

Astronauts on UNB campus

by Jeff Czopor

Some people have their heads up in the clouds or are rather spaced out. For Canada's first woman astronaut, Roberta Bondar, this description is quite literal.

Bondar, a neurologist who takes a compliment from being called a professional lifetime student after being schooled in a number of scientific fields, says that there is always something new to learn (especially on a mission of the space shuttle).

The mission of the Discovery which took place between January 22 to the 30, Bondar's first journey into the vast realm of weightlessness, and it was probably this aspect of the voyage that was the most difficult to adapt to.

What constituted Bondar's first voyage marked the 45th mission of the shuttle program and the fourteenth for the Orbiter Discovery.

Indeed, Bondar found the flight extremely thrilling but

claims that the time constraints and deadlines for the various tasks that need to be done left no room for adjustability and adaptability.

Bondar touched upon a number of experiments with plants and microscopic animals, including an American plant in good ole Canadian soil which grew larger than normal. As well, various crystals were grown and research into human reflexes, the lymphic system, and anti-biotics were also conducted.

One aspect of the voyage that Roberta found particularly thrilling was the international crew that accompanied her. Scientists and specialists from Canada, the United States, and Europe worked together to further plan for what will hopefully soon come to be: life colonies in space and the pioneerization of homo sapiens.

As well, Bondar amused her eager listeners with stories about keeping one's

sanity, glasses, and lunch while in weightlessness and how sometimes one must give up the fight and roll along until coming upon to a wall.

Bondar was joined by Ken Money, payload Specialist on the Discovery, who delightfully provided background information on the mission. The mission involved 220 scientists in all. Thirteen of the scientist were Canadians and 45 experiments were conducted in all. Perhaps the highlight of Money's anecdotes was his description of how one must become a "bathroom expert" before voyaging off into space, "the seat is nine inches across, the hole is three inches. It requires a certain degree of accuracy."

Bondar fervently persuaded the audience to continue the pursuits in science. She explained how she felt when she flew over various continents and not only witnessed geological wonders such as eroded rivers and

canyons, but environmental dangers as well. Perhaps her most important message was that it is not unfeasible to want to become directly involved in the Canadian Space program and have this dream come true.



Roberta Bondar
Kevin G. Porter photo



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