

Tension turns to jubilation, expectation for Phoenix Mars Mission

Born from parts made for other spacecraft, the aptly named Phoenix will inundate scientists with detailed data that could help them unlock the history of climate change on the red planet. The unique timing of the mission will allow an up-close look at a Martian polar summer, when the sun never sets.

By **SUSAN ALBRIGHT**

For most of us, Memorial Day weekend offers time off – time to remember and honor the war dead, and to open the cabin, or maybe head to the park for grilling, chatting and watching the kids play. For scientists and technicians working on the Phoenix Mars Mission, however, the weekend delivered high anxiety – soon followed by whoops of joy and great expectations for discoveries ahead.

After a 10-month journey, the unmanned Phoenix Mars Mission was ready to focus scientific inquiry on the planet's cold northern plains, where the Mars Odyssey Orbiter found subsurface water-ice in 2002. During this year's mission, a robotic "arm" will dig deep into the subsurface to collect samples for analysis. The goal is to see whether microbial life could once have flourished there.

But first the spacecraft had to land safely,



FRED PROUSER, Reuters

Mission leaders Peter Smith, left, and Barry Goldstein show an image from the Phoenix Mars Lander.

and that was no certainty.

According to the Washington Post, Phoenix "was assembled largely from parts manufactured for other spacecraft. After two Mars mission failures in 1999, the space agency scrapped a landing mission planned for 2000 and recycled some of the hardware. One of those failures was the last time NASA tried a soft landing on Mars. The Mars Polar Lander was angling for the south pole when it prematurely shut off its engine and crashed to the surface below. The other failure involved a

spacecraft that was supposed to go into orbit around Mars; NASA lost contact with it during the approach, and its fate is unknown."

Hence the high anxiety on Sunday, when scientists at the University of Arizona Lunar and Planetary Laboratory, NASA's lead institution for the mission, and their colleagues at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory sweated the upcoming landing.

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As Delta-NWA work on a deal, experts warn of merger pitfalls

By DAN HAUGEN

With their proposed merger, Delta and Northwest are betting that a bigger, combined airline will be better fit to survive the turbulent times facing the airlines industry these days. It's the same assumption behind most corporate mergers: a larger company equals a stronger company.

It's a risky assumption to make, however. The experts who study mergers say they usually fail outright or fall short of delivering the benefits promised on their announcement. At least half of the time they wind up hurting shareholder value.

The reason mergers often disappoint is that companies have unrealistic expectations about the benefits, and meanwhile they underestimate the challenge of integrating two companies — a difficult task that can cause companies to lose employees, customers and their focus.

Delta and Northwest executives are aware there's potential for a bumpy several months ahead. A recent securities and exchange filing by Northwest Airlines outlines the merger risks. It says:

- Current and prospective employees could experience uncertainty about their future with the company, and that uncertainty might impair the company's ability to retain, recruit or motivate key personnel.

- Completing the merger will take up a significant amount of time and attention from management, and that diversion might draw people's focus away from the day-to-day running of the company, which could affect business relationships.

- Integrating the two companies might take a long time, and

even if it's completed successfully, "there can be no assurance that this integration will result in the realization of the full benefits of synergies, cost savings, innovation and operational efficiencies that we currently expect."

Key challenges

They're challenges that face any corporate merger, and the difference between failure and success often comes down to good planning and solid communication, according to those who have been through the process before.

The Hay Group, a global consulting firm, evaluates mergers by studying companies' performance and comparing it to the market, competitors and claims made before the merger. More often than not mergers don't deliver the desired goals, its research has concluded.

"One of the things you can take away from this is that combining two large organizations is a phenomenally difficult task, and those going into it for the first time typically underestimate it," said George McCormick, U.S. director for mergers and acquisitions at the Hay Group.

(McCormick's bias: His company is the one you call to come in and make sure your merger goes smoothly.)

He said he sees companies struggle through mergers because executives get so consumed with the negotiations and finances that they neglect to properly plan how they will organize, motivate and take care of employees, many of whom will play a key role in determining the success of a merger.

"Very often they're asked to cooperate with people who have been competitors until the day before," McCormick said.

Meanwhile, there are times when "everybody knows that despite all the talk and promises, at some point the music will stop and it turns out to be a game of musical chairs."

