from several locations on and after September 14, 1882.(16) The 1882 comet was reported “situated near the star Lambda, in the constellation Tivins... reported bright in appearance; ... at about 11 o’clock this morning (Mountain Time), a comet, plainly visible to the eye, was seen about 5 degrees from the sun, and in a direction—a trifle south of west... visible all day.”(17)

Halley’s Comet of 1910 was visible to astronomers and photographers from September, 1909 to June, 1911, and by the unaided eye from mid-spring to early summer with mid-May having the best offering.(18)

The approach of Halley’s Comet was first reported in January, 1910. Initial reports of its arrival were sketchy during the winter and into spring, until it passed close by the earth in May, when daily head-lines on Page One were commonplace. The San Diego Union reported that Phoenix, Arizona observers saw Halley’s Comet appear “in the southwest sky shortly after sunset” the previous evening.(19) In Topeka, Kansas, the tail was seen with the unaided eye, being about 10 degrees in length. In Dallas, Texas, viewers said this January sighting of “the comet attracted great attention throughout Texas tonight (January 20, 1910). It was visible in the southern sky, close to the horizon, immediately after sunset.”(20. See also, the several illustrations in this Book).

On January 24, 1910, another comet, perhaps believing itself to be a pretender, if not a contender, to the throne of Halley’s Comet, was discovered zipping by. It was known as the “Comet A of 1910.” (21. And, if you have read that correctly, it is not “a comet of”). “Its light differs from that of most comets, though it closely resembles the great comet of 1882.(22) This new celestial body was first reported in Johannesburg, South Africa, on January 16, 1910, by an astronomer named Innes. The new comet was named after Innes originally, but scientists in Europe and America decided to call it “Comet A,” accepting the description of its “striking orange color.”(23) A new comet, outshining Venus in brilliancy, (was) visible here in (Washington, D.C.)... along the atlantic seaboard in the south, (viewing) the comet just after sunset.(24) In Toledo, Ohio, on January 22, “It was plainly visible to the naked eye. The comet appears southwest, to the right of Venus and the horizon.”(25) By February, 1910, “Comet A
1910’ (had) a tail 43 degrees in length,” when seen in St Louis, “and (was) rushing away from
the earth... The nucleus is diminishing in brilliancy, (but) the tail (had) grown to an enormous
length,” and this was said to be “the first and last visit to the earth, although if the comet’s (orbit)
is found elliptic, the comet will revisit the earth again in a few thousand years.”(26)

While reports did not indicate as much, there apparently was no confusion in the news
reports, or in the people’s minds, between Halley’s Comet and “Comet A of 1910.”

Halley’s Comet of 1910 was feared by some, respected by others, and reveled or ignored
by about as many more. The concern and consideration for the Comet could be seen in the names
the newspapers attached to it. Early on, its welcome mat stretched from a disdainful “Sidereal
Tramp”(27) to a friendly “Astral Visitor”;(28) then, at its closest pass, the Comet gave old planet
earth a swat with its tail, earning the title “Celestial Vagrant,”(29) and “Sky Vagrant”;(30), and
with almost a sigh of relief, the “Sky Rover”(31) was bid adieu as it went on its way to the
distances.

Picture Section, Part I, gives the best account of earthlings’ opinions of the Comet: on one side
of the page, a fierce, fiery ball of a comet bore down like a roaring pit-bulldog upon a fearful,
shrieking world; but once the comet was past, and beyond being any danger, the event was
portrayed as though the Comet had turned-tail and ran, the cartoon deriding it, by showing a
disgruntled earth scowling at a cowardly, howling comet running away like a scaredy-cat
looking over its shoulder in its own fear of its intended victim. It is worth every penney spent by
the reader to go to the library to see this cartoon for oneself. (This amusing account of the
Comet’s awe-inspiring arrival and its fizzling departure can be seen at the beginning and end of
this Book).

For a more thorough, first-hand amusement, your Editor recommends the Reader review
*The San Diego Union* and *The New York Times* as noted, as well as other periodicals of that era,
usually on microfilm, at the public library.

---

**LOCAL & DISTANT NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS**

**OF THE ARRIVAL AND PASSING**

**OF HALLEY’S COMET OF 1910**

(For an amusing “Editorial Cartoon” depicting Earth’s fearful view of the approach of a
terrifying Comet, please see the linked image-file “A Terrifying Comet Accosts Mother Earth”,
originally from “Poor Mother Earth: A Study in Physiology” (one of two images), *The New York
Times*, Sunday, May 22, 1910, Picture Section, Part One, p. 16.).

From a meager beginning in the early months of 1910, to news-heights in mid-May, the
news accounts quickly dropped the Comet, and by the end of May, barely a short column
appeared to acknowledge its presence in the immediately recent past. The world went on and so
did the Comet; there were more important events to report. Nothing is as dead as yesterday’s
news, comets, astronomers, and star-gazers notwithstanding.
Monday, May 2, 1910
“Halley’s Comet, drawn by Mons Baldet,” looked like a white spot on a large black ball — perhaps representing the darkness of space. The accompanying news column called it a “Sidereal Tramp” that was seen by many persons on the northern coast of the United States, and was observed by several persons in the Seattle (Washington) sky, during the morning hours of April 30 or May 1. The sky was unusually clear along the eastern horizon of Seattle, and the Comet became visible to the naked eye shortly after 3 o’clock.

Tuesday, May 3.
The Hydrographic Office received a message from a ship at sea: “Halley’s comet can be seen plainly with a glass (binoculars) at 4 AM, 25 degrees north-east of Venus.”

Friday, May 6.
The Comet was seen from ferryboats, “by ferrymen and their owl [late night] travellers” and “by all who looked up.” It was seen in the eastern sky before dawn, and brightened after 3 AM, “the tail sweeping away to the south-east. It could be plainly traced from 3-4 times the apparent breadth between the horns of the fast waning moon which hung below and to the southward about on a level with Venus, the comet’s closest neighbor.”

“A Spectacular Sight,” was the headline, saying the Comet was best observed from 3:30 to 3:45 AM. “(T)he visible portion of the tail is 18 degrees, which corresponds to a length of 20,000,000 miles... The comet at that time is almost directly east and about 10 degrees above the horizon, and the tail points directly away from the sun. Those who live in the glare of electric lights must expect to see the comet very imperfectly....”

(In 1986, Mr Clint Hatchett, an astronomer at the Reuben H. Fleet Space Theater, in Balboa Park, San Diego, has suggested a very general way to determine lengths and distances of celestial objects and bodies. If one holds up their hand at arm’s length and makes it into a fist, the distance from the outer edges of the first to the fourth knuckles would be about 10 degrees, and measure probably about 3-1/4 to 3-1/2 inches across. A comet with a tail of 18 degrees, then, would be about 2 hand-widths, or about 7 inches, in length as seen in the sky.)

In 1910, “James Wallace, a local (San Diego) man, versed in astronomical observations says, ‘... I saw the comet yesterday morning at 2:52 with the unaided eye. It is seen to best advantage at 3:00 o’clock, being then 10 degrees above the horizon... It is large and brighter than the stranger we saw in the evening sky last January [referring to “Comet A of 1910”]. The tail of the comet now stands out clear cut and well defined against the sky. After Monday (May 9) it will apparently rapidly approach the sun and on (Wednesday) May 18 it will pass across its disc and brush us with its tail.”

Sunday, May 8.
*The New York Times* had full page drawings, showing the famous comets in history and an artist’s conception of what they looked like and their comparable size.
Tuesday, May 10.
A popular east-coast astronomer, Mary Proctor, wrote about Halley’s Comet and comets in general, with a picture of the Comet from an observatory telescope.(38)

Wednesday, May 11.
The Comet was seen in the eastern sky, with its tail “fanlike in appearance” and about 58 degrees long (or almost 6 hand-widths, 20 inches) or as being “equivalent to the distance between the pointers of the Great Dipper.”(39)

Thursday, May 12.
The San Diego Union published a photograph of “How Halley’s comet appears in the eastern heavens every morning shortly after Three o’Clock... (and) how it would be revealed to San Diego (viewers) if they arose at that hour.” The Comet was more respectably addressed as “the astral visitor... traveling 1792 miles each minute.”(40)

Saturday, May 14.
Mary Proctor had another long column in The Times, with a drawing or sketch of the Comet “as seen from the Times Tower,” with a nearby bridge as a comparative object for size. The Comet was just a faint white streak in the sky, at first, but “by 3:25 AM the train of the comet was 20 degrees in length, or four times the distance between the pointers in the Great Dipper... At 3:30, the train of the comet was clearly visible to the naked eye, to a distance of 35 degrees (3 1/2 hand-widths, 11-12 inches)... Instead of being long and slender, as it appeared on (Friday) May 6, it was spread out like a partly open fan, its greatest width at the extreme and being about five degrees (1/2 a hand-width, about 2 inches). The nucleus resembled a golden globe immersed in folds of gauze. Each moment it became more clearly defined, finally glowing as brightly as a star of the second magnitude.

“By 3:37 [A.M.], as the stars began to fade, the train of the comet was still visible for 20 degrees (about 7 inches). Three minutes later, the nucleus of the comet maintaining its brightness, compared favorably with the first magnitude star Altair, which was glowing brightly near the zenith. In the southern sky, the glowing red star Antares, which marks the heart of the Scorpion in the constellation of that name, was peeping over the mists of the horizon as though anxious to share with us a parting view of the comet. It arrived too late to see the comet’s train, which had faded from view by 3:40, but the nucleus was still bright and clearly defined, and remained so until 3:45. Meanwhile, most of the stars were rapidly fading and the stars in Cassiopeia were still discernable. Altair and Vega had almost extinguished their light, looking pale in contrast with ruddy Antares.

“At 3:54 the nucleus of the comet was visible to the naked eye, though its light was now dim as compared with the ever increasing splendor of Venus nearby. The nucleus remained visible to the unaided eye at 3:57, after Gamma in Pegasus had vanished. At 4:10 the nucleus of the comet though faint, was discernable and remained so until 4:20. Ere it faded entirely from view, the lustre of all the stars had paled in the approaching dawn, and Venus was left alone in all her glory to greet the rising sun. MARY PROCTOR.”(41)

Monday, May 16.
Newspapers carried a continuous account of the comments and opinions of the astronomers and scientists. A drawing showed a description of the times on a nearly daily basis,
with the comet and earth in their solar positions and Some more comet-history.(42) The Comet was increasing in brilliance to “nearly zero magnitude, the highest stage of stellar brilliancy.”(43) At Amherst, Massachusetts, college observations showed the tail to be bifurcated (divided into two parts), but in one piece the next morning. Another article called the Comet a “celestial vagrant” when it was remaining in obscurity and was not able to be seen during an attempt at a mid-day viewing.(44) A page-2 column had a cute cartoon characterization that might have been included to help minimize the fears beginning to be expressed by some people. New England astronomers appeared to concur as to the possibility of a luminous display similar to the Aurora Borealis, or northern lights. Others believed it “probable,” and still others would “doubt if there could be any effect at all.”(45) Not very reassuring to the frightened people who were not familiar with the celestial facts to hear of such divergent opinion.

Mr Wallace’s educated, or at least, studied, understanding of the forthcoming events was enough to allow him and others so interested to be unafraid of the Comet’s approach and influence. The astronomer Mary Proctor said, as part of a Times full page article in the Magazine Section specifically about Halley’s Comet, “fears of the comet are foolish and ungrounded.”(46) As with this present publication about those who remember Halley’s Comet of 1910, the Times recounted the memories of their citizens who remembered Halley’s Comet of 1835. All four people, in their eighties or older, said they (later?) “laughed at (the) fears of it,” and detailed their account of the popular reactions of that nineteenth-century visit.(47) Yet “the common people” were afraid, nevertheless.

