

# People Frown Sometimes

Gary Swanson

On Columbus Day 1992 the National Aeronautics and Space Administration will begin a 10-year search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI). Since 1960 it has made 50 such attempts, but previous radio searches have sampled only a thin slice of the cosmos. The SETI project, however, will link existing radio telescopes around the world with newly developed computer programs that can scan 15 million frequency channels a second. That is 10,000 times more frequencies than the previous 50 attempts combined, and at 300 times the sensitivity.

Now that scientists have devised so extensive a program, they are beginning to worry about what they should do if they do succeed. What if someone out there actually receives our signal and sends back an answer? What do we say next? How do we communicate with a species from another planet?

Some have suggested that we should take a cue from how we are presently communicating with other species on *this* planet. With that in mind, interspecies communication psychologist Francine Patterson, who taught Koko, a 19-year-old lowland gorilla, how to communicate with American Sign Language, asked Koko, "What would you say to someone who didn't know anything about gorillas or people?" After little hesitation, Koko, who has the vocabulary of a six- or seven-year-old deaf child, signed back, "Koko good" and "People frown sometimes."

In charitable honesty Koko has put her finger on something important. The fact is, members of *Homo sapiens* are not perfect. We

have some problems. By and large we're unhappy. We frown.

And that is a shame. Should we tell the rest of the universe that we allow others of our own species to starve to death every day? That we have focused an inordinate amount of our intelligence and resources on the development of weapons that could literally wipe out our entire species as well as other forms of life on our planet? That we think so little of life that we surgically discard thousands of our own unborn young? Some scientists, considering the possibility of communicating with extraterrestrial life forms, are genuinely worried that if we tell creatures on other worlds what we're really like, they just might have the intelligence, technology, and compassion to put us out of our misery.

Certainly sin has made this earth a difficult place to live. Unfortunately humankind is looking for solutions to its problems everywhere but in the right place. Thomas Jefferson wrote in the United States Declaration of Independence that all men are entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." But what is happiness, and how can we achieve it?

To work out a definition of *happiness*, it may be necessary first to explain what happiness *isn't*.

*It isn't the same as fun.* "Fun is what we experience *during* an act," writes Dennis Prager. "Happiness is what we experience *after* an act. . . . Understanding and accepting that true happiness has nothing to

do with fun is one of the most liberating realizations we can ever come to."<sup>1</sup>

*It isn't synonymous with success.* There are simply too many successful people among us who are terribly unhappy. We cannot observe their dissatisfaction without concluding that success seldom fulfills humankind's pursuit of happiness.

*It isn't avoiding what makes you miserable.* If this were true, then truly money could buy happiness. The more money you have, the more you can distance yourself from what makes you miserable. But the existence of so many wealthy yet unhappy people on this earth suggests that money can't make unhappiness go away.

*It isn't the result of a formula.* "We are happiest," writes Frederick Turner, "when we are striving not for *happiness* but, say, for artistic perfection, or for the purest service to other persons, or for knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

This is what Jesus meant when, after washing the disciples' feet and pointing them to a life of service to others, He said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17, KJV). And the Bible actually offers several very practical approaches to happiness:

**1. Trust in God.** "Happy is he," wrote Solomon, "who trusts in the Lord" (Proverbs 16:20, RSV). The world's happiest people are those who realize their own human weakness and are able to put their wholehearted trust in God's infinitely loving care.

**2. Wisdom of God.** Solomon freely acknowledged from whom his wisdom came when he exclaimed, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom" (Proverbs 3:13,

KJV). The real danger here—which leads to unhappiness—is to forget the true source of human intelligence and intellectual accomplishment.

**3. Hope in God.** When the disciples learned that Jesus had been resurrected, they realized for the first time that He had provided a way of escape from the world's misery and unhappiness. "After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20, NIV).

We have an assurance that God loved us enough to send His son to this earth to set things right.

"Grace be to you," Paul wrote, "and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Galatians 1:3, 4, KJV). That is a message that we can communicate with confidence to the rest of the cosmos—as if the other universal inhabitants out there didn't already know!

#### NOTES

1. "The Secret of True Happiness," *Reader's Digest*, (June 1989), pp. 177-178.

2. "Life on Mars: Cultivating a Planet—and Ourselves," *Harper's Magazine*, (August 1989), p. 34.

*Gary Swanson is the editor of the Collegiate Quarterly and the author of many articles.*

## Interchange

Readers interested in establishing correspondence with Adventist college/university students or professionals in other parts of the world:

\* **Dickson Anwi-K.A.:** 24; male; studying toward a degree in Social Science; hobbies: exchange of letters and photos, playing gospel music, faith sharing; correspondence in English. Address: Room K8, Legon Hall; University of Ghana; Legon; Ghana.

\* **Samuel Baidoo:** 29; male; studying Theology and Music; hobbies: reading, music, swimming, traveling, photography, literature evangelism; correspondence in English or French. Address: P.O. Box 10968; Accra North; Ghana.