There's a high risk of attrition, and when employees are laid off or leave on their own to competitors, they take with them ideas and customers.

Reaching out to employees

Jon Campbell, CEO for Wells Fargo Minnesota, knows these issues first hand. Previously with Norwest Bank, he oversaw the post-merger integration of the banks in the late 1990s. He did the same for several smaller acquisitions by Norwest.

"One of the things we learned very early on in our deal making was that if you lay all the good people off, you don't have much left. The other thing that happens when you lay a lot of people off, customers don't stay around."

Campbell said he thinks part of the success of the Norwest-Wells Fargo merger was an aggressive employee outreach program called Retain and Retrain. During the merger, it sought to assure employees that it wanted to keep as many with the company as it could, and it backed it up with training programs.

"When people believe that there's probably going to be a job for them there, change is still really difficult, but the anxiety is clearly reduced," Campbell said.

It took lots of planning and communicating to successfully integrate the two banks, Campbell said.

Even after a merger has been completed, there are plenty of hurdles to hang up a merger's success. One thing that's often overlooked is the complex-

ity factor, said Myles Shaver, a Carlson School of Management professor who specializes in mergers and acquisitions.

"The idea is that if you take your company and make it twice as big, it's probably going to be more than twice as hard to manage," Shaver said. "The level of complexity increases more than linearly."

So sometimes managers find themselves working a lot harder than they did before the merger. Sometimes being a larger company means decisions take longer, making a company less nimble than it was previously.

The stock factor

Shaver said it's increasingly well-known among business executives that the average merger fails to improve the company. In about two out of five mergers, the two companies' combined stock drops in value after news of a merger, he said.

"At the same time, when most people go into them, they say this is not going to be an average one," Shaver said.

It's important to remember, too, Campbell said, that shareholder value isn't the only measure of a successful merger.

"We have to be successful with team members, customers, communities and investors. We have to work every day to balance those relationships because anytime that equilibrium gets out of whack, we aren't going to like the outcome," Campbell said. "I know shareholder value is important, but you do have to look at those other metrics as well."

Dan Haugen writes about airlines, medical technology and general business topics. He can be reached at dan@danhaugen.com.

There's a high risk of attrition, and when employees are laid off or leave on their own to competitors, they take with them ideas and customers.

Ex-Minnesotan has seen all 60 years of Israel's history



JOE KIMBALL

Activities surrounding Israel's 60th anniversary remind me of Saadia Gelb, who grew up in Minneapolis but emigrated to Israel just months before the official founding of the state in 1948.

Emigrated is the wrong word: Gelb, a committed Zionist, actually smuggled himself, his wife and three small children into Palestine in November 1947, because the British authorities were strictly limiting entry permits at the time. After several failed applications, he procured round-trip tickets on a cruise ship, and when the ship docked in Haifa, they slipped off and never returned.

They made a life for themselves in a kibbutz called Kfar Blum. Gelb, now 94, still lives there. After a life of political action — he knew Golda Meir and worked with the early presidents of Israel, even coming to the United States in the late 1950s as an emissary — Gelb now lives in a senior residence on the kibbutz.

Brother still active in Twin Cities development efforts

His younger brother, Howard Gelb, is a Twin Cities developer, now working to redevelop the Hamm's Brewery (later Stroh's) buildings on St. Paul's East Side. Howard is 84, but goes to his office on West Sev-

enth Street every day.

Howard said Saadia is often hard to reach in Israel, and has slowed down a bit physically, but not mentally.

"When he turned 90, his children told him he must stop riding a bike, because if he fell, he might be badly hurt," Howard said. "Saadia agreed, but told them he would continue swimming."

The Gelbs were born in Poland, but the extreme poverty after World War I caused their father to move to New York, and then Minneapolis, where he served as a rabbi and saved enough money to bring the rest of the family to America. The family arrived in Minneapolis in 1926. Saadia attended Talmud Torah school and then went to the University of Minnesota, where he studied humanities and began organizing Jewish youth groups.

He worked as a social worker in New York and Chicago in the 1930s, as Jewish leaders around the world began planning the establishment of Israel. All the while, Gelb and his wife, Helen, knew they would eventually live there, too.

