

From www.chroniclejournal.com

## LOCAL

### Ice racing perfect fit for Rick Mercer

By SARAH ELIZABETH BROWN

Sunday, January 20, 2008

Advertising writers couldn't script a better stereotype – a friendly Canuck pouring Rick Mercer a cup of Tim Hortons coffee while the CBC star gets ready to race a car on ice – all at 40 below.

Mercer and his production crew were at Thunder Bay's Mission Bay for Sunday's ice races, filming a segment for the Jan. 29 edition of the Rick Mercer Report.

A jovial member of the Thunder Bay Auto Sport Club was working his way down the pit line, pouring cups of coffee from a jug when it was suggested the guy in the green car might want a cup.

"Holy crap, it's Mr. Mercer," the man hollered over the ferociously-cold wind, which forecasters said was responsible for creating a wind chill factor of -41 C. Taking a break from helping a crew member fiddle with an interior car camera, Mercer said he'd love a cup.

Star treatment for a Canadian star, whose set required multiple layers of long underwear.

"Why wouldn't I come to Thunder Bay in January," he said, dressed in a down Canada Goose parka and four layers on his legs.

"The Mercer Report is all about travelling around the country, doing extreme things, and when we heard about this race I absolutely wanted to come.

"The fact that it's the coldest day of the year just makes it that much more interesting, especially for all those ridiculous people who watch the show who can't drive in the winter. I'm telling them that, you know, Canadians pride themselves on being able to drive in the winter, but really, Thunder Bay is where it's at.

"These are the people who know how to drive on ice."

Mercer didn't take any practice laps before scooting around the track with two cameras on his car and another held by a crewman in a rented SUV following his No. 77 green Mazda, a loaner from Hillcrest high school's auto shop.

"I'm from Newfoundland, so I've certainly, you know, spun out on the ice before. I know to pump my brakes, but that's the old days. I don't even know if that applies – I don't know what I'm doing," the comedian said.

No stranger to extreme adventures in the name of a good show – from driving a Leopard tank to skinny dipping with Bob Rae – Mercer said he'd seen a clip of the ice racing on the club's website, and figured the segment would "blow people's minds.

"This is winter in Canada – you've got to do crazy things to keep yourself sane, and this is certainly a crazy thing to do."

A Mercer crew member saw a local television news spot about the Hillcrest automotive program last week, and called to ask if Mercer could take a spin in their ice racing cars, explained auto teacher Keith Moore, who is also on the auto sports club executive.

Mercer took to the track in a six-lap exhibition race with other drivers.

He said he plans to return Thunder Bay to do another segment on the city's Finnish culture.

"I'm keeping my clothes on (today)," he said, referencing his infamous segment last season in which he and Rae jumped off a dock into a lake, both naked as jay birds.

"I'm glad there's no sauna actually involved, because I just couldn't bear getting naked today," he continued. "I have so many layers on it's ridiculous. Like I can barely move. . . . But I've got a number of ridiculous layers on, I'm embarrassed to admit."

With a small crowd of auto enthusiasts and local media listening, Mercer didn't pass up the opportunity to do a little stand-up comedy about his collection of cold-weather gear.

"I always wear the Canada Goose (parka), but it always makes you feel good as you're zipping it up and you look inside near the washing instructions . . . they ask for your blood type," he quipped. "That's always good."

The Rick Mercer Report airs at 8 p.m. Tuesdays on CBC television.



Copyright © Monday, January 21, 2008 All material contained herein is copyrighted by  
The Chronicle Journal, a division of Continental Newspapers Canada Ltd.  
All Rights Reserved.