

Interview Assessment #4

Name: Dr. Elizabeth Rampe

Profession: Planetary Geologist

Location: NASA Johnson Space Center--- Houston, TX

Date: October 16, 2017--- 4:30 PM

Dr. Elizabeth Rampe is currently a planetary geologist at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, TX. Dr. Rampe mainly focuses on Mars' past water rock interactions by studying the chemical weathering processes on Earth. She also obtains information on Mars' aqueous environments through her work on the Mars Science Laboratory Rover (Curiosity).

Dr. Rampe's journey in science started with her parents. Both her mother and father were scientists and the love for science was passed on to her. I could tell how passionate she was when she started to talk about her. I particularly saw that excitement when she talked about her favorite lab instrument.

Although Dr. Rampe has an amazing career, life wasn't always happy and smooth for her. She told that when she was in graduate school, her advisor was too hands off and didn't provide her with any aid. As a result, she had to figure out everything on her own. Dr. Rampe told me how stressful it was because she constantly felt like she was lost but that didn't stop her from obtaining a PhD. In order to solve this issue, she spoke with other experienced graduate students. This put her on a clear

path for her career. Dr. Rampe was kind in of to offer me advice so I wouldn't go through a lot of trouble when I am a graduate student. She advised me not to assume that I don't like something right off the start. It is crucial to have an open mind or else I will miss many great opportunities. She also told me to contact my graduate advisor during the third year of my undergraduate studies in order to prevent any confusions that might occur during graduate school. I found all of her tips very useful. I am glad that Dr. Rampe told me this as it will allow me to be successful in my higher studies.

After she gave me wonderful advice, I was very eager to know how she started to work at NASA. During graduate school, Dr. Rampe was very fortunate to obtain a grant to work temporarily at NASA but her amazing work landed her a permanent position at the Johnson Space Center. She soon finished her postdoc at JSC, under the mentorship of Dr. Dick Morris. Since then, she has been enjoying doing scientific research. Dr. Elizabeth Rampe told me that the best part of her job is learning about Mars. Unfortunately, she doesn't like it when her her research doesn't work but that is just part of the learning process.

With the amount of passion Dr. Rampe possessed, I had to ask her if she ever wanted to become an astronaut. She told me that she indeed did and that it would be a coolest experience if she did go to space. However, the problem of being an astronaut is that they won't be able to do a lot of scientific research on Mars in order to keep the integrity of the samples intact. This became the factor that made her decide to continue working at NASA on Earth because she will get to do more research. I never

imagined that astronauts won't get to do a lot of research while on Mars but it was definitely a very important perspective to have.

Being a female scientist in the STEM field, I wanted to ask her about the ongoing issue of the low numbers of women in STEM. I wanted to know why she thinks that this is a problem. Dr. Rampe told me that, unfortunately, this trouble started with history. For centuries, women were seen as the lesser gender. Society always placed women as the subordinate to men. As a result, it is really hard for society to grasp the idea that women are accomplishing a lot, independently. Fortunately, things have gotten a lot better but women still face an increased amount of gender bias in STEM. I asked her how females can overcome this obstacle and she told me that women should always remember why they decided to pursue stem because when they do, nothing will stop them.