Memoir details Gelb's role as Israel 'pioneer'

In his 2001 memoir, "The Chase Is the Game, The Journeys of an American-Israeli Pioneer," (which I helped edit) Gelb describes the situation:

"During and after World War



Saadia Gelb

II, I met with all the leaders in the Zionist movement, old and young. We saw each other at meetings, conferences

and social occasions. Our views differed widely but we were all fighting for the same cause — the foundation of a Jewish state in our lifetime. It was exhilarating, exhausting, nerve-wracking, yet tinged with a satisfying sense of accomplishment."

When they finally arrived, and began living in the kibbutz (where everyone was involved in all the daily chores) some doubts arose:

"After three months of kibbutz living, Helen and I had a serious discussion. Had we made a mistake? Could we survive this type of life? Had my friends been right when they said I was a bureaucrat and not fit for manual labor? ... But how could we leave? We were penniless and I wouldn't ask our families for financial help. And what of my moral responsibility to the hundreds of youngsters whom I had instructed in the joys of life in a Jewish state? We were in a quandary. In the end, we decided to stick it out for a year and then re-evaluate the situation."

That year became decades,

and the Gelbs stayed and became a part of the fabric of Israeli life. He worked for the national government and in various jobs on the kibbutz, including truck driver, fisherman, youth leader and hotel manager, before retirement.

In his musings in 2001, he said the only workable solution to the Palestinian situation is to have two co-existing states: Israeli and Palestinian. "The hard fact is that there is a Palestinian nationalism and by our own definition they have a right to self-determination," he wrote.

On Israel: "I accept the standard answer to our Zionist claim to Israel-Palestine: it is our origin, our history and the only potential for group survival and development in the contemporary world. Most of all, we are candidates for annihilation. The Arabs are not.

"The internal Jewish division is rooted in the unresolved issue of 'Who is a Jew?' In my opinion, there are two criteria: descent and association. I prefer association. Anyone who knowingly wishes to assume the burden of being Jewish is welcome."

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Joel Kramer, CEO and editor

Tension turns to jubilation, expectation for Phoenix Mars Mission

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"In all," said the Post, "six of 11 similar attempts by the United States, Russia and England ended in failure, so the Phoenix team awaited with enormous apprehension the outcome of the spacecraft's approach and landing."

'No one says a word'

Time magazine described the scene: "Because of the spacecraft's risk-filled landing, it could have easily been a nightmare. ... Sitting in the mission control room during the final moments of the descent is like riding the bench during a baseball no-hitter: no one wants to jinx the outcome, so no one says a word."

"Seven minutes of terror" is how [lead scientist Peter] Smith described the communications blackout as the spacecraft passed through the Martian atmosphere. One flight technician fidgeted with his pen. A few others rocked back and forth in their chairs, tension lines webbing their faces.

"Then came a simple radio burst, indicating Phoenix had reached its destination. Said Michael Wright, who helped design Phoenix's protective heat shield: 'Once I heard that ping, everything was OK.'"

The touchdown occurred at about 7 p.m. Central time. At the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Barry Goldstein, Phoenix project manager, said, "In my dreams it couldn't have gone as perfectly." According to the Guardian of London, "Jubilant mission controllers described landing the £212m probe as like scoring a hole in one at golf if you 'tee off in Washington and the hole is in Sydney - and moving.'"

Then came the pictures. "Less than two hours after landing, the NASA spacecraft beamed back four dozen black and white images, including one of its foot sitting on Martian soil amid tiny rocks," the Guardian said. "Although images of the landing site, a nearly featureless plain marked by polygon-shaped cracks, may not dazzle jaded space buffs, scientists are thrilled," Time reported.

"I know it looks like a parking lot," said principal investigator Peter Smith, "but there's ice under that surface. This is a scientist's dream."

After some reconnoitering during its first week on Mars, the Phoenix will get down to business. The Post explained that "Unlike the two rovers that have been exploring the Martian surface for nearly five years, Phoenix is built to stay in one place and use its robotic arm to dig into the soil and ice. The vehicle is equipped with several miniature chemistry labs to analyze the material it digs up."

