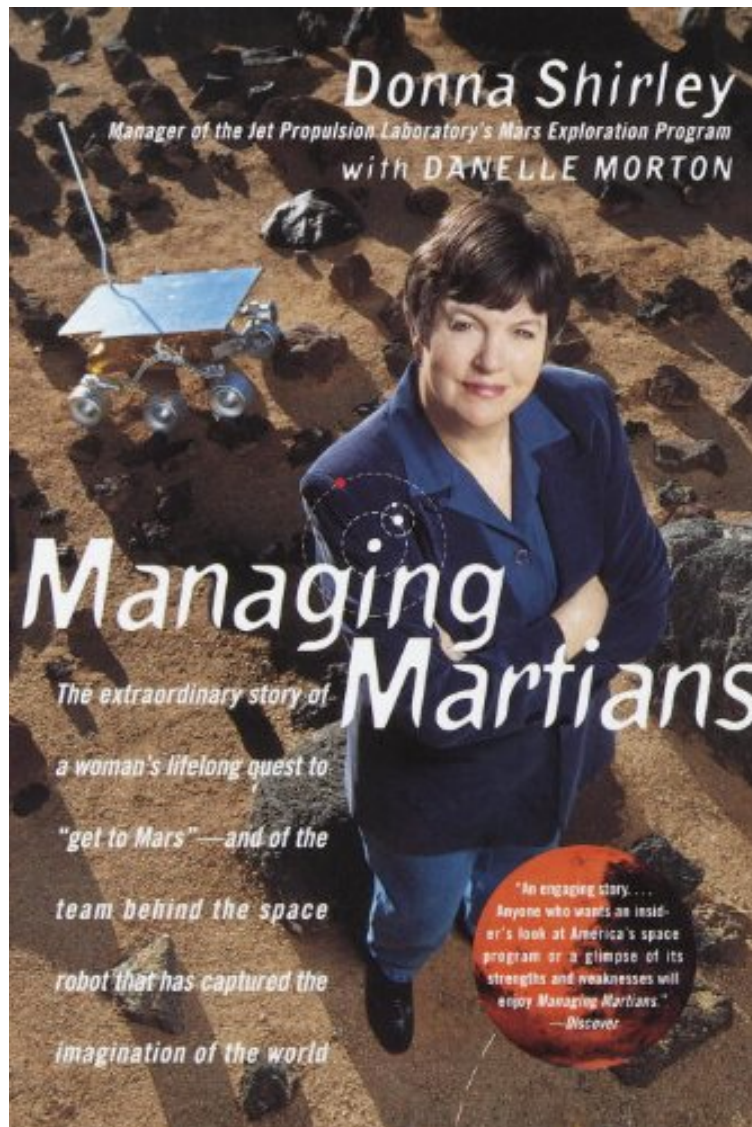


Managing Martians

Donna Shirley

ebooks | Download PDF | *ePub | DOC | audiobook



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#1161417 in eBooks 2010-05-28 2010-06-09 File Name: B003O86L1C | File size: 72.Mb

Donna Shirley : Managing Martians before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Managing Martians:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It's Not Just YouBy Nicole C. TedescoThis was an experience piece more than a "how to". This is a fine book to read if you want to know that YOUR experiencing managing your team is not as unique as you think.7 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating, although too broad, survey of JPL SojournerBy Robert L. MillerSince she was a kid in flat Wynnewood, Okla., reading Arthur C. Clarke novels and staring at the sky, Donna Shirley dreamed of going to Mars. Her book chronicles her life from flight-obsessed preteen, to hometown beauty queen, to the realization of her dream as manager of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory's Mars