“Comet Scares The French,” laughed — or sympathized? — the headline. “The common people believe pretty generally that the approach of the comet is the cause of the remarkable atmospheric disturbances,” of icy temperatures alternating with mild days; cold dismal showers, etc, regardless of there being “no open excitement” among them.(48)

In Port-au-Prince, Haiti, sugar pills were being sold to the locals by the more mercenary in due to the adverse influence of voo-doo fears and rituals.(49) As the Comet became visible at 2 AM on Saturday, May 7, in Bermuda, a decidedly red tinge was noted in its tail.” After a 101-gun salute in honor of their new king, George V, at Hamilton, Bermuda, “as the report died away, the observer saw a sudden flaring up at the end of the comet’s tail. The head also glowed, a ball of red hue... Some of (the locals) connected the strange light with the death of King Edward (on that previous Friday, May 6).(50)

Another report detailed how the “Sky Vagrant Causes Funny Things.” It mocked the fears of Indians who had sought haven in mountain caves; told of a farmer in New Mexico fearing the Comet, drank poison and died; of miners taking refuge in Denver’s deepest shafts; and of foreigners from Russia and Mexico employed in the fields around Fort Collins, Colorado, spending the day praying over what they believed was to be an approaching catastrophe.(51)

There were several reports of people committing suicide, sometimes after killing members of their families.(52) In the southern states, two people, on separate occasions and locations, were shown the Comet and they dropped dead immediately.(53) “In districts populated by foreigners, school children by the hundreds asked permission of their teachers to remain at home... for fear of some untoward happening for which Halley’s comet may be responsible.”(54)
WE REMEMBER HALLEY’s COMET of 1910

Many workers in the southern states refused to go to work, some going into a “comet frenzy,” others attending all-night church services in continuous prayer. (55)

With news of the earth’s passing through the Comet’s tail, there came the unwarranted fears about cyanogen, a colorless, odorless and very poisonous gas, said even by scientists to be the main composition of the enormous tail. The earth was to have went right through all this deadly air several days later, Wednesday, May 18. (56) And yet, for all its millions of miles in dimension, the tail was said to be so “highly attenuated [thin, weak, diluted] that the most perfect laboratory vacuum is extremely dense in comparison... It seems to be a conservative estimate that there is not more than one particle of molecule, microscopic in size, on the average, per cubic yard. (57)

The Lick Observatory’s comments had little effect on some. The “comet cold” was an epidemic in New York City, causing a marked degree in colds and cases of the grip (influenza) probably caused, says one physician, from the early morning rooftop comet-watching parties. A more calm minded citizen had “asked the Health Commissioner to stop the newspapers from publishing scary stories about the comet, because it was frightening over-sensitive persons into illness.” (58)

Not everyone found themselves bound to fear. But for those who did, feared the Comet, or at the least of the worst, the tail. They feared either would strike the earth and destroy it. This fear apparently was not a wide-spread response, and it was said that “only the foolish held any apprehension over the coming of the comet.” (59) An editorial column quoted an astronomer as stating, quite positively that if the comet hit the earth, it would disturb us about as much as the dropping of a featherbed into the ocean would disturb the whales (60) This, after the newspaper printed four columns of lengthy, factual news and scientific drawings of the Comet and its path, with dates to show where it would be, including after it successfully zipped past the planet, under the headlines of “Comet Is No Menace,” and “Earth In No Danger.” (61) Not to be out-done by one of their own, at the same time another newspaper’s front page sub-headlined the idea that the Comet’s powerful influence might result in earthquakes. (62) Accompanying that headline, on the same page, was a centerpiece article that reassuringly said, “Old Earth Still Safe and Sound.” (62).

The bias of the media, for better or worse, either as an influence on or as a reflection, of the populous thought of the day, was front-page obvious. But “they don’t know, like we do, that everybody’s ignorant. We’re just ignorant on different subjects.” (63).

Those people who believed themselves not to be ignorant — of the dangers of the Comet, anyway — were enjoying the event almost as much as they would the greatest High Society season. The newspaper reporters were having a field day.

In New York City, “Guests of Big Hotels are Comet-mad,” said one paper, describing mid-night breakfasts that were being served atop fancy hotels, enlivened with music. (64. We must remember that music in the days of 1910 was most certainly “live,” as they didn’t know any other way to obtain that level of quality).
There was a “comet-dinner” sponsored by The Thirteen Club, which was held at the West Street Building, at that time “the highest available building in New York, and as near to Halley’s comet as they can get.” (65) The sun-parlor on the roof of the Waldorf-Astoria was prepared for the Comet-watchers. The Gotham, St Regis, and many other hotels of upper-class and high-class quality joined in the faddest fray. Express elevators were reserved for the occasion,(66) to accommodate patrons arriving from the brisk sales on binoculars (or, “spy glasses”) and telescopes, which sold for a dollar each (a day’s wages for the average worker). “All classes of people... have become astronomers, and as a rule they are not buying small cheap instruments,(69) but first-class telescopes that sell for $50.00 to $250.00 (67)

“So great is the interest in Halley’s comet here-abouts that this local (Pasadena, California) telephone company has instituted a call system similar to were to  that of hotels... Registers for the accommodations of (railroad) passengers who desire to see Halley’s comet are now maintained on all Pullman cars arriving at or departing from Los Angeles.(68) Hotel clerks were, in- deed, calling visitors to awaken them for parties on those early mornings, (69) and many of the comet-watchers were already forming clubs for the next (1986) Hailey’s Comet visit.(70) Comet-watching parties and just plain old comet-watching became a gambler-fad in the Flatbush (New York City) social circles, where they occasionally made a party of 13, and thus defying superstition — wearing black robes and masks. “Some artful Flatbush men are already scheming to adopt (the Comet), and shelve the time-worn excuse of an installation of officers at the lodge, offered upon daybreak arrivals at home.(71).

One astronomer suggested viewers “will have as good a time as the hotel they happen to choose provides in the way of dinner, music and good company.” Those not at a party were advised to go down to the river and “view the steamships passing up and down to relieve the monotony of waiting for something to happen aloft, and will make an evening worthwhile on its own account.”(72)

In Boston, the fire alarm was to be sounded to awaken those who desired to see the Comet, upon receiving word from the Harvard Observatory. Mayor Fitzgerald was convinced that at least half of the people in the city were on their rooftops night after night. “I propose,” said the mayor, “to let these comet gazers get a little needed sleep. Then, if the comet is not seen, they can remain in their beds until morning, while if it appears the alarm will give them notice.”(73)

Owners of the larger cafes and restaurants were saying the vogue created by the Comet would be “as much a financial success as the “reveillion,” which marks the end of the old year and the advent of the new.(74)

A New York City public school teacher arranged for the parents of his grade school students to arrive at 3 AM to watch the Comet. The parents were invited to watch, too, but most declined, saying it was enough that they brought the children, and they were too tired to see it, in any case. The next day there!were a lot of sleepy-eyed children in school.(75) A New Jersey boy, missing all night and for an absence of over 22 hours, was returned home. He was found high atop the school belfry, where he waited for the Comet. Soon after climbing up there, the
hoots of unseen owls nearby, and other strange night sounds, terrified the boy until he fell asleep. (76)

The Comet didn’t take any notice of all this fear and fun, and it didn’t slow down, either.

Tuesday, May 17
The Comet was being measured as 30 degrees long, or 24 million miles, end to end. (3 hand widths, or about 10-11 inches). Astronomic reports indicated the Comet and an eclipse of the moon were to be seen at the same time, set for Monday, May 23. For the moment, the Comet was arising in the western skies, having disappeared in the morning skies, only to be reappearing in the west after May 18. It would be “moving eastward from the sun quite rapidly, and ought to be visible in the western sky after May 20,” said another interpretation. The best part was that it would be at its brightest except for the interference of the full moon’s strong light. Best viewing would be between 8:30 and 10:30 pm.(77)

Another report from the previous night’s watch said the tail’s shape, as viewed in Geneva, New York, on May 16, “was that of a pointed crescent.,”(78) and yet another report confirmed the crescent shape but saw the tail as being 45 degrees long (4-1/2 hand widths, about 14 inches).(79)

Wednesday, May 18
The previous night, the tail was 105 degrees long (10-1/2 hand widths, about 34 inches), with a lag, or a distance causing a disconnection, between the Comet and its tail.(80) Astronomers were predicting the Comet would be traveling at 50 miles per second, with the earth passing through the tail for about 6 hours during the coming evening, starting at 8 PM.(81) Some scientists in Pasadena were planning on trapping dust from the tail of the Comet during its closest pass, hoping their intricate devices would work, then hold the samples for testing and examination later.(82) Attempts to collect Comet dust were being made in New York City, as well.(83)

Thursday, May 19
In San Diego, very large headlines, with starburst-like shapes between the lines heightened the visual effect of the announcement that the earth had passed through the Comet’s tail.(84) Reports came in to major news centers in New York by cablegram from all over the world; from London, Berlin, Geneva, St Petersburg (soon, and regrettably, to be known as Leningrad), Johannesburg, all with the same message, varied only by the observer’s memory and vocabulary.(85)

The Comet’s tail extended well across the Milky Way in a spectacular display of the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights, reaching across the sky from east to west, as seen at Yerkes Observatory in Williams Bay, Wisconsin. (For a personal remembrance of that spectacular sight, see ???. The Observatory did not connect the Auroral phenomenon directly with the Comet.(86) The same scene was found in New York City’s northeastern sky, from 10:30 to 11:30 PM, with the Aurorals explained as being caused by sunspots.(87) Scientists said these immense suns-pots, intensely black, made a sudden appearance on the same day the earth passed through the Comet’s tail.(88) Comet gazers saw intermittent flashes around the Comet from 10:30 to 11:30
PM, following the Auroral appearance. Astronomer Mary Proctor wrote that the flashes were white, occasionally “ruddy,” and coming from beneath the clouds or from a low bank of mist. The flashes were “as arcs of fire hovering over the darkness. Some of them arose, fanlike in shape, rays of white light radiating upward to the arc’s edge, where a crimson flash completed the effect.”(89)

In San Diego, the Comet was said to be “visible again, heading away from us, with the tail sticking straight up out of the western sky a little above the spot where the sun sinks. There will be no light from the rising sun to dim the glory of the spectacle, and it is likely to be far more majestic than in the stages of the approach. At the end of a month, good-bye for another seventy-five years.”(90)

Friday, May 20
Called the “Sky Rover,” the Comet made its appearance in the western sky at 7:38 Pacific Time, as seen from the Mt Wilson Observatory in Pasadena. It was one degree above the horizon (barely a finger width), as a “hazy, nebular star” with a reddish color possibly caused by surface dust and fog from the ocean. The tail was faintly extending upward and away from the sun.(91)

The student observatory at the University of California at Berkeley reported seeing a 15 degree (5-6 inch) lag, or distance, of the tail behind the Comet.(92)

Observatories all over the country told of their sightings, including a 101 degree (32 inch) tail length, while many people failed to see anything happen. Questions about the position of the tail during the encounter with the earth caused astronomers to be unsure if the planet had actually passed through the tail or not. A long list of “professors” offered conflicting accounts, including an explanation of the “deep curve that has developed in the comet’s tail,”(93) a curvature that led astronomers into errors of calculations of the tail’s true length.(94) Instruments failed to record any data, and no dust was trapped.(95)

Saturday, May 21
Many people saw the eclipse of the moon on Sunday evening and Monday and Friday in the early morning, but there was no news of the Comet at all on page 1 or page 2. A drawing showing the Comet’s orbit was relegated to page 4. In Wisconsin, it was said the Comet was in the western sky with a brightness of the 4th magnitude at 8:00 PM, increasing to the 2nd magnitude at 8:30, as it was lying close to the horizon. The tail was missing, according to several accounts. San Jose, California saw it “in the eastern sky. The tail extended from the horizon up to the Milky Way, making its observed length 150 degrees (48 inches). The tail curved away from the earth.”(96)

Another newspaper used a map with the solar objects to show why the Comet appeared first in the east, then in the west, and also reported the Comet visible at 7:30 PM for only one hour.(97)
Sunday, May 22
The tail was seen pointing both east and westwards. The article was unclear if there were two tails at the same time in each direction, or if one in the evening and another that next morning. In New York, the Comet went from east to west in the sky (perhaps much faster than was usual), and in St Louis, the tail was seen at a 45 degree angle. No comment here was found telling whether it pointed upwards or down.(98)

Monday, May 23
The two-tailed Comet was seen at Johannesburg, South Africa, where photographs indicated one tail in the west at night, and another in the east in the morning skies.(99)

Tuesday, May 24
The dense clouds prevented San Diegans from seeing the Comet on Monday evening, and obstructed their viewing the double phenomenon of the Comet and the eclipse of the moon in the same sky.(100)

Thursday, May 26
All the reader found was a small page 1 column regarding the gas content of the tail.(101)

Friday, May 27
The Comet was seen in San Diego the previous night as a bright star that “appeared high in the heavens” at about 55 degrees above the horizon, and “a trifle to the south of west, about 8:30 o’clock [and] could be seen plainly with the naked eye.”(102)

There were no more headlines or articles about Halley’s Comet of 1910 in either The San Diego Union or The New York Times, except for the occasional, vague comet-comment, dropping the once maybe frightening, then as often amusing subject more quickly from sight in the newspapers than from the sight of the blinking eye, leaving the remaining details to be gathered and presented by astronomers and scientists in their obscure publications, and memories in the thoughts of people who probably never thought they would ever see such a sight again. Yet some did live to see it.

“THE COMET AS AN OMEN”
From the Baltimore Sun

“That human nature is the same today as it was four centuries ago is indicated by the fears aroused in various places by the approach of Halley’s comet. That the world has progressed is proved by the fact that these fears are exceptional and not general. Science reassures us far more often than it alarms, and this is one of the striking instances of that fact.