According to Time, "The scoop, edged with prong-like 'ripper tines,' is designed to crunch into the tough polar permafrost. NASA's plan is to dig trenches about 19 in. (.5 m) into the surface, a depth where scientists believe ice meets soil, and haul a sample onto the spacecraft. There, an instrument will heat the soil in tiny ovens, checking the resulting vapors for water and carbon compounds. An on-board chemistry lab with dual microscopes will add water to the sample and analyze the spectral and electrochemical results to check acidity, salt levels, and ion concentrations."

Dramatic climate change in arctic

According to Henry Bortman of Astrobiology Magazine, the

Phoenix mission is different in several ways from NASA's previous landed Mars explorations. "But what most distinguishes Phoenix from previous Mars missions are its destination and the science investigations it will conduct. The Phoenix landing site is in the planet's arctic north, in a region where orbiting spacecraft have detected water ice just inches beneath the surface. Previous landers have all explored Mars's equatorial region."

"Mars's polar regions undergo dramatic climate change," Bortman continued, "alternately warming and cooling, because of changes in the planet's orbit that occur in cycles lasting tens of thousands of years. It's possible that during a recent warming phase, water that is now locked up in frozen, buried ice temporarily became liquid. If it did, it would have left behind telltale chemical signs that Phoenix will be able to detect."

"Phoenix will not be looking for liquid water per se, Smith said, 'because we think it's too cold now. We're looking at the changes in the soil caused by the liquid,' changes that may have occurred during a previous warm period in the Martian northern plains. Phoenix will also look for organic molecules in the soil and ice it scoops up with its robotic arm. ..."

Smith told Bortman: "We think organics must exist at Mars, because they're brought in by asteroids and comets that have clearly impacted the planet over its history. And so what happened to those organics, and are they preserved in this region?"

A particularly suitable time and place

The Phoenix Mission website, at the University of Arizona, explains additional reasons

for the arctic region's suitability right now:

"First, Phoenix will land during the retreat of the Martian northern polar cap, when soil is first exposed to sunlight after a long winter. The interaction between the ground surface and the Martian atmosphere that occurs at this time is critical to understanding Mars' climate history."

"Second, since the sun never sets during the Martian polar summer, Phoenix can take advantage of maximum sunlight, which is essential to the two solar panels that Phoenix will deploy as an energy source for the robotic arm and other instruments. Sunlight is also important for keeping batteries warm, which will store electrical power."

"Lastly, the ice-rich soil in the Martian polar regions may be the only place on Mars where microbial life can survive, and sampling in this region could provide researchers with insight into the planet's habitability."

So now, with the spacecraft safely ensconced, we can all watch as the experiments unfold. NASA describes the Phoenix project as aptly named. "Like the Phoenix bird of ancient mythology, the Phoenix Mars Mission is reborn out of fire; this new mission was created from the embers of previous Mars endeavors," the agency says on its website. <http://www.nasa.gov/> "Scientists and engineers are confident that Phoenix will rise from the ashes revealing clues in the Martian arctic soil about the history of water and potential for biology."

Susan Albright, a MinnPost managing editor, writes about national and foreign developments.

"'I know it looks like a parking lot,' said principal investigator Peter Smith, 'but there's ice under that surface. This is a scientist's dream.'"

The Daily Glean: The horror of Hugo

By DAVID BRAUER

Day Two of the Hugo tornado tragedy dominates local coverage. Here's a rundown of the relevant topics:

The fatality. It's pretty awful; 2-year-old Nathaniel Prindle was blown out of his house into a pond, the Strib reports. The PiPress says Nathaniel wasn't breathing when he was found; a neighbor had to turn the mother, Christina Prindle, away from the scene so she wouldn't see her son's body. His badly injured 4-year-old sister, Annika, was pulled from the home's rubble. Despite the smell of gas, neighbors plunged in to save the family, and one, Marvin Miller, found the boy, the Strib's Joy Powell writes.

More on the family: Annika remains in critical condition, the father, Gerald Prindle has a broken leg, and Christina Prindle has severe facial lacerations, the PiPress notes. The wind blew her atop Annika. WCCO's Jason DeRusha says the Prindle house was hit head-on and blown 30 feet back into the pond.

