

Wake Up

Wake up they said, and she had 1,000 times or more before, but this time, silence.

There hadn't been enough time before the launch window to test everything, would she fall at the first hurdle. Oppy stretched out her 5' 2" tall frame and set to work reporting back to the office. Ten long minutes later the first close images of this alien surface arrived, and everyone was astounded at what they saw. Red dust as far as the eye could see but her camera found gold in the form of bedrock. Analysis of this would provide so much valuable information.

Continually recharging her batteries via solar panels and hibernating during dust storms to save power, this marvel of modern engineering continued to explore the terrain, sending back valuable data and photos of everything she saw. The dust was their enemy covering the solar panels and reducing her power. Satellites detected huge dust devils dancing towards her and the team feared her power source would be obliterated but discovered that in fact the strong winds had swept the panels clean and once again Oppy was working at full power.

Oppy spent the hours of daylight, collecting, analysing and sending data back to the control centre. With the command 'Good Night Oppy' would shut down for the night to conserve power and protect her systems from the extreme cold. When they discovered that she was still going strong after the expected lifespan of ninety days the scientists told Oppy to explore the huge Victoria crater some distance away. It was a journey that took the rover two years and, despite the extreme winter season on Mars, she kept going. After a detailed study, and still going strong, Oppy was then set on another long journey to explore another interesting landmark, Endeavour crater. This was an even longer journey and took her three years to reach and again, she wowed the scientists. Beyond all hopes and expectations, she detected phyllosilicates, which meant there once had been water on the planet. Oppy went on exploring but age, and the invasive dust, was catching up with her. She developed 'arthritis' in her arm and started developing 'amnesia' due to failing hardware. The scientists developed a work around and on she went until a large planetary scale dust storm stopped in her tracks and all contact was lost. They hoped that she had put herself into hibernation mode and just needed the morning song prompt to know it was time to wake up, but after eight months they played the final wake up song and for this occasion they chose 'I'll Be Seeing You'

Oppy, as she was affectionately known had survived an explosive solar flare which had corrupted her programme, landed from a great height with precision and grace, had travelled far beyond everybody's expectation and outlived her twin by eight years. This family friend would no longer connect them to the red planet.