

February 28, 2003
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377 S. Meeker Ct.

Dear K C:

I am writing you this letter not only to thank so much for all that you did for the success of the *MIST* experiment, but also to share a few thoughts with you. From the very first training session I knew that you were the absolute right person for the right mission for the right experiment. Not only had you a background in the physical sciences, but also the right balance of an endless for spaceflight. I was also quite surprised and happy to know that we had shared the same advisor at CU Boulder, making us professional siblings. And on top of everything else you had a great personality, a great sense of humor, and a keen appreciation of life's many gifts. I guess it is easy to find common ground when people share similar backgrounds: foreign heritage, drive to follow dreams, the immigrant story, passion for the skies, love for airplanes, space, the good Earth, the mission well accomplished. Since the start of the *MIST* project, I kept reminding myself every day how lucky I was to be working on a dream of a lifetime, a science experiment to fly in space. But you KC, you really reached the stars and that coveted position that is reserved for only the very few. I remember asking you if you could still capture the magnitude of being an astronaut, but like always you just responded with that humble demeanor making it seem so easy and reachable for everybody. Well, let me tell you that it is not an easy goal to achieve and that your life is an example for many of us that will always follow your star as a guide.

Now, I really want to talk to you about your role in all aspects of the *MIST* experiment. I cannot tell you how happy and humbled I felt after your first call and video downlink during the integration of the apparatus. Making the effort and taking the time to gather everybody up there to send me greetings and pose for pictures in front of the experiment just filled me with great pride and unspeakable gratefulness. I thank you very much for carrying the *MIST* stickers to space in that little plastic bag in your personal notebook, just as you promised you would do it, and for pulling the stickers out so I could see them floating in space. I could see you clearly in the downlinked image, but it was so hard to really express my appreciation and true feelings through the voice of the person in charge of talking to you in the Air-to-Ground loop. I really wanted to be up there with you guys and rejoice in zero gravity.

Needless to say I will be forever thankful for the extra effort you put to recover the experiment after its initial leak problem. Five hours of volunteered off-duty and meal time were unheard of and definitely never to be expected from any crewmember according to **NASA** rules. But you knew very well that the effort meant rescuing *MIST* and five long years of hard work and high hopes. Once we were up and running you do not have an idea how grateful I was and how desperately I wanted to let you know and thank you. My only consolation is that you may have read the flight note uplinked at the end of *MIST* operations explaining our outstanding results and our many thanks to the crew. Everything worked just right and we obtained more science than we had expected. I cannot lie and pretend I do not feel a mixture of joy and sadness when I watch and listen to the videos downlinked from space. They acted as an electronic lifeline that captured the voice and actions of all of you in space and brought them down to Earth to preserve them forever.

I have to confess one more thing. Not surprisingly, what you did for the *MIST* experiment has captured the attention of many people wanting to write, report, or just simply know more about it. Every time this happens, I try to picture you and how you would try to shy away from all that attention. But at the same time, I cannot help feeling that I must tell the real story of what you did to help make *MIST* a success. You see KC, we need real heroes and role models and you have definitely broken every barrier and defy many stereotypes. Your example has and will continue to open doors for many people following your same dreams. So please forgive me if I talk about you and your exceptional role during the mission. I will try to be as accurate and true as you would.

Space is that difficult but inescapable exploration path to follow for the human race. In that pursuit, you carried not only the flag of India and of the USA, but of every country and person with a common dream of discovery. Although I never met your husband Jean-Pierre or any of your family members, I must think that they shared your same goals and aspirations. For all of them I extend my deepest and sincere respect, knowing that they will go on always having you not only as a hero and role model, but the proud memory of you as loving wife, daughter, and sister. Even people like me that got to know you just a little bit feel blessed to have crossed your path in life. It may be that the apparent transition from life to darkness is just a seamless flight from Earth to Space, from daylight to starlight. All of us are making that flight in different ships and at different times, but with the same destination. With that hope in mind, I am sure I will see you in Space sometime in the future. Until then, shine a bright light upon us every once in a while so we can see the road to get there.

Angel