\* **Stanley John Mamud Buba:** 20; male; studying Architecture; hobbies: reading, letter and postcard exchange, film, sports, table games; correspondence in English. Address: Dept. of Architecture, Faculty of Environmental Sciences; University of Jos; P.M.B. 2084; Jos, Plateau State; Nigeria.

\* **Cesar G. Jeronimo Falcon:** 24; male; completing a degree in Political Science and also studying Theology; correspondence in Spanish. Address: Urb. Los Sauces, Manz. "Y", Lote 12; Surquillo, Lima; Peru.

\* **Ellis G. Guiles, Jr.:** male; holds a B.S. degree in Electronics Engineering and works as product manager; interests: racquetball, History, Philosophy, Religion, travel, reading, music, and cooking; correspondence in English. Address: 6627 Dunn Avenue; Waco, TX 76710, U.S.A.

\* **Janet Hamilton:** 27; female; single; British of Jamaican parentage; completing a B.A. degree in systems analysis; interests: traveling, nature walks, sports, music, self-improvement; correspondence in English. Address: House 18(G), Ashley Village; Bristol Polytechnic; Frenchay, Bristol BS16 1QY; England.

\* **Ruben Darga Holdorf:** 29; male; studying Journalism and teaching History and Geography at an Adventist academy; hobbies: reading, film, postcard exchange, collecting foreign Bibles; correspondence in Arabic, English, German, Italian, or Portuguese. Address: Rua Jordania, 424; Cajuru, CEP 82960; Curitiba, Parana; Brazil.

\* **Morinal Ipa:** 24; male; studying medicine at the University of Papua New Guinea; interests: singing and listening to music, rugby football league, jogging, camping; correspondence in English. Address: P.O. Box 3804; Boroko, NCD; Papua New Guinea.

\* **Stephen Kaba:** 24; male; studying Agriculture; hobbies: postcard exchange, reading, music; correspondence in English. Address: 57M, University Hall; U.S.T. - Kumasi; Ghana.

\* **Mirtes L. Leichsenring:** 32; female; working as a pediatric nurse at a public university hospital; interests: music, growing plants and flowers, socializing, and reading biographies; correspondence in English or Portuguese. Address: Rua Leonardo da Vinci No. 501; Jardim Bela Vista; 13090 Campinas, S.P.; Brazil.

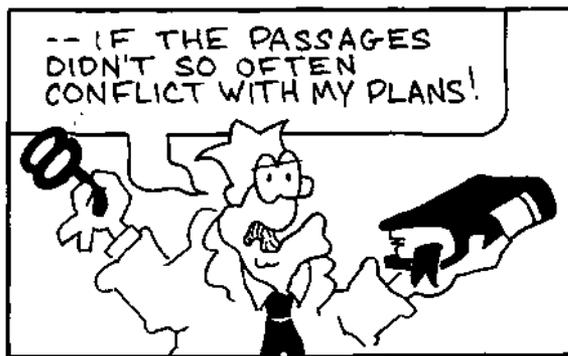
\* **Leah J. Martinez:** 26; female; studying toward a degree in Commerce with a major in Data Processing; interests: reading, writing poems, and conducting Bible studies; correspondence in English. Address: Blk #17, Bata Subdivision; Bacolod City 6001; Philippines.

