QUE SERA, SERA?

On the eve of 1984, most of us are fascinated by, but uneasy about, the future. We realize, as many of the authors in this issue point out, that educators have a special need to study the future because our students will live there. But we aren't sure we can really divine its secrets.

Harold Shane (p. 11) believes we can, not with absolute certainty, of course, but with reasonable accuracy. He cites predictions by the Rand Corporation and other groups and individuals that were surprisingly correct. An early advocate of futuring in education, Shane has written three books and numerous articles on the subject. His writings and speeches catalog stupendous problems that by now are depressingly familiar: pollution, depletion of natural resources, nuclear proliferation, overpopulation. But he is not discouraged; for every problem, he can suggest ten things we should be doing.

Jesco von Puttkamer (p. 4), a planner for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, is even more optimistic. Drawing on the work of French philosopher Teilhard de Chardin, von Puttkamer muses on the pattern of human achievements and prophesies our continuing evolution to higher and higher forms of consciousness.

Because the computer is rapidly reshaping the world, both in and out of schools, we include in this theme issue a symposium on the future of computers in education. We wanted a variety of views and we got them, ranging from suggestions that schools are obsolete to the skepticism of Charles Suhor (p. 30) who believes that as computers become familiar tools, the notion of "computer literacy" will be superfluous.

In a song made popular by Doris Day in the 1950s, a mother advised her daughter not to think about the future: "Que sera, sera; whatever will be, will be. The future's not ours to see, que sera, sera." Futurists reject such fatalism. True, we can't foresee exactly what will happen, but we can make informed projections about what is possible and probable. Then, with planning, we can increase the probability that our preferences become reality.