"Houston. It's been a long way, but we're here." These are the words of the famous astronaut, Alan B. Shepard, as he firmly planted his first footprint into the Moon's surface. They are seemingly unperturbed words from a man experiencing no less than walking on another world and seeing his insignificant home planet floating in black nothingness through the tears in his eyes. But, for him, and for the few that knew him, the words are deep in meaning. Following his first spaceflight, Shepard had been grounded for 10 years with the incurable Meniere's syndrome and was told he would never fly in space again. He never gave up his dream. Finally, after 10 years and three abort threats, Al Shepard was standing on the edge of forever and must have experienced that surreal sensation as one realizes a hard won dream is happening – this is reality. Indeed, the Moon is a long way, but that had little to do with what Al Shepard said to those in Houston who had witnessed his journey.

I think there are a few analogies to Shepard's story (which is the romantic stuff of History) and the making of my Ph. D. (which will go down quietly and anonymously). Once Shepard's Mission was started, it could not be completed alone. In fact, it would have completely failed several times over without a capable and dedicated support network. So it is true for this work. Many times during the stresses of student life, my support network was there for me, holding me on, giving me courage when the going got tough.

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It's been a long way, but we're here.