

## Faster Than Right

by Shawn Fluhr, ASPE



This will be the last log from a crew member of the Hara-Luzhou expedition. There are only 24 people left on board. We have all agreed on our decision. Nine thousand former crew members have departed and gone to the surface of Hara-Luzhou.

In January 2023, the crew of the Departures Mission left from Kennedy Space Center and traveled toward Alpha Centauri, the closest star to Earth. They arrived after traveling 37 years, and they broadcasted a message back that was received on the 100th anniversary of the Apollo 11 landing. With renewed interest in space exploration, astronomers found a promising star system that was subsequently named Tau Emora; it was 155 light years from Earth. A planet of 1.09 Earth masses was found within Tau Emora's habitable region. Its atmosphere contained oxygen, nitrogen, methane, and carbon dioxide—telltale signs of organic life. We were elated.

When I was 8 years old, I watched the low-quality video of Allan Richards on EVA, with his handheld camera haphazardly pointed toward the ground of another planet that orbited around another star. After that, I wanted to

be an astronaut. I begged my father to buy me astrophysics textbooks that I could barely understand. I never went to high school; I dropped out to move in with a friend in California, and I entered the 2072 contest. I recorded my five-minute video, containing proof that I had the stuff to survive a 1,000-year journey to Tau Emora. I spent six weeks making that video. We nearly ruined our apartment by staying in one room for over a month. I sent in my time-lapse footage with my closing statement. For nine long months, I watched people near me—lifelong friends—get chosen to visit the Johnson Space Center for training. After all the waiting and the stress, a recruiter came to my apartment to give me the news: my chance.

I went to the Space Center. For 10 long years, while the ship was being constructed in orbit, I learned about logic and mathematics, and I absorbed Russian, Hindi, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. In those 10 years, thousands of applicants were slashed. I *had* to remain on that list. Everyone worked, day and night, to be on that list. NASA only accepted applicants between 18 and 25 years of age because, by the time the mission began, they would be in their

30s. After all of my... our... hard work, we'd made it on board—doctors, lawyers, historians, philosophers, psychologists, engineers, chemists, and nutritionists, 50 of each.

We had one job: sacrifice ourselves to see this mission through. Everyone on board was put into cryogenic sleep. We estimated a journey of 930 to 940 years. Each year, 10 random cryopods were opened. Those people got a year of space life before being refrozen. Every day, those crew members left a log entry, like this one I am leaving now. They documented repairs made and their psychological status. Our group, the 24 of us left on board, did not stay awake for just a single year. I watched the other pods for 40 years—the last 40 years of our 1280-year journey, three centuries longer than expected.

We tried signaling back to Earth with the power-hungry transponder. Nobody ever picked up. If they sent anything, we never got their message. We know now that they forgot about us. We drifted from our expected course just slightly, but it cost us delta-v and time. We were slow, at an angle only a few degree-seconds from our intended course. I suspected they lost us, assumed us dead—at least until yesterday. We could see the lights a week ago, and we picked up the radio signals decades ago. As we approached the system, more and more stations and music could be intercepted. What was left of our radio receiver picked up data nobody on board could manage to digest. No meaning could be derived. None of that matters anymore. We wasted our entire lives ensuring the success of this mission.

Not only did humans succeed, they—well... it turns out... 14 years... 14 forsaken years after we left our great blue marble—developed a method of superluminal travel. And it's not your run-of-the-mill science-fiction warp drive. It's the worst kind. It uses cheap hydrogen for fuel stored in a manufactured black hole of an engine that runs constantly. It produces energy in the petawatts. At least, that is what we were told when we were interrogated upon arriving at this damned star. The people on board this Mayflower

came to realize that humans can do so much in just 1,000 years. The population of Eden—the planet that we were supposed to name Hara-Luzhou—is approximately 15 billion now, higher than Earth's population when we left it. Because of the efficiency of this engine—the Kugelblitz/Solumn-Alcubierre drive—the human species did not just colonize *this* planet. No, they colonized everything—*everything*—every star in *our* galaxy and *every other* galaxy. Even the voids between them are busy with trade, ships, and casinos—space casinos.

Since the discovery of faster-than-light travel, there was an average growth rate of 4% per year of the human species. A back-of-the-envelope calculation puts the universal population at 50 thousand billion... billion... billion! Five hundred million people for each star, in each galaxy, in the observable universe. There is likely more beyond.

For 1,280 years, nobody saw us. They all just blew right by, none the wiser. Now that we have had a glimpse into the future—humanity's glorious, immortal future—we know there is no way that we would be able to adjust. We told ourselves that we would see this mission through to the end. Let the record show that our mission was a success.

By the time you read this, we will be deceased; and we hope irrecoverably so. It was instantaneous, and it was painless. Do not try to bring us back with your new science. Let us keep at least the honor of having seen our mission through to the *very end*. Thank you.

Enjoy your new and eternal lives, crew of this Mayflower. You made history. You are heroes. Everyone in the universe will know your names.

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Cole Rodgers,  
Cryogenics Maintenance Team 5

CC: Cryogenics Maintenance Personnel Ω