

COMMENTS & LETTERS

cjc@unb.ca • January 16, 2008

Visit Big Ben and get credit for it: What's better than that?

Dear Editor

These winter days are delightful (perhaps), but when they end I will be taking a second group of students to London for the work study program, and that is something to look forward to. I would like to tell them a little about the experience, and to give them the web address of the program: <http://www.cel.unb.ca/travelstudy/london/courses.php>

May is a lovely time in the capital city of what was once the British Empire, and the source of so much Canadian history and culture. I lived many years in London, and visit at least once a year for research purposes, and for fun. Last year was the launch of the UNB travel-study program, and I, with Sandra Bell in the English Department at UNBSJ, were joined in London by eight students. Two courses were offered - on Royal Navy material history, and on English theatre. Classes consisted almost entirely of visits to historic warship, dockyards, museums, stately homes, and theatrical performances.

We mostly traveled on the top deck of London buses, so that everyone could become familiar with the city. From the small club we were living in, bus route 4 passes St. Paul's Cathedral, on its way to Waterloo railway station, from which we took the train to Portsmouth to see Admiral Nelson's flagship at the battle of Trafalgar in 1805, HMS Victory, and the first armoured and steel built battleship in the world, HMS Warrior; or to go the other way to Chatham Historic Dockyard where we saw, amongst other things, the last remaining 18th century working rope walk in the world. Bus route 19 passed near the British Museum, the Shaftesbury Avenue theater district, Piccadilly Circus, Hyde Park Corner, the world famous Harrods departmental store, and the Victoria and Albert museum. To get to the historic



Dr. Tracy tells of the travel-study program to London, England for intersession this year. It is a first come first serve opportunity.

Globe theater, built like a 16th century original, we got off at St. Pauls, and crossed the Thames on a foot bridge, from which we could see HMS Belfast, the last big-gun cruiser in the Royal Navy.

The only written assignment in my course was that students had to keep a journal of the trip, and it was very pleasing to read at the end of one of them the following: "I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the United Kingdom, more than words could describe. I have toured legendary ships, stood in the footsteps of national heroes, and held a personal book of a king, all within three weeks. I've learned a great deal, and experienced a great deal more than I had hoped. It's been an amazing ride and I am sorry to see it end."

In the course of the next month students will have an opportunity to book to take part in the next trip to London. But only 14 can come. The tour is de-

liberately kept small, because London is a crowded city and a very large one. The cost of \$3,600 per student includes accommodation, most meals, transportation on the field trips, and tuition in two courses. This will be my course on Royal Navy history, with Miriam Jones of UNBSJ teaching an early-modern English literature course. Each student will be accommodated in a private bedroom in the club, with a full breakfast and dinner. Students will receive travel cards, which also let them travel free on the buses should they wish to explore on their own time.

But there is not much time left for booking, because the accommodation can only be held for another month. So I hope that anyone thinking about coming will go to the web page as soon as possible, and make a booking. The first 14 will be the lucky ones.

Nicholas Tracy

Heroes in the Canadian political scene

ROUSING THE RABBLES

by Nick Ouellette

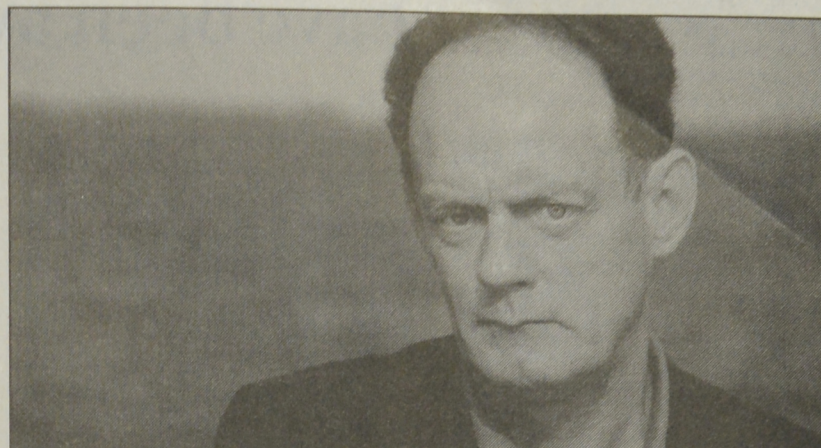
I follow politics, both locally, provincially, and nationally. I have been for as long as I can remember, and I can now identify who my heroes are in Canada's political scene: Rex Murphy and Rick Mercer.

Read them. Watch them. Religiously. Never miss a week. Nothing speaks to the wit and refined humour of the Canadian way like a good Mercer Report or a stinging column by Rex in The Globe and Mail or on the CBC's The National. It's almost always the perfect way to put a week's worth of events in real perspective.

