

LIFESTYLE

OLYMPIC PENINSULA

**WHITTAKER
MAKES
HIS
WAY**

INSIDE:

**ARCHAEOLOGY OF OUTHouses
SHOOTING THE MOON
BEST HIKES OF THE OLYMPICS
CORRUPTION OF SACRED TOBACCO
GAMES AT 'STRANGE DAYS'**





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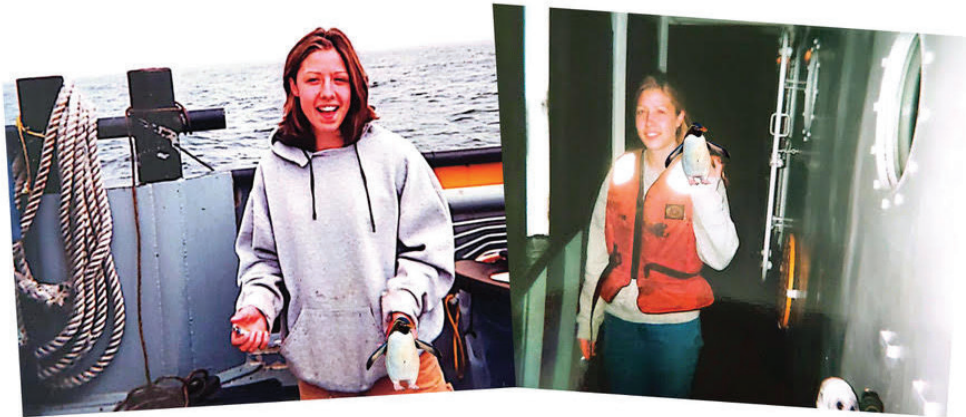
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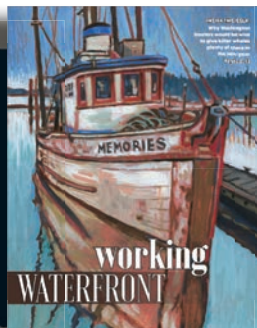
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ABOUT THE COVER

Leif Whittaker sits atop the Southeast Ridge.

Photo by Michael Brown

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RUN THE TABLE

STRANGE DAYS OFFERS COMMUNITY AND FUN THROUGH GAMES

BY KIRK BOXLEITNER

In the shadows of the mezzanine above Al-drich's, bands of adventurers come together to test their skills, and perhaps even cast spells or bravely explore supernatural realms.

The card-playing and board-gaming evenings organized by Strange Days Comics and Games in Uptown Port Townsend can range from "Magic: The Gathering" to "Dungeons & Dragons," (a.k.a. D&D), but one January night saw a circle breaking out "Betrayal at the House on the Hill."

Back in the 1990s, one character on "The X-Files" insisted he hadn't spent so many years playing D&D without learning "a little something about courage," but Strange Days owner Kristin Myers hopes her store and its events also help foster a sense of camaraderie.

Before she opened Strange Days in November 2023 in the store at 940 Lawrence St., Myers' husband Rick had co-owned a board game store in Colorado. Although he sold his share to his partner when they moved, Kristin still missed the atmosphere of that shop.

KRISTIN MYERS TAKES STOCK OF HER INVENTORY
AT STRANGE DAYS COMICS AND GAMES.

PHOTOS BY KIRK BOXLEITNER



KRISTIN MYERS ALSO CONDUCTS BOARD GAME NIGHTS, INCLUDING "BETRAYAL AT THE HOUSE ON THE HILL," A TILE GAME THAT ALLOWS PLAYERS TO BUILD THEIR OWN HAUNTED HOUSE.

Myers has held a number of jobs over the years, from artistic pursuits to service and retail gigs. She happened to be between jobs when space became available on the mezzanine above Aldrich's for a new merchant and saw the opportunity to run her own business for the first time.

"We talked about it that September, and made the decision to do it that October," said Myers, who believes she benefitted from seeing her husband's business in operation. She acknowledged that "every business is going to be different, even if you're done something in the same field in the past."

Kristin and Rick discussed ideas she was interested in implementing, and "what I'd be proud to put out there into the world." That's how she came up with a vision and mission statement for Strange Days.

