

Space Ray Pathfinders

#7 – Moon Walker

The OB was electric with the enthusiasm of the teens. Gramps (a.k.a. Space Ray) had hung up magazine pictures of space rovers all along the Operations Bay wall that included the two cracked windows. It was tough for the teens to stay in their seats during the usual club opening moments. The opening prayer barely ended before all the teens began asking each other if this was going to be the absolute best lesson they've had so far.

Gramps walked to the first picture in the row and pointed to it with his hand-carved cane. He said, "This is Moonwalker, that sprang to life on the lunar surface in 1970. The Russians were the first to put a rover on any celestial body besides Earth. As you can see it's about 7 feet long with 8 wheels that carried only electronic equipment. It was guided by remote control from Earth."

"In the next two years, America put 3 different 4 wheeled lunar cars on the moon that carried two astronauts and their equipment. We all called them Moon Buggies," Gramps said with a grin. "All of these vehicles are called Rovers because they travel on the surface wherever they land."

Gramps moved past a cracked window and pointed at the next picture in his Rover Gallery. He continued his lesson with, "Now we'll switch to the Mars Rovers – which are all American. The first was the Pathfinder's Sojourner in 1997. The next two were the twins, Spirit and Opportunity in 2004. The Spirit got stuck in the sand and died. The Opportunity is still functioning, long beyond its designed lifespan. What's neat is they landed on Mars just like a bouncing ball. When they stopped rolling, they opened up just like God designed a flower to open."

"And then in 2012 we sent the big boy – the Curiosity. It landed by a crane lowering it gently to the surface of Mars." With his cane, Gramps motioned toward a picture he had covered up, and said, "I've saved the best for last. But before that, let's have some questions and maybe some answers – if we know them."

The next 10 minutes or so were full of excited teen questions and a few answers that surely generated more questions.

"Now clubbers, before I uncover this last authentic lunar

rover photograph, I want to say this photo means a great deal to me. First is because one of my best friends sent it to me, knowing how much the photo says about exploring heavenly bodies – whether moons, asteroids, or planets. Now I want you all to put on your detective hats and tell me what are some of the things this lunar rover photo says to you." He uncovered his prize picture.

Nancy raised her hand, and said, "Gramps. That lunar sky, if you want to call it that, is so black. To me it looks so empty, so cold, and even gives me lonely chills. I'd miss our blue sky with fleecy clouds in a minute."

Jake's comment was, "I look at that flag stuck in the ground with no atmosphere, no wind, nothing to make it wave and attract anyone's attention."

Bonnie said, "I stare at the lunar lander in the middle of the picture. It looks so fragile. It sits there quietly, a reminder it is the only way home, with no backup or plan B."

And then Gramps spoke. "Clubbers, what grabs my attention the most, are the tracks. The rover wheel tracks that curve around here and there. And even more are the tracks of humans – the footprints of the astronauts."

The club's silver-haired leader looked into the eyes of each of the teens as the tone of his voice became more serious and heartfelt. "The reason this rover picture from my friend means so much to me is that I picture in my mind the tracks, the steps I leave behind and where they go. I know people are watching me, not 'cuz I'm special or anything, but my heart just breaks when I think of moments I make stupid selfish decisions that lead me into trouble. Those decisions lead me into trouble and also those that are following in my tracks."

"And I can even imagine myself on the moon all by myself, and making a stupid decision. I think that no one else will know, but I believe somehow it brings tears to the Lord, in spite of all that He has provided for me. He's the only way I have to reach my Heavenly home, why would I shame or hurt Him?"