“Astronomers, theologians and plain citizens today are speculating about this strange visitor of the skies, but they do not fall into superstitious panic like the one which resulted when this same comet appeared in 1456, and to the Ave Maria was added this prayer: ‘Lord save us from the devil, the Turk and the comet.’ Of course, it so happened that about at that time the Turks had come into
full possession of Constantinople and were threatening to overrun all of Eastern and Southern Europe. It seems to have been argued that though the Turks were quite powerful they had not yet reached the position of being able to command a comet to follow them.— ergo: if the Turks did not bring the comet, the comet must have brought the Turks. Therefore the panic.

“In other years the comet was deemed a good omen, and we have reports that the comets of 1811 and 1858 had a most beneficial effect on the earth’s atmosphere, especially on the vineyards of Southern Europe. It seems that the wine of those years was of such abundance and of such a joy-producing quality that for a long time it was advertised as ‘comet wine.’ If our present methods of advertising had been in vogue we should probably be manufacturing ‘Comet wine’ even to this day — perhaps shooting off skyrocket over the vats in the cellars to produce the flavor.

“However, it is probable that the only real effect a comet has is to make everyone more keenly alive to both the good and bad events of the ‘comet year.’ Had this noted skylight of Halley’s appeared about the time of the ‘Frisco earth quake, there is no telling what sins would have been charged up to it.”(103)

“The comet came, the comet went, and this old earth is no worse and no better, and thus far very little wiser.”(104)

(For another amusing “Editorial Cartoon,” depicting Earth’s disgruntled view of a whining, whimpering departing Comet, please see the linked image-file “A Whimpering Comet leaves Mother Earth”, originally from “Poor Mother Earth: A Study in Physiology” (second of two images), *The New York Times*, Sunday, May 22, 1910, Picture Section, Part One, p. 16).
We Remember
Halley’s Comet of 1910

Their Personal Remembrances
of The Comets of 1910 and 1986
in Conversation during March, 1986

A PLEA FOR THE CHILDREN
by Dr. Alice Kinninger
Chula Vista, California
Who Also Remembers Halley’s Comet of 1910

Oh, it was a very beautiful sight, I’ll tell you that. Very beautiful.

I was very young, and my father was a physician, and the family had a nice house in Santa Barbara (California), up on a hill. My father thought enough about it to pick me up and put me on his shoulders. I wasn’t even three, but I remember the night very well. The family saw it many nights, but I guess they picked me up only one night.

My teen-age brother had kept a diary almost all his life, from the time he could almost write. He tells about many nights, and of course toward mornings, when they would see the Comet and how beautiful it was and all. And he talks about the little sister, you know, and I have (those diary) books; I’ve had them all my life.

But I can remember being held by my father, and the vastness of the sky, and the beauty of it, and the warmth and love of my family, and I thought through the years of the tail of that Comet in relation to blankets (laughter) that drape down toward terra firma. And later when I got to see weddings, I got to thinking about the Comet’s tail as a wedding veil, a beautiful, you know, a beautiful wedding veil. (Laughter).

But [Halley’s Comet] to me, it’s just like an old friend that’s come back to visit, and it’s not like a cold, dusty, dirty ball of ice. I think it’s just a beautiful spectacle) because it’s been like a goal to see it again, to live and, you know, keep well, and active, and get to see it again. And that goal, dream, has come true.

When we were on the star-gazing parties with the (Reuben H. Fleet) Space Theater (in Balboa Park, San Diego), the Peter Jennings (ABC-News) people were there (to interview me). I don’t know how they got my name, except maybe one of my poems was published (in) one of the national publications, so I guess they got the name from that person. That was kind of fun. I’m a dentist, and we met at the dental society and it was real exciting when the whole (news) entourage came in for the interview, and it was fun, [but when it was broadcast,] it was pre-empted here [in San Diego], so it wasn’t known locally. I think [it was] one of the local [sports] teams, or something; that [it] was the height of the season or something. They sent me a video tape of it, and I had heard [about the news piece] from some early orthodontic patients that
I had when we lived in Los Angeles, [and] as far away as from Hawaii, from Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland. And up north, Washington, and so forth. So it was quite generally broadcast. It was fun.

So my point is, in telling you this, is to encourage families, if they can get out soon, to encourage families to take their little ones [out to see the Comet of 1986]. See, sometimes they [the adults] think, ‘Well, a pre-school age child is too young,’ [and that, as children,] we wouldn’t remember. But I remember many things about that night, and things that aren’t in the [brother’s] diary, and so forth.

I think the exciting part about this is the inspiration for health, for people, you know. young people, to keep well, to see it again, and to know that it’s just all a part of God’s work. It’s just mind-boggling. It makes you realize there’s a pretty great God out there.

GORDON McNARY REMEMBERS
HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Mr Gordon McNary
San Diego, California

I saw it very distinctly. I saw it a number of times.

At that time, I lived in a little town in Nebraska. I was 10 years old then, born in nineteen-hundred. We were in a small community (where) we didn’t have electric lights, nothing to bother or darken the moon. You could see Halley’s Comet with the tail very distinctly at various spots (in the sky). I remember my father on several occasions getting us up in the small hours of the morning, to see [for] myself; and at dinner time.

I would say it was in the lower quarter of the horizon. I remember getting up at 2:00 o’clock at night and looking at it, in the south, the southern sky, and then [we] saw it in the west, and at different latitudes, I guess. Not too high, as a rule. To the west, it was not too far above the horizon. We saw it one night in the south and it was quite high up off the horizon.

It was very distinct; very big. And you could see the tail. You see, at the dark of the moon, and without any street lights or anything as interference, the atmosphere was clear. You check on nights when the sky was full of stars, and you’d catch it.

I remember my father saying, ‘This won’t happen again; you’ll probably never see this again.’ (Laughter) He was greatly interested. I think at dinner one night, we had west windows, and he said, ‘Let’s turn out our lamps, here, and look at it.’ It was in the west, and not too far above the horizon. We didn’t have a chance to look at it through binoculars or a telescope. We just looked at it with natural [means], by eye. It was that clear. We had beautiful views of it.

I would think, as I recall it, it was almost colorless. It was an ordinary star with a tail. Probably a fiery color, maybe a little yellow cast.
In the distance, of course, (the tail’s length) have been tremendous. It would trail in your vision. I don’t know how to describe the length, but it would be five times the length of the star itself. But it was quite distinctive, quite a tail. Seems to me that the tail, when I saw it, was to the left of the Comet itself. I was looking west, for instance, and the tail would be to the south. [The Comet’s head] was much smaller than the size of the moon, but it would be a good size; it would be like one of your stars in the evening, with a tail. A bit larger than that, about that size.

It came in at various times. It would be off for a few days, and they’d give us a schedule (in the newspapers). I cannot truthfully say whether I saw it from the other direction or not. It could be, coming in from other latitudes, couldn’t it? I think that when we saw it in the southern skies, that it seemed to me that (the tail) might have been on the right, then. But when I saw it in the west, it seemed to me it was on the left. I was only about nine or ten years old then.

I’m completely at a loss to tell you (what season it was in). I think it was not in the winter. (It was in comfortable weather, to stand there and watch it), yes. I would think that it was in the spring or fall.

It was a phenomenon, but I don’t know of any fear. There was lots of news coverage. The daily papers set the schedules as to where it would be, and about the time you would see it. ‘Above the horizon, between the hours of 9 and 10, something like that. Or, ‘In the morning.’ I think we must have [talked about it in school, but] I think my father had more of an interest than a lot of people. He was fascinated with it and would get us up at the wee hours of the morning to look at it.

He was a very learned man. He had been a telegrapher in the early days of the wireless and Marconi code, and then he worked on the regular telegraphy, with Morse Services at the turn of the century, so he was greatly interested in that sort of thing. Through him, I was very much interested, and he kind of kept us looking at it.

Of course, at 10 years old, [all this was] more than just a phenomenon. At 10 years old, you’ve only had 10 years of experience, and this is something to remember.

I would be very much tempted to see it again. I have some friends who drove out to Cuyamaca (a foothills “mountain” range north-east of San Diego), a while back, to see it though.

You know, I was amazed in that we would not see it again for some, what, 76 years? And I was amazed at what happened to [the Comet] in the interim, how limitless this area of space is.

The Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights)

We would lay out on the lawn in the summer. We had the Auroras. Boy, that was like, in the middle of the West, you know. Some vivid colors. And we’d watch those. I think I was more concerned with those than I was with the Comet. [The Auroras] would throw the telegrapher’s wire services out, you know. We used to get these clear down, you could see them almost directly overhead, they were that far down, and they would not only be the white shafts that you see, but they were in color. The sky would be in colors, greens and blues. [And they extended]
horizon-to-mid-sky, and come from the north, at a certain time of year and a clear atmosphere. That we used to watch a great deal, and then there’s certain times when there are falling stars, of course, and we were interested in that, and we would lay out on the lawn and wait and look at those during the night, too. There were certain periods when they were very active. [But] these [Auroras] went clear across half the sky, they were very big. It was like fireworks, really.

EDNA CREE REMEMBERS
HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Mrs Edna Cree
Hillcrest, San Diego, California

I remember it just like it was yesterday.

I was 15 years old, I was in school in Elgin, Illinois. It had [a population of] about 35,000 when I was there.

Halley’s Comet was supposed to be close to the horizon. Well, our house was on a hill, not much of a hill, but the street just slanted down. We were at the top of the hill, and we just looked down the street, and it went like it was just crossing the road down there.

You could see it easily with your eyes. There was a lot of sky above it [the Comet] as it went by, of course, but like I said, that hill went down and ended at the horizon. So [the Comet] was above the houses, and the buildings, that were down there. It was that high up from the horizon. But it was low in the sky.

And it didn’t move too fast. I mean, you had time to get a good look at it. It was just about five o’clock; just about dinner time. My mother was just started to get dinner. [It was] about dusk, as we used to call it back in Illinois. And I remember she stopped and we went out [and] stood in the middle of the road, looking towards the west. We didn’t have any binoculars or anything. If you were fortunate to be where you could look toward the west, you could see it.

Well, we saw the whole thing. I’m telling you, it was beautiful. It just crossed the street.

It was in the western sky at that time, going from north to south. I remember that it was a great big beautiful ball, and it had a tail on it, this marvelous tail, behind it. It was a very long tail, much wider than a pencil.

It was just like gold, you know, and it was just like a million of those sparklers that little kids have. We used to have them when I was little. It looked like hundreds of those all going off at once. You didn’t see the wire down there, just the sparkles. And the whole tail was just like that; a sparkling gold color. The whole thing was gold color.
[The tail] flared out from the head like if the head was a foot across, then the tail would go out so that it was bigger than a foot as it got towards the back. All we could see crossing our street was that the tail was straight.

The round head, the cosmo, as it says in the papers, that was heading south, and the tail was right out behind it, to the north. But it filled up the whole sky, all across the street, it was so big. If measuring it, I would say it was yards and yards. And it spread out from the round head of the thing and it got wider as it got to the back. It was beautiful. Just to look at it down the street, it was a great big round... could have been bigger than the moon.

I saw it just that once, and it was gone. I don’t remember anything unusual except that beautiful ball with that big, long tail. We were too far away for the Comet [(to light up the ground where we were standing]. And we couldn’t see it in the daytime, either.

I’m a twin, and I remember my sister was sick. She had what they called the grip in those days; nowadays they call it the flu. My mother said, ‘You have to get up and go out and look at that, because you’ll never see that again in your lifetime.’ Well, my sister and I both thought, Well, it could be possible to see it, but not probable. We didn’t think we’d live to be 90. She didn’t, but I’m still here. Our other sister was in Chicago, and my brother was also in Chicago. I don’t know if they were interested. I never heard them mention it.

At that time, I only saw it once. You didn’t see it like they’re seeing it now, [for] two or three months. It was only supposed to be that once as it went past where we were. I wondered how back in those days they knew what time you were supposed to look at it, or how they knew just exactly to tell you where to look. We only heard what was in the newspaper. Of course, in those days, they weren’t having all this – space business. And everybody thinks, ‘Well, the weather’s changed because of the space business,’ and all that stuff. Nobody thought anything about it [then, in 1910]. It was just the Comet. And something unusual, like the [sun] when it has an eclipse by the moon. Just something else to look at that you never [had] seen before. There was no radio or television in those days, and that’s why I’m wondering how they happened to get up [publish] in the Elgin paper the right time of day. That’s where you got your information, [it] was from the newspapers.

They had an astronomer place in Elgin in connection with the — I’ve forgotten what school it was. That Dr Urey used to be in that place. He was long time ago (an) astronomer.

April [of 1986] is supposed to be the best [viewing this year] it says. That’s when it’s going to be the brightest. But I keep track in the papers and I cut out everything I see about it, and figure it out. It says, you know, in the papers, ‘Just a ball of ice.’ Everybody thinks it’s something white. Well, the one I saw was not white, it was gold. The whole thing, the shiny tail, and the round head, just like a bunch of gold going across the sky.