"Everyone is welcome to come play here, and to build a community together," she said. "My only requirement is that they be kind to others and to themselves."

Tabletop games allow participants to "utilize parts of their brains that they might not normally exercise, or that might not otherwise be their strong suits," she said. That includes spatial, deductive and long-term reasoning.

Myers also appreciates a trend in which such games are becoming "more cooperative, rather than pitting players against each other in direct combat." She said she believes that makes it easier to learn an increasing diversity of rules and play strategies that have expanded in modern gaming.





STRANGE DAYS' GAMING STOCK RUNS FROM THE PRACTICAL, INCLUDING "MAGIC: THE GATHERING" EXPANSION PACKS, TO THE WHIMSICAL, INCLUDING "DUNGEONS & DRAGONS" PLUSH DOLLS.



In addition to sessions of "Magic: The Gathering" and "Star Wars Unlimited" on Wednesday nights, and board-gaming sessions on Thursday nights, Strange Days also conducts miniature painting nights on the first Fridays of every month. "Star Wars Unlimited" drafts and "Pulp Cthulhu" roleplaying are on Saturdays, and D&D sessions on Sundays.

Strange Days hosts miniature strategy games on are many skilled painters in this community. "We have paints and brushes for miniatures right here," Myers said. "Painting miniatures is a very Zen exercise. We even have a local miniatures artist who joins us from time to time, and shows us what he's working on," adding there the second and fourth Saturdays of every month.

JERED CROW LOOKS OVER HIS "MAGIC: THE GATHERING" DECK DURING ONE OF STRANGE DAYS' CARD GAME NIGHTS.



RYAN FLANAGAN LAYS DOWN A "MAGIC: THE GATHERING" CARD, AS SAM HOBART WAITS HIS TURN DURING ONE OF STRANGE DAYS' GAMING NIGHTS.

"We're always looking for touchstones and big events in the gaming world, so if someone is excited about some system, I'm open to that," Myers said. "Magic: The Gathering" has new releases just about every month, and a lot of game companies are really good about supplying us with materials to get new players into their games

with every new release."

She said she has been heartened to see "Magic: The Gathering" become a multigenerational pastime, with parents accompanying their children to play sessions, just as D&D celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2024, with the latest edition, the "Monster Manual," due for release in 2025.

A promotional image for the Olympic Music Festival 2025. The background is a photograph of a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a blue shirt, sitting at a grand piano and looking at a laptop. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a large, colorful graphic for the festival. The text "OLYMPIC MUSIC FESTIVAL" is in a bold, sans-serif font, with "OLYMPIC" in blue, "MUSIC" in orange, and "FESTIVAL" in purple. To the right of this, the year "2025" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below the year, the text "JULIO ELIZALDE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. Below that, the words "CONCERTS AND EVENTS" are written in a large, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom right, the text "New Event!" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, followed by "FEBRUARY 22-24" and "THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MOZART" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. Below that, the text "Discussion and viewing of AMADEUS" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom right, the text "Tickets and Information" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, followed by the website "www.OlympicMusicFestival.org" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

Myers loves not only playing these games, but teaching them as well, and acknowledged that some games can be “intimidating, or even daunting” for folks to try and learn on their own.

“Demonstrating how games work is one of my priorities,” Myers said. “There can be a lot of processes, phases and moving parts to any number of games, which even come with their own language, so I’m happy to play quick rounds to clarify the rules. Plenty of things can look complex, but they’re not as complicated as they seem.”



KRISTIN MYERS, OWNER OF STRANGE DAYS, SETS OUT SAMPLE GAMES, SUCH AS THE "HARMONIES" LANDSCAPE TILE GAME, SO THAT CUSTOMERS CAN SEE WHAT THOSE GAMES ARE ABOUT.

