

The Leader

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IN DEPTH • IN TOUCH • INDEPENDENT • SINCE 1889

\$1.50

MEET THE NEW BOSS A2 • JEFFCO PRIDE A9 • LINER NOTES B2

BRINNON
110°

PORT TOWNSEND
100°

SEATTLE
104°

PORTLAND
116°

TRIPLE DIGITS

Historic heat wave is too hot to handle



A visitor to Fort Worden cools off on the beach south of Point Wilson. *Leader photo by Brian Kelly*

Temperatures climb past 100 throughout Jefferson County

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Emma dog-paddled her way back to the shore at Point Hudson, took a few steps on the beach, and bounded back into the water.

“The dog days of summer,” laughed John Graham of Sequim as he watched his golden retriever go after a stick for the umpteenth time.

It certainly wasn’t a day at the beach for most of Jefferson County Monday, as Jefferson County — and the rest of the Pacific Northwest — was dogged by triple-digit temperatures from a horrid and historic heat wave.

Record high temperatures were shattered across the region as residents retreated indoors, restaurants closed, and local governments sent employees home.

Port Townsend hit the 100-degree mark, surpassing the record of 96 set on Aug. 9, 1960.

Elsewhere, it was even hotter: 110 degrees in Brinnon, and 108 in Forks. Seattle reported a high of 104, and in Portland, Oregon, it was a sweltering and suffocating 116.

The National Weather Service issued an excessive heat warning last week that



Emma, a golden retriever belonging to John Graham of Sequim, enjoys the water at Point Hudson. *Leader photo by Brian Kelly*

stretched into Tuesday. And from Shine to the West End, residents sweated, suffered, and looked for relief.

STATE OF EMERGENCY DECLARED

The scorching weather prompted the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners to declare a “state of emergency” Monday.

The proclamation ordered county operations

at the Jefferson County Courthouse to be closed for “the safety and welfare of citizens and employees.”

The county courthouse in Port Townsend, built in 1892, does not have air conditioning. “It holds a lot of heat and gets a lot of sun,” Chair Kate Dean told her board colleagues before the measure was passed.

Jefferson County Emergency Management Director Willie Bence agreed.

“It’s going to be pretty brutal. It’s going to be rough in there.”

The proclamation put the decision to stay open at the departmental level. With the exception of the county jail, few county buildings have air conditioning.

Jefferson County District Court was closed at noon Monday.

The county transfer station also shut down, at 2 p.m., after employees noted the temperature was 106 degrees on the tipping floor.

Jefferson County Superior Court was closed, as well which added another delay to the ongoing first-degree murder trial that started June 14.

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Bomb blast still under investigation

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Detectives continue to try to sort out what happened in an explosion of a homemade bomb that critically injured a 46-year-old Port Hadlock man and left his granddaughter with minor injuries.

Detective Sergeant Brett Anglin of the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office said Monday it was not clear how many homemade explosives were at the property during the June 15 explosion that shook neighborhoods near the commercial center of Port Hadlock.

Some of the homemade devices were destroyed in the blast, Anglin said.

Other pipe bombs — ones that had not yet been fitted with fuses — were recovered and later destroyed by the Washington State Patrol bomb squad.

The man injured in an explosion was identified as Jesse Thomas Taylor, 46. Authorities said he lost his left arm in the blast.

Taylor is a Port Hadlock resident and has lived on Ness’ Corner Road since October 2016, according to voter registration records.

Taylor was flown to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle aboard a medevac helicopter after the explosion.

Emergency dispatchers were flooded with calls just after 9:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 15 reporting loud explosions in the area. Some also said they saw large flames and smoke.

Detectives responding to the scene of multiple explosions in the 700 block of Ness’ Corner Road also found homemade explosives, including what appeared to be pipe bombs and improvised devices.

According to the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office, one person who called 911 reported that a man was found on the property with a chest injury and fully amputated left arm.

Taylor wasn’t the only person injured in the blast. His 6-year-old granddaughter also sustained burns to her head, authorities said.

Neighbors of the property described hearing at least one explosion, with some saying they could feel the concussion thousands of feet away. Some said they heard multiple blasts.

Scott Clements, was near the waterfront in Port Hadlock when he heard explosions.

“I heard the explosions and then I heard all of the emergency vehicles,

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Al Gawle holds up a few of the cards he received wishing him a happy 100th birthday. *Photo courtesy of Al Gawle*

Port Townsend WWII vet looks back on 100th

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Alphonse “Al” Gawle has seen it all.