They say it was going to be too close to the sun this time, or too far away, or something; different than before. That was the first thing in the paper, that it wasn’t going to be so bright. Well, I found another article later on, and they said it’s brighter than they thought it was going to be. So it says, if you can see the North Star with your eyes, why, you will surely see Halley’s
Comet without binoculars. [But] I’ve got binoculars, so I can look with them. You [wouldn’t] need a telescope if it was like it was before [in 1910].

I’ve been talking about Halley’s Comet for years to my grandchildren, so finally my grandson said one day, “Gramma, you’re going to have to go to Australia to see Halley’s Comet. The best viewing is going to be down there.” But how am I going to get to Australia? And he said, “I’ll take you.” But the poor grandson doesn’t have a job right now. Couldn’t take me if he wanted to. Oh. he’s — I can’t keep track of my kids; I think he is 29. My son did say he I’d take me, but that was before we knew it was going to be in the middle of the morning when you had to get up, and had to go a long ways to get up there [to see it locally].

And I read here that this time it is not going to be as bright as before, but if it is as bright as it was before, those street lights down below at night-time shouldn’t bother you; shouldn’t keep you from seeing it.

I think I saw Bennett’s Comet [“Comet Bennett,” one of the two brightest in the 1970s]. I found it in the sky one night here with my binoculars. Well, that was just like a great big cloud, not too much in the sky. But I found it, much to my surprise, in the middle of the night. I found it two nights. So I’m sure you can see Halley’s Comet.

I’m going to be terribly disappointed if I don’t see [Halley’s Comet], because when I got along in my eighties, I thought, Well, I’m just going to stick around until Halley’s Comet comes around again. I’ll have to watch the paper and see, because I’ve certainly got to see that if possible. You better not miss it, because you’ll never forget it once you see it.

There was an article in the paper which said [the reporter] talked with some man who was I think 5 years old when he saw it. And I thought, “Well, maybe she’d like to talk to somebody who really remembers what it was!”

Aurora Borealis

I lived in Minnesota for years. I saw those. After I was married) we moved to Minnesota, and we used to have just beautiful ones there. One time I was coming home at night and it was dark all over, and it was just like a cathedral up there, these beautiful blue, and green, and red lights up there. My husband was a railroad engineer, so when he used to come home from the run in the middle of the night, held say, You better look out there, it’s beautiful. Aurora Borealis. Saw lots of ‘em.

CARR BEEBE REMEMBERS
HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Mr Carr Beebe
North Park, San Diego, California

Oh, yes, I remember the Comet. I was 8 years old at the time of Halley’s Comet. I was in northwest Iowa. I was clear up in the north west corner, just about a hundred or a hundred’n
twenty five miles east of Souix Falls, South Dakota. And Souix City, [Iowa], I was northeast of Souix City. Maybe a hundred miles or so. Maybe not quite a hundred. I was in a little town of 1,500 people. Spirit Lake, was the name of the town. It was a very little town, the county seat of Dickinson County.

I was up, probably at early in the evening, (after dinner time). And I don’t even remember what season it was, (but) the weather was clear. I was outside, and as I remember, there was no snow on the ground, so it must have been spring or fall, I don’t remember which. Warm weather.

I saw it with my naked eye. And it seemed like it was in the west, and it seemed to be as you look at it, it seemed to be about a foot off the horizon. It wasn’t very far above the horizon. And I saw it for several days, and then it finally disappeared. It was just a white streak.

I don’t know whether I can differentiate at this late date between the head and the tail, because it seemed to be about the same size. [Using a ruler for measuring length], it would probably be about a foot long. It seemed like one wide streak that was probably maybe about four inches tall, from the horizon up, about four inches, or five, in depth, up and down, I would say, and a tail maybe 10 or 12 inches. The white space that I saw was about 10 or 12 inches. That was a long time ago, but maybe I’m exaggerating. Maybe it wasn’t that wide. Maybe it was only 2 or 3 inches.

It was more like two inches. And the tail didn’t seem to flair out and get weaker toward the end very much, except at the very end. As I remember it, I don’t remember particularly (the angle to the horizon), except — I’m closing my eyes now — the head might have been a little higher than the tail. But not much. As I saw it in the west, [the Comet] seemed to be going to the left, and it disappeared to the left, [as I] remember it. The tail was pointing toward the right.

DOROTHY KELLER & WILLIAM KELLER
REMEMBER HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Dorothy and William Keller
North Park, San Diego, California

[Mr. Keller] I was a kid out in the country, where there was no smog, nothing to interfere with the air. [It was] clearer, so that it was very plain, then.

I was on a farm, near Limberlost Creek, in Indiana. Limberlost Creek was a good deal west than we were. [It was] near the Indiana and Ohio border, south of Ft Wayne, quite a bit below it, but north of Richmond and Muncie. Gene Stratton Porter was a well-known author in those days. Girl of the Limberlost novels. They were nice stories written along about that time. I’m trying to think of a modern author to compare her to, but they don’t have that kind anymore. Wrote a great deal about the Limberlost Creek. Freckles, was another one. And I was raised on the Limberlost Creek.
As I remember, and I’m going a long ways back and a lot of memory, it was in the summer time. It was warm, so we could go outside and see it. My brother was older, and he was running a farm. I wouldn’t have been with him if it hadn’t been in the summer time. I’d have been at school. I can remember going out with him and looking at Halley’s Comet.

We did have one of these expandable telescopes, but we could see it almost as well with the naked eye, because it was much plainer, then.

I haven’t seen it this time around, but they’re talking about its being dim and you need some eye help to discern it clearly; and you didn’t, [back] then. It was very clear in the sky at that time. We were away from the smog, and [the Comet] was closer. It had a different circuit; the earth was in a different position relative to the sun when it was here before. [The Comet] is controlled by the sun. It makes its circuit and loops around the sun and goes back into the distance, but the earth was in a different position, so it came closer 75 years ago. I’m sure the show was a great deal better 75 years ago. Do you remember it, Mom?

Mrs Keller: Oh, vaguely. I remember hearing about it. I was 12 years old then. I don’t remember seeing it, although I suppose I did. I was in the city. Sioux City, Iowa. That wasn’t a very big city.

Mr Keller: [The Comet] wasn’t all that spectacular, or all that large. Now, you’ll hear lots about what size it is now. Well, most — it’s so difficult to see it on this trip that very few people are seeing it. People in towns aren’t seeing it unless they get out in the country someplace where they have artificial equipment to see it with so there’s not much to see after you see it this time.

(It) wasn’t as big as the moon, or half as big as the moon. It was a good size. Maybe not that big, but much larger than any star.

Mrs Keller: Oh, yes. It was larger. I don’t know how large.

Mr Keller: It was a long time ago, but it wasn’t as big as the moon. But it was a good fraction of the moon. It looked farther away at any time that I saw it than the moon did. It didn’t seem as brilliant a light; it wasn’t as clear as the moon is, but it was very discernable.

If I was looking straight up, it’d be 90 degrees, [so] I would say (the Comet) would be 45 degrees, as I remember. About a quarter of the way up, at the time. Now, (in 1986), it’s pretty low.

I don’t remember anything (regarding color) except the yellows on it. I don’t remember seeing any blues on it. But probably what you were looking for was what you saw! (laughter).

It didn’t light up the sky like a big fireworks or anything like that. You had no trouble seeing the tail extending back from it. It didn’t near cover the sky or any portion of the sky, like that, but it was very noticeable. You could see it readily, (with) no trouble locating it. It didn’t extend half across the heavens or any portion like that, but it extended well back. More than a
couple of inches, as you looked at it. It was probably a foot or so long. You could see that it was kind of tapered. It was pretty.

Now, you almost have to know what portion of the sky exactly to look for it, and from what they say, (you’ll get) a hazy glimpse of it.

There was some fear when they first reported the Comet was coming at the earth, and some people were worried. But it wasn’t very long until the publicity got out. They had newspapers; they didn’t have instant exposure that they have now, but it wasn’t. long ‘til word got around to everybody that read anything, that it made its regular circuit there every 75 years.

They used to call it “Hay-leez” Comet. Now this time it’s “Hal-eez” Comet. There’s probably a good deal more publicity to the man that named the Comet now then there was in my time, because it wasn’t mentioned in every news broadcast, 7 times a week for sure, like it is now. About all we knew about the pronunciation was reading in the paper. Well, if you read it “Hay-leez” in the paper, you’re going to call it “Hay-leez”. They say [now] that’s how the man pronounced his name, “Hal- ee.” Well, I never ran onto any outside pronunciation; it was “Hay-leez” Comet because that’s the way I read it.

LAURENCE THOMPSON REMEMBERS
HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Mr Laurence “Jack” Thompson,
Rancho Bernardo, San Diego, California

Yes, I saw that Comet.

I saw it in Reno, Nevada. I must have been 25 or 30 years old. You could see it good. Of course, it’s so long ago, I can’t really describe much of anything about it.

I was an engineer, a civil engineer, in Reno, building electric power plants. I think it was about 1910; ‘10 or ‘12, along in there. I lived about eight or nine blocks from my office, from downtown. There in Reno, every time I went home from the office, why, I could see it very good.

I don’t remember where it was (in the sky). We just looked up and there it was. Didn’t seem too high. Wasn’t no trouble to see it. In Nevada, it was very plain. It stayed up there quite a little while.

Let’s see, it seemed to me (it was) just going along, possibly (with) a slight curve to (the tail), as I remember. Just sort of a yellow color, you know, like any other thing flying around like that. I don’t know (the size of it), I can’t remember, it was so long ago. I think it would be bigger than (a ruler held at arm’s length).
It was quite easy to see. We could see it almost every night. We got used to it after a while.

We don’t have too much clouds up there, in Nevada, anyhow, in there around Reno. Reno is more of a desert city, you might say. I don’t think there was any snow or anything like that around there, (and) I don’t remember any cold weather. Seems to me it was more or less like it is today (clear, dry, cool-to-warm, Southern California day in March, 1986).

Nobody (was afraid of it or) paid a whole lot of attention to it. I think right from the start, everybody was informed about the whole thing, but there was no particular excitement that I remember.

I know that Reno was a pretty nice place to see it, because it was very visible up there. (Bright lights from the city) didn’t bother us any. We could see this thing flying along... I just casually looked up and there it was, you know. We’d see it every night.

We may be able to see it very clearly here in another couple of months [of 1986], but I haven’t looked for it this year. I expect the thing takes the same course most every time. I don’t care anything about it. I may go see it the next time. (Laughter).

Was it 1910 when it visited us before? 1910. That would be 75 years ago. 75 from... I was 25, 24 years old when I saw it, in 1910. Because I’m 99, now. I was born in 1887.

(Considering it all, I would think that) there’s probably another force or two in nature that we haven’t discovered yet.

ADAH GILLAN REMEMBERS
HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Mr Adah Gillan
Pacific Beach, San Diego, California.

I remember seeing the Comet. it was a very important thing, but it wasn’t important enough to stay up until it disappeared. At least it wasn’t for me.

I have a feeling I was taken out of bed. It could have been cold. I have a feeling I was being held or supported, (although) I was as much as 10 or 11 years old. I wasn’t a baby, so I didn’t have to be cuddled up like a child. The weather was clear, but it was as cold as the dickens. All I remember is being wrapped up, and my brother explaining it to me, which didn’t mean anything (to me), because I didn’t want to hear, I guess, but anyway, I don’t remember any of the conversation, but he stood there with me hanging around his neck, wrapped up in a blanket, trying to explain what it was. I was probably saying, “Well, what’s it for?, What’s it going to do?, Is it going to blow up?”
When we saw it, it was in the middle of the night. And people weren’t out rolling around (at that time of night). I imagine that there were people within two or three blocks of us that didn’t know (the Comet) existed. Because (for) the working people — and working hard, (back) then, long or short days, why, they were up at 4 o’clock in the morning, tending to some of the stock. And even in town, why, we had a cow, and we had calves, and we had chickens, and we had a horse... and we had a little colt. We had lots of things to do [early in the morning].

My people were homesteaders. They were pioneers, real pioneers. And when they found out this land was homestead land, (and that) a piece there in Scottsbluff County was going to be up for housing, they came from Fremont, Nebraska, where they had homesteaded long before they could buy any property in Scottsbluff County. And my dad was the first postmaster, my mother was the first postmistress, and I was the first baby, in Scottsbluff County. I was born on May 29th, 1899. I’ll be 87, shortly. And I lived in Nebraska until I was 30 years old. [*As it was known then, later as Scotts Bluff.]