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CHECK SHOWTIMES

BEADING HUMOR WITH HISTORY

ARTIST LAYERS MYTHS AND REALITIES
THROUGH THE LENS OF NATIVE ART

BY ALEX FRICK



THIS AWARD-WINNING COLLECTION OF "CANCER STICKS" CATALYZED KAREN SIXKILLER'S ART CAREER. SHE CONTINUES TO TELL STORIES OF HISTORY WITH HUMOR LAYERED WITH PERSPECTIVE. PHOTOS COURTESY OF KAREN SIXKILLER

In 2015, Karen Sixkiller stood beside her booth at the annual Cherokee Art Market, a prominent, widely celebrated contest in Oklahoma featuring over 160 artists from around 50 tribes nationwide. In front of her was her original "Cancer Sticks," a collection of ornately crafted cigarette replicas of delicate beadwork.

Getting through the jury selection process felt like a long shot for Sixkiller. She was not expecting much from her "Cancer Sticks," or as she describes them today, "these goofy things." She crafted a series of dazzling anatomically correct beaded hearts, which she believed to be her show-stopping piece.

Not only did her work get past the jury, but "Cancer Sticks" earned Sixkiller the Judge's Choice Award. It was only then that she grasped its impact. With that came the realization that this was her path.

"People appreciate this sort of obscure message," she said. "Other people understand what I'm trying to say, and they appreciate it, and they appreciate the quality of my work." Close to a decade later, Sixkiller is ready to showcase a deeper connection into a world of history, humor, and the crossroads of tradition and exploitation. Her upcoming exhibit at the Longhouse at Peninsula College in Port Angeles runs from Jan. 7 to March 27, with a special presentation on Feb. 27 at 12:35 p.m.

The legacy of tobacco in North America is a complicated one. Once a sacred plant, tobacco is now synonymous with disease and addiction. Sixkiller's exhibition series, "Cancer Sticks: Corruption of Sacred Tobacco," aims to explore that transformation, utilizing her unique artistic ability to connect history with humor, and her own personal connection.



KAREN SIXKILLER'S "CALL YOU HOME" SCULPTURE FEATURES A SCREECH OWL STANDING UPON A TOBACCO PLANT STAND AS A MIRROR. SCREECH OWLS ARE SYMBOLS OF DEATH IN CHEROKEE CULTURE, BUT LIKE TOBACCO, THEY ARE NOT NECESSARILY NEGATIVE SYMBOLS.

Conceptually, Sixkiller's intricate creations are rooted in her journey. Her Cherokee heritage is a cornerstone of her art, but that was not always the case. A native Washingtonian, she was once known as Karen Fritts, after her father. Sixkiller comes from her mother's side, a family name denoting membership in one of the Cherokee warrior clans. Her mother, too, was gifted artistically.

Sixkiller received an undergraduate degree in public health, environmental health and community medicine from the University of Washington. Out of college, she had difficulty securing a paid public health internship in Seattle. She couldn't afford full-time tuition while completing an unpaid internship. In time, she received an opportunity to work for the Indian Health Service in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She wasn't searching for them, but she found her roots.

"I didn't discover that I had any connection to my Native heritage until I worked with Native people," Sixkiller said. "It was the first time I worked with Natives. It was the first time that I realized, 'Wow! These people assume the world works or should work in the same way that I assume the world should work.'"

"And, oh my gosh, without even knowing it, my mom instilled a particular value system and way of understanding the world, which is Native."

However, Sixkiller felt that her impact on public health had limits if she did not develop the ability to communicate and educate. She said that it was impossible to be effective because the only way to be effective is to teach people and help them understand how to improve their own lives. She transitioned into a career in education, developing teaching methods that emphasize the value of layered understanding, which would become her artistic signature element.

"It comes from teaching and knowing that you're supposed to be scaffolding your instruction so that students at different levels of understanding and ability are all challenged and addressed," Sixkiller said.

"PEOPLE THINK ABOUT SMOKING AND THEIR LUNGS, BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE WHAT A HUGE EFFECT IT HAS ON THEIR HEART." HER DEPICTION OF A BEADED, ANATOMICALLY CORRECT HUMAN HEART REPRESENTS THE BEAUTY OF HEALTH AND ITS VULNERABILITY.



Borrowing from her career as an educator, she approaches her art with the same scaffolding techniques in her themes to engage and educate her audience.

"I'm not interested in beauty for beauty's sake. I have things to say, and I love layering information and meaning in them," she said.

