

TV link fail moonmen go walking

LAUGHTER AND EXCITED CHUCKLES drifted down from the moon over a colour television link today as Apollo 12 astronauts Charles Conrad and Alan Bean began a 3½-hour exploration after a pin-point landing.

Conrad climbed down from Intrepid, the lunar module, to become the third man to set foot on the moon at 12.44 BST.

Humming happily, he moved around collecting soil samples and, with a merry "Dum-de-dum-de-da," tied the sample bag to a line for Bean to haul up and stow inside Intrepid. "I feel great," the spaceman kept saying.

Bean joined him on the moon half an hour later, lowering his visor against the dazzling sunlight and exclaiming with delight at the sight of shining glass beads sparkling on the lunar ground.

But a disappointment followed for viewers on the ground, who had followed the early stages of the moon walk by colour TV.

Soon after Bean got down the ladder, the TV camera failed, and no amount of juggling with it by the astronauts changed the scene—a bright light at the top, with most of the screen blacked out in shadow.

Bean said the plastic cord, leading into the camera, seemed to have melted in one section.

The astronauts' work, in setting up their scientific experiments was marred by failure of the camera, and listeners could gather what they were doing by snatches of conversation between the two men.

Earlier, in an attempt to show Bean coming down the ladder, Conrad was holding the

camera upside down and the result for viewers was just an uncertain movement of colour in the moving shadows.

Earlier today, after their 250,000-mile voyage through space, Conrad and Bean steered the Intrepid to a pin-point landing in the moon's Ocean of Storms.

Side of crater

They came down within 800ft. of Surveyor III, an unmanned US moon probe which dropped on to the side of a crater in April, 1967.

The astronauts were ecstatic as they rode the Intrepid down, singing out their altitude as they went, laughing out loud and exclaiming: "Son of a gun, right down the middle of the road," and "It's so fantastic, I can't believe it."

Moments after he stepped on to the surface, Conrad reported spotting Surveyor 3 "sitting on the side of a steep slope."

He told Bean: "I don't sink in too far. I can walk pretty well, Al, but I gotta take it easy and watch what I'm doing."

He said there was a lot of lunar dust in one area, but he thought Intrepid's descent stage engine may have blown it there.

Bean, watching from the porch at the top of the ladder attached to one of Intrepid's landing legs, noted that Conrad seemed to be leaning very far over as he moved about in the lunar gravity, only one-sixth that of earth.

Conrad's descent down the ladder and his movements close to the lunar module were seen in colour by television viewers on earth. It was the first colour transmission from the moon.

Bean, meanwhile, reported a possible fault with the water cooling system of his space-suit. But he made some adjustments and it appeared

to be working properly, although he said he was a bit cool.

Conrad, humming as he collected samples, repeated that he could not move about as quickly as he thought he would be able to.

Not to fall

He giggled and chuckled as he told himself not to fall "down this little crater hole ... oops, another crater hole ... like an obstacle course."

"Man, am I gonna get dirty" (from the thick lunar dust), he remarked.

Astronaut Bean joined Conrad on the Moon at 1314 BST and became the fourth American to visit another heavenly body.

"I feel like Bugs Bunny," said Conrad, as he guided Bean on to the spacecraft's "porch."

As Bean reached the surface, Conrad called out: "Welcome aboard."

Bean exclaimed that he could see some little shiny glass in the rocks.

'Hustle, boy ...'

"Yes, I reported that," Conrad said, adding, "Hustle, boy, hustle, we've got a lotta work to do."

"You've really got to be careful when you move into the dark," he cautioned.

They are scheduled to spend almost 32 hours on the lunar surface before blasting off to rejoin their fellow astronaut, Richard Gordon, now maintaining a lonely vigil in orbit around the moon.

During the second of their two scheduled 3½-hour moon walks, Conrad and Bean are due to try to retrieve several of the Surveyor's components, including a television camera, for return to earth.

Scientists hope to learn much about the effects of the harsh lunar environment on earth materials from the surveyor equipment.