Exploration Program. Her team sent Pathfinder and the rover Sojourner to the red planet in 1997, and rebuilt ways of managing spacecraft missions along the way. As you might expect in a book with this title, covering all of the above, sometimes the subject matter is stretched very thin. This is in some parts a book that tries to do too much, and the autobiographical sections on Donna Shirley's childhood, her experiences becoming licensed as a pilot, seem somewhat out of place in a book such as this. Make no mistake, there are lessons here, about glass ceilings and reaching for childhood dreams, but they are never fully realized, or completely developed, in the text. I have heard many women express an interest in reading this book for Shirley's opinions on how women should deal with male-dominated fields, and how, or even if, they should "prove" themselves in positions of power, but there is little that enlightens that aspect of the book. One of the best quotes, however, from Shirley, concerning her new found fame as a female role model, sums up part of the problem in one sentence: "Our culture is so starved for female role models, that a woman who simply shows up on TV becomes a hero." Unfortunately too obviously true, and a shame on our society. However, Shirley's story is extraordinary, and compelling in her fervent chase of her goals. Shirley has had to work hard, sometimes at great sacrifice, for this business. Her interview with the California Institute of Technology is illustrative of this (during an airline strike, her interview was cancelled, so she arranged her own flight, against CalTech's orders, for the interview). She has had to struggle to maintain professional cool while under enormous stress. As a lesson to bureaucratic managers, the book works well, although probably won't be taken as a compliment to the NASA teams of old; Shirley has had to work with some temperamental folks in her lifetime of government work, and she's learned (the hard way) how to manage teams well. I suspect that many men and women would be drawn to the line of work that Donna Shirley is in expecting smooth, intelligent teamwork -- everyone laboring under a common purpose or dream, planning and executing grandiose, flawless missions to the planets. Shirley's book destroys all of that. The NASA mandate to plan missions as "faster, cheaper, and more often" required, out of necessity, a complete restructuring of the way JPL did business. Of course, in doing so, no one wanted to throw out the best of the bureaucracy, which was responsible for highly successful missions in the past. The schedule of Shirley's team was so tight that not a day would go by without having accomplished something substantial towards the mission launch date. And her faithful descriptions of the committee work is enough to make you reach for the aspirin bottle. The harsh review boards that she was made to endure and the lack of a social life, adds to the sense of repulsion of what managing, or even participating, in a project such as this entails. Over the course of several chapters, she describes her constant conflicts with a Pathfinder supervisor, Tony, who was determined to sink the rover project, and she pulls no punches. Of course, microwave sized Sojourner, the rover, eventually landed on Mars, landing on July 4, 1997, and capturing the world's imagination. Sojourner traversed 100 meters of Martian surface, returning 550 images and 15 chemical analyses of soil and rocks, far exceeding expectations, and certainly meeting all criteria for a successful mission. But that doesn't take away from the inherent tension of a project such as this. For all involved, having this expensive, delicate object they helped design strapped to a projectile hurtling toward a chunk of rock in space, made the stakes very high. Even those with a fair amount of knowledge about the project will find surprising details about slashed budgets, impossible deadlines, shouting matches with rival managers, and plenty of last minute solutions. She also mentions the competing goals (and budgets) of the manned spaceflight program, specifically the expensive International Space Station, but unfortunately never gives a personal opinion or resolution of how to handle both goals without compromising either. Shirley is an aeronautical engineer of the pre-feminist generation, and brings both her lifelong dream of getting to Mars and sheer hard work, respect for talent, and well-honed management skills as her tools to get her there. She has many unique and clever ideas about managing people, which one suspects from reading the last few chapters is what she really wanted to write about, but was not allowed to delve into in this book, perhaps out of fear of losing readers. Pity, because the title, "Managing" Martians, should at least give her the latitude to go into her theories on effectiveness of management styles. Shirley has written another book, published for now only on the internet, about creative management. Perhaps she will use her \$65,000 author fee for this book to have her other creation published at last. However, this book, as written, is far from perfect. There exists much fascinating and exciting lore about the red planet: its ancient mythology, and its scientific speculations gone wild in the last century, even spawning science fiction terror in this century. However, this book does not delve, even once, into this area. Like Mars, the background of JPL, how it came to be, how planetary missions came to be a goal of our government, is likewise not discussed. Additionally, although The Planetary Society played a large role in planning for, and keeping public support high for, the Mars Rover project, it is only mentioned, very briefly, in a few pages. Additionally, this is exactly the type of book that should have an index, which is a major flaw. Because of the constant references to previous Mars missions, including Mariner, Viking, and the unsuccessful Russian probes, a chronology of previous Mars missions would have been a plus in a book of this nature. As a final note, in late August, 1998, Donna Shirley announced her retirement from JPL, after 30 years of participation of various projects of planetary exploration, culminating in her position as Mars Program Manager. I hope she continues to contribute to the areas she knows and loves the most: planetary exploration, and management methods for tapping the imagination's power to spawn boundless creativity.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A unique insider's view of NASA's interplanetary missions
By A Customer
A century from now, when this year's Oscar-winning films, hit sitcoms, and top ten CDs are gathering dust in some

media archive, and the feats of contemporary sports figures are known only to the most compulsive of trivia buffs, school children will be studying the pioneering missions of space exploration such as Mars Pathfinder-Sojourner. "Managing Martians" by Donna Shirley gives the reader a rare insight into the occupational culture that made these epic adventures possible. Readers who are familiar with the "Mars and Venus" series of books on the psychological differences between men and women will no doubt catch the double meaning of the book's title. Much of Ms. Shirley's autobiographical narrative describes her struggle to reach her career goals in a historically male-dominated profession during the Sixties. It is a world in which pioneering women swim against the stream in a culture in which young women were (and to some extent, still are) taught that studying subjects such as science, math, and technical drawing was "unladylike", and the few women who did continue their education beyond high school were pressured to graduate with an "Mrs." degree and settle into the cozy, familiar role of middle class housewife-mother. Her interests in science fiction, flying, and a life of adventure set her apart from her peers, and she manages to avoid the cultural traps set for her and perseveres in her aim of becoming an aerospace engineer. In the last part of the book, Shirley relates the challenges and frustrations of managing a space project against a background of tightfisted budgets. The NASA of the 1990's is no longer awash in cash, and a spirit of "make-do-or-do-without" pervades the organization. Competing groups fight over the dwindling pool of money, and rivalries can be fierce. Her team struggles not only with the technical problems of building their robot rover, but also the perception that it is an unnecessary frill that only adds weight and cost to a mission that is already stretched thin. Shirley herself is forced to defend her project in bitter confrontations that sometimes degenerate into shouting matches. Her account of the attempts to derail her rover are not only entertaining, but also uncover internal politics to which the lay person or the taxpayer seldom exposed. In the end, as we all know, the rover Sojourner is recognized as a technical triumph and captures the rapt attention of the world for weeks. In conclusion, you don't have to be a techie or a woman to enjoy Shirley's narrative of growing up in pre-"Flower Power" America and becoming an aerospace engineer in the Golden Age of space exploration. Her book successfully conveys not only the incredible tension and exhilaration of participating in a planetary mission, but also the trials and frustration of achieving recognition in a traditionally male-dominated field.