"Cancer Sticks" is a multi-layered, complex exhibition that explores the complicated nature of tobacco. It explores the myths and realities of tobacco use before and since America's colonization through the unique perspective of Native art and humor.

"Something I experienced myself and something that other people have reiterated to me is how much smoking, modern smoking, is associated with Native Americans," Sixkiller said. "Where's the truth, and where's the myth in there? And where is the disparity coming from? What's the motivation for the disparity?"

INTRICATE BEADWORK GIVES SIXKILLER'S "CALL YOU HOME" SCULPTURE BEAUTY; THE CANVAS OF A TOBACCO LEAF TELLS A STORY.

She points to American Spirits, a cigarette company that controversially uses Native American/American Indian imagery and likenesses on its packaging, causing many to believe that the brand has tribal affiliations. Sixkiller's "Un-American Spirit" is a humorous parody of the controversial brand but tells a layered story about a falsely built narrative that there is a correlation between cigarette smoking and the sacred nature of tobacco in Native culture.

"As far as I'm concerned, cigarettes are little cancers, little death doses, they're little cancer sticks, and they're deadly," Sixkiller said.

"The whole series is a way of expressing that understanding – my understanding, that tobacco is supposed to be sacred, that it is sacred, and that it has been corrupted."

While the series explores heavy themes of addiction, disease and cultural exploitation, for Sixkiller, an essential element is that there remains a layer of humor; ultimately, it must be funny.

"If you've got a serious topic, you have to use humor. If you keep people in that fear and pain for too long, it starts taking them out of their ability to make change and think. I want people to think," she said. "I'm hoping that when they see these things, it is so odd and yet familiar at the same time that they can't help but start thinking and start wondering, why? What is this about? Why is this about?"

Sixkiller's "Cancer Sticks" is an artful provocation defused by humor. It tells a layered story that may be uniquely interpreted from diverse perspectives. It encourages reflection. In the end, "Cancer Sticks" is a gut punch, and a chuckle, and everywhere in between.



"UN-AMERICAN SPIRIT" - SIXKILLER DISPLAYS HUMOR WHILE DEMONSTRATING EXPLOITATION'S DANGERS.



SIXKILLER IMAGINED WHAT A PAIR OF CIGARETTE-AFFECTED LUNGS MAY LOOK LIKE. THE FINAL VISION, "GASP," IS STRIKINGLY SIMILAR TO AN ACTUAL SCAN OF A DISEASED LUNG, TOPPED BY ITS PRESUMED CULPRIT.

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RISK MANAGEMENT

BY TOM MULLEN

Growing up in Port Townsend, Leif Whittaker was entering his teen years when he first noticed that his childhood was not normal.

“I started to realize the size of his legacy and achievements, how powerful that was and how people knew him. People would come up to us and they’d recognize him and I started to wonder, ‘Why are these random people coming up and wanting to meet my father?’ He’s done something that’s a little outside the norm but my dad, to me was always my father, always supportive, caring,” Whittaker told the Leader.

His father, Jim Whittaker, is one of the great mountaineers in history and will forever be remembered as the first American to climb Mount Everest.





LEIF ON THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT
VINSON, THE HIGHEST PEAK IN
ANTARCTICA, IN JANUARY 2010.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL BROWN
PHOTOS COURTESY
OF LEIF WHITTAKER

“I had mountains in my blood,” Whittaker admitted, but he didn’t enjoy his first climbs.

“I thought the hiking was torturous. I had my mom carry my pack. Later, when I was 15, my older brother and I climbed Olympus and that, to me is when I pinpoint the beginning of my climbing.”

His father’s shadow is immense but the younger Whittaker was not tempted to follow a different path, no matter how torturous the hike.

“It was certainly there in the background, hearing my father’s stories of climbing, my mother’s stories of climbing, all those stories. I soaked them up. I think my parents felt that it would be better not to force me, to not push me into that world and so they were really good about that.”

So much so that Whittaker sometimes wishes that they’d pushed him a little more.

“I’d be better.”

The mountains pulled him into working as a Climbing Ranger for the United States Forest Service, a gig he worked for a decade. It was during that time that he met the man who helped him alter his trajectory.