Well, maybe not all of it, but this Port Townsend resident has certainly seen a lot in the century he’s spent on this earth.

The Great Depression, the rise of communism, a world war, the atomic age, a presidential assassination, the moon landing and the first Black U.S. president are just a few of the more notable events to have happened since Gawle’s birth on June 17, 1921.

Friends and family recently gathered to celebrate Gawle’s 100th birthday, complete with a classic car parade, courtesy of the Port Townsend chapter of the

“I’ve got cards from everybody, every place, people that I don’t even know.”

Alphonse “Al” Gawle
CENTENARIAN

Rakers Car Club. For his birthday, Gawle also received a flood of well wishes.

“I’ve got cards from everybody, every place, people that I don’t even know. It’ll take me a long time to get through all these cards.”

“I counted them, there’s 195 cards there,” Gawle beamed. “There’s cards from little kids who couldn’t write, but drew pictures of things.”

While it does go against his personal mantra of always looking forward, Gawle agreed to catch up with The Leader and reminisce about some of the memories he’s made over the past century.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Born in Webster, Massachusetts, Gawle was one of 14 children born to Polish and Czechoslovakian immigrant

parents, Peter and Anna Gawle (Laincz).

With so many children to feed, clothe and house, Al Gawle said toys and other luxury items were scarce when he was growing up. Gawle said he remembered scrounging around for spare change to spend on licorice, ice cream and other sweets. The youngster also had a taste for frog legs, which he would catch by paddling a wooden boat out to a nearby swamp and shining a flashlight in their eyes to stun them.

Gawle went into his sophomore year of high school before deciding that school wasn’t going to be the right environment for him at

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Vet: Life of adventure leads to home in Port Townsend

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that point in his life.

"I went into my sophomore year and I had just gotten too smart; I just couldn't teach the teachers anything," Gawle said. "I got in maybe with the wrong group of kids at that point and I was very bored with school, but I was an excellent student."

THE YOUNG MAN AND THE SEA

After dropping out of high school, Gawle was left to ponder how best to spend his days as a young man.

"It was just a matter of trying to figure out, 'What am I going to do?'" he recalled. "Somehow or another I found out that there were opening enlistments for a short period of time in the Navy."

Having enjoyed fishing trips with his father to the nearby ponds and lakes in Massachusetts, Gawle decided to pursue a life at sea for a spell.

"I enlisted for a term of six years," he said. "They closed the quota, so I was lucky to get in at that time."

Shortly after enlisting Nov. 1, 1939, Gawle packed his bags and was shipped off to Newport, Rhode Island for basic training.

After completing basic training, Gawle began his military career as an apprentice seaman, making \$21 per month.

Gawle was first assigned to the USS Hatfield — a Clemson-class destroyer — and then transferred to the USS Enterprise — a Yorktown-class aircraft carrier — after the Hatfield was turned over to the U.S. Naval Reserve. Shortly after arriving in Southern California, Gawle found himself transferred from the Enterprise to a destroyer base in San Diego.

While serving on base in San Diego, Gawle was noticed for his strong voice and good diction and given the task of manning a telephone switchboard known as a private branch exchange (PBX).

On Dec. 7, 1941 Gawle fielded a call for the base's commander. Suspecting something unusual was happening, Gawle broke protocol and listened for long enough to hear that Pearl Harbor was under attack.

Because of his unique position, Gawle said it's likely he was one of the first people in the U.S. to learn of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

SHORESIDE SHENANIGANS

It was while serving at the destroyer base in San Diego that Gawle said he experienced one of his fondest memories from his time in the service.

"Sailors typically are looking to see if there's some girlfriends they can find somewhere," Gawle recalled. "A buddy and I decided that we were going to go to a dance that was playing in downtown San Diego."

The leader of the orchestra was Glen Miller.

"We got to the dance hall and by the time we got there, we'd probably stopped and had a couple of beers and we didn't have enough money to pay the admission price," Gawle said. "So we decided to look around and see if we could sneak in somewhere."

While he's sure someone must have spotted them slipping into the venue, Gawle said nobody said a word to him and his pal. Possibly, Gawle added, this was due to the fact that they were both in uniform.

Having successfully gained unpaid entry, Gawle found the nerve to approach Miller during the intermission and asked him



Six of the Gawle brothers served in the armed forces during World War II; photographed here are Frank, Joe, Al, Henry, Paul and John. Photo courtesy of Al Gawle

for an autograph. Miller agreed, but without a show program for the musician to sign, Gawle had to think of something quick.