Donna Shirley's 35-year career as an aerospace engineer reached a jubilant pinnacle in July 1997 when Sojourner--the solar-powered, self-guided, microwave-oven-sized rover--was seen exploring the Martian landscape in Pathfinder's spectacular images from the surface of the red planet. The event marked a milestone in space, but for Donna Shirley, the leader of the mostly male team that designed and built Sojourner--and the first woman ever to manage a NASA program--it marked a triumph of another kind. *Managing Martians* is Shirley's captivating memoir of a life and career spent reaching for the stars. From her seemingly outlandish aspiration at age ten to build aircraft, to abandoning high school Home Ec in favor of mechanical drawing, and, at sixteen, becoming a licensed pilot, Shirley defied expectations from the beginning. In a vivid narrative, rich with anecdotes and thrilling turning points, Shirley recounts the intense battles she waged to defend her vision and the ingenuity and resourcefulness of her committed team. Her moment-by-cliffhanging-moment account of Pathfinder's landing and Sojourner's first tentative foray across the sands of Mars brilliantly captures the fulfillment of a lifelong dream as it heralds a brave new era of space exploration. From the Trade Paperback edition.

.com Donna Shirley dreamed of going to Mars since she was a starstruck kid in Oklahoma, reading science fiction and staring up at the big Western sky. *Managing Martians* chronicles her life from flight-obsessed childhood to the realization of her dream as manager of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory's Mars Exploration Program--the people who sent Pathfinder and the rover Sojourner to the red planet in 1997. Shirley's story is extraordinary in its simplicity: she set her sights on what she wanted, and chased it fervently. Yet simple doesn't always mean easy, and Shirley owns up to getting sidetracked along the way, and having to work hard to get back to business. And what a business! Imagine having an expensive, delicate object you helped design strapped to a projectile hurtling toward a chunk of rock in space. The best parts of Shirley's story are the tense moments, when she struggled to maintain professional cool while under enormous stress. This book is part autobiography, part lesson to bureaucratic managers; Shirley has had to work with some temperamental folks in her lifetime of government work, and she's learned (the hard way) how to manage teams well. One gets the impression that she would have made an excellent military leader, or CEO. Mars buffs all over the world should be glad she stuck to the stars. --Therese Littleton From Publishers Weekly

What do you do if you are a tomboy daughter of the two most prominent families of Wynnewood, Okla., a small town in the middle of the U.S. in the middle of the 20th century? If you're Shirley, you set a course for Mars. Along the way, even if you smell of airplane glue instead of White Shoulders, you enter horse shows; and even if you are struggling academically and socially as the only female engineering student in your class at the University of Oklahoma, you enter and win the Miss Wynnewood contest. In this autobiography as unself-conscious as Shirley apparently is herself, the first woman to manage a NASA space flight program invites readers to follow her adventures, beginning with an awkward childhood, through four decades of failure and success, culminating not in an end but in a new beginning. "Where do you go after you've been to Mars?" her epilogue asks. "Where do you go after you've reached the pinnacle of what you

imagined for yourself?" The answer is to pursue a new passion, to discover once again what you want to do when you grow up. "The question is only: Which passion do I want to pursue?" she declares. "Stay tuned." This book will certainly appeal to unconventional women, but it also belongs on the reading list of teenage nerds and adult former nerds, of anyone who has ever misstepped, of anyone who has ever been uncertain, of anyone of any age who still dreams of reaching beyond the horizon. 16 pages of bw photos not seen by PW. \$65,000 ad/promo; author tour. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From School Library Journal YA-Morton traces the career of engineer Donna Shirley, the first woman to manage a major space mission. Shirley became fascinated with planetary exploration as a child; after 35 years in the field, she still retains her sense of wonder. Writing in a clear and breezy style, she describes her experience with a number of space-related projects. The greatest part of the book is devoted to the cliff-hanging development of "Sojourner Truth," the Pathfinder Mission's highly successful Mars rover. The author paints a vivid picture of the corporate culture of space exploration, the creativity and excitement of this work, and the colorful individuals who bring about the success or failure of these endeavors. Through wry anecdotes, the author shows how hostile the cultural environment of engineering and space science can be to women, and how she has used humor and ingenuity to deal with these challenges. YAs will see how space missions happen and what it's like to work on them. More generally, the book conveys a sense of the sorts of frustrations and rewards they are likely to encounter in any professional field. Christine C. Menefee, Fairfax County Public Library, VA Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.