It was on Mount Baker that he met Scott Johnston.

“He is really well known and has coached with amazing success, training for mountain sports – coaching for mountaineers who are trying to climb big mountains.”





LEIF PHOTOGRAPHED ON MOUNT DECEPTION IN OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK.

Whittaker helped Johnston build Evoke Endurance into what is billed as the leaders in global mountain coaching, where Whittaker works with athletes training at all levels.

Entry-level climbers, across the whole range of skills and abilities fit, given his background and history "I also work with skiers and other endurance athletes."

"Scott had a science-base of knowledge from other endurance sports and brought it to mountain sports. He founded a company when that book launched. He hired me and trained me and continues to train me and about 20 other coaches and I love the work," Whittaker said, adding that the job is mostly communicating.

His workday looks normal at first glance, serving his clients on weekdays from nine to five but those clients happen to be elite athletes.

"Discipline and consistency are the key and when building a week of training at a time, the client can see, 'I have a hour-long hike.' So they don't have to think about it. They know they're doing the right thing. It takes out the guess work, having a regular schedule."

STAYIN' ALIVE

In climbing, Whittaker told *The Leader*, there are two types of risks, which he refers to as “hazards.”

There are objective hazards, like weather, rock fall, avalanches - things that are outside of our control.

“The mountains don’t care who you are or where you are. They move and they shift without warning so there are always going to be objective hazards. You can mitigate those hazards by starting early so you’re off the mountain before the sun begins to melt the glacier, creating a higher chance of rockfall. But you have to accept some of those.”

Mount Everest, he said, has very, very high objective hazards and one of the ways a climber mitigates those hazards is to be fit.

“When you’re in there, it’s a hazardous place so you limit your time in that place. You move fast and efficiently. If you’re fit there’s a much higher chance of being safe and successful.”

Whittaker works with elite athletes on readying them so they are at their optimum state of fitness while in those situations.

There are also subjective hazards, those that are within the climber’s control and based on decision making.

“It’s about caring for yourself on the mountain. Strategy choices such as where to be at what time and technical elements, all the things we do have control over which can mitigate and manage those risks, to try to bring them down as much as we can.”

The best climbers, Whittaker said, are those who can narrow their focus on their life to single objectives.



LEIF CLIMBS UP THE SOUTHEAST RIDGE OF MOUNT EVEREST ON HIS WAY TO THE SUMMIT. MAY 25, 2010.

“One of the things we do is try to eliminate the noise. A climber will devote a year of training to their goal so you need to remove that. You need your family to be on board, your wife or husband. If you have kids you may need to spend less time with them if you want to be successful. You need to train hard, give up some of your weekends,” Whittaker said.



A few years ago, Whittaker published his book, “My Old Man and the Mountain,” which, he stressed, is not a technical guide for climbers.

“You’re just gonna be entertained, that’s the main goal of the book. It’s not instructive or didactic. I drop you into my mind when I’m on Everest.

Certainly there are lessons but that’s not what it’s about. It’s a fun read.”

Daniel James Brown, author of *The Boys in the Boat*, agrees, calling it, “a great, great read.”

This story first appeared in The Port Townsend and Jefferson County Leader.



ANOTHER MAN'S TRASH...

RUSS WEST IS EQUAL PARTS
ARCHEOLOGIST, ARTIST, RECYCLER

BY MEREDITH JORDAN

Most shopkeepers plant themselves in their stores for the holiday season, when retail sales are at their peak. Not Russ West, who was gone from Bottle Shop, his storefront near the lower Sims roundabout, for most of the week leading to Christmas.

“The shop is nice and fun, but I’d rather be digging,” explained West, who was back to Port Townsend by Dec. 24. That sunny morning he sorted the loot from the latest outhouse dig in front of his shop at 305 Kearney Street, more recognizably known by its “La Bottle Me” sign, while assisting the occasional customer.

There is a short window of opportunity to hunt for outhouse treasure, explained West, who had taken the trek with his digging partner, Christopher Moore, to excavate in and around Prescott, Washington. “If it freezes you can’t probe it,” West said. And if it’s too wet — as it is much of the year in Washington — forget it, too heavy.