Construction/design problems? Christina tells the PiPress that the house "accordioned backward," possibly enabled by an open attached garage door. The Strib's Bill McAuliffe writes that storm assessors say houses "had been made vulnerable by having attached garages facing the wind or walk-out basements away from the wind, or questionable ways of anchoring walls to the foundations." Are they suggesting the houses would've stood otherwise?

Other survivors. KARE's

Scott Seroka talks to a man who couldn't get into his house and ended up clinging to some corner siding as the tornado whipped past. "He has a deep bruise on his calf where a 2x4 smacked his leg, but otherwise, survived a tornado while the house around him was decimated," Seroka says.

The scope. In addition to the death, 17 people were treated at hospitals and 32 at an elementary school, the PiPress calculates. The Strib says 50 Hugo homes were destroyed and 220 were damaged, including 61 with non-tornado causes such as hail. The paper estimates \$25 million in lost personal property. The PiPress reports that there's probably not enough public-infrastructure damage to qualify for FEMA help. One Coon Rapids house was pushed off its foundation.

The cause. The Strib quotes experts saying it was two tornadoes — a Coon Rapids twister had winds of 86 to 110 miles per hour, while the more powerful Hugo version was between 136 to 165 miles per hour. One Hugo resident said the funnel was 200 feet wide, according to the Hugo Citizen newspaper. WCCO has the best resident video; a KSTP producer who lives in Hugo also taped the during-and-after.

In other news ...

The Strib's Kevin Diaz chronicles "leadership PACs," relatively unregulated "petty cash funds" that let big donors effectively double contributions to favored pols. Such PACs give to other candidates, turning fellow pols into special interests. However, only about a third

of Norm Coleman's and Amy Klobuchar's funds are used that way; ditto Al Franken's. Most cash goes to management and events, and "in Coleman's case, polling." Polling? Funds aren't supposed to be spent on a member's own campaign, but Diaz doesn't explain that last one.

The Strib misses a chance to localize an interesting AP story on a military bullets that are too small to "bring down an enemy decisively, and that puts troops at risk." No one suggests the M855 rounds are poorly manufactured, just poorly deployed, but who operates the Army plant that makes the M855? You'd never know from the story; it's Eden Prairie's own Alliant Tech-systems.

Remember the Minneapolis Planetarium? It's sucking solar wind, says the Star Tribune's Steve Brandt. The Planetarium's former sponsor, the Minneapolis Library Board, no longer exists, and its successor, the Hennepin County Board, is "wary" of responsibility for the \$39 million project. There's \$22 million in state bonding, but fundraisers want \$250,000 in county dough to find \$17 million in private cash. Augsburg College may want a downsized facility for its downtown campus, but it wouldn't be much of an attraction.

Today's hot button: Should freedom-loving Richfieldians be able to park their RVs in their own driveways? The Strib's Herón Márquez Estrada writes that Richfield might become one of a "few" cities to ban the unsightly 24-foot-long metal belugas. (Note: That's almost as long as my house is wide.)

Bloomington makes you get neighbors' permission. Richfield gets about a dozen complaints per year. Fun fact: There's a Supreme Court decision saying you can't ban RV parking solely for aesthetics.

But that's not even today's talker. The PiPress's Shannon Prather unearths the tale of an Oak Park Heights inmate who "choreographed pornography sessions involving a developmentally disabled teenage girl." Convicted killer Joseph Soltis persuaded one woman to have sex with the girl and another woman to photograph it and "gave orders while it was happening." A juror who helped convict Soltis on sex charges says the system should restrict unlimited phone calling.

The Downtown Journal's Michelle Bruch scores an interview with one of the guys accused of trying to parachute off a riverfront condo tower. Charges were dropped against Joe Johnson, but he says last month's arrest at the Pinnacle tower was the first time he'd been caught. He jumps off downtown skyscrapers monthly, he claims. Technically, so-called BASE jumping isn't illegal here, the story says. The Foshay and IDS towers are out, but Riverside Plaza and the under-construction Target tower are cool. Lots of how-to.

Nort spews: The Twins had Memorial Day off, which just seems wrong.

Want to add your voice?

If you're interested in joining the discussion by writing a Community Voices article, email Susan Albright at salbright@minnpost.com.

