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Carl Sagan dies at 62

From: **CNN Inteeractive**
Date: Fri, 20 Dec 1996 08:38:36 -0500
Fwd Date: Fri, 20 Dec 1996 08:38:36 -0500
Subject: Carl Sagan dies at 62

<http://cnn.com/US/9612/20/sagan/>

Carl Sagan dies at 62

Astronomer, author looked
for what the universe might
hold

December 20, 1996
Web posted at: 6:30 a.m. EST

From correspondent Norma
Quarles

NEW YORK (CNN) --
Astronomer Carl Edward Sagan, a
gifted storyteller who extolled and explored the grandeur and
mystery of the universe in lectures, books and an acclaimed TV
series, died Friday after a two-year battle with bone marrow
disease. He was 62.

Sagan died of pneumonia at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research
Center in Seattle, where he had a bone-marrow transplant in April
1995, a center spokeswoman said. The center had identified his
disease as myelodysplasia, a form of anemia also known as
preleukemia syndrome.

Born in New York City in 1934, Sagan was a noted astronomer
whose lifelong passion was searching for intelligent life in the
cosmos.

"The significance of a finding that there are other beings who share
this universe with us would be absolutely phenomenal, it would be
an epochal event in human history," Sagan once said.

Sagan began researching the origins of life in the 1950s and went
on to play a leading role in every major U.S. spacecraft expedition
to the planets.

"We have looked close-up at dozens of new worlds. Worlds we
never saw before. And unless we are so stupid to destroy
ourselves, we are going to be moving out to space in the next
century," he said. "And if I'm fortunate enough to have played a
part in the first preliminary reconnaissance in the solar system,
that's a terrifically exciting thing."

"We have swept through all of the planets in the solar system, from
Mercury to Neptune, in a historic 20 (to) 30 year age of

spacecraft discovery," Sagan once said.

Sagan made his mark early with research showing that Venus is scorching hot and Mars is a cold desert. Among his many gifts was the ability to communicate his knowledge about the cosmos.

"Are we an exceptionally unlikely accident or is the universe brimming over with intelligence? (It's) a vital question for understanding ourselves and our history," Sagan said.

Radio telescopes listening for signs of life in the billions of stars and galaxies, as part of a program close to Sagan's heart, have so far received no response.

"It says something about the rarity and preciousness of life on this planet," he said. "The flip side of not finding life on another planet is appreciating life on Earth."

Outside his research, Sagan also hosted a popular television series on PBS called "Cosmos." He published hundreds of scientific papers; wrote eight books, including the Pulitzer Prize winning "The Dragons of Eden"; and was a professor of astronomy at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

Sagan came close to death twice after being diagnosed with blood disease in 1994. Bone marrow donated by his sister, along with chemotherapy, put his cancer in remission.

Speaking at a conference after that episode, he said, "I'd like to begin with a personal remark. I've been in Seattle for the past months, fighting a life-threatening illness which it looks as if I've surmounted."

Despite his battle with cancer, Sagan continued his dream of going to the stars.

"The job is by no means done," he said. "We will look for the boundary between the solar system and the interstellar medium and then we'll voyage on forever in the dark between the stars."

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