I was next to the bottom; there were seven of us, and they’re mostly gone. I had one brother, my second brother, (who) took pictures. He would wrap me up when I was very tiny, and put me in the buggy — it was a horse and buggy, and we had a good old horse, and we’d take off every day, rain or shine, to take pictures. Of anything. Well, I went with him all summer long, and way into the winter, wrapped up, while he traveled all over western Nebraska, into Colorado, into Wyoming, (40-60 miles away), taking pictures. And I think that we traveled 4 or 5 years before I got kinda tired of that. He sold his pictures. If you could ever find one of them, his pictures were printed on china. All kinds of china. Plates, all sizes of plates, cups and saucers,... He took rain pictures, snow pictures, fog pictures, everything you could imagine. His name was Otis W, as in Wilson, Simmons. If you’re interested in history, my youngest brother, Robert, was Congressman for 12 years, from Nebraska.

One of my brothers, Charlie [probably Charles Sheldon Simmons], was an artist. And he took after his grandmother. Under her tutelage, she taught him how to mix oil paints when he was about 5 or 6, and by the time he was 10 years old, why, he had all kinds of paintings. Later, he had showings in New York City, but he had 52 painting exhibits in Scottsbluff. We went back [there, visiting.] for it. And there were pieces brought in from every state, every place you can think of, from England, and Russia, and the foreign colonies.

He very likely painted a picture of the Comet, (and Otis may have taken a picture of it).

I don’t recollect anything except this big thing that was in the sky, and (thinking) “What in the heck was it doing there?” I’d seen all kinds of cloud formations, and sunset formations, floating around, that was, we just expected (that sort of thing).

I don’t remember any color. I remember movement, that it didn’t stay in one place....

I have a feeling that, this is just a feeling, I don’t have any idea it would be anywhere near correct, but I would think when we were looking at Scotts Bluff Mountain, where the Comet was hovering, or poking along, or what have you, and that row of small mountains there
called Scotts Bluff, (is) probably 200 miles long. And I have a feeling that (the Comet) was going from me, (toward the) east, and that would have to be south-east.

Well, it was a whole lot bigger than the mountain, before and that’s a biggie. From our viewpoint, (it was thicker than a pencil). It would be more like a good-size hand. If you talk to somebody closer to Omaha, why they’d give you, “A long streak.” Well, it wasn’t any long streak.

(The tail) probably curved, because I remember saying afterwards, “Well, that big fish wopped itself around.” I only have that feeling away back in my noggin that I saw (that) it was like a fish (jumping out of the water). I don’t have any idea what the length was, see I but I have a feeling the head was lower than the tail. And it wasn’t way up in the sky, it was close, it was close. Didn’t have to look up very high (to see it). It crept right along the top of Scotts Bluff Mountain. It was going down right behind our mountain. And we were seeing it in the daytime, (too). I’m sure that where we were watching was on a little hummock, back of the store. I imagine that I was there all of the time that it was visible.

Apparently, it didn’t impress my family too much, because I don’t remember having any knowledge or information pumped into me, or I would remember it. In fact, I don’t think my folks thought it was such a wonderful thing. I don’t think it was considered terribly important. I don’t remember any deep conversation or discussing what it was like, or anything. I don’t recall anything about the Comet that anybody talked about, unless my brothers were talking about it to my dad, and I didn’t pay much attention. I don’t remember it ever coming up until a long time afterward, and somebody said, “Well, that was the year of the Comet.” And I remember (saying), “Oh, I saw that.” But I thought that it was just, you know, like a storm cloud (or other weather event).

(I don’t remember seeing any other comets), no. I haven’t even seen this (1986) one. I haven’t seen this one since it was here and visible, (but) I haven’t been out looking for it. In fact, when (they) started this deal that it was coming through here, and my son was sitting here, I said, “You know, when I was little, about (ten years old) or so, was when the (1910) comet was visible, but I don’t remember the name of it. And he was surprised, because I’m pretty good at remembering. And I said, “We never talked about it, did we?” And he said, “I don’t remember ever talking about it.” He said, “Well, we better see if we can make arrangements for you to see this one.

The Aurora Borealis, etc.

Yes, (I’ve seen them). We had a lot of sky-lighting. And I always thought that’s the way it was supposed to be, purplish, bluish, pinkish, all at the same time. Now, I don’t know why (we had them), but we did. We had a lot of flash lightning that was colored. (But the Aurora Borealis) was just like the sky. I don’t think they were like clouds; we had colored clouds the year round. We had colored clouds in the winter time, mostly blues and purples, and lots of reds. It was just all of those bright colors, mixed up. That’s one of the things that I miss out here [in Southern California], because we don’t have those gorgeous sunsets.
Almost all of Nebraska is (or was) just like desert on top, but if you go down a little ways, you got fertile soil. (But) the whole top of it (was) buffalo grass, and if you ever got your feet tangled up in buffalo grass, you’ll wish you hadn’t come that way. Buffalo grass is long, and prickly, and snarls, even in the wagon wheels...

We had terrible, terrible storms (back then). We had everything you could imagine, in the line of storms. We had hailstorms, with hail as big as hen’s eggs, coming down just woppity-wop, and breaking windows...

There were no roads anywhere, and wagons were in pretty bad shape. And you had to sit on hard boards (when riding in them)...

We didn’t have any society. We had people that had money, but it wasn’t Society...

We didn’t have newspapers, then. I don’t know how (we heard about things). Probably came over the — we did have the telephone company. My dad ran the telephone company, too. But over the telephone, from Denver, and Omaha, special news reports came over the telephone. We got [most of the] news when the train came through. The train would drive very slowly through town, and (the engineer) would broadcast the whole news (by his voice). But it took us a long time for any of us to get any kind of papers. The newspaper was a little folder (about the size of a letter-page)...

Scottsbluff [as a county or city] was born just after I was born, in 1899. Scottsbluff City is on the north side of the North Platte River, (across from Scotts Bluff Mtn). I think the town was laid out on the straight, because my dad had something to do with it. It’s in the center of the Nebraska panhandle.

EVERETT JACKSON REMEMBERS
HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Mr Everett Jackson
Normal Heights, San Diego, California

I certainly remember it well.

I used to sit on my front porch and look at it when I was a kid. I was 10 years old then, and it was a real sight; it was really something very impressive.

I had a brother called Hai — his name was Harold. Well, at that time, I always said that (it) was my brother’s comet, “Harold’s Comet!” My family would look at it every night.

I was in Texas, then, in east-central Texas, 80 or 90 miles below Dallas, south of Dallas. My folks, my father had farms, and a ranch. There wasn’t many street lights there. No. heavens,
no. It was a small town, very small town, you know, and not any lights to interfere. Maybe that’s one reason why we saw it so well.

I don’t know what to tell you about it. It was very clear. We would watch for it. We would see it every day, every night, for a number of nights, I forget how many. I think it was in the early part of the evening, just after it got dark. I’m not sure, but I think it was summertime. (it was) pretty comfortable to stand outside and watch it.

It was not at all like this one (in 1986). it was really a bright thing, (back then). Big, bright brilliant thing in front, with a tail coming out from behind.

I seem to remember it was, I would guess it was sort of an orange color.

It was a long tail. Well, not so very long. As I remember it, ... You can’t tell how long it was, but it seemed to me it stuck out behind about fifteen feet! And probably fifteen billion miles! I would say, it would seem to me as I would remember it, (the size of) it was a little bit smaller than the moon, but it was very brilliant. And as I recall it, what is in my mind, what I remember is that the tail seemed to be joined on to the head. It went out behind, but it wasn’t disconnected. To tell you the truth, I’m quite sure the only thing I remember is the tail going out in one direction.

As I recall it, it seems to me that I saw it, let’s see, it was in the eastern sky, when I saw it. And it was headed north and its tail went south. That’s the way I remember it. Because my house, I can remember sitting on the front porch of my parents’ home, and we were all watching it, and that porch faces east. So I was looking into the eastern sky, at the Comet. So that’s the way I remember it.

I was 10 years old, and I doubt if I even looked at a newspaper, (but there was) never any excitement much about it, but there might have. I’m sorry, after all, that was how many years ago? 75? It’s a wonder to me that I can even recall those images.

I had a big family (when I was a boy). I got a letter just a few days ago from my little sister in Dallas, talking about that comet. She saw it with me. She wrote to me not long ago and she seems to remember seeing it from another spot. You’d better get in touch with her.[Your Editor did, and hers’ is presented next.] Ask her how the Comet was. She seems to remember it better than I do. She’s two years younger than I am, but she remembers it. I believe she saw it this time (in 1986). I have a nephew -who lives back in Texas, in my hometown, and he has a very powerful telescope. So a while back he invited some of the members of the family and she may have been among them. And they went and saw [“Hayley’s”] Comet through his telescope. Recently.

You know, I have seen the Comet. And it doesn’t interest me at all to see it again. I’m quite convinced it is out there somewhere! (Laughter). I’m too busy. I don’t think I took much more interest in it then than I do today. (Laughter). You couldn’t be talking to a worse person to learn about the Comet. I saw it, all right. I saw it once, and that was enough! (Laughter).
I’m sort of a writer, myself. I’m a painter, but I’ve also written two books, and I’m working on my third. They’re really memoirs. One of them is in all the bookstores around here called, *Burrows and Paint Brushes* [...*A Mexican Adventure*]. And it’s about my four years when I was young, painting in Old Mexico. I went down there in 1923 and stayed until 1927. So this book is about that. You might be interested in it, but I don’t mention the Comet. (Great laughter). The other one will be out next spring, the both of ‘em being published by the Texas A & M University Press. I didn’t know where to send my manuscript, so I sent it there, and they accepted it and they seem happy to have the second one. The second one is about my painting in Mexico, but a lot of it’s in Baja California. And the name of it will be, *It’s a Long Road to Comondu* [...*Mexican Adventures Since 1928*]. That’s a town way up in the mountains, the (Sierra de la) Gigante mountains, way down in Baja. A very hard place to reach. That’s my second one. I haven’t named my third one; I’m working on it, but they will be putting out my second book this Spring [of 1986]. It’ll be a little bigger book. But you know, there’s a lot to do to get these things out. I have to go over the copy with them so much and get pictures.... It’s illustrated with color paintings of mine. If you read my book, I’ll read yours!

**DALE MERWIN REMEMBERS**

**HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910**

Mrs Dale (Rosita) Merwin  
(Everett Jackson’s little sister)  
Dallas, Texas

We called it “Hal-eez” Comet. And it is “Hal-eez.” If it’s “Hay-leez,” wouldn’t it be H-a-i-1 — ?

The one I saw had a tail going horizontally, and it was lo-o-ong and stre-e-e-tched across the western sky. It was so long that I was frightened of it, you know, but if you can get hold of an ‘85 [1985?] Old Farmer’s Almanac, well, in there you’ll see a picture of the Comet as I remember it. They have them in the libraries. It’ll have a whole story in there along with telling what different people in different parts of the world thought about it.

It was kind of weird, you see. They were afraid, and they thought it was an omen, and something bad was going to happen, and a war would start, and things like that. There was one such incident here in the United States but it was put a stop to by the police.

Everett said eastern sky, didn’t he? Yes, he did. He said that, and he told me that, too. Well, if he was on the farm, maybe he saw it, but now I understood it, (he) said that he was sitting out on the porch with the whole family. Well, if that was the porch, our home faced east, see, and I knew that if he was speaking of home, you couldn’t have seen the Comet in the east. It wasn’t in the east, it was in the west, and I think you can confirm that — the year of 1910, probably by astronomer’s records, by scientific records, of how it appeared in different sections of the country at certain times. And we saw it in April and May.
Well, now, of course, the Comet moves around, you know; that is, the earth moves, or whatever moves. But the night I saw it, and I probably saw it many nights, because it appeared for quite a while, you know. Well, we was standing behind the ol’ servant house, and that back side of the house is the west view. And so I called an old friend of mine, who is 85 years old, and I asked her, she lived in west Texas at the time, and I said, Did you see Halley’s Comet in 1910? And she’s Everett Is age, and she said, Yes, I did. I saw it. And I said, Where was it in the sky? And she said, In the western sky. And I said, I’m glad you said that, because I remember it. I know that it is in different locations, positions in the sky at various times all the time. But when I saw it, it was south-west, I would say. Most south-west.

(Binoculars?) Didn’t need ‘em at all. We didn’t need them at all. And it was bri-i-ght, and, oh, well, we just didn’t, and nobody, momma, poppa, any of us needed any binoculars.

It looked like the color of a star. It wasn’t colored, like the Aurora Borealis, or anything like that. It was just a big star with a lo-o-ng, long, long tail. And it stretched a’wa-a-y across.

It wasn’t as big as the moon. I’d say it was as big as the Star of Bethlehem. You know, as we see it pictured. ‘Course, it wasn’t like that, ‘cause the Star of Bethlehem didn’t have a tail. It was bigger than any star I’ve ever seen. I put it like that. The head was. And then it had that lo-o-ng tail. The head was south and the tail was north.

