

Our City

Second sucks. Second is always the first loser. Second best is still second. All the previous phrases are ones that I have heard and used more than once. Yet, I have been doing some reflecting this past week about second place in regards to my students' performances two weeks previous. Second doesn't sit well with me; it never has. Although I have finished second or lower more than I have ever won. As I crested the highest point of Hillcrest heading north this morning on my walk I was about 90 minutes later than normal and what I saw made me realize that second isn't always bad. Throughout most of the walk, stars twinkled above then started to fade as the sky turned to the darkest of blue and a sliver of pink stretched across the eastern horizon below which still lay a blanket of black as far as my eyes could see. In the blanket the stars above were replaced by the sparkle of lights that shown brightly in whites, yellows, blues and reds 180 degrees fore and aft again for as far as I could see. It's a sight that I have seen more than once but never appreciated the dichotomy, the reversal of perspective. This particular view always seemed second, inconsequential, to views I more fully appreciated when I have been in wilder and more remote places. But this morning I fully grasped the beauty of it finally. As I continued down Hillcrest and passed behind The Ranch, Robin Adkins must have been baking, as aromas of fresh dough and sweet things filled my senses. A smile crossed my lips as I realized that second ain't always so bad.

My walks still take me throughout town; as they continue to work in, around and through the changing seasons of April, I find myself again pleased that our City crews continue to make progress as they cleanup from winter and service critical infrastructure. While the Street Department is in a holding pattern, Superintendent Daren Dahlke and Public Works Coordinator Jeremy Peirsol decipher some budgeting issues needed for major projects. The Street Department continues to sweep streets, repair potholes, clean storm drains and gutters, all the while helping out wherever else needed. They are also gearing up for the Spring Cleanup that will begin next Monday, weather permitting. Please heed the notices you have or will receive about how to sort and pile the debris you would like the City to haul to the dump for you. It will make the service we are providing much more efficient and allow us to continue it next year. Thank you in advance for your help.

The Waste Water Department has begun filming the sewer lines they have cleaned. They work to identify trouble spots in need of further cleaning or repair. They also began flushing fire hydrants this week; exercising the hydrant valves and moving water throughout the system. The Water and Waste Water Departments have gone to a weekly work schedule of four ten hour days in order to make more efficient use of their time on major undertakings like flushing sewers, filming and repairing various services where needed. Personnel will still be regularly available Monday through Friday from 8:00 to 5:00 to meet your needs. Of course if you need them outside of regular business hours they will be available as well, just like always.

As I walked out to Willow Bay later this morning with my granddaughter Grace, grandson Ike and Sally's folks Don and Suzanne, we saw the Interfaith Volunteer group hard at work picking up garbage, clearing willows and generally contributing greatly to the appeal of the area. My thanks to this and other groups who continually find ways to improve this place many of us choose to call home. You each make a positive difference for the rest of us. Thank you again for being the right type of role model.

I think too often the efforts of others on our behalf goes unrecognized and certainly underappreciated; to this I am not immune. Too often the piece of trash we never see, the working sewer line we never think about, water at our tap, the streets we drive on and the parks our kids and grandkids play at lack any significance in our daily lives until that piece of trash turns into thousands or the sewer no longer flows; then we notice. It's not unlike second place, most people, except those who were second, rarely remember who finished second in anything. And, often things like trash and infrastructure go unnoticed until they can't.

As I continued past The Ranch, with Robin's baking still in my nose, I thought back to a conversation I had with our second place Ag Issues team and a bit of news I received last Monday. Of the seven members on the team, five have pledged to each other to continue their efforts next year as seniors, efforts that I have no doubt will carry them to the National event in 2017. They don't want to be remembered as the team that broke the streak, but as the team that placed first in the nation. "It's not going to end like this," the five almost said in unison. Sometimes, second place provides the motivation for something much different. I learned a long time ago the defeat will make you better or bitter; the only difference is I.

The news I received Monday brought shouts of joy from seven different students. I wrote last week that Shanice Allen had set a personal goal last October but that it wasn't realized as the FFA only takes State winners to the National events. It appears this is true except in events that are relatively new and in which they are trying to encourage participation. This is the fourth year that the Novice Parliamentary Procedure Career Development Event (ninth grade only in Idaho) has been a National event and the last year they will allow two teams from each state to participate. As it turns out, at least this year second place for seven freshmen was good enough to make it to the next level and provided them with an opportunity to make their best better. Second place also provided the incentive for five other students to turn bitter into better. As I finished my walk and my reflections, I concluded that second didn't always suck and in the case of at least 12 of my students, it ain't so bad.

Until next week...