

OSU/NASA Education Projects: Aerospace Education Services Program (AESP) Archive

Oklahoma State University-Stillwater, Oklahoma

An Old Man and the Rocks by Ralph Winrich. Written 2001.

An Old Man and the Rocks
By Ralph Winrich

An old man was being helped down the hallway as I pushed my cart out of the door. He was stooped and moved slowly assisted by a young man who worked at the Museum of Science in St. Paul, Minnesota. I had just finished a four hour workshop on getting and using the moon rocks and was trying to get the van loaded and me in it and on my way before the rush moment in St. Paul. (St. Paul is too small to have a rush hour, but they do have rush moments)

On the cart was the mock up of several moon rocks collected as they looked before they were cut up and studied. The old man glanced at this and then stopped. What occurred next consisted of 15 minutes of his asking me various questions, first about the rocks and then about the moon in general. I had the feeling, by his questions, that this was someone who never stops learning. He seemed so interested in what was on that cart and what I was doing with this stuff for teachers.

In this job it is always a pleasure to meet people who thrive on what we have to offer and who—for lack of a better term—continually search for more knowledge. There are days when that in itself is what pulls us through. This had been such a day, the weather and the people who came in on this Saturday had not been what I expected, and I was feeling rather beat, you get days like that. Up till then it had not been the best of times. But all that changed with a few minutes with the old man.

Then it was time to move on. He asked my name, I told him Ralph. I asked him his, he said Linus. It was at that moment that the person helping him said " Mr Pauling, Sir, they are waiting for us in the boardroom" and the old man , the only male, two time Nobel prize winner slowly moved on, towards the rest of his day.