

Authors ponder alien life

Who Goes There? by Edward Edelson

(Doubleday, \$8.95)

Are there intelligent alien beings beyond the walled-in garden of Earth? The search is on, according to Edelson, author, magazine writer and science editor of the New York Daily News.

Edelson has written a fascinating book tracing what he calls SETI — search for extraterrestrial intelligence.

Whether that search bears fruit depends first of all, Edelson writes, on whether there is intelligent life on earth — which can intelligently deal with such problems as starvation and nuclear war. SETI presumes we will survive ourselves.

The opening portion of the book deals with the past, explaining for the scientifically uninformed what has gone before — from the "big bang" theory of creation and the expanding universe, through the 1976 Viking probe that tested the soil on the surface of Mars for traces of organic life — our first step in applied (as opposed to theoretical) exobiology.

Edelson points out that in a universe of 100 billion galaxies, each containing 100 billion suns, the odds favor life by something like 100 billion billion to one.

What kind of life? Probably carbon-based. How do we find it? Either by listening for alien signals, most likely mathematical in content, or by traveling via an as yet undiscovered technique to explore the universe for ourselves.

Have the aliens already visited us? Not likely, according to Edelson, who finds the evidence of saucer sightings illogical, particularly in view of the swarm of UFOs supposedly sighted and the high cost of space travel.

It is daunting to think that we are a small planet circling an insignificant sun, far from the galactic mainstream — not to mention the universal center — while vast civilizations may be flourishing. Somewhere.

Edelson has written an easy-to-read, occasionally witty book that serves as both primer and survey of what is being done in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence.

—Joan Hanauer (UPI)

Messages from the Stars, by Ian Redpath

(Harper & Row, \$10)

If there is other "intelligent" life in the universe, it may be smart enough to decide not to get involved with us until we learn how to live peacefully among ourselves.

But as long as scientists and non-scientists believe that technological civilizations must have appeared in other solar systems, man will try to contact them.

We may learn something about life elsewhere when Voyagers I and II pass Jupiter this March and July, and when they get to Saturn in November, 1980 and August, 1981.

Meanwhile Redpath's readable, balanced book sets out the reasons for believing intelligent life has appeared and still is appearing on other planets in our own and other solar systems. He examines the statistics used by theoretical physicists, the pros and cons of actually making contact once other life has been located, and the astronomical cost of doing so.

He also reviews — and dismisses — some of the more outrageous claims of the arrival of "extraterrestrials" on earth, recent and historical.

His over-all conclusion: "I believe that if extraterrestrials exist, contact with them is inevitable. Whatever our misgivings, we must be ready to face the existence of other beings in space. First contact will be the end of our isolation, and it will also be the end of our innocence."

—Glenn Currie (UPI)

Bestseller 'Gnomes' now in paperback



BOOKS

Storm on the Range, by Max Brand

Devotees of Max Brand and Western novels will welcome the reprinting of this rags-to-riches story first published in 1931. Tom Fernald, a downtrodden and allegedly slow-witted shepherd, has just sold a portion of his herd to pay debts, including a mortgage on his rocky patch of land. While returning to his shack he is robbed, and thus is unable to make his mortgage payment.

The banker vows foreclosure and decides to take Fernald's pinto as partial payment to replace his own lame roan, but the pinto is a one-man horse and bucks until the banker is thrown headfirst into a post and killed.

Fernald assumes everyone will accuse him of murdering to avoid having to pay the mortgage, so he disposes of the body, then conducts a successful search for the fortune hidden on the banker's ranch.

Over the next few years, Fernald uses the sizeable fortune and his own shrewd wit to expand his possessions well beyond a million dollars through adept buying and selling of sheep and cattle.

Fernald maintains his natural physical strength and also develops expertise with pistols to go along with his tremendous wealth, and eventually becomes a widely known and respected citizen.

Much of Fernald's problem occurs when the man who robbed him finds out about the fortune, and threatens to expose Fernald as a thief and murderer, yet Fernald is reluctant to silence him and has no success trying to bribe him.

—Charles R. Schultz

(Schultz is a University Archivist)

Blanco, by Allen Wier

The time is 1959. The action takes place primarily in the small town of Blanco in the Texas Hill Country and in San Antonio, 50 miles to the south. The principle characters include Mamma; Eunice Marrs, long time widow of Armon Marrs who exists on a small pension, generally complains about her problems, and appreciates the generosity of her daughter and son-in-law;

Eunice's son Turk, age 45, a veteran of World War II and the local ne'er-do-well whose livelihood comes from part time work at the Sinclair gas station and from cutting the grass at the cemetery; Eunice's daughter June, age 32, who lives and works at Texas Cut Flower in San Antonio; and Cage, a former Ohio wholesale groceryman who became a moderately wealthy land developer in San Antonio, and who is engaged to June.

Some parts of the story are revealed through flashbacks, especially in June's memories of childhood in Blanco while her father Armon was still alive. Some flashbacks also occur in Turk's memories, but many other parts of the story appear only through June's imagination.

The author leaves a lot to the reader's imagination also. Why, for example, does the San Antonio businessman Cage drive all the way to Temple to buy a new car just before his marriage to June? Making the purchase in San Antonio would have been better for business.

Why does Cage insist that June have her premarital physical at a free clinic? Money does not appear to have been the reason, for he gave her money to take a taxi both ways.

The portions which deal with real, current life are well done. The overall "scene" in Blanco appears to be accurate. June and Cage's honeymoon in Galveston, Turk's relationship and activities with his running buddy Robert Allen, and even the infrequent reference to the high school football team are understandable and believable. Had Wier included more of this and less imagination, I might have understood the story and enjoyed the book. As it is, I found it greatly confusing.

—Charles R. Schultz

Bestsellers

FICTION

1. *War and Remembrance* — Herman Wouk
2. *Chesapeake* — James A. Michener
3. *Overload* — Arthur Hailey
4. *The Stories of John Cheever* — John Cheever
5. *Second Generation* — Howard Fast
6. *Evergreen* — Belva Plain
7. *Dress Gray* — Lucian K. Truscott IV
8. *Fools Die* — Mario Puzo
9. *The Coup* — John Updike
10. *The Sixth Commandment* — Lawrence Sanders

NONFICTION

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2. *Mommie Dearest* — Christina Crawford
3. *A Distant Mirror* — Barbara Tuchman
4. *The Complete Scarsdale Medical Diet* — Herman R. Tarnower and Samm Sinclair Baker
5. *American Caesar* — William Manchester
6. *Linda Goodman's Love Signs* — Linda Goodman
7. *In Search of History* — Theodore White
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