



Jay
Leno



Mo
Rocca

First, the GOP — and now 'Leno'

'Tonight Show's' Mo
Rocca in town to size
up convention plans

BY JASON HOPPIN
Pioneer Press

Next year's Republican National Convention will give the Twin Cities some prime-time national exposure, but are we ready for late-night TV?

"The 'Tonight Show with Jay Leno'" will be in town this week to tape a segment on how planning for the convention is coming along. A whirlwind Thursday tour will include stops at Rice Park, the Xcel Energy Center and Nicollet Mall, where a hat or two will very likely be tossed skyward near the statue of Mary Tyler Moore.

With Leno cooling his heels back in Burbank, Calif., comedian Mo Rocca is spearheading the visit. Reached in Denver while checking up on the Democratic National Convention, Rocca said he's long been a fan of the Twin Cities and is well versed in the rivalry between the two cities.

"I want to know if Minneapolis is going to try to steal the

'Tonight Show'

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credit (for the convention) from St. Paul," Rocca said. "St. Paul has long been treated as the Nikki Hilton to Paris."

As you can tell, you can expect the visit to be reminiscent of "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart" correspondent Rob Corddry's tongue-in-cheek 2005 "investigation" of the Rice Park "Peanuts" statue controversy.

Rocca plans to bike to work with Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak and perhaps listen to St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman take a turn on the bagpipes.

Asked about the wisdom of playing bagpipes on national TV, Coleman said he's not sure it's a go. Apparently, once you warm up an Xcel Energy Center crowd for Rod Stewart, it's hard to go back.

"I won't do anything less than a 10,000-seat arena," Coleman deadpanned.

Rocca knows St. Paul, rattling off several little-known facts about the city. The occasional political commentator also praised any state that could elect Rudy Boschwitz and Paul Wellstone, and he volunteered that he thought Jesse Ventura's idea to merge the Minnesota House and Senate into a single legislative body was a good one.

"The only reason I'm coming to Minnesota is so I can use the

word 'unicameral,'" Rocca said.

There is one other stop Rocca would like to make while he's here.

"I want to go to that polka bar again," he said, referring to Nye's Polonaise Room.

The visit also will include a return to the Mall of America,

which apparently didn't go well the last time Rocca went there.

"I shouldn't have ridden the rollercoaster after eating that Cinnabon," he said.

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