

Air cadet leaders and students on hand for launch

Miltonians were front and centre for yesterday's historic liftoff

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Most Miltonians no doubt caught hometown boy Chris Hadfield's historic liftoff yesterday aboard the space shuttle Endeavour.

But some local residents got a much closer look than others.

Among them were four leaders of the Milton Air Cadets, who made their way down to Florida's Cape Canaveral earlier this week and witnessed the launch from a special viewing area.

While more than three miles away from Endeavour, two of Milton's space shuttle spectators knew full well that an overwhelming sensation awaited them yesterday — having been on hand for launches in the past.

Amazing sensation

"There's a tremendous pressure you feel in your chest," explained former local squad chairman Barry Chamberlain, who took a group of young cadets down for Col. Hadfield's first blast-off in 1995.

"It's one thing to see a launch on TV, quite another to see it in person and something even more to know somebody actually going up."

Mr. Chamberlain — who was responsible for bringing the local astronaut back to town a few years ago as a reviewing officer for the air cadets' annual inspection —

said he's very proud to be associated with Col. Hadfield's education bursary program, adding "For a guy who's gone up in space, he's really down to earth and just a heck of an individual."

Witnessing the launch alongside Mr. Chamberlain yesterday were fellow air cadet leaders Nick Klip, Rex Sutcliffe and Frank Phillips — a former commanding officer who viewed a liftoff from Daytona Beach 16 years ago.

He recalled, "It's a heck of a realization to think that one minute the shuttle's lifting off and the next thing you know it's over India."

"There's no concept of (shuttle's) speed when you're on the ground."

Mr. Phillips — a detective with Halton Regional Police — said he's been fascinated with aviation and space travel since John Glenn's heyday and that Col. Hadfield's beginnings with the local air cadets reflect very positively on the program.

Among the younger witnesses to yesterday's launch were a small group of Milton District High School students.

"I'm really looking forward to this," said grade 11 student Ashley Ward before leaving on the trek.

"I've always been interested in anything to do with aviation."

Added grade 12 student Jeff Vandevalk, "I have no clue what to expect, but it should be a great opportunity. I only wish more people could go."

The students' excursion was partially funded by local businesses.



This group of Milton District High School students were among those on hand at Cape Canaveral in Florida to witness Chris Hadfield's historic launch aboard Endeavour yesterday. Also front and centre for the liftoff were (at right) local air cadet leaders (from left) Rex Sutcliffe, Frank Phillips and Nick Klip.

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