

Guest Column: You don't have to come in first place to win

May 20, 2022



Here are three unrelated topics that, although quite different, have one thing in common: Even a loss can be a win.

Having what you want is not as important as wanting what you have

For about 30 seconds last Saturday, I was the owner of the fastest car in Del Norte County, maybe even in all of Northern California.

Don Nuss Jr., as we know, built some of the world's fastest cars right here in Crescent City. Some even set world land speed records in their class at the Bonneville Salt Flats.

After Don Nuss's passing, an auction was held Saturday, May 14, at his Redwood Welding Service shop to sell his race cars and motorcycles, metal fabrication and machine shop equipment and tools. Lots of great stuff.

There was only two things from the hundreds of items offered at the auction that I truly wanted: the beautiful blue Streamliner that set a world land speed record of 336 mph; and Don Nuss's library of engineering and

metallurgy manuals that helped him design and create his Streamliner and other magnificent vehicles.

At \$5, I was the only bidder for the library. I still had money in my pocket for the Streamliner.

It didn't matter that I'm not exactly streamlined, myself, or that even if I ever managed to squeeze into this cruise missile I would have to be extracted with a shop crane and a gallon of axle grease. And I didn't care that the when I drove it down Highway 101, it held only enough gas to go about 10 miles. I had to have it. After all, it is a part of Crescent City history!

An online bidder started at \$10,500. I raised it to 11 thousand; back and forth in \$500 increments until I hit a plateau at \$17,500. I had promised my wife I would not go above \$11,000. But there she was, the beautiful blue Streamliner. And my wife was hundreds of miles away.

I begged the crowd for support. Did they want the Streamliner to go to some anonymous online bidder? I promised to keep the Streamliner right here in Crescent City where she was born. A member of the crowd offered to throw in \$500. My brother Dennis chipped in another \$1,500.

I was back in! Nothing was going to hold me back now!

Eighteen thousand, eighteen-five; nineteen, nineteen-five. Damn! This online bidder isn't going away! Twenty thousand, twenty thousand five hundred. Twenty-one, twenty-one five hundred. Twenty-two, twenty-two-five.

The feeling must have been similar to what the Streamliner driver felt roaring across the salt flats watching the speedometer needle spin until it broke off. Faster and faster, closer and closer to victory. I felt it.

And then, the mystical powers of marriage intervened. Still more than 800 miles away, my wife must have known (again) that I was going through a crazy spell. Her message, sent through the clouds, the breeze, the birds, the bees, arrived at \$24,500: "Stop, you dummy."

For what seemed like a full minute, the online bidder failed to respond. Maybe he got the same message. "Oh crap! I might actually win this thing! It's mine! Wait 'til I tell my wife what I bought her!"

And then, the online bidder spoke up: "Twenty-five thousand."

It was over. I was out. The Streamliner was his.

The exhilaration remained. Disappointed? Certainly. Things didn't turn out all bad. I paid my five dollars and got a great set of books that will keep me building Streamliners in my dreams for years. And my wife got to keep \$24,500 that we desperately need to make some home improvements.

But for 30 seconds....

Ex-Sheriff Waltz pleads to single misdemeanor

Ex-sheriff Randy Waltz pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor last week to settle one of the strangest prosecutions in recent memory. Waltz was originally charged with three voter and election fraud-related felonies regarding his residence address. He resigned as the appointed sheriff, and withdrew from the race to be elected to a four-year term.

The case was scheduled for a preliminary hearing last Thursday. The defense did not object to the prosecutor's request to reduce Count 3 to a misdemeanor. In exchange for Waltz's plea of no contest to that charge, the prosecution moved to dismiss Counts 1 and 2.

Waltz will serve no custody time, nor will he be placed on probation. He was fined \$1,000. The plea pursuant to *People v. West* indicates that Waltz, in pleading no contest, did not actually agree with the accusatory facts. Nevertheless, the court found a factual basis to support the conviction.

There is some indication that Waltz will later seek an expungement of his conviction, which will wipe it off the books. Both sides got more or less what they wanted. An unpopular case was resolved without impaneling a jury and taking the case to trial.

Final qualifying lap for County Supervisor

We are about to enter the final qualifying lap in the race for three seats on the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors. There are three candidates for District 3, four candidates for District 4, and five candidates for District 5 running in the June 7 primary election.

A candidate must receive at least 50 percent of the votes, plus one, to avoid a run-off in the November General Election, otherwise the top two candidates will face off against each other, and the top vote getter in November will be elected to the office.

Those candidates who do not make the cut in the June primary might be comforted by the reminder that is a lot less trouble to place third in the primary than second in the general election.