

Contest winner: It's more about persistence than luck

By Susan Gilmore
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Dennis Pappas caught the bug on a trip to Reno in 1972. He picked seven of eight winning numbers in Keno and won \$1,200.

It was his first big jackpot, but far from his last.

"I only married him for his luck," said his wife, Jan, sitting in their Woodinville home recently.

Since the Keno win, Pappas has won two cars; trips to Hawaii, Las Vegas and Harrison Hot Springs in British Columbia; concert tickets; gift cards; Seattle Mariners tickets; and cash.

"I think it's because I do it over and over again. Some things are going to hit," said Pappas, 64, who said he probably enters six contests a week. Many are sponsored by local radio stations.

Only Lotto has eluded him — he buys three tickets each week.

Before he sends in a contest entry, he reads the rules carefully to make sure his e-mail address won't be shared and he won't get on a junk-mail list.

A lot of his winnings come from radio contests, where prizes are awarded to the seventh or 15th caller, and he can cash in on his fast fingers on the telephone buttons.

In 2003, station KBSG was giving away a new Volkswagen. Pappas made it into the final drawing of 54 contestants. Each person reached into a bucket to retrieve a car key, but only one key would open the car.

Pappas was contestant No. 37, and he was certain the car would be given away before his chance, but it wasn't. He reached in for a key and it opened the car. It was his.

He kept the car for a year, before trading it in for a Lexus.

In 1976, Pappas called in on another radio contest, was the seventh caller, and correctly answered a trivia question — the answer was Elvis — and was entered into another drawing. He picked up a 1956



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Dennis Pappas of Woodinville is an avid contest participant whose winnings have included two cars.

gold Cadillac, which he gave to his neighbors, who were in love with it.

He told his neighbor to take the car for a spin. When the neighbor returned, Pappas handed him the title.

Pappas, now retired, worked in inventory control and always had the radio playing, which is how he was able to enter so many contests.

Pappas' winnings have included several trips. One radio-station contest sent him to Maui.

And when he went to a travel agency to buy tickets to Disneyland, he entered a contest. When he got the agency's newsletter, he found his name at the top as the grand-prize winner of a trip to Las Vegas.

Pappas also won a trip to the Napa Valley, where he had a chance to make a 10-foot putt and win \$25,000. He missed.

Pappas figures he spends about an hour a day researching and entering contests. "If you don't play, you can't win," he says. "I do it so much. You throw something against a wall, something's going to stick."

Pappas has a two-page list of his winnings, some large and some small: T-shirts, a canned ham, a watch, Mariners tickets, second-row seats at a Michael Bublé concert. It's not all free; he has to pay taxes on his winnings.

At home, Pappas has prepared a chart listing the times various radio stations sponsor their contests. He sets a timer to turn on the radio at 7:45 every morning.

Pappas doesn't consider himself a particularly lucky man. "I don't always win. I don't win more percentagewise; I just do it more," he said "I've learned to be patient. I may never win another thing again."

What he'd really like to win is a cruise. Oh, yes, and a big Lotto jackpot.

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