

THE THREE GALILEOS CONFERENCE

An Overview of the Event

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A conference having the title *The Three Galileos: the Man, the Spacecraft, the Telescope*, was held at the University of Padova from 7 – 10 January 1997. The conference was jointly organized by the U.S. space agency NASA, JPL, the German space agency DARA, the University and Astronomical Observatory of Padova, and the Telescopio Nazionale Galileo, with the added support of the International Astronomical Union. The scientific committee was composed of: C. Barbieri (Chairman, University of Padova), S. Atreya (University of Michigan), E. Bellone (University of Padova), M. Belton (NOAO), P. Benvenuti (ESA), F. Bertola (University of Padova), M. Calvani (Astronomical Observatory of Padova), G. Cariolaro (University of Padova), W. Ip (Max-Planck-Institute for Aeronomy), T. Johnson (JPL), T. Owen (University of Hawaii), J. Rahe (NASA), and R. West (ESO). The purpose was to discuss the discovery of the Medicean Moons by Galileo Galilei in Padova from 7 – 15 January 1610, the results of the Galileo spacecraft during the cruise phase and while orbiting the Jovian system, and the construction of the 3.5-m active-optics Italian telescope Galileo (TNG) in the Canary Islands.

The conference was preceded by an academic ceremony, attended by all Deans of the Faculties, by many authorities, and by a large audience, during which the Rector of the University awarded the Galileo Project Manager, W.J. O'Neil, and Project Scientist, T.V. Johnson, the title of 'Dottore in Astronomia'. The two neo-laureates presented an oral dissertation covering the main aspects of the Galileo mission and scientific results. During the ceremony the Rector was presented with two gifts: a copy of a letter of Galileo Galilei kept in the Special Collection Library of the University of Ann Arbor (Michigan), and reproduced as faithfully as possible, thanks to Prof. S. Atreya; and a watercolor entitled *The Three Galileos* painted and donated by the contemporary American artist Gregg Mort.

The conference was attended by 140 scientists and historians of science from Europe and the U.S.A. Some 30 invited contributions and 50 poster papers were presented. A round table discussion, chaired by L. Woltjer (President, IAU) — and with the participation of R. Giacconi (Director, ESO), R. Bonnet (Director of Science, ESA), J. Rahe (NASA), A. DiPippo (ASI), G. Setti (CRA), M. Marov (Academy of Sciences Moscow), D. Morton (University of Arizona), J. Geiss (ISSI) — elucidated several perspectives of the exploration of the Solar System.

In addition to the scientific sessions, other events (partly sponsored by the Town and Chamber of Commerce of Padova, by St. Anthony's Rectorate, and by the Beltrame Foundation) helped to clarify the historical aspects of the era of G. Galilei in Padova. Among the special events was a 'Galilean' dinner, prepared following Galilei's original recipes and the foods used in that epoch. The meal was accompanied by music of the 17th century played by students of the University. There was also an organ concert in St. Anthony's Cathedral played by Dr. Les Deutch (JPL), who selected his pieces in order to show the evolution of musical taste and techniques that occurred between the 16th and 17th centuries; and the showing of some very rare, and in some cases unique, astronomical manuscripts and books of the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries belonging to the Beltrame collection.

During the conference, the Holy Father John Paul II made known His invitation to the participants to a private audience in the Vatican for the morning of the 11th. Following His welcoming address, the Pope was presented by O'Neil and Johnson with a book of images from the Galileo spacecraft, and by C. Barbieri with a book of photographs of the TNG.

The Acta of the conference, containing also the discourse of the Holy Father, edited by Barbieri, Johnson, and Rahe, has been published by Kluwer Academic Publishers. Unfortunately, during the

preparation of the book, Dr. Jurgen Rahe tragically lost his life. It has been the unanimous decision of the Scientific Committee and of the organizing institutions to dedicate the book to him.

Following the conference a great exhibit, 'Voyage in the Cosmos,' opened in the historical Palazzo della Ragione in Padova. The exhibit had on display many items kindly provided by NASA/JPL, ESA, DARA, ASI, ESO, CNR, TNG, and other institutions. The exhibit allowed participants the opportunity of wide access to the World Wide Web, thanks to ten workstations loaned by IBM and a fast telephone line provided by TELECOM. The exhibition continued for six months afterwards, and was visited by almost 70,000 paying spectators, and by some 400 classes from many schools; 30,000 persons accessed the Internet and 100 teleconferences were organized with ESO and Asiago Observatories.

A video tape presenting the highlights of the academic ceremony and conference, papal audience, and exhibit has been prepared; this also has been dedicated, as the proceedings have, to the memory of Jurgen Rahe. The video can be obtained through the TNG Office in Padova or through the Galileo Project Office at JPL in Pasadena.