Remembering that he and a fellow sailor had recently tried their hand at the barber's trade and shaved each other's head bald, an idea sprang to mind.

"I took off my hat and said, 'Put it right here on my head.'"

Miller obliged.

MAKE WAY FOR THE KING

San Diego wasn't Gawle's only noteworthy shoreside trip, though.

While stationed aboard the USS Panda, he worked as the "oil king" in charge of handling the fuel tanker's many valves and fuel lines for the boat's 18 tanks, which Gawle estimated carried some 2.5 million gallons of fuel.

"There were all kinds of pipes, hoses and valves and some of those were in the bottom of the ship," Gawle recalled. "So you had a shaft that had a steel-rung ladder going all the way down the ship, probably 40 or 50 feet down."

While serving as oil king, Gawle learned that the shore boat would be making a landing at a nearby beach for a little R&R while the Panda was anchored out in a bay in Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea. Gawle also caught wind that each sailor who went ashore would find himself outfitted with some beer and cigarettes once on the beach.

Naturally, Gawle needed to be on that shore boat.

"The officer on deck was getting the shore boat ready to take us and I said, 'I have to go down below and turn some valves down there. Please wait for me, can you wait?'"

"Oh, yeah, we'll wait for you, go do it," came the reply.

Gawle scrambled as fast as he could down into the belly of the ship.

"I get down to the bottom and these valves get sticky after a while from all the gasoline, it takes a lot of strength to turn those things," he said. "I worked as fast and as hard as I could to get the job done; I come up the ladder and I look up and the shore boat was gone."

Driven by sweltering anger and a thirst for a few of life's simple amenities after having spent 36 days at sea on a massive, floating bullseye for enemy aircraft, Gawle would be damned if he didn't get his beer and cigarettes.

"I was always a good swimmer, ever since I was little," he said. "I went over to the fantail on the stern of the ship, and I dove over the side."

The waters were home to sharks, as discovered during previous swim calls wherein sailors stood guard with rifles in hand.

Without any shark guards standing watch, Gawle swam

the "quarter-mile or so" from the anchored ship to where the shore party had landed.

As the sailor emerged from the water, having completed his pilgrimage in search of just a few simple comforts, a sailor from another ship called out to Gawle.

"He says, 'Where the hell did you come from?' I says, 'Right there.' and I pointed, 'That ship over there,'" Gawle recalled. "He said, 'You're kidding!'"

So impressed was the sailor with Gawle's feat of sheer bullheadedness, he offered him one of his bottles of beer and a cigarette.

"I was so mad that I didn't even look for my own group and I didn't want anything to do with them. I figured the hell with them, you leave me behind, I can take care of myself," he said.

With his beer polished off and his cigarette snuffed, Gawle turned back to the water and swam back toward the Panda.

"I didn't want to go to the gangway, I knew what would happen if I went that way, I'd go right into the brig," Gawle said. "So, I went to the Jacob's ladder on the stern of the ship and I climbed up."

Gawle bee-lined for a shower, cleaned off the saltwater, got into a fresh change of clothes and waited for the wrath to come down as he was certain someone must've seen his approach.

"There was never one word spoken, nobody ever talked to me about it," he chuckled.

While he fondly recalled his shoreside antics, a war was on and, as such, not all of Gawle's memories from his Navy days are quite so light-hearted.

THE WORLD AT WAR

While stationed aboard the USS Amycus and bound for the Lingayen Gulf as part of an allied invasion force, Gawle was tending to nature's call when the war came knocking.

"All of a sudden, general quarters sounded," Gawle said. "When a general alarm sounds, boy, you just jump up and you go."

The Amycus was now in the fight.

In addition to his work as a metalsmith aboard the ship, Gawle also crewed a 40-millimeter deck-mounted anti-aircraft gun.

"I got up to my gun station and I was manning the 40mm gun and aircraft were flying around up above," he said.

Due to the heft of the ammo being fired by the gun, it was typical to have a loader present at the ready to rack more rounds in once the initial volley had been spent.

"The gunner is shooting, your helper is over here waiting for you to say 'reload' and he pulls that [spent magazine] off and puts another one on. Well, I got through with mine and I hollered at him to

reload and here he is down on the deck, covering his head with his hands. He was really scared. I was, too, believe me."

With an aircraft carrier nearby, the Amycus was a relatively low priority for the attacking Japanese aircraft, but that didn't prevent a pair of enemy planes from setting the Amycus in their crosshairs. One of the aircraft was shot down during the attack and the other was forced to break off the attack. When the smoke had cleared, Gawle learned that three of his shipmates had been killed and several more were injured.

