

Crowd embraces Chris Hadfield

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 the Space Shuttle Atlantis recalled his own childhood, when his dreams of becoming an astronaut "were a flat impossibility."
 "I want kids to realize this (space travel) is what Canadians do, and that one of their own is involved. This is something they can do," he said.

He told the crowd of two Canadian astronauts who will be space-bound within the next year. The Milton native himself hopes to make another trip before the turn of the century.

Lt. Colonel Hadfield is actively involved in every mission the space program undertakes. He was the first Canadian to operate the Canadarm in space, and is hoping to do so again when construction of the international space station begins.

Canadians, he explained, are involved in every aspect of the space program including science development and medical research.

"This is an exciting, unique time for Canadians and the space program. We're among the first generation to see a permanent presence in space.

Canadians don't have to be involved in this, we choose to be involved. It's a great feeling to be on board a train that's leaving earth.

Within these kids' lifetime, there'll be people living on the moon, and perhaps on Mars as well."

Having already fulfilled his dream of space travel, Lt. Colonel Hadfield said his next wish is to 'make a space walk'.

He contends this will be entirely different from his first journey and won't necessarily be better or worse.

"It's not a competition. You don't stop eating just because you've had a great meal," he said.

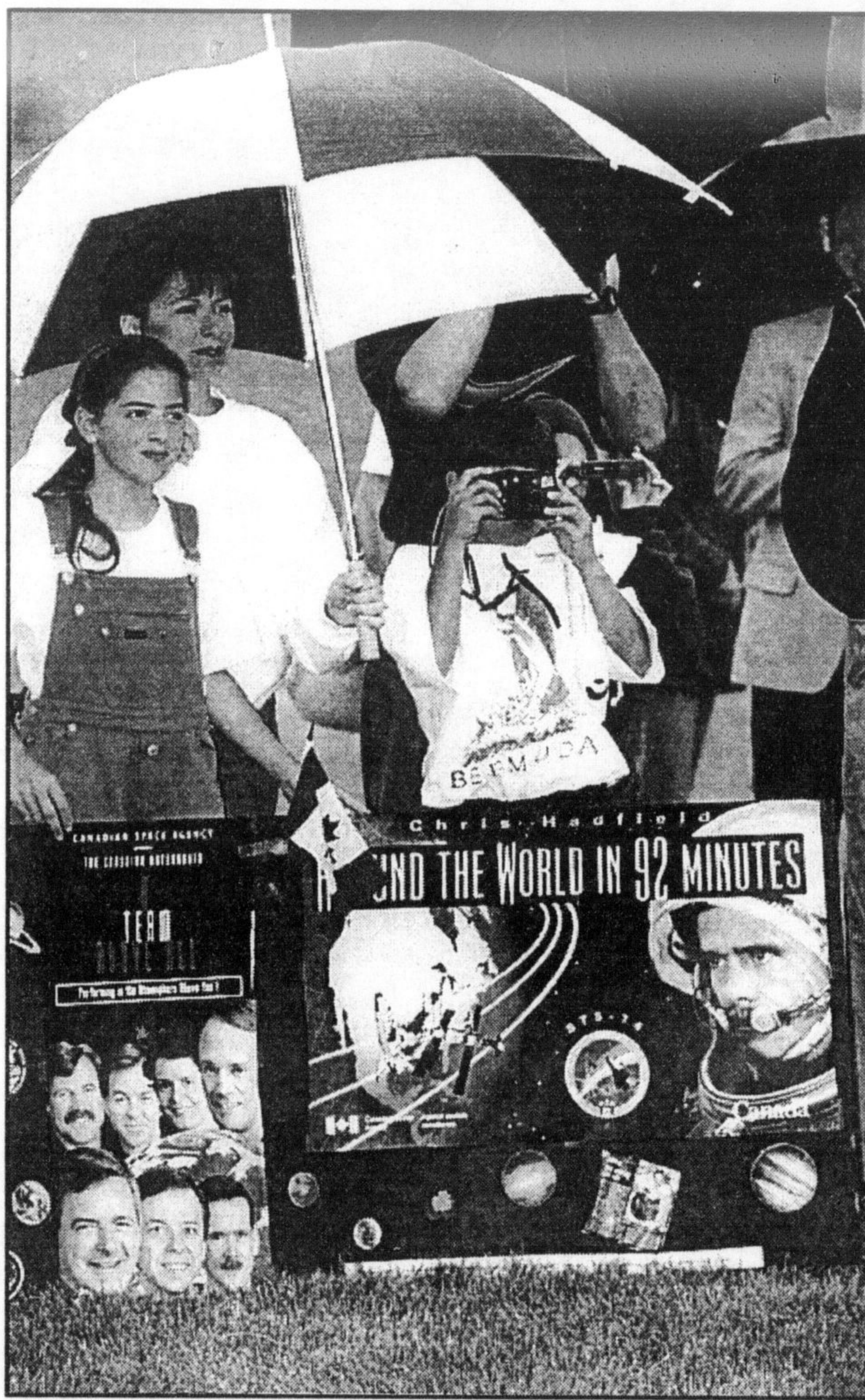


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Enduring the rain and trying to shield her school project was Laura Thomas, 10, as younger brother Andrew, 8, took a photo and mom Colleen sheltered them with an umbrella. The two kids later got autographs from the astronaut.

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