It would be longer than a foot (if holding a 12 inch ruler at arm’s length). That’s the reason I want you to find that (picture). You can judge if you get that ‘85 Old Farmer’s Almanac. It was a long, long tail, longer than a horse’s tail. Yeah, it was a long tail, and it stretched out behind that star, see, and this one, when I saw it, was above the western horizon, oh, just up a-way, not too low of course, but not way up. You didn’t have to pull your neck back, you know, to see it. You just stood there and looked at it. Because it was high enough just to be right for you to stand there and look at it. It was like that. And you will see that, when you get that Almanac. Of course, to my child’s-eyes, it seemed to me like it was kind of waving, but I don’t think it was, at all. It must not have been.

But I thought the tail might strike the earth and set it on fire. That frightened me, you know. A lot of people thought it was some sort of an omen, and we didn’t know, but I thought, and I suppose I had heard the older people talking that it might strike the earth, I don’t know. But that came to my mind, and it frightened me, you see.

But we stood there in awe, and I don’t know how many nights we watched it. We must have gone outside to see it more than one time, because it was visible at Mexia (Texas) for a longer time than one night. We went out after it was good dark, you know, and looked at it. We were all standing together, (and) how long we stayed there, I have no idea.

Oh, it was a -wonderful sight. All my life I have remembered it. And why Everett got it in the east, I’ll never know, but he has it — he even wrote me that it was in the east, and I didn’t argue with him.
Let me see, that was in nineteen-ten. Oh, one of my sisters was married at the time. She married in nineteen-seven, see, and she might not have been with us. Everett was born in nineteen-hundred, and I was born in nineteen-two. I know the ages and how old and when every one of them was born, but I don’t think Hal had gone off to college, so we were all there. We were a group, I know. We were all interested in it, and poppa was interested in it, and Everett was interested in it at the time, but I guess it just didn’t impress him like it did me. He was interested in art, and all that sort of thing, and I’m interested in the stars and the planets, and the fact of the matter, when I went out to visit Everett at San Diego, he took us to that planetarium or whatever; no, the omni-theatre, I guess it was. (The Ruben H. Fleet Space Theater, in Balboa Park).

And we went into the theatre and sat down. It is just like a theatre, and then all of a sudden it began to move, and we was supposed to be in a spaceship, you know. And to me, when we came down from there, I said, Why Everett, that was just like a worship service to me. Because it was so wonderful to go through the stars and the planets, and you felt like you were among them. That was a true blessing for me, ‘cause I’ve always been so interested in the stars.

My niece’, down at Mexia, she has a son who lives out in the country, see, and he has a good telescope, and they have already seen it [the 1986 Comet]. They saw it in February, early February. But we see (it) more clearly in April down here than any other time. But Bob, the nephew, has to go to the National Guard, and he won’t be there. So we have to go in March, and it will be seen there, in March, but it won’t be as good as in April, see, so we’ll go out to Bob’s house, and we’ll have to set out alarm clocks and get up and be there by 4 o’clock in the morning. That’s when it is going to come by. And that’s what we plan to do, see. And if the weather is clear — ‘course, none of us trust the month of March — why, we plan to do that, see. And I’m so hoping.

Now, when I was in Massachusetts, this past November, November, 1985, why, my son lives there, and we went up to the college and went up into the planetarium. And they had a large telescope up there on top, and we tried to see the Comet, and they did see it, but in Massachusetts, it only looked like a fuzzy ball. But I couldn’t see it at all. See, my eyes are not what they used to be. They located it; it looked like a fuzzy star, and that’s the way it was reported in the newspaper: it looked like a fuzzy star. And so they did see it, but I couldn’t see it, and I was SO-o-o, so disappointed, ‘cause I had to climb steps and steps and steps to get up there, you see, and then I couldn’t see it. And I think the reason was, I’m looking through too much glqss. I’m looking through my eye- glasses with 83 year old eyes, you know, and through the telescope, and I just couldn’t see it. (Editor’s question: ‘But how many other 83 year olds got up there to look at it?’ She had a short pause for contemplation, then gave out a great peal of laughter, like a little girl, so pleased).

I sat down and rested a while. Like I said, I just can’t keep climbing these steps, Jack. And so I sat down and rested and they went on and looked, and then he came back, says, Are you rested enough? And I said,...Yes. And we went on up, see. But I didn’t get to see it, and I was so disappointed, because it was bitterly cold in Massachusetts in November, see. I had to wear a coat with some kind of down lining, you know. I didn’t take a coat warm enough for that kind (of) country, so they let me have one of theirs, you know.
We’ll get a better view (of the Comet) down here than they (are) going to get. However, Jack, they live in a small town, Williamstown, Massachusetts, and they don’t have the problem of city lights, like we do. And he can go out on his deck any time and look up and see the sky like I used to see it when I was a little girl at home, because we didn’t have the interference of the pollution in the air and also the lights, you know.

And I can remember the Milky Way, it was clear across the sky, and it just makes me sick. I haven’t seen the Milky Way in all these years because of the city lights, I guess.

But I’m telling you something, I’m looking forward to all those constellations when I take off for Glox-y [the ‘Galaxy’? or, heavenly ‘Glory’?]. And I won’t need a spaceship, either.

You must go (and see the Comet). You won’t get to see it twice in the same lifetime. I may. [And she most likely did.]

The Aurora Borealis

The Aurora Borealis, it can be seen in Massachusetts, and my son phoned me the other night from Massachusetts, and he said, Mother, I’ve just seen the Aurora Borealis. He says, I went out onto the deck to look at the stars, and while we was standing out on the deck, well, the Aurora Borealis appeared. And it’s wavy and it’s different colors, like the rainbow, you know, and it waves like a curtain blowing in the wind. And he said, It was a sight. And he wished I had been there, you know. And I’ve never seen that. He called it the Northern Lights. I’m going to write him and tell him that I looked it up and I couldn’t remember how it was spelled, either, so I called my deceased husband’s daughter, so she told me how to spell it. A-U-R-O-R-A, B-O-R-E-A-L-I-S. My friend who was born in nineteen-hundred here told me that she saw (the Aurora Borealis) in west Texas when she was a young girl. And so I understand it has been seen this far down. But I think when it happens, doesn’t it do something to disturb our electrical things?

MAUD COLEMAN REMEMBERS
HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Mrs Maud Coleman
La Jolla, San Diego, California

I was about 10 years old, when I saw it.

\[1/\] YOU MUST GO. And yet, your Editor never did go out to see Halley’s Comet of 1986. Which would usually be cause for lament; but after interviewing these many Earlier Observers, and listening to the audio recordings of their voices, over and over again, to be sure their words were faithfully represented, he found that their memories, and the news accounts of that Event, were as easily becoming his own memories, especially with the much lesser 1986 showing of Halley’s Comet. The 1910 version was so much better, as the Reader is now discovering.
I was in San Luis Rey, [California], which is near the San Luis Rey mission, the second mission in California, and our ranch was about three miles up the San Luis Rey valley from the mission. And that’s where we saw the Comet.

There were no street lights a’tall, heavens no. Just coal [oil] lamps. Our ranch house was sitting on a hill, and the next ranch house was down in the valley, and that was the nearest lights, and that would be at least half a mile away.

A lot of the people were just farmers around us, and so forth, our neighbors. They thought it was a very interesting thing, but they didn’t realize how, what a truly interesting thing they were looking at.

We had a private teacher. My people were English, (and) we had an English governess. My dad was the one who was so interested, and he pointed it out. We of course had a lot of conversation about it, how it came ‘round every 75 years or whatever it is. My dad was a well educated person. He went to Oxford; he was an Oxford graduate. He told us to be sure and watch it, and that it was somethin’ we would probably never see a’gain, which, of course, lots of people didn’t. But I’ve just been lucky. We had only sisters in the family, and we were all interested in it. And, you see, different ages would have seen it differently, too.

It seems to me (when we saw it), it was in the spring of the year. I can’t remember (the weather conditions), but I remember seeing it, so it must have been clear when I saw it. Because it would come up every night for, oh, I don’t know how long. Couple of three weeks, maybe.

Of course, I was only ten, but as I remember, it came out of the east. It came up over [nearby] Palomar Mountain. I’d suppose as it got dark. It was always before dinner time, but as it got dark, it came up, just like the moon, or the sun, or any of the stars would come up. But never up very high as it went west. You know, it didn’t come up in the sky like the moon does. It was in a lower orbit, you might say. And it wasn’t too high as it went south. This is the way it seemed to go: South, toward the west, as I remember it. It rose from the east and went south and west. Mostly it was on the east side of the hill looking out toward [Mount] Palomar.

It was a beautiful sight. You could see it for weeks, and through all the phases of the moon, but I think when the full moon began to get bright, you didn’t see it. You only saw it for a while (then).

It always seemed about the same color. It was a star-color. If you call that a color. It was not really flame-color, but just star-color. I don’t know. It’s rather difficult to describe, really. (It didn’t flicker or twinkle, or make any unusual flashes), not that I remember. It was just quite a large ball of light (that) came up and as I remember it, it had this glorious long tail on it. That’s what I remember. It was really a most beautiful sight.

I think it would be as long as (twelve inches, a foot, in length) or longer. Of course, it’s just a childhood remembrance. And I had never seen anything like that (before). I’ve seen other comets, but they were never, were nothing compared to that. When we had a place down on the
I compared (the cosmos, or head of) it to about a golf-ball size, up in the sky. Much larger than a star, or any of the stars that we see.

The tail was flared out, you know. It came down to the head, but then it sort of flared out, as I remember. I don’t remember any (of the tail waving, or anything like that). It just moved along (about as fast as) any of the other stars and moon does through the sky. You don’t see them moving, but they do move.

No (fears), no, not that I know of; ‘course being an educated people, why, (my parents) didn’t have any fears, and of course, we [children] didn’t have any, either.

We would get the *Los Angeles Times* I think it was once a week, and there was publicity about it, yes, but I can’t remember there being a great deal.

Now, this year, it is apparently not similar to the way I remember it, because I have just seen it [in 1986] through glasses, binoculars, which my son had, and looked out over the ocean at it. And it’s kind of a blur, and that’s it. They say that down in Australia it is much brighter.

(Halley’s Comet of 1910) was really very beautiful, I’ll tell you. It was spectacular, ... I have never seen any fireworks that were anything compared with that. It was truly a beautiful thing.

EDITH KOHERR REMEMBERS
HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Mrs Edith Korherr
(Maud Coleman’s younger sister)
La Jolla, San Diego, California

Oh, sure. I remember it very plainly.

Twice we saw it. I mean, well, I won’t say twice, ‘cause we saw it for at least two weeks. At least it seemed like a long time that it was there.

But at first. we saw it — we had a dairy, and we had probably two or three hundred acres, and we milked cows. There were several of us in the family. I had two sisters and my dad. And

---

2/ THERE WAS A COMET... ‘Possibly, Comet Bennett, of March 1970. In the morning sky, it was extremely bright, probably brighter than Halley’s Comet of 1910. Actually, it was thought of as the comet of the decade, and now, as far as brightness is concerned, as being the comet of the century, even with your naked eye, but it was just nothing compared to Halley’s Comet of either 1910 or 1986. Another one could have been Comet West, in 1975. That was quite bright, and was well observed, too.’ Mr Clint Hatchett. Astronomer, Ruben H. Fleet Space Theater, San Diego, March, 1986.
Maud Coleman, she’s my sister. (We were both out there on the ranch). She was 10, and I was 7; Beatrice was a little older, I think. We did the milking in the open. We had a big corral. In those days they didn’t have the milking machines, (so) we all milked cows. And we would do that in the early evening, and that’s when we first saw it [the Comet]. That is what I first remember.

Then, later on, we’d eat our dinner, and then we’d sit out on our veranda, on our porch — it went around the house, big wide veranda. And that’s when we would see it. And we’d sit out on there and watch this comet (come) over Palomar Mountain. This was early in the evening, and we’d see it ‘til we’d go to bed.

We were little kids, you know. And my memory of it, and my sister, Maud’s, didn’t coincide.

It was very dark, very dark out on the ranch, you know. There would be no lights from anywhere, except starlight. And I think (it was clear), if I could see it and remember it the way it is now. I couldn’t tell you if it was a cloudy day or not.

It [the Comet] went up (through-the sky) like the moon, like the stars do. So it really wasn’t very low. It moved. You couldn’t see it moving, (though).

(We used) the naked eye. It was very plain. I don’t know whether dad looked through, he might have looked through a telescope ‘cause we did have (one), but I don’t ever remember having any binoculars as a child.

To me, what we used to see, I’d say the tail was probably, oh, dear, of course you were a little girl in those days. It would seem quite big, to me. Oh, I would say it come up head first, over the mountain, and the tail would be neigh along behind it. It would not be straight behind it. The comet’s head was toward the south, and the tail was north, sort of south-west, the head was. (And the tail) would stream out behind. As T remember it, and now I couldn’t tell you for sure, because I was only 7, but as I remember it, it was sort of wide at the star and then went on back. Oh, it was probably (long pause) couple of yards long, as I remember it, and fairly wide.