At the very least, it serves as a check on whether you have missed an important news story. If you aren't understanding Rex's logic, as tightly wound as it might be in his excellent command of the English language, and if you aren't getting Mercer's jokes, chances are you aren't aware of what they're talking about. That's your cue to go back through the week's news archives so that you can truly appreciate what they are offering you, because really, if you don't do that, you're missing out.

In the best-case scenario, you know and appreciate exactly what they are talking about and have a chance to laugh and think critically about the absurdities that arise in government and public life. Information and humour—you can't ask for more.

What really amazes me is how well almost everybody can relate to both Rex and Mercer. Sometimes Rex's rants on The National can be difficult to dissect and fully understand—what amounts to a virtue as a challenge but what could



One of Canada's political heavyweights, Rex Murphy is someone you don't want to miss

be a vice for some. Earlier this month, in defending the rights of magazines to start debate and express opinions, Rex had this to say about an accusation that Maclean's magazine was "flagrantly homophobic": "Maclean's magazine? Well, we all know what a hotbed of radical bigotry and vile prejudice Maclean's magazine has been. Go away... for what seems like a century Maclean's was no more 'offensive' (that is the 'can't' term of choice these days) than a down comforter on a cold day and if Mark Steyn's article [about Islam] offended them: so what? Not every article in every magazine or newspaper is meant to be a Valentine card addressed to every reader's self-esteem."

Meanwhile, it might be easy to miss a lot of the subtle humour in Mercer's rants, but in the end he almost always brings it back to something simple yet meaningful that highlights the plot lines of the story government. Recently, in writing about the Mulroney-Schreiber affair, he had this to offer: "Brian Mulroney has always been one of the most polarizing characters in Canadian history. That's his shtick. You mention his name anywhere in Canada, half the room wants to snap. And now, like some sort of dormant gastrointestinal virus, he's back demanding and getting a full judicial inquiry into his dealings with Karl Heinz Schreiber. And you can't

blame the man really - last time they looked into this he walked away with over two million dollars."

The point is this: you can almost always pick up on what Rex and Mercer are conveying with little to no effort. It's not contrived. It's not skewed or unbiased. You can rely on each of them to give it to you straight. You can also count on them not holding back what they really think about a situation.

They are to Canadian television what Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert are to its American counterpart. Sure, sometimes things can get a little off colour; not everybody will go skinny-dipping with Bob Rae, and sometimes Rex's opinions can be expressed quite harshly. But, as two popular figures in the Canadian reporting scene, they are doing what so many of their colleagues fail to do in a media culture that often disregards the wellbeing of the system for the sake of sales. For an injection of real world logic and viewpoints, turn to Rex Murphy and Rick Mercer: keeping their readers and viewers informed, interested, and in touch with the world around them.

Nick Ouellette, a UNB law student, has served on the UNB Student Union Council and the UNB Board of Governors, and now serves on the UNB Fredericton Senate and as an Assistant Don in UNB's Residence Community.

Snowboarding doesn't need a double standard

by Chelsea Armstrong,
The Peak
(Simon Fraser University)

BURNABY (CUP) -- A couple of weekends ago I entered a competition at Mount Seymour, B.C. called Premature Jubilation, a season-opening rail jam put on by Rome Snowboards. It attracted some 70 competitors from Whistler, Kelowna, Vernon and even some students from Simon Fraser University.

It was the perfect day: old friends, a barbecue, cute boys, but more importantly, good old-fashioned jibbin' (hitting rails). To top it off, I placed first in the women's division and won a snowboard bag and a DVD.

The prizing didn't bother me until I saw what the men raked in. First-place received a brand new

Rome snowboard, second took home bindings and third-place was presented with some dope gloves and a park pack.

Another disconcerting fact: none of the ladies received a second or a third standing. This has been a familiar setting in women's snowboarding since alpine-racing was considered technical and cool.

There were twice as many blokes competing than there were girls. Obviously the boys' prizes should be far superior, right? Wrong. Female snowboarders suffer the same sensory trauma and abysmal lifestyle boys do. We even pay the same money for season passes.

I remember dropping out of high school in grade 11, moving to Banff and living in a two-bedroom apartment with seven other people, making \$6 an hour raking jumps in a park all day. I lived in conditions many would deem third-world. Nevertheless, I rode eight hours a day, two days a week to get as many runs in on my limited time off.

Now I'm a full-time student at Simon Fraser still trying to pursue "the dream": owning your own house in

Whistler, a sled and pickup truck. Having an endless list of sponsors and 100,000 Air Miles from all the trips to Chile and New Zealand.

When I impale my shins trying to 5-0, break my thumb trying to front blunt and taco while back lipping it's hard to understand why the guy dropping in beside me won a snowboard or a giant cheque and I went home with a board bag and a men's XL t-shirt.

