

## It's Quieter in the Twilight

The Voyager 1 spacecraft was a singular project when NASA launched it in September 1977. Its aim, as a space probe, was to study the outer solar system and interstellar space, beginning with flybys of planets Jupiter and Saturn. Later, it extended its mission to locate and study the regions and boundaries of the outer heliosphere and to explore the interstellar medium in 2012. To this day, it continues to penetrate space, having traveled some 14 billion miles from earth. It will be shut down in 2025. (*To note: a twin probe, Voyager 2, was launched weeks before Voyager 1 and performed flybys of Uranus and Neptune*).

All these years, scientists at NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California have been piloting and obtaining readings from the space vehicle, which continues to reveal secrets in our solar system. Even as the probe's distance increases and its information thins out, a small group of scientists still follow the progress of this historic experiment. This intriguing documentary film captures their tranquil world "It's Quieter in the Twilight" introduces us to these scientific holdouts, now in the "twilight" of their work.

The documentary uses ample historic and animation footage of the Voyager conception, construction, and launch and contains many film and video excerpts of its findings, especially around Saturn in its early days. But what this film really concentrates on is the dwindling but dedicated personnel still monitoring the project.

The remaining Voyager team of scientists—now down to a dozen or so—work in a non-descript building "next to a McDonalds." They are comfortable in the quiet; it suits them. Yet this quirky team of engineers—now in their 70's and 80's--are still pushing the notion of discovery, traveling among stars propelled only by dwindling sunlight.

The remaining staff is also pleasantly diverse. They include a sweet woman from rural South Korea (Sun Matsumoto), a man from the Jim Crow South (Jefferson Hall), and two South Americans who found rich lives as scientists in the U.S. (Enrique Medina and Fernando Peralta), as well as the groups' director Suzy Dodd and a cluster of others. All those interviewed are thoroughly articulate and knowledgeable, as well as good-humored about their status on a predestined project. They display no regrets, but sometimes evince a sense of nostalgia, even pathos, describing their life's work.

The director of the film, documentarian Billy Miossi, has spoken eloquently about this Voyager team in an interview: "There's a unique dichotomy that drew me into the story of the aging Voyager mission. The grandest feat of human exploration being steered by a humble few sitting in a drab office space. They

seek no fame, no recognition. Instead, they're content to quietly contribute a novel expertise for the sake of a deeper understanding of the vastness that exists beyond our world. So much is owed to a tiny team of engineers who have forgone promotions, and now retirement. To understand...their devotion is what lies at the heart of 'It's Quieter in the Twilight.'"

*(The film runs a crisp 83 minutes and is not rated--though it contains nothing objectionable,)*

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