

Hultquist, Bob

# Firefighter scores on game show

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By JULIA ASHBERRY  
Staff Reporter

A Belleville firefighter was nicknamed King of the Hill after friends saw his appearance on the television game show Jackpot this week.

As a contestant on the half-hour show, which is filmed in Toronto, Bob Hultquist says being king of the hill was an interesting—and profitable—way to spend a few accumulated days off work.

The shows are pre-recorded, and producers have prohibited Hultquist from revealing the final outcome of his sojourn as king of the hill. But the 41-year-old Belleville resident has been doing a lot of smiling recently as he performs his duties at the Moira Street East fire station.

The 12-year veteran of the Belleville Fire Department was first seen Monday on the Bob Stewart production televised on Global stations at 7:30 p.m. Jackpot is hosted by Mike Darrow, who oversees the rapid delivery of riddles by and to each show's 16 contestants.

Hultquist says he auditioned for Jackpot "on a dare" from a friend who had ventured from Ottawa to the Toronto recording studio for a shot at being a contestant. Ironically, Hultquist was later accepted as a contestant but his friend wasn't chosen from the almost 20,000 people who apply for auditions yearly.

The audition process requires applicants to answer 20 general knowledge questions and 20 riddles, followed by a recital of various riddles. Of approximately 40 people interviewed on the day of Hultquist's audition, he was the only applicant selected as a contestant.

Hultquist says he has always been a fan of trivia and trivia games. But he



BOB HULTQUIST

had no inkling of his knack for riddle-solving.

"The first hurdle is the first riddle," says Hultquist, who adds that he's "not much of a public speaker."

"The cameras are intimidating—I

was nervous the whole week," says Hultquist, who had a taste of television taping in previous years of local Kinsmen television bingo filming.

An entire week of half-hour Jackpot segments is filmed during one 12-hour stint in the television studios. Hultquist says his Jackpot appearances required five costume changes for each day of taping.

Hultquist says the show's absence of a studio audience may have limited the tension on the set. The sound of applause is created by the contestants who cheer for each other, he explains. Each correctly answered riddle adds to the show's cash jackpot.

When the enthusiasm of contestants appears to wane, offstage Jackpot employees start to gesture encouragement to those in front of the cameras. But Hultquist says contestants' reactions to uncovering a Jackpot riddle are spontaneous.

"I defy anybody who goes on that show to see Jackpot and not yell," he says.

Hultquist had a chance to read a jackpot riddle—and share in the potential Jackpot—during Tuesday night's show. But television viewers will have to wait for tonight's show to see the results of Hultquist's jackpot riddle card.

Jackpot, which is created by American producers and is aired on several American television stations, can also be viewed on Canadian stations weekday afternoons. But Hultquist is featured in the evening shows this week.

After his introduction to competing on television game shows, and the as yet undisclosed financial benefits of the venture, Hultquist says he'd audition for another game show "in a minute."

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