

MY CO₂-POWERED CAR LESSON

One little flaw and ... pfft. But was it a total loss?

By Jarom Harris

I had an assignment in my physics class to build a CO₂ (carbon dioxide)-powered race car. We started with a block of wood, and with careful planning, instruction, and eventual approval from our teacher, we were able to construct our cars.

On day one of construction, I was kind of nervous. I had never tried to carve anything out of wood and had never seen or even heard of the big machines we were supposed to use. After the teacher helped me for the first little bit, I gained the confidence to move forward by myself, and I was surprised at how simple, easy, and fun the machines were to use. After cutting out the main design and drilling the holes for the axle, I began sanding. I helped a few others sand their cars too.

I spent the next two class periods painting my car. I don't have the best painting or art skills, but I did the best I could. It took me a long time, and I made sure that each stroke was perfect and that the color flow from lighter to darker was smooth and made sense. Some of my friends complimented me on the design when I was finished.

Race day caught me by surprise, as I still had not put in the axles and wheels, and I had close to zero time to finish everything I needed to do before the race. In a panic,

I realized that the axle would not fit into the hole I drilled on the first day because the paint covered it. I quickly drilled new holes, but my aim was just slightly askew, making the axles wonky and unbalanced. The back wheels didn't spin freely, and one of the front wheels didn't even touch the racing surface. I replaced that wheel with a larger one to compensate. It looked ridiculous.

I made the final adjustments to my car while watching everybody else in the class

“Maintain an enthusiasm for learning throughout your life. Find joy in continuing to learn and in expanding your interests.” *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 10.

race their creations. Some cars flew super fast, sometimes even crash-landing into the box designated as the finish line and losing wheels. For the most part, everyone's car made it to the finish.

Then it came time for me to race, and I knew my car was going to have trouble. When the button was pressed and the car launched, it pathetically lost its big wheel and



ILLUSTRATION BY ALLEN GARBIS



stopped about 10 feet from where it started. I glanced at it with a cringe of disappointment. I thought to myself, “Just one mistake messed it up. If it weren’t for that one mistake, it probably would have reached the finish line.”

It was an utter flop. I was anguished by my lack of success.

But toward the end of class I realized something that changed everything.

In spite of what had happened, I had actually made that car—it was still my own work. I had had fun learning how to use those machines, sanding, and painting. I had done the work and learned from my mistakes, and that was what really mattered.

I may not have had the best woodworking or painting skills. I might not have even gotten an A on the project, but I walked happily down the hallway anyway, knowing that I have my own abilities and inabilities, and that I can learn. I am grateful for that knowledge. Just as long as I keep learning and trying, I will always have an A+ in the class of life, where Heavenly Father is the teacher and provider. I’m so grateful for the knowledge of a loving Heavenly Father who knows us and has blessed each of us with diverse traits and the ability to learn. **NE**

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