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DISABILITY IN SPACE

Steven Jimeno is a 63-year-old male with a physical disability. He was always in a wheelchair. Jimeno was always shy in school and was treated as an outcast. When he was about 13 or 14 years old, he had always dreamed of going to outer space. However, many authorities discouraged him, because he was disabled, and they didn’t think he was capable.

Jimeno graduated from Aerospace Research Pilot School, a flight training school in Edwards, CA, where one of his disciplines was Systems. He graduated from Arizona State University with an PhD in Aerospace Engineering.

After graduating, he worked part time at The New York Hall of Science, and was a tourist for the American Museum of Natural History’s Planetarium Exhibits and ushered many shows involving space adventure. He did publicity for movies such as *The Martian* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. He did two summer internships for many *Star Wars* events at Disney World and Disneyland in Florida and in California and offered Legoland assistance with Outer Space adventures.

Throughout most of his life, he had his family for support, but he didn’t have that many friends until college or work. Back in his high school days, his classmates were very nice but did not take him seriously because of his disability. When he went to college, his college classmates were drawn to Steven’s passion for outer space. Many years later, he was even admired by his colleagues at work.

During the 50th anniversary of Apollo, Jimeno realized he could get another chance to apply for a job exploring into outer space. He applied after Memorial Day weekend and was already accepted around the middle of June. Jimeno spent 2-4 weeks training in order to prepare for outer space. He eventually succeeds and his family is pleased with how hard he worked in order to get what he had always dreamed of.

On July 16, 2019, Steven is ready to explore the moon. He has always dreamed about this. He teams up with Megan and Eric and together, they go and explore outer space. While on the spaceship, there are a group of aliens that attack Steven and his friends along the way to the moon. The aliens pick out many of their weapons from inside their spaceship to attack Steven, Megan and Eric, but eventually all three of them overpowered aliens by punching, kicking and doing a little kung fu to knock the weapons out of the aliens’ hands and knock them down. Steven realizes that he is able to move around from one place to another because he is floating in space. He realizes that in space, he is not confined to his wheelchair and he can move around because he is floating. The trio eventually land on the moon, but the aliens finds them which then leads the trio to whip out their machine gun and wipe out all the aliens by freezing them solid. The astronauts have won, and they sing, dance and celebrate it. Because he can float, Steven realizes that not only can he walk, dance and beat a bunch of aliens. He is very proud of himself, and Megan and Eric are proud for him too.

On July 17, 2019, Steven and his friends return and tell the press how happy they were of the opportunity to explore outer space and fight aliens. They hold many interviews and press conferences and even at their homes. Back on Earth, Steven still uses a wheelchair, but he is very proud of who he is and what he can accomplish.

Jimeno has always been a fan of science fiction movies such as *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Close Encounters of a Third Kind*, *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* and even the *Alien* franchise. He fell in love with watching *First Man* after it won the Oscar for Best Visual Effects. When NASA wanted to relaunch spaceships in outer space, Jimeno didn’t hesitate to explore outer space and mentioned that his love for the Ryan Gosling movie, *First Man*, inspired him to be an astronaut. Eventually, Jimeno got his dream and afterwards went on many interviews. He recently saw the movie *Ad Astra* when it premiered in theaters and IMAX. He loved *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* that he was able to get Disney+ to watch *The Mandalorian*.

I based this Steven Jimeno story off of The New York Times article about Ed Dwight, written by Emily Ludolph on July 16, 2019,. Ed Dwight wanted to be the first African American to explore outer space in the early 1960s. After completing his training, he was not selected by NASA due to his race. He resigned from the Air Force and NASA in 1966 because of the way he was treated due to his race, which led him back into regular corps. Back in Ed Dwight’s days, race was a barrier, even though it is not as much of a barrier today. Because I have a disability, I wanted to switch around the barriers from race to disabilities. The theme of the story is that just because one has a disability does not mean that they cannot do anything or overcome their obstacles in order to achieve their goals.