



THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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NEW YORK, NY 10021

June 23, 1987

JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

NASA

Dr. James L. Gooding  
SN2  
NASA Johnson Space Center  
Houston, Texas 77058

Dear Dr. Gooding:


I am responding to your letter of May 27th which reminded me of prior correspondence going back to last February concerning Mars sample-science. Although I was a very enthusiastic member of the Mars Viking Lander experiment team, I have more or less retired from space science in the interval and I do not contemplate playing an active role in a program that will still take some years to reach fruition. So I was not sure how pertinent my remarks would be.

I do however have a single policy point that I would like to leave for the record.

Certainly the scientific value of return samples from Mars would be enormous for a wide range of disciplines. This is sometimes confused with a manned return mission and I hope that you will not fall into that trap since it will necessitate a vast multiplication of resources in a way that will add very little to the scientific utility. On the other hand it seems to me absolutely vital that we secure samples from a variety of locations and I am obviously speaking to the necessity of a rover which would be able to explore a variety of terrains and secure samples that are representative of a number of quite different sites within its purview. I don't have the original copy of the announcement and if there is time I would like to have a look at it and perhaps I would have more to say in response.

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Yours sincerely,

  
Joshua Lederberg