

Bondar honored by RRMCMC

By Norman Gidney

Times-Colonist staff

The largest class of graduates ever from Royal Roads Military College listened Friday to astronaut Roberta Bondar's description of her high-profile shuttle trip and her hopes that some of them will follow her into space.

She and Sidney resident John Bruk, a corporate lawyer who established the influential Asia Pacific Foundation in Vancouver a decade ago, received honorary degrees at the college's convocation Friday morning.

"It's not an easy world up there. It's a harsh world, a hostile world," she said.

During the shuttle launch, when the vibrations were so bad it was impossible to read and difficult to hear, she recalled her extensive training — water survival exercises with U.S. pilots in Florida, the practised escape routines.

Like the cadets' four years of heavy academic coursework and sports activities, the training prepared her to handle the difficult tasks of functioning in space.

Their experience at Royal Roads will help the graduates when they face future crises and tough assignments, she said.

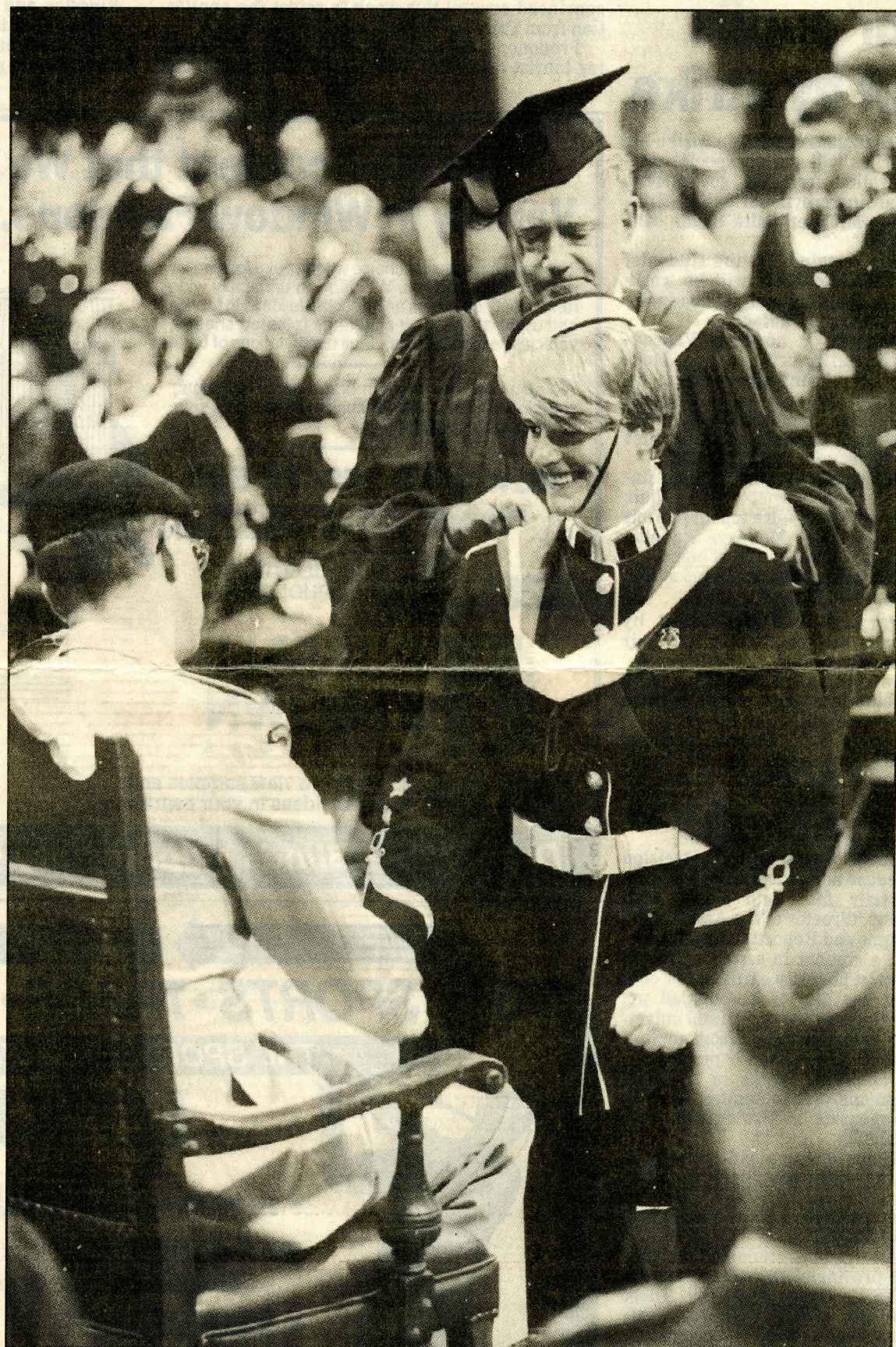
They have developed a "sense of discipline, a sense of belonging and a set of skills for dealing with the world and how to best represent Canada."

Orbiting in the shuttle Discovery 300 kilometres up, Bondar said she sometimes felt as if she could reach out and touch the globe, but she reminded the cadet graduates of the down-to-earth reality.

"The only way you can touch this wonderful planet is down here. We should treat it with reverence."

Looking out on the audience of 50 red-jacketed graduates — 20 per cent of them women — Bondar said she was glad to see the evolution of military policy on women's roles in the forces.

Royal Roads commandant Col. V. M. Cains told the cadets in the four years since they arrived at the seaside military college



■ GRADUATING CADET Nicole Schiele smiles after receiving degree from Col. V. M. Cains.

Ray Smith/Times-Colonist

they had earned a liberal education, with humanities and science majors getting a large dose of each other's discipline.

They became bilingual, as the Royals Roads curriculum includes daily second-language

training, and they underwent an extensive physical conditioning program, striving for success in sports and learning how to handle defeat.

They also received a grounding in the military ethic — duty,

discipline, respect for authority, honor, precision in one's work.

On Monday, the *Times-Colonist* will include a photo page of the Royal Roads Military College ball.