It would have sort of a glow, about the color of the stars. Sort of more like a yellowish, a star is, isn’t it? It was very nice. I can’t tell you (if it flickered or twinkled). I think it did but I don’t remember... to well. Not an on-and-off thing; it was there all the time. I just remember the glowy, the glowy tail. A glowy color would be like the color when the sun goes down, and leaves that glow over the... only that is very much stronger than what this star was like.

The tail was wider than (a pencil or a thick cigar).As I remember, it would be as wide as, well, I’m looking around here trying to find something that it would be as wide as. Well, probably a hair ribbon; a fairly wide hair ribbon. Or a cummerbund. How ‘bout a cummerbund? That’s more like it. (It really dominated the sky). Oh. indeed yes. (The size of the cosmo) would be bigger than a golf ball. Maudie said a golf ball, but I, it was larger than a golf ball, to me. More like a baseball. It was not nearly as large (as a full moon) Not nearly (half as big). But if the moon, when it was quarter, would be round, why, it would probably be about as big as that, maybe. (The Comet) wasn’t quite so big (that it would light up the ground nearby).
We didn’t look at it all the time, because it became very commonplace. But we would see it, and think it rather interesting at the time, and then maybe we had other things to do. We didn’t just — watch the Comet. It wasn’t the most important thing in my life, at that age. (Laughter). Dad was interested in it as a very fine sight. He enjoyed it. (otherwise, he was not) particularly interested; not any more than the normal people are. (And) I haven’t seen it this year.

I don’t remember (at 7 years old, about) any publicity. There may have been, but I don’t remember, because I probably didn’t even read the papers at that time. We had a governess, a private tutor, (but she didn’t point it out), not that I remember.

I was only 7, and I couldn’t tell you anything. (Laughs). That’s quite a span of time, in there.

MARGARET FREEMAN REMEMBERS
HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Mrs Margaret Freeman
Hillcrest, San Diego, California

Yes, I remember it. I saw it, and I remember it well.

I was born on oh-four. And you see, then, it was in 1910 and 1911, as it is now, in ‘85 and ‘86. So I was really seven years old.

I remember it was just one night. See, we lived in Elkhart, Indiana, which is about a hundred miles east of Chicago, if you know that part of the country, (and) was a town of I think at that time about 35,000. I was born in Chicago, and then, because of my father’s work, we moved to Elkhart, when I was about a year old or so, and I grew there and went to school until I was 19. And we were there until 1923.

My grandmother was living with us (at) that particular time. She was a very well educated woman, a college graduate. And judging from her age and all, and as I’ve read, very few women graduated. Very few women had a college education in those days.

She took my sister, who was a year older than myself, and myself, — I’m one of six sisters; there’s only four of us left, now — and she took us out in the back. You see, this is a small town, and there were street lights, (but) nothing like now. It was part of the city that was big lots and big houses. It was the city living; we had the street-car that ran by the house. And of course, we had a big house and a big yard, and she took us way out in the back yard where it was dark, and she pointed it out.

Well, being the age that I was, you know, in those days you did as you were told, and when my grandmother took us out and pointed, she pointed it out directly, and said there was a possibility that we would see it again.
I can tell you the direction; it was in the north-north-west. The front of the house faced north. I would say north-west of where we looked at it. It was not high (off the horizon), but not low. It wasn’t near the horizon, and the tail was going out to the east.

I remember it was dark — very dark. It was in the back of the house, back a ways from the house, where there was no light, because the street light was in front of the house, and it was reasonably warm weather.

The Comet was very plain. And as I say, I don’t think we were impressed too much then, but she was very good about explaining the whole thing, and saying, possibly, we will see it again. Well, of course in those days people weren’t living as long as they are now. I’m 81, now. I suppose she never dreamed that I’d live that long. So she explained the whole thing to us, and that is what she said, Possibly, you will see it for a second time. You know, kids aren’t — we were taught many things that they are not teaching now. But my grandmother explained it, we accepted it, and that was it.

Of course, you know, my mother — I would call her an amateur astronomer — she pointed out the Big Dipper. I haven’t seen the Big Dipper since we left Elkhart. And that was in 1923. I don’t know where it is, from here. And as I say, she pointed (it) out. But in as much as my mother had pointed out so many things, long before the Comet came along, we were used to looking at different things.

The tail was straight; that I remember. We only looked at it a few minutes, and I’ve been hoping I could see it this time, but I’m sure there’s many people who have seen it as I did, the first time. My guess is, no doubt it was visible to many people, but they weren’t fortunate enough to have someone point it out to them, (although) I don’t remember anything in connection with school. I would have been in the lower grades (then). All I remember is our own grandmother, and after that, her explaining the whole thing to us quite a bit.

I would kind of like to see it, just to be able to say I saw it twice. Other than that, it doesn’t mean anything. There would be a big difference between (the memory of) a child between 5 and 7, and 7 and 10, too. I looked at when I was a child of 7, and I proceeded to forget about it until a year or so ago. And I started seeing in the paper about it. And I was thinking, and figuring a little bit about it, when we saw it, and this, that, and the other....

You know, where I live, here in San Diego, the building I’m in is U-shaped, or like a horseshoe, and the porch is facing south, from my living room. And I tell the next-door neighbor, We have a box seat looking at the sky, right here in San Diego, to see the moon (and all the stars). I’ve often thought I’d like a series of lectures on astronomy. As I was saying, the other day I wished it was in the south; then I wouldn’t have to travel as I am to Hawaii. I could see it from my porch. That’s wishful thinking, isn’t it? But you never know. (It might decide to adjust itself), if I speak to it, yes. (Laughter). But as I say, I find all that rather interesting.

I play bridge over in (Balboa) Park once a week. And there is a man there who I know. And I don’t know, something was said, and he said, Well, I saw it. I don’t know how old a man he is, and he’s not very talkative, I guess I’ll put it that way. So I said to him, Hey, did you see
I have, and so I’m told, an exceptionally good memory for my age. A friend said, You have an exceptionally good memory. I said, I don’t know, I just have. Now, that’s just something. Some have it and some don’t, as they say. I couldn’t tell you what I did yesterday, but I can tell you all about what I saw in those days, and all. But that’s only natural, I guess. I think, and especially when you’re older, of course, I’ve always been interested in all that sort of thing, because of my mother and my grandmother, and I think that many things are interesting. And if you can keep yourself interested in different things, it’s wonderful.

The Aurora Borealis

I had a sister and her husband (who) had a place up in Wisconsin. They lived in Couderay, near Spooner (in northwest Wisconsin). And I remember one night we were out driving, my brother-in-law was driving, oh, just going no-place, you might say. And the lights, the lights were very plain, in the — that would be the north sky. That’s the one time I saw it. It really was beautiful to see. And this was in the northern part of Wisconsin.

HAROLD NOBEL REMEMBERS
HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Mr Harold A. Nobel
Kensington, San Diego, California

I don’t think I can help you much, but I did see it.

I’m 88 now, so I was 13 then, or 12, really. I was living in Jackson, Michigan, at the time, and in a house at 970 South Jackson, meaning we were about nine, ten blocks from the main downtown street. In the back was a very large cemetery. Very large one.

And looking out our second story back window — we only had one window in the back of the house, Halley’s Comet was very evident night after night, because of course there were no lights for at least a quarter of a mile across this cemetery. The street lights there (in Jackson) were electric arc lights. You know, they had carbons. And a man had to go around and change the carbons regularly. They were two carbons that moved together, and the arc was where they contacted. And this gave a considerably whiter light than you can get around here (today), that’s for sure. These sodium vapors are terrible. And lights weren’t very close together in those days. But looking over at the cemetery, there was no light visible over that way, because it was such a big cemetery.

The window was facing — let me see, we lived on South Jackson, and the window would be facing to the West. (The Comet) was in the western sky, that’s right. We were (watching it from the) inside, (because) as I remember, it was more or less winter time. It was cold. I think this was in February, but I’m not sure.
I don’t know (the hour), but I suppose I had to go to bed at that time, so (when it became visible), it was before that. I would say, after it got dark, but that’s a long time ago. I thought (we saw) it for several weeks, but I could be wrong on that. It wasn’t just a, You gotta do it right now, because I remember we used to look at it every night, for a while. I guess it was a couple of weeks. I don’t think it was (seen) during the day.

As I remember it, (the head, or, cosmos) was on the right. That would be, it would be heading north, wouldn’t it? (The tail would be flaring out toward the south), that’s my recollection. Of course, as I say, that’s a long time ago.

I don’t remember (the shape of the tail), and I didn’t see any movement of it. It changed a little, from night to night, but you couldn’t notice any great change as you looked at it. I don’t remember that (the tail was pointing upwards). I don’t have it in mind that it was, no.

I thought it was kind of low (on the horizon). As a matter of fact, we lived on a high spot on this street, and the cemetery property similarly was high behind us, and then dropped off very rapidly to the south, but right behind us in the cemetery was quite a group of pine trees, which were quite high. And it was above those. I would say we were looking above the horizon appreciably, maybe 15 degrees or more. I don’t know, (but) if we’d have gone outside, on the ground, and had to look over those pine trees, I’m not sure, (but) it I’ve been right in the top of the trees, probably. That was one reason why we had a good viewing point, you see, from the second floor.

(The weather was clear), yes. We didn’t have things like fog back there. Of course, it could be overcast, arid so on, but not like it is out here (in Southern California). It was fairly clear at night, there. I don’t remember (any snow being on the ground), but there probably was. I’m pretty sure, um, I thought it was in February. In other words, it was in the winter. I’m sure of that.

I don’t remember that it (flashed, or displayed any unusual lighting). I just remember that we saw it night after night, and it had the tail. It was nowhere as big as the moon, but it was appreciable, (but) I would not think it was as big (as a little finger nail). As I remember it, you know, we have planets, and some of the planets are larger than the common star, you might say. It was probably more on that size. They are nowhere as large as the moon.

I was much interested in it as a lad of twelve and a half, and the phenomenon, (although) I don’t remember that there was (anything said at school), ‘course our family was quite familiar with it, and everybody looked at it every night, and everything like that, but I don’t remember what happened (specifically). I did (spend a lot of time looking at it). By a lot of time, I might spend ten minutes or something like that, you know. (But) after you see it night after night, why, you don’t want to spend too much time with it, when you’re that age.

There were three boys and my parents. I guess my dad probably showed it to us originally, but I don’t think he looked at it very much. I was the principle one that was interested in looking at it every night. I don’t remember, I suppose (the other brothers) did look at it, but I didn’t have much opposition when I was looking at it. (Laughter). This window happened to be
right at the head of the stairs, and therefore it wasn’t conducive to large crowds looking out the window at one time! (Laughter).

(There wasn’t much conversation about the Comet). It was more or less just another thing. I suppose everybody saw it, and I wasn’t given to worrying much. As I remember it, there was (some publicity about it). It was definitely called to our attention, but I don’t know whether to say it was a lot of publicity, (but) there was publicity.

Yes, (there were fears among some people about the Comet). As I remember it, a number of them felt this was the end of the world. As I remember, in Battle Creek [Michigan], which is a city, I don’t know, maybe thirty, forty miles away, there was quite a group there that thought this was it. I remember some of them even sold their property and gathered an on a hillside, hilltop, and so on, but their fears were not well founded. (Laughter).

I never did (see it through binoculars or a telescope, then), and I was anxious to see (the Comet) this time, too, but I never did. I looked a number of times last year or early this year, when it was supposed to be evident, but I never found it. I guess if you can go out there where you can get away from the city lights, (you can see it).

As I told you to start with, I’m not sure that I’m too good a person to ask these questions, because my memory of this is not precise anymore. Being an engineer I think things are no good unless they are rather precise. (Great laughter).

The Aurora Borealis

Oh, yes. I lived in North Dakota for years, (although) I’ve lived in San Diego over 60 years. I came out here in ’24 [1924], born in ’97 [1897], in November. (But) as I remember, (the colors of the Auroras) varied. It might have been bluish and greenish, and seems to me now and then a tint of red. They move, (or) they seem to move. It was noticeable.

GORDON PLUMMER REMEMBERS
HALLEY’s COMET OF 1910

Mr Gordon Plummer
La Mesa, California

I was about six years of age about that time. I’m actually only going to be 82, so I’m still a young fella. I tell people, I’m not getting old, I’m just staying younger longer!

