

Donna Shirley's Farewell to JPL



Hello and Goodbye from Donna Shirley, Mars Exploration Program Manager

I've been working on Mars on and off since 1965, intensely in the last 10 years, and I'm going to move on. Mars has been a fascination for me since I was about 12 years old and started reading science fiction like Arthur C. Clarke's "Sands of Mars" and Ray Bradbury's "Martian Chronicles." Over the past year I've seen my dreams come true with the success of Mars Pathfinder, the Sojourner Rover, and the Mars Global Surveyor Orbiter. The Mars Surveyor '98 orbiter and lander will launch within a few months, and future Mars missions are being planned.

Since 1994, when I became manager of the Mars Exploration Program, I've seen a collection of unrelated projects become linked with the objective of exploring Mars systematically, a piece at a time. The program has pioneered NASA's new "Better, Faster, Cheaper" philosophy, developing projects for a fraction of the cost of previous projects. Pathfinder and Mars Global Surveyor each cost less than a modern blockbuster movie. The two 1998 missions are being carried out for the price of Pathfinder. I was really gratified when a senior NASA manager said a couple of years ago: "The Mars Team has gone a long way toward convincing me that JPL really is doing business a new way."

I've been privileged over the last 32 years to work with some of the best, brightest, hardest working and most fascinating people in the world. JPL works at the cutting edge of engineering and science, sending robots where no robot has gone before. The summer and fall of 1997 with the Pathfinder and MGS successes were a pinnacle, and I have little more new to bring to the space program.

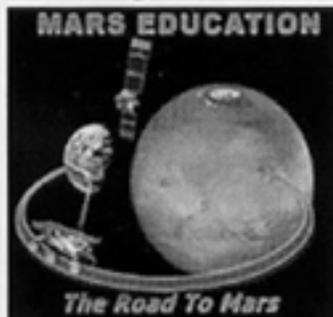
The last chapter of my autobiography, "Managing Martians," is called "Where Do You Go After You've Been to Mars?" I've been thinking a lot about that and have decided to retire from JPL to go in some new directions.

I'm going to finish the PhD in Human and Organizational Development (that's really a fancy name for management) that I've been dabbling with for a year. I'm doing a lot of speaking and am starting to develop a following as a management consultant. I'd like to apply the management and leadership skills I've learned to some new problems, like cleaning up the environment and making the world a better place for all of our children and grandchildren.

No one could have had better jobs than I have had, nor a better set of people to work with at JPL and to interact with in the space-loving public. The Mars Exploration Program will go on, orbiting, landing, roving, collecting and returning samples, and eventually people will go to Mars. I'll be following this Web site along with the rest of you to watch its progress. Thanks,

*Donna Shirley
MEP*

New Education Web Page



<http://marsnt3.jpl.nasa.gov/education>

Dr. Cheick Diarra Named UNESCO Ambassador



Dr. Cheick Diarra, who oversees educational outreach efforts for JPL's Mars Exploration Program Office, has been designated the 19th goodwill ambassador of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to the continent of Africa.

His appointment, announced May 12 by UNESCO Director General Federico Mayor, represents several firsts in the organization's 50-year history of promoting collaboration among nations through education, science, culture, and communication. Diarra, who was born in Mali, West Africa, is the first ambassador originally from Africa, the first from the sciences, and the first American citizen to hold the post.

In his role as an ambassador for science and technology education, Diarra, who holds a doctorate in mechanical engineering from Howard University, Washington, DC, will be working toward establishing a university in Africa with a strong science curriculum. He also will be involved in efforts to raise public awareness of the importance of science and mathematics to global peace and technological advancement.

*Diane Ainsworth
JPL/PIO*