A FATAL MISTAKE

On another occasion, Gawle's crew had orders to repair a Japanese suicide boat to be used by an officer for going ashore.

While his crew were working to weld shut a leak in the boat's fuel tank, they had failed to follow protocol allowing the tank time to air out after emptying the fuel. As they worked on the tank, vapors inside the tank were ignited by the welder, causing an explosion that threw shrapnel throughout the shop.

Gawle was the first to get down to the machine shop to help his fellow sailors. Recalling the men's injuries, Gawle pauses for a moment, as if he was witnessing the scene all over again.

"One of them had his forehead opened up ... the other one had a bad knee injury, a big cut," Gawle recalled.

A third sailor had suffered a shrapnel wound that removed a large part of his hand.

With only a pharmacist mate aboard the ship, Gawle and his fellow sailors were at a loss for how to treat the injured men. To boot, the ship had been observing radio silence while underway to prevent enemy attention.

Fortunately, the captain made the decision to break the radio silence and contact a hospital ship that had passed them earlier.

While waiting for the hospital ship to arrive, Gawle was struck by something one of the injured men had said.

"The only thing I remember was him saying, 'I don't know why I'm out here. Why do things like this happen? I used to work making brooms.'"

Gawle shook his head.

"He made brooms."

"But, these kinds of things happen," he added.

POST WAR YEARS

After finishing his time with the Navy, Gawle was honorably discharged Dec. 13, 1945. His discharge paperwork bears the following notations: WWII Victory Medal; American Theater Medal; Asiatic Pacific Theater Medal, with

two bronze stars; Good Conduct Medal; Philippine Liberation Medal, with one bronze star; and the American Defense Service Medal with one star.

In addition to serving on the Hatfield, Enterprise, Amycus and Panda, Gawle's hitch also included stints aboard the destroyer USS Chandler, and the supply ship USS Rigel.

With a world war now under his belt, Gawle had decided he needed to get back into school.

After taking a few community college courses and earning his high school equivalency certificate, Gawle applied and was accepted to an accelerated law degree program at Boston's Northeastern University. Five years of education later and the high school drop-out graduated from college.

A CAREER TAKES OFF

After examining a few unfruitful business prospects and a brief foray into the political sphere following his graduation, Gawle eventually found himself answering a newspaper ad for the Boeing Company. He was initially offered a factory job using the skills he'd learned in the Navy, with the promise of possibly working in the company's contracts and legal departments later.

So on Feb. 20, 1957, Gawle packed his bags again and set out for Seattle.

While with Boeing, Gawle was promoted to the company's contracts department and later Boeing's in-house legal services department.

During his tenure with the aerospace company, Gawle played a part in the outfitting of an aircraft to be used as Air Force One and participated in negotiations for a young Richard Branson as he worked to start his airline Virgin Atlantic Airways.

It was also while working at Boeing that Gawle met the woman he would marry, Colleen.

Colleen and Al Gawle were wed Nov. 13, 1965 in Seattle. Two years later, the Gawles welcomed their daughter, Shirley into the world. In 1970, they had their second daughter, Diana.

Gawle retired from Boeing on July 1, 1986. Since retiring, Gawle has enjoyed fishing and maintaining a healthy regimen of physical activity, something he figures is a carryover from his days in the Navy. On July 29, 2008, at the age of 87, Gawle walked the 13.1 mile Seafair Half Marathon despite the punishing 92 degree heat that day.

Gawle remains active today and continues to live independently in Port Townsend with his puggle Booster.

In an attempt to collect and share the memories he's made over the years and also to work through the trauma of wartime, Gawle wrote a book with the help of his daughters Diana Partovi and Shirley Lewis. "My Deck of Cards" chronicles Gawle's major life events from his childhood, to his Navy days, all the way up to recent years. Many anecdotes in this story were borrowed with permission from Gawle's book.

WHAT'S THE SECRET FORMULA?

Some may wonder what Gawle's secret to living such a long and hearty life could be, Gawle said it's partially luck.

But, he added, he lives by one guiding philosophy.

"You can't relive yesterday because yesterday is gone. You can't start living tomorrow because tomorrow isn't here, but today is," he said. "Do your best to do what you can today and then tomorrow will be today."



Al Gawle photographed during his 100th birthday celebration. Photo courtesy of Al Gawle



Gawle's family took the liberty of making up a few mementos for the special occasion, including a T-shirt and hat as well as a novelty newspaper. Photo courtesy of Al Gawle