I was here, in Southern California, out at Point Loma [at the far southwest of San Diego, very close the Pacific Ocean], when I saw the Comet. San Diego is my hometown, but of course I’ve traveled, as anybody does: Europe three times, Canada, Mexico, Hawaii. I went on a cruise ship, to see the total eclipse of the sun. That was a real experience. I’m retired, but I still teach, doing enrichment work in the schools, and I’m a member of the San Diego Hall of Science.
(Point Loma) was established, but quite different than now, very crowded. (I lived) where it wasn’t to far from the (present) Government reservation. There were lots of areas that were just free country, you know, mostly chaparral. It was nice. In fact, I think I remember when electricity on a real scale came to Pt Loma. You see, I was born in nineteen-four. Of course, there was electricity there, but I mean in many areas it really hadn’t taken [or, been popular, or established] yet.

My dad taught astronomy. My dad was chief geographer in the US Forestry Service, under Theodore Roosevelt. He knew a lot. He wasn’t with me at the time (when I saw the Comet of 1910). He spent much of his time in Washington. He was really in Government Service. He was instrumental in getting the conservation movement that we now have, started. He was among two or three others, with Gifford Pinchot and Garrete P. [Putman] Serviss.

Well, as I can recollect, my parents took me up out of bed at about 10:30 at night. I was going on to six years of age, so that’s a long time to remember. But I recollect that I saw the Comet quite clearly. It was quite distinct, and the tail quite long. Of course, I didn’t understand much about comets, but they pointed out the tail to me, and told me it comes once in 76 years. And so, I’m one of those who lived to be around, at least, when it was (returning again), but the seeing isn’t very good this year. It was up in the night sky, and so it wouldn’t have been seen in the daytime by anybody. I remember being taken outdoors. As I recollect, I was looking towards the south, and quite high in the sky. Of course, the porch, where they took me, was facing that way.

The Comet was pointing sort of west, and rather high in the sky. I don’t know that I thought too much about directions, north, south, east, west, but I remember the house, you see. I wasn’t up on astronomy then (laughter), but remember, you’re asking of a one-time five-year-old. I can still remember my 5th birthday, actually. I’ll be 82 in August. What I say is, I’m 41, only. I’ve been around twice.

(The weather) was clear, all right, or I wouldn’t have seen it. And as I recollect, the head was toward the west, and the tail toward the east. And that would be true, and the sun bad set, you see, and the tail is always away from the sun. It was visible, but of course, the tail of a comet is several millions of miles long, actually. If I were to pretend to measure it; I would say, with such recollection as I have, that it would have been about six inches on the ruler. Certainly not more. Perhaps I should amend that to about five. The bead [cosmos, the head of the Comet] would be about a small fingernail, that size. But of course, then, you know, a child’s imagination tends to build up something afterwards..so you can’t put too much stock in my memory after all these years.

But I still recollect the event, my seeing the Comet. It could have been seen on several successive nights. It never moves very much in the sky. You don’t see the motion, but if you’re taking a picture, you would need a long time exposure and Your camera would have to move to stay with the Comet, and then the picture of the stars would be streaked. Now, I’m not able to say whether the Comet at that time was on the part of the journey toward the sun or whether it was later, because I saw it only on that one occasion. Just the once. I would say in terms of degrees altitude, I would say at least 60 degrees, as I recollect, (above the horizon). I had to look
up. Not the way it is this time, and [it was] almost perpendicular, as I remember, but I have trees, there were trees around, so of course, it had to be high in the sky for me to see it. But I would say if in an align of the tail and the comet, I would have said it was a little bit toward the south-east, not too much.

Oh, I suppose (the color) was just white. Much the same as the moon, but not as bright, not as bright as a full moon. (It didn’t light up the ground area), not in that sense. To me, it dominated the sky! (Laughter). But then, you’re asking a one-time youngster. There was no moon that I could recollect at that time. I would guess that it was a waning moon, in that it was very late in rising. That’s only my, should, we say, educated guess. Of course, during the whole time of the Comet, the moon had been through all of its phases. So I couldn’t tell you, and I couldn’t give you the date on which I was it. (I wasn’t afraid of it), nothing like that a’tall. Nothing that I was aware of. I think that [any fear of it] had pretty well gone out. I’m afraid there is no question about there being any fear of it.

My father being astronomically [interested], and well, he was so interested in so many things, in fact just as I am.

LOUISE SAVAGE REMEMBERS
HALLEY’S COMET of 1910

Mrs Louise Savage
North Park, San Diego, California

I remember it very well. I was ten years old at the time. I was a little girl then, but I remember seeing it. I didn’t have any family at the time; I was an orphan, a poor little orphan. (Laughter). I went to school there, at the Theosophical Society there (Point Loma, San Diego).

I remember seeing the Comet as it dipped down into the ocean, in the western sky. (I saw it) every night, while it lasted. Every evening, we walked over to where the [Society’s] temple was. All those buildings are gone now, but this was over the cliff, or the bluff. We’d stand there about ten o’clock and watch the Comet (as) it would fade down into the ocean. Every night we’d go out there. (At school), we had very good lectures about it. We had an astronomer, a Mr Ryan. He knew everything about the stars, and we got a lecture, and we’d go stand on the bluff and watch what was happening.

(The Comet went) straight ahead. (The tail) was at an angle to the horizon, as I remember it. It was going straight down, and the tail was pointing upwards. The tail seemed to be curved, like an arrow. It didn’t go straight down, it went in kind of a curve into the ocean. (The tail) flared out towards the back. It was quite a big thing. (It would be larger than a foot long), yes, I think so. It seemed kind of a blue-gray [in color].

It went on for about six weeks, as I recall. There were no [street or other bright] lights, (so when it got dark, it was dark). [The Comet] didn’t appear by day, because by that time it went down into the ocean, around the earth. We just stood on the bluff and used plain eyesight.
We remember Halley’s Comet of 1910

(The weather) was similar to this time of year, you know, the weather is never too good. (The Comet was moving), slowly.

I was telling my grandchildren about it. My grandson is very much interested in it, and he wants to get as much information as he can about it. There was an article in the last (March, 1986) issue of The Eclectic, about seeing the Comet.

It was a wonderful sight. I’ve never forgotten it.

Mr Plummer doesn’t remember. I’ve known him for a long time (for seventy or eighty years). He’s too young!

__________________________

NOTES & SOURCES

for News Accounts and Reminiscent Images of the Occasion, as found in Newspapers of the Day

The following notes represent information or quotations from sources relied upon in this book, for discovering published facts regarding the events of the appearance of Halley’s Comet of 1910, as found in either The San Diego Union or The New York Times, of May, 1910, unless indicated.

It is amazingly remarkable that those who said, in 1986, that they remembered Halley’s Comet of 1910 could remember almost exactly what they saw, 75 years previously, when only a child. It should be a reminder, to us all, for ourselves and our children and grand-children. And how unfortunate that those who saw Halley’s Comet of 1986, in its apparently dismal passage, might not remember it at all, when they attain the elderly ages of our august Remembrancers.

1. Union and Times, May, 1910, *et al.* (*i.e.*, “and others”).
2. Times, Sunday, May 1, p. 8.
5. Times, Friday, May 6, *et al*.
6. Union, Times, Sunday, May 1, *et al*.
7. Times, Sunday, May 1, *et al*.
8. *Ibid* (*i.e.*, “in the same place” as fn. 7).
9. Union, Sunday, May 1, Sec. 2., p. 11; Sec. 1., p. 7.
10. Union, Sunday, May 1, Sec. 2., p. 1.
11. Union, Sunday, May 1, Sec. 3., p. 1.
12. Union Sunday to Tuesday, May 1 to 3, Sec. 2, p. 7.
13. Union, Sunday, May 1, Sec. 2., p. 1.
14. Union, Sunday, May 1, (“Homes”) Sec, p. 16.
15. Union, *ibid*.
19. Union, Friday, January 21, 1910, p. 1
20. Ibid.
21. Union, Monday, January 24, 1910, p. 1
22. Ibid.
23. Union, Monday, January 24, 1910, p. 1
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 2.
29. Union Wednesday, May 18, pp. 1, 3.
34. Times, Friday, May 6, p. 5.
35. Union, Friday, May 6, p. 8.
36. Union, Friday, May 6, p. 8.
38. Times, Tuesday, May 10, p. 7.
40. Union, Thursday, May 12, p. 1.
41. Times, Saturday, May 14, p. 7.
42. Times, Monday, May 16, pp. 1, 2.
43. Union, Monday, May 16, p. 16.
44. Union, Wednesday, May 18, pp. 1, 3.
45. Union, Monday, May 16, p. 16.
47. Times, Sunday, May 15, Magazine Sec., p. 2.
49. Times, Tuesday, May 17, p. 2.
50. Times, Monday, May 9, p. 4.
52. Union, Friday, May 20, p. 3.
54. Union, Thursday, May 19, 1,3.
57. Union, Tuesday, May 17, p. 3; Times, Tuesday, may 17, pp. 1, 2.
59. Union, Thursday, May 19, pp. 1, 3.
60. Times, Friday, May 20, p. 8.
WE REMEMBER HALLEY's COMET of 1910

64. Union, Saturday, May 14, p. 16; Sunday, May 15, p. 2; Monday, May 16, p. 2.
65. Times, Thursday, May 12, p. 2.
66. Times, Tuesday, May 17, p. 2.
68. Union, Friday, May 13, p. 1.
70. Times, Friday, May 20, p. 1, 2.
73. Times, Tuesday, May 17, p. 1.
75. Times, Saturday, May 14, p. 2.
76. Times, Sunday, May 15, pp. 1, 2.
77. Union, Tuesday, May 17, pp. 1, 3.
78. Union, Tuesday, May 17, p. 3.
79. Times, Tuesday, May 17, p. 2.
81. Times, Wednesday, May 18, p. 1, 3.
82. Union, Wednesday, May 18, pp. 1, 3.
83. Union, Thursday, May 19, p. 1.
84. Ibid.
86. Union, Thursday, May 19, pp. 1, 3.
89. Times, Thursday, May 19, p. 1.
90. Union, Thursday, May 19, pp. 1, 3.
92. Ibid.
93. Times, Friday, May 20, pp. 1, 2.
94. Union, Friday, May 20, pp. 1, 3.
95. Union, Thursday, May 19, p. 1.
96. Times, Saturday, May 21, pp. 1, 4.
97. Union, Saturday, May 21, p. 1, 2.
100. Union, Tuesday, May 24, p. 1.
103. Union, Monday, May 9, p. 4.
104. Union, Thursday, May 19, p. 1.
Reminiscence Images of the Occasion,
as found in Newspapers of the Day

The editorial cartoons of a roaring Comet and fearful Earth, and a fearful Comet and a
scowling Earth (“Poor Mother Earth: A Study in Physiology” (two images), on the front and
back of this E-book, is from The New York Times, Sunday, May 22, 1910, Picture Section, p. 16.
Others, with artistic visualizations, and astronomic details, are as indicated:

“The Comet from the Times Tower: Clear Night Enables Miss Mary Proctor to Make a Close
Study of It” The New York Times, Saturday, May 7, 1910, p. 7. (See the link: “The Comet seen
from Times Tower”).

(See the link: “Earth’s Passage Thru Comet’s Tail”).

“The Comet’s Tail as seen from The Times Towers between 2:30 and 3:15 AM Yesterday” The
New York Times, Friday, May 20, 1910, p. 2. (See the link: “Times Tower 230-315 AM
Yesterday”).

“Did the Earth Miss the Comet’s Tail by 197,000 miles?” The New York Times, Saturday, May
21, 1910, p. 4. (See the link: “Did Earth miss Comet’s Tail by Miles”).

________________________________________________________________
The Comet from The Times Tower

Clear Night Enables Miss Mary Proctor to Make a Close Study of It.
The passage occurs on the night of Wednesday, May 18, beginning at 11:20 o'clock and ending about 1:20 o'clock Thursday morning, after which the comet will be visible in the evening instead of the morning. In the diagram the earth is moving from right to left, the comet from left to right. At their respective speeds of 18 and 25 miles a second they will pass each other at the joint rate of 43 miles a second. Two days after the passage of the comet's tail its head will be at its nearest to the earth, 14,300,000 miles. The comet's orbit is inclined to that of the earth at an angle of 18 degrees.
THE COMET'S TAIL AS SEEN FROM THE TIMES TOWER BETWEEN 2:30 AND 3:15 A.M. YESTERDAY.
Did the Earth Miss the Comet's Tail by 197,000 Miles?

PART OF COMET'S ORBIT BELOW THE EARTH'S

PLANE OF EARTH'S ORBIT

PART OF COMET'S ORBIT ABOVE THE EARTH'S

SUN

POSITION OF COMET'S TAIL 6 PM MAY 18
POSITION OF COMET'S HEAD 6 PM MAY 18

POSITION OF COMET'S TAIL 1:30 PM MAY 19
POSITION OF EARTH'S HEAD 8 PM MAY 18
POSITION OF EARTH'S TAIL 1:30 PM MAY 19
POSITION OF EARTH'S TAIL PASSED OVER IT
POOR MOTHER EARTH!

A STUDY IN PHYSIOLOGY