

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the APR06 Meeting of
The American Physical Society

Never A Team Member; Suddenly A Team Leader!

JILL TARTER, SETI Institute

In the 1960's there weren't many female engineering students, and 'teaming' was not an official part of the curriculum. Teams were formed casually, as a way to share the enormous load of lab reports and problem sets – that is unless you were one of those female students. Physical isolation and institutional lockdown in the female dorms made my participation in study teams extremely difficult. As a result, I got a better formal education (working all the problem sets myself), but I missed out on learning a very practical skill. Leading a team is hard work, particularly if you've never been a member of a team. One solution is to work harder than almost anyone else. Another trick is to choose a small pond in which to be a big frog. I chose SETI (the search for extraterrestrial intelligence) because I was captured by the idea that I live among the first generation of humans who can try to answer this ancient question (Are we alone?) by making observations, rather than accepting some belief system. I'm still hooked by that concept and struggling to make the pond bigger (and financially secure) to bring in the next generation and the generation-after-that, for as long as it may take to end our cosmic isolation, or accept our singularity.