SCIENCE AND FUTURE

Can the average person really understand science? Does the average person want to know about science? Does science matter to us? The answer to these questions is a resounding yes!

For many of us, however, the mere memory of physics, chemistry, and biology classes in high school and college makes our eyes glaze over. We left the classroom with the belief that science was dull and abstract and virtually impossible for the average person to understand, Back then, it wasn't cool to understand science, and it seemed to have little immediate relevance to our lives. Yet as we matured and headed into the world, we found ourselves face to face with sophisticated computers at work and frequent headlines about matters of science - mapping the human genetic make-up, cloning, test-tube babies, and the August 1996 discovery of the possibility of past life on the Mars, to name a few. Suddenly, scientific knowledge has not only become acceptable, it has become a useful, essential, and inescapable part of our lives.

For some of us, our fascination with science began in the 1950's and 1960's, when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik or when Neil Armstrong set foot on the Moon - striking evidence of mankind's ability to apply scientific knowledge to accomplish extraodinary goals. For others, all it took to become interested in science was getting out of high school or merely witnessing the unending series of new scientific achievements and inventions that occurred during the 1970's, 80's, and 90's: the Venus landing, fiber optics, deciphering DNA code, black holes, space stations, microchips and computers, microsurgery, the Space Shuttle, heart transplants, artificial heart, superconductivity, the discovery of other solar systems, and much more.

You don't have to be a theoretical physicist to be awed by space exploration or curious about whether life exists on the Mars or how the Universe began. You don't have to be a biochemist to have an interest in the fundamental processes of life. It's impossible *not* to be curious about such matters. Scientific knowledge and discoveries are much too interesting and profound to be left only to scientists.

Science can be fascinating. Many great discoveries of the past have now, in our lifetime, culminated in the most incredible and pervasive scientific and technological revolution that could be imagined. Whether we approve of it or not, we're swept up in that revolution and the resulting culture - unless you live in a cave. Not only is science fascinating, it matters to us because it is life. They say that whatever road we take, our fate is indissolubly bound up with science. It is essential as a matter of simple survival for us to understand science. The more we know science, the better we understand life. It means feeling more comfortable with our everyday lives, and using science and technology to accomplish goals. Science is a part of our culture and heritage. It is of great importance for not merely "ivory tower" intellectuals but for the masses of average people.

Knowledge is our destiny. *Homo sapiens* will continue to search for the answers to new questions. We will develop new concepts, new theories, and we will continue our quest to understand the natural world. We must continue to discover, create, explore, and invent.