Agony of defeat in civics competition

Before the cat was taken out of the box, Sedona International Film Festival Executive Director Patrick Schweiss could place signs and other markers on city streets. This was one possible answer to a round of questions during Sedona’s first civics challenge, put on by Northern Arizona University’s Philosophy in the Public Interest, the Other Lifelong Learning Institute and the League of Women Voters, Verde Valley chapter, at the Yavapai College Sedona Center on Thursday, Feb. 11.

The perfect eight-team bracket was nearly shattered however, forcing me to break my journalistic integrity and join the competition.

Two teams dropped out without explanation from the challenge. In a tournament designed specifically to raise voter awareness and knowledge about city, state and U.S. issues and powers, the two major political parties did not show. Both the Democrat of the Red Rocks and the Mingus Mountain Republican Club were no-shows, drawing a few quick barbs from the audience toward the national parties in general.

Two three-person teams needed to be formed and after waiting as long as I thought possible to raise my hand, for the good of the nation’s voters, I volunteered. Along with two brave women, we formed the creatively-named Wild Card No. 1, still attempting to hide behind my relative anonymity as a copy editor.

I had already been singled out earlier. Those in attendance will remember me as the one who did not sing along with Shonda Jepperson, the night’s entertainment. I hate singing in public, even as a young kid going to church I just mouthed the words. But Jepperson called me out with a smile on her face and I was left speechless, this time not by choice.

Civics can be a lot like football

Rotary Club of Sedona, Rotary Club Sedona Red Rocks, the city of Sedona and Sedona Red Rock High School will compete in the final rounds of Sedona Civics Challenge.

If you didn’t have tickets to the Super Bowl, relax, you can be at a more exciting contest. The Sedona Civics Challenge semi-final and final quiz.

Both events pit the top teams that survived the previous elimination rounds. The four winning teams will face off against each other on Thursday, Feb. 18, at 6:30 p.m. in Yavapai College’s Sedona Center on Cultural Park Drive — across State Route 89A from SR517, room 3A, until our first Sedona Civics Champion emerges.

Both the Super Bowl and the SCC call for a particular set of skills. In football, it’s running, passing and tackling. In the SCC it’s knowledge of our city, state and nation.

Both events call for teamwork. Football has 11-person teams, the SCC has three-person teams.

The SCC championship pits teams from four leading community organizations against each other in exciting quizzes. Each team wants to be the Sedona’s Civics Challenge Champion. Each hopes to be the team that gets a congratulatory call from President Obama, a visit to the White House, guest appearances on the late night talk shows and a ticker tape parade downtown Route 89A in Sedona. Who knows, maybe they will.

Actually, by stepping up to participate in this showdown, all of these groups are making a much-appreciated contribution to bringing civics to our community’s attention in an animated, informative way. These SCC players will serve as role-models of what concerned, reasonably well-informed citizens know.

This event is being put on by the League of Women Voters Greater Verde Valley, in the Public Interest at NAU, and the Other Lifelong Learning Institute. Admission is free. The winners will be celebrated that evening at a party that also honors the 96th birthday of the League of Women Voters, founded in 1920 to ensure that women, who had newly achieved the right to vote that year, would be informed and engaged voters.

The quiz questions will be about government, history and current events. About one-third will be about the USA, a third about Arizona and a third about Sedona and the Verde Valley. They will call for the range of knowledge every good citizen should have.

In fact, during the quiz, audience members will jot down their own answers, thereby being active participants in the whole experience and getting feedback on what they do and don’t know.

Although the quiz will be more educational and fun than cut-throat competitive, the audience’s cheers for the players on their favorite teams surely will spur them on. But answers shouted from the audience and no busy Googling on cell phones. And the whole contest will be commercial-free. For more information, contact Barbara Littrell 649-0135 or blittrell@azcentral.com.

streak hit a snag. Basking in the glory of knowing when Arizona became a state, “I never met a multiple choice test I didn’t like,” was heard, swiftly followed by frustrated groans. Everyone seemed to do well, though, with quite a few proud faces as we paused the trays of cookies and coffee on our way out.

League member Barbara Littrell took an opportunity at the end to remind everyone to register to vote, as "Arizona tries to suppress our vote in many different ways." I was unclear what she meant by that, though some were...
angry at the closed primary Arizona currently holds.

The competition was also a good time to gauge our local club’s and official’s knowledge of the basics. The city, featuring Vice Mayor Mark DiNunzio, seemed to be the most dominant, though they did catch a couple bobs on Question 10 when they seemed to balk an answer. They will possibly face former city manager Tim Ernster and the Rotary Club of Sedona. Rotary in general did well, as Rotary Club Sedona Red Rocks also defeated its opponents.

The Great Decisions team, Sedona Verde Valley Free Thinkers and the equally creatively-named Wild Card No. 2 joined us in the looser’s column, but hopefully everyone had a good enough time to swing back in next week to see the semi- and final rounds of the Sedona Civics Challenge.

Thursday, Feb. 18, at 6:30 p.m. at Yavapai College’s Sedona Campus.

I’m going to go brush up on my check and balances.

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