It might be harder for men to win because there's so many of them but women have their own setbacks. Girls have a rough time hitting 60-ft. booters (I've only ever seen three of us mamas hit the Seymour step-up). If it weren't for Marie France Roy, Erin Comstock, or Ms. Dakides I would still be nose-pressing the flat box. Read up on what they went through to be where they are.

It is time for the industry to stop treating us like second-class citizens. We deserve to win that snowboard, and don't get me wrong, boys do too. This is not a cry for war or condolences - perhaps just recognition of the equal effort and blood we put in to this amazing sport.

Just how private are your UNB eServices?

BETHANY'S BRIEFING



by Bethany Vail
VP Academic

Everywhere you turn in today's world you hear about privacy concerns. It's a concern that has been magnified over the past few years when companies started transferring paper files to computers. Here at UNB, we did the same thing, moving student files from paper to the digital world.

Suddenly there were intranets with access to essentially anything you wanted to know; for better or for worse.

With all the internet and web interface security we have nowadays, we as students of UNB have a level of trust for how the university handles our information, as we rightly should. You may be shocked however to learn how much of your personal information is actually on display.

Student files used to be kept in locked file cabinets. If a professor needed access to information they had to justify themselves to the person manning the reception desk before viewing the file. Now with student files being digital, a professor or instructor may leisurely log onto their e-services account where they can view personal information about any student in their classes. No one is asked permission and this can even be done at any computer with internet access.

In order to view a student's information, the student needs to be currently registered in the course of that instructor. This information can only be viewed during the course and for a short time before and a short time after.

Student id photos are on file. Before you even enter the classroom, your professor may already know what you look like. Most professors find this useful so they can learn names quickly and interact with students in the classroom; however this makes some students feel uneasy, especially when a printed copy of faces is passed around the classroom as attendance. Once photos are printed off, the university has little control over where they go or what happens if they are lost or stolen.

A student may choose to suppress their photo, but the default setting is that a student must opt-out of having their photo displayed, rather than opting-in. Currently, any student who wishes to suppress their photo may do so by logging into their e-services and selecting the "personal" tab. Click on the privacy link under that tab to remove your photo from being seen by professors and instructors for your current courses.

High school marks and transcripts are available for viewing also. While this is very useful to academic advisors, one questions its usefulness to professors and instructors. A professor is free to haphazardly scan your marks before marking your term paper, or at any other time they wish. This may cause a bias towards or against a student which compromises academic integrity.

Your address and phone number is also listed for a professor to view. Teaching Assistants have been granted access to all of this information as well, some of whom are upper year undergraduate students. Clearly, they should not have access to their peers' personal information.

There is current debate whether

UNB's actions toward privacy comply with provincial legislation. Even if it does, one questions if morally UNB should let students' personal information be on display, especially without their knowledge or consent. Although students agree to UNB's policies and regulations when they sign up to attend our university, there are likely few students, if any, who are aware of the level of access to their private information.

Currently, I, your Student Union Vice President Academic, along with Vice-President Academic Jane Fritz, ITS, and other groups on campus are part of a "task force" created to look into this matter.

The group was created based on the premise that there may be too much information on display and that student's privacy may be compromised. This task force has been working on proposed changes to what information is accessible on each individual student and to whom it will be accessible to.

The idea of changing what personal information is available to who was brought forward at the last Senate meetings in November. Surprisingly, some professors spoke out against the changes. It seems that there is a mindset at UNB that students cannot be taught without their photo and home phone number readily accessible. I do not agree. The only access that should be granted is access actually necessary to properly instruct a course. Anything else should be hidden from individuals who have no real reason for seeing information that is very sensitive and personal. Students shouldn't expect anything less from their university.

The matter has not yet been resolved, and will come forward to both the Fredericton and Saint John Senates again. Hopefully these changes pass, because this will certainly be a very positive step toward protecting the privacy of students here at UNB.

Take the bus to Crabbe Mountain Every Saturday and Sunday

Departure Times:
 8:00 A.M. YMCA
 8:15 A.M. SUB
 8:30 A.M. Rossy's
 8:40 A.M. Keswick Landing

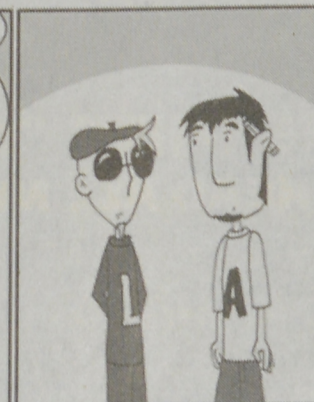
Leaves Crabbe Mountain at 5pm, stops at all locations!

\$40 - includes lift ticket, rentals and bus
 \$30 - lift ticket and bus
 \$15 - bus only

Runs everyday through March Break

Phone: 463-8311 www.crabbemountain.com

Art & Lit



FOR MORE SEE MOOCARTOON.DEVIANTART.COM