COMMUNITY VOICES

Iron, cold iron: on bridge collapses and 9/11

By CLAYTON BENNETT

"Gold is for the mistress, silver for the maid; copper for the craftsman cunning at his trade.

"Good!" said the Baron, sitting in his hall. "But iron, cold iron, is master of them all!"

— Rudyard Kipling

What does Sept. 11 have to do with a bridge collapse that killed 13 people? Everything.

On Sept. 11, 1916, the Pont de Québec Bridge over the St. Lawrence was nearly complete when the center span fell and 13 workers were killed. This followed a catastrophe nine years earlier, when the first bridge attempted in that location failed and 76 workers fell to their deaths. An investigation found that faulty engineering was to blame. The bridge was eventually completed in 1917, the longest railroad cantilever span built then or since.

A few years later, leaders from the Engineering Institute of Canada proposed a national professional association for engineers, along with a statement of principles. With help from Rudyard Kipling, the organization created the ceremony known as "The Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer," which was later adopted by some engineering schools in the United States as well.

As engineering students near graduation, they may attend these ceremonies, at which each new graduate who takes an oath

of ethical practice receives an iron ring to wear on the smallest finger of the engineer's working hand. According to legend, these rings were first made of iron taken from the collapsed Pont de Québec Bridge.

59 St. Thomas graduates took part

At the University of St. Thomas earlier this month, 59 new engineering graduates took part in one of these ceremonies. The oath they take includes these words:

As an Engineer, I pledge to practice integrity and fair dealing, tolerance and respect, and to uphold devotion to the standards and the dignity of my profession, conscious always that my skill carries with it the obligation to serve humanity by making the best use of Earth's precious wealth.

As an Engineer, in humility and with the need for Divine guidance, I shall participate in none but honest enterprises. When needed, my skill and knowledge shall be given without reservation for the public good. In the performance of duty and in fidelity to my profession, I shall give the utmost.

In the decades since this ceremony was first performed, engineers in Canada and the United States have designed, constructed, maintained, inspected, repaired, condemned, and decommissioned thousands of bridges. Some of those engineers wear the iron ring. All of them understand the responsibility they have for the safety of others who

depend on their judgment and skills. Following ethical standards, inspecting engineers from the government, the University of Minnesota, and outside consulting firms declared the I-35W bridge structurally deficient as long ago as 1990.

Resurfacing, inspection chosen

While the designation of structural deficiency does not necessarily mean a bridge is unfit for service, the I-35W bridge, officially called Bridge 9340, ranked in the bottom 5 percent of federal sufficiency ratings for more than 100,000 heavily used bridges. Despite cautions about cracking and fatigue from MnDOT engineers, the state agency deferred repair work on the substructure, choosing instead to resurface the top deck and conduct periodic inspections of the support system.

Put bluntly, MnDOT engineers were told to keep inspecting a deficient structure rather than to fix it. This is a similar response to the one made by the White House in August 2001, when national security reports warned of an imminent attack on American soil — and nothing, at least nothing effective, was done with the information. The reasons given since both events have varied, but the underlying message is that public safety was not the highest priority of either administration.

In a few short months, a new bridge over the Mississippi River will take the place of Bridge 9340. Perhaps it will even be

completed in time to show visitors to the Republican National Convention. At that convention, Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty will doubtless meet with some members of the current administration in the White House. He may be asked to join the party's national ticket. And regardless of his own prospects, the governor will doubtless serve as a gracious host, welcoming guests to our beautiful state and cities.

The convention will take place just one week before Sept. 11, so a solemn commemoration of that day would be appropriate. Gov. Pawlenty could combine such an observation with a remembrance of our more recent, more local losses in Minneapolis. At one end of the new span across the river, when the time comes to cut the ribbon that opens the bridge, he could pause a moment. If any ranking administration officials are present, he could certainly ask them to join him in making a new oath to protect the public.

Then, producing a small box containing objects made from the twisted girders of the old bridge, he could present each elected official with a small but meaningful gift: an iron ring.

Clayton Bennett is a business writer and the author of several nonfiction books. He crossed the former I-35W bridge at least a thousand times.

Want to add your voice?

If you're interested in joining the discussion by writing a Community Voices article, email Susan Albright at salbright@minnpost.com.