Finding a place to dig takes some experience. Outhouses were typically near alleys, so they start there — once they have permission. “Saloons are the best. They had five-seaters,” said West.

They’ve gotten good at the trade over the years. West makes sure to shave and look nice before he knocks on a door to ask permission. He always offers to share what he finds with homeowners. They use caution in lifting off grass and setting it aside, so its easy to close back up like nothing ever happened. Then he drops off some of the spoils. “The homeowners are happy, and the neighbors want you to dig, too.”

The conditions were rough that December week in Prescott, with wind gusts of 40 miles per hour and “freezing cold temperatures,” but they were successful. West said the first part of the trip they “got skunked” but things picked up: 10 little drug bottles at one location, a bottle of buckeye extract from Olympia, a vintage Lysol bottle, half of a pocket watch, three horseshoes and an iron.

A COLLECTION OF BOTTLES AND OTHER ITEMS FOUND DURING A DECEMBER DIG NEAR PRESCOTT, WASHINGTON.



RUSS WEST STANDS IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS SHOP ON
KEARNEY STREET IN PORT TOWNSEND.
PHOTOS BY MEREDITH JORDAN

But there can be gold in them-thar-digs, too — real gold. Moore told a story of pulling up a 3.5 pound leather satchel filled with gold ore. “You could feel it was something like that,” he said. He described sending a steel rod into the earth, like the kind used to find pipes into the ground, when it hit with a soft thud.

He left the bag untouched until recently when he gave it to one of sons. “He’s getting into gold panning,” Moore said. He estimated it was likely to contain about 15 ounces of gold in there, once it’s smelted. His theory is that a miner dropped the satchel in the l’eau by accident and didn’t know where it went.

West estimates he’s dug around 6,000 once-active outhouses around the country, most of them in Washington state.

There is a simple reason so much stuff ended up in outhouses, said West. “There wasn’t garbage pick up, so not a lot ways to get rid of trash,” he explained, adding there was also a lot less trash. A lot of things turn up in the remains of an outhouse, such as fruit juice crocks, chamber pots, and western guns.

Once they found cleats used to hook ball-and-chains that attached to prisoners. They found two of those near an old prison. “You find a lot of historic stuff,” said Moore.

They have also found a lot of toys buried in the dirt over the years, including marbles. Some might have been delivered to the pit by parents who were punishing an errant child, Moore said. More likely, West offered, is that toys, including dolls, went in around the time of smallpox for fear they carried the disease.

WEST'S SHOP IS MOST RECOGNIZABLY KNOWN BY ITS "LA-BOTTLE-ME" SIGN OUT FRONT.



“It doesn’t matter if they were sick or they were drinkers or whatever else — a lot of people put treasure down the outhouse,” said West. Liquor bottles are in abundance. “Sometimes there’s an alcoholic in the family who likes to sneak and throw a bottle in the hole,” he said.

The most valuable thing to come out of a successful haul is likely to be an in-tact rare bottle. The biggest sale West has made was a Brown & Drakes Catawba Bitters “ladies leg” from 1855, which netted \$11,000. Ladies leg refers to a shapely curved neck distinct from most bottles and very unusual. “That was the coolest thing,” he said, shaking his head with the memory.

Brown & Drakes was based in Binghamton, N.Y., but some of the most desirable bottles come from San Francisco. Glassworks companies started to spring up there in 1862, when local business people noted the number of bottles being imported. The San Francisco and Pacific Glass Works company, perhaps the best known of those companies, made elaborate embossed bottles that were often recycled and re-sold, with labels affixed that reflected whatever it contained.

That history is well known among diggers, which means San Francisco has been well-searched for artifacts. West and Moore prefer lesser-traversed grounds.

“I didn’t get to go to college to study archeology,” said Moore. “But I’ve still been able to live the dream, to see how these people lived, inch by inch, 140 years ago.”

West is an artist at heart. Items do not have to be intact for him to find utility in it. He keeps broken glass, and uses it in his artwork, mosaics made of glass. He also makes driftwood sculptures. “It’s always exciting to