In the news

Carnal Sagan speaks to audience about Mars

By Gordon Hall

Carl Sagan, noted astronomer and exobiologist, spoke on "The Exploration of Mars" last Monday night in Kresge Auditorium.

Sagan, who is the Henry Draper Professor of Planetary Studies at Cornell, is well-known as a popularizer of science in general, and space science and planetary exploration in particular. Sagan is not of the unknown. To the contrary he says of himself: "I am in awe of the unknown."

His latest book, The Dragons of Eden, a bestseller, deals with the evolution of human intelligence, a topic almost entirely outside of his own field.

In the early part of his talk, Sagan spoke of the early history of Martian exploration, looking at it through a telescope from earth. He mentioned the debate over the possibility of intelligent life on Mars which began with the discovery of the "canals" by Percival Lowell of MIT.

Sagan added that "the question is similar to the telescope the intelligent life was on."

One of the most important aspects of interplanetary exploration, according to Sagan, is the usefulness of looking "at other planetary environments as cautionary tales." He noted the similarity between Venus's runaway greenhouse effect and the effect caused by the dumping of excessive amounts of carbon dioxide into earth's atmosphere.

Sagan went on to talk about the Viking mission and the possibility of life on Mars in light of our present knowledge of Martian conditions. He commenced by stating that "Many biologists, I am among them, feel that life is not possible without abundant surface water. I feel bonded water is sufficient if life has once evolved." Sagan even conjectured that "It is certainly possible for large organisms to exist on Mars."

Sagan feels the Viking mission has a major weakness. The - [Please turn to page 2-]

Cambridge campus taking shape

By Margot Tsakonas

Decades is an occasional feature. (The Tech that presents in history of MIT through the eyes of historians, photographers and alumni. The first two installments last term dealt with the Inaugural early days in Boston.)

William Barton Rogers founded the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1865; the first classes were held in the Mercantile Library until the Bostonian Street building was finished shortly thereafter.

Three years later Rogers suffered a stroke and was succeeded by John D. Bancroft, who followed 13 years later by General Charles A. Walker. That year Rogers died while speaking at Cambridge.

During the next 30 years, President James Mason Crafts, Henry S. Pritchett, and Charles A. Goddard, MacArthur donated much of their efforts to move MIT from Boston while avoiding a merger with Harvard. In 1912, George Eastman, president of Eastman Kodak, offered $2.5 million for the new site in Cambridge.

In October 1911, President MacArthur announced his intentions of building a new MIT in Cambridge. Planning such an ambitious, environmentally difficult and expensive project, over 2,000 blueprints, as well as documents and faculty members outlined their specific needs which amounted to a single million square feet. John Freeman, Class of 1876, an engineer and member of the Corporation, had been working on preliminary designs for the building.

While construction did not begin in 1912 as hoped, as problems were encountered in selling the Boston campus. Also, Despardele died suddenly, so in 1913 W. Allen Boston was chosen as chief architect and two members of the Class of 1876, Charles A. Stone and Edwin S. Webber, were chosen as engineers. Indeed, if the architectural possibilities were magnified, the engineering problems were formidable.

The MIT campus as seen from the air in 1929

New transit guide very helpful

By David B. Koretz

The latest (1977-1978) edition to the Metropolitan Boston Transportation Authority (MBTA) brochures of transit options is entitled Car-Free in Boston.

The leaflet is distributed by Public Transportation, Inc., in Cambridge, and a special guide is accompanied by the MBTA's latest (1977-1978) brochure.

Within the book itself are sections on the various "car-free" options such as bicycle rides and carpooling for long-distance journeys; and the basic MBTA services for transportation.

Other helpful sections list points of interest attainable by transit, as well as cultural and entertainment centers, and how to travel without an automobile to cities and towns in eastern Massachusetts.

The Association, although independent from the MBTA, promotes the T's services throughout the region. The introduction states, "Compare the basic MBTA fare of 25c with the annual cost of owning and maintaining an automobile in Boston — over $2,000."

That $2,000 could be converted into 8,000 MBTA trips (25c per trip), more than enough to satisfy even the most active traveler.

Further bias is shown in the "Downsizing Boston", chapter. "While driving in Boston can be difficult, traveling downtown by car is guaranteed to be frustrating. The best way to travel downtown is to take transit — and then walk. The core area is densely developed and there isn't any destination far from a transit stop."

Despite these remedies, however, the book is an excellent guide for anyone, particularly students, who want to get around the area without a car.

Published by the Association of MIT Alumnae, the book was written by Maryl Dorsey in the fall of 1977. A limited number of copies remain in stock at the MIT Bookstore.

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