

## Space Shuttle Launch Experience

By Corey McDonald



On February 6<sup>th</sup> 2008, Thanks to the Make-a-Wish Foundation of Northern Alberta, in cooperation with Make-a-Wish Foundation of Central and Northern Florida, I got to fulfill my dream wish of going down to Kennedy Space Center to watch a Space Shuttle launch in person. The launch was the most incredible experience that I have ever witnessed – The rumble of the engines, the sound of them – it was just amazing. My wish started off at 6 AM on February 6<sup>th</sup> when a limo came to pick me and my family up from our house and take us to the airport, we arrived in Orlando, Florida around 5 PM Eastern time, the launch was scheduled for February 7<sup>th</sup> at 2:45 PM Eastern.



February 7<sup>th</sup>, launch day. We arrived at Kennedy Space Centre at 9:30 am and we had a lot of time to kill before we boarded the bus to get to the launch viewing site. So we spent it touring Kennedy and visiting their makeshift launch control centre, where they had TV screens that allowed you to see the astronauts getting into the vehicle that would take them up to the International Space Station along with a live launch commentary that announced specific events in the launch sequence. About two hours

before launch we were taken on a bus to the launch viewing site about six miles away from the launch pad. There were initially some concerns that the launch would be scrubbed today due to some thunderstorms that were in the vicinity of Kennedy Space Centre. However the thunderstorms cleared up at launch time and it was a “go”. At T-1 minute (1 minute before launch) there was a sense inside me of “Oh wow! This (the launch) is actually going to happen!” As the countdown got nearer to T-0 (launch) I was getting very excited. I was counting down the final seconds to launch along with the launch commentary.



The next few days were spent touring Kennedy Space Centre and the Astronaut Hall of Fame as well as shopping (cant forget that one!) before it was time to head back home to cold, snowy Edmonton, Alberta.