

10 Years on Mars: How Spirit & Opportunity Affected Our Lives

(Mike Seibert)

I always said, "There's no way I'll ever move to California; no way I'll ever move to Los Angeles..." Got a job offer: "Do you want to work on the Mars rovers?" "Okay fine, I'll move to California -- I'll move to Los Angeles."

(music)

(Julie Townsend)

I was an undergraduate, and I was actually working at Marshall Space Flight Center when Pathfinder landed. Working that summer as an intern, I actually was aware of the Pathfinder landing and I was so surprised -- I had no idea that anybody did anything like that.

"These people sent a probe to Mars, and it had a rover, and they drove it around -- this is the coolest thing I have ever seen." And I was like: "How much fun must their job be?" And at that time I would never have ever dreamed that I could actually be part of the team working on the very next rover that we landed on Mars.

"...and we're gonna set the suspension parameters tighter. So we're gonna leave the differential at 12 degrees, and set the bogie to plus or minus 12. We don't believe that this will trip..."

(Nimisha Mittal)

In reality, it's the rovers that made me come here in the first place -- even before I started college. A lot of people that I've worked with in the past have told me that they got interested in the space program because they saw man land on the moon in '69. And I wasn't around back then, but I was in school when the rovers were launched and when they landed, so the rovers are really important to me in that respect, because they are the reason I'm here.

"...and then we do our pre-drive front left hazcam, and then we start our drive..."

(Mike Seibert)

When they were landing, I had actually about three semesters left in my undergraduate career. I didn't think I'd ever be working on them because, well, they were supposed to die before I finished up my junior year. And then they just kept going...and going...and going...

(Julie Townsend)

Being a new student out of college, coming to work on this mission, I was very optimistic. I always believed that it was going to work. Against all odds we were going to make it work. And of course at times it hits me and make me very emotional. You can see me in some of the landing footage: I think I'm

hyperventilating on screen when we first saw the images come down from Mars. It was so monumental to see the vastness of what we were doing.

(laughter, applause)

(Mike Seibert)

This has been one heck of an adventure, and it's just like a really good dream. I never thought I'd be doing it, but I wouldn't trade it for anything.