

Run for Olympic gold unforgettable

Oxford designer overwhelmed by bobsled win

BY QUANNAH LEONARD

REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

OXFORD — The tears didn't roll, they poured from Bob Cuneo's eyes when he watched the U.S. four-man bobsledding team win the gold medal in the 2010 Winter Olympics last month.

Cuneo, 63, is the engineer and constructor behind the "Night Train" bobsled that driver Steve Holcomb and his push team rode to victory.

"There is no way to describe it," Cuneo said Tuesday from his office at his business, Chassis Dynamics.

Last month, friends gathered at the Brookside Inn Restaurant to watch the race, and at least 50 assembled again on Wednesday at the same restaurant to recognize Cuneo's accomplishment.

State Sen. Robert J. Kane, R-Watertown, and State Rep. David K. **Labriola**, R-Naugatuck, issued Cuneo a citation from the legislature, and also brought a proclamation from Gov. M. Jodi Rell, extending congratulations to him and "Night Train."

"It's the pride of Connecticut," said **Labriola**.

Cuneo's friend, Tanya Carver, who lives in Oxford, organized both events at the restaurant, a favorite of Cuneo. She said this is big for Oxford, and for her friend.

"I'm really proud of him to have something like this," Carver said. "I know he's been at it for a long time."

Carver said she knew this was her friend's last year as lead engineer, and thought this was a way to recognize him.

Cuneo, who lives in Bethany, has been assembling bobsleds for the U.S. men's and women's Olympics teams since 1994. With the help of funding from NASCAR veteran Geoff Bodine, he manufactures the sleds under a nonprofit called Bo-Dyn Bobsled Project.

Typically after an Olympics, the bobsleds are shipped and stored at Cuneo's business at 91 Willenbrock Road. But this year, they will be housed at a Goodyear racing tire facility in North Carolina.

It's time to pass the baton to another engineer, Cuneo said. He will semi-retire and continue to help as an engineering consultant, he said. He wants more time to spend with his wife, Karen, and to explore other opportunities, including building specialty cars and returning to his involvement with auto racing.

"If I never back off, I will never get passed," Cuneo said.

Cuneo flew to Vancouver to watch his sleds compete. He's also an inspection official for the sleds, but not his own. He watched the four men cross the finish line from the inspection area.

After the winning race, other officials hugged him and shook his hand.

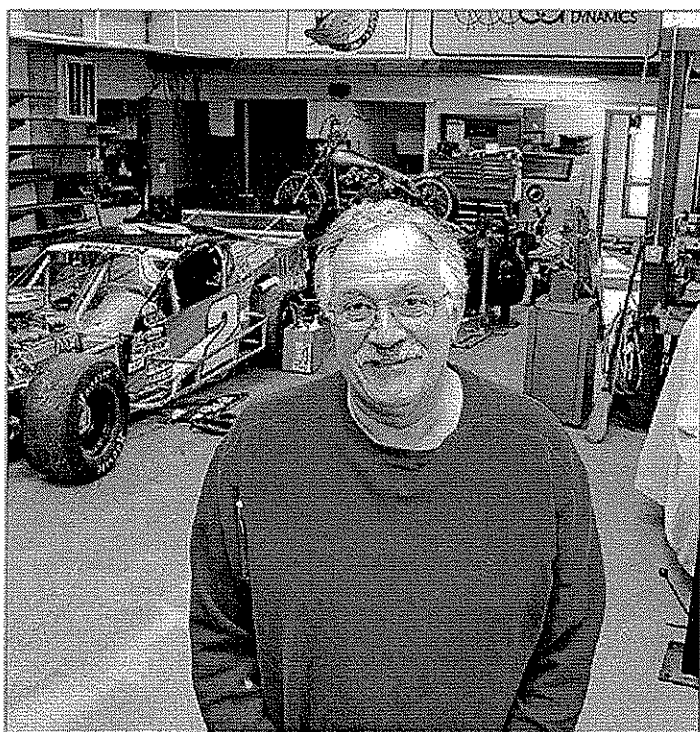
In the weeks following the Olympics, Cuneo's phone has buzzed nonstop, and he has been to other special events that have recognized his achievement.

He went to the Atlanta Motor Speedway earlier this month.

Many racing participants have felt close to the bobsled project over the years, he said. Cuneo has manufactured cars for auto racing since 1970.

He even had the chance to hold the gold medal in his hand. Tears poured then, too, he said. When you've invested that much in a project, it's natural to be moved, he said.

"I think the only time I was that moved was the time when my children were born," Cuneo said.



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Bob Cuneo's business, Chassis Dynamics in Oxford, has assembled bobsleds for the U.S. men's and women's Olympics teams since 1994. The four-man bobsled team won a gold medal in the 2010 Winter Olympics, and Cuneo was honored by state legislators at the Brookside Inn Restaurant in Oxford on Wednesday evening.