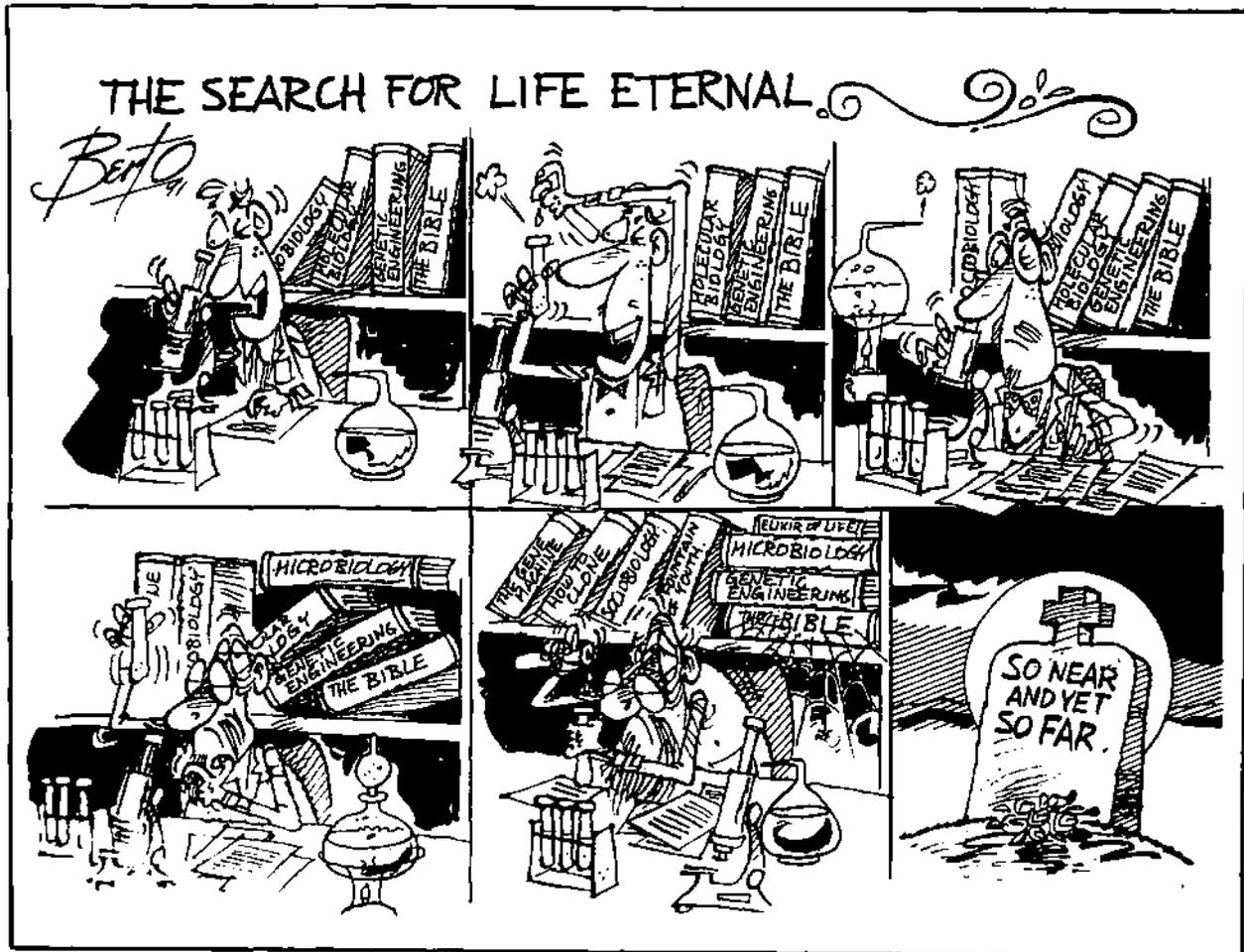
\* **Evelia Rosario Molina Gomez:** 21; female, studying toward a degree in Food Engineering; interests: reading, recreational activities, classical and religious music; correspondence in Spanish. Address: 2a. Privada Poniente, No. 54; Col. San Caralampio; Tapachula, Chiapas; Mexico, C.P. 30700.

\* **Sueli Nunes:** 21; female; completing degree in Journalism and working as editor at Brazil Adventist Publishing House; hobbies: reading, tourism, sports; letters in English, Portuguese, or Spanish. Address: Caixa Postal 34; Tatui, Sao Paulo; Brazil, CEP 18270.

\* **Armenio Ferraz de Oliveira Jr.:** 28; male; single; recently completed a teaching degree in History; hobbies: reading, travel, stamp collecting, photography, astronomy, faith sharing; correspondence in English, Portuguese, Russian, or Spanish. Address: Rua Prof. Eulálio de Arruda Mello, 134; Jardim Lucila; Tatui, SP, CEP 18270 Brazil.

Please turn to page 34





## Interchange

Continued from page 21

\* *Jacqueline Pories*: 20; female; first year university student; interests: stamp collecting, friendships; correspondence in English or Spanish. Address: Calle 2da. #E-15, Res. Mar Azul; Km. 7 1/2 Carretera Sánchez; Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

\* *José Reis*: 31; male; studying toward a degree in Electric/Electronic Engineering; working in electronic maintenance; interests: religion, music, informatics, and sports; correspondence in English or Portuguese. Address: Rua Lobo Viana, 91, Ap. 13; Santos, SP; CEP 11045 Brazil.

\* *Marsha Janine Thompson*: 20; female; studying toward a degree in Psychology and English; hobbies: travelling, singing, childminding, reading, and swimming; correspondence in English. Address: 4845 16th Street; Zephyrhills, FL 33540; U.S.A.

\* *Maria Teresa Pino Villalobos*: 25; female; degree in Special Education, with emphasis in Learning Disabilities; hobbies: correspondence, painting, reading, camping, making new friends; correspondence in any language, but preferably in Spanish. Address:

Las Codornices 3438; Lomas de Macul; Santiago; Chile.

\* *Prem Kumar Raj*: 25; male; studying Dentistry; hobbies: traveling, making new friends; correspondence in English. Address: c/o Dr. Christo; Quarters No. 17; Kasturba Medical College; Manipal 576119, Karnataka State; India.

\* *Rudy Siburian*: 22; male; studying toward a degree in Petroleum Engineering; interests: piano playing, singing, hiking; correspondence in English. Address: Jl. Nusa Indah II, B 203 Jaka Setia; 17147 Bekasi Selatan, West Java, Indonesia.

*If you wish to be listed here, send your name and postal address, indicating your age, sex, marital status, field of studies or professional degree, hobbies or interests, and language(s) in which you would like to correspond. Address your letter to: Dialogue Interchange, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, U.S.A. Please write clearly. The journal cannot assume responsibility over the accuracy of the information submitted nor of the content of the correspondence which ensues.*