

I read in the Times Standard last week that Eureka is nationally rated as one of America's coolest small towns. Who decides what towns are cool and not? It was a Jetsetter website! Pray tell, what did they say makes Eureka a 'cool' town? Answer: "Victorian architecture, unique local businesses, the waterfront and a vibrant arts community..." These things all sound pretty 'cool' to me, and perhaps warrant a few moments of reflection.

Last weekend a premiere example of cool—if by cool you mean 'waterfront, plus unique local businesses, plus vibrant-arts-----was on full display in the form of the Kinetic Sculpture race. I know, the Race travels from Arcata to Ferndale. But, it goes through Eureka and showcases the artisans and <sup>architecture</sup>craftiness of our whole county. I was with my adult children for the weekend and they decided that since they now live in the uniformly bland suburb of Vacaville, they would like to see Humboldt in all its creative glory. So we went to Arcata to see the start of the Kinetic Sculpture race. Well sort of... we were a bit late because the surf was pretty good (another thing that makes Humboldt cool). We arrived just in time to see people walking away from the Plaza and I knew I was in trouble. But, thankfully not everyone left with those kinetic contraptions; many stayed to grab a bite to eat or watch a street artist escape from a straightjacket and chains. So, we saw the Kinetic crowd, which was almost as entertaining as the Kinetic sculptures. Alas, we missed the Flying Pink Elephant, Blue Whale, Shark, Meri the Monarch Butterfly, the Busy Bee from Eugene, a Trilo-bike and a whole lot of Kinetic machines that defy name or description...

"This is Humboldt County at its best," my son said. Yep, this is Humboldt at its crazy lunatic, wild-and-creative best. I thought... Creativity comes in interesting packages around here—maybe everywhere.

Come Monday, in order to redeem myself, I readily agreed to drive to Ferndale for the finish. We were entertained as we stopped at the Eel River and watched many of the tired crews peddle across the shallow river; well, some peddled, some paddled ~~across~~. Two ladies piloting a Bee like quadracycle got hung up on a rock at water's edge. Several guys watching, including me, were sorely tempted to render assistance by giving them a big push up and out of the water. They glowered at us: as if to say, "Don't you dare touch our Busy Bee!!!" They said it anyway, so we backed off from our <sup>feeling about it</sup> ~~male~~ chivalry. I heard later that you lose your Ace status if anyone pushes or pulls from outside the vehicle. I guess they wanted to Ace the race... come hell or high water.

Finally, we drove to Ferndale for the finish line some 42miles from Saturday's start. With much fanfare the crews piloted their kinetic sculptures the final few yards as they pedaled across the line... "For the glory?" "We're all in the brotherhood and sisterhood of lunatics," said one participant. Now that's "cool."

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment