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*Training for the Future—T. J. Creamer*



*Timothy J. Creamer, mission specialist. NASA Image 99-HC-108.*

I'm a bit of a fish out of water because of the lack of experience that I have, but I have been training to fly in space in the future, and the not-too-distant future, I hope. The truth is I stand here today on the shoulders of the giants that have preceded us. I am a space baby. I was born in 1959 and have grown up with this environment. If I go back just a little bit further, I have to ask the question, "How did we get here?" That takes us back to the literature of the mid-1800s, with Jules Verne, Edgar Rice Burroughs, H. G. Wells, and the other visionaries that put the horizon that we had seen in front of us a little bit closer.

The red planet became either the mythical friend or the source of unmentionable horrors that drove science fiction. In 1895, the first science-fiction movie appeared, but things started to really prosper in the 1920s. For instance, there is a story about a guy whose girlfriend is being kidnapped by aliens, and he tracks them down across the galaxy using a device that later became radar. As it turned out, the description of that device was so accurate that the inventor was initially denied the patent for his radar system. The visionaries of the past are allowing us to do what we're doing in the present and begin to reach a little bit further in the future.

Today's main focus is the International Space Station, of course. When my class came in 1998, we were first asked, "Do you mind waiting a long time before you fly?" And we said, "No." That was and is the right answer. So our class came in with the expectation of helping to build this engineering feat called the Space Station, and it has been an extremely exciting and enthusiastic time. Often I get asked do I mind waiting to fly,

and, the truth is, we've got a great mission and a great bunch of people working together. It's an exciting time to expand that horizon that the literary minds helped expand all along; now we get to go a little bit further with our feet.

In the not-too-distant future, we will have completed the Space Station. Then the question becomes where to go next. Of course, as you've heard this morning, some of the likely targets are the Moon and Mars.

It is the giants I mentioned earlier upon whose shoulders we stand. As it turns out, Bob Crippen's middle daughter helps carry this legacy forward. I walked into class, and his daughter was our primary instructor. She made cookies to keep us interested in the class and teased us with candy, and threw it at us when we got the right answer.

Then she took us into the simulator and showed us how many ways we can do bad things to ourselves. She is a very sweet, smiling, and wonderful mentor, but the truth is that she is helping bring us into the future so we can do our job and become part of the legacy that our predecessors formed for us.

The truth is we are extremely excited about what we are doing. I can't wait to fly, and the flying is only a small portion of the job. We are making contributions every day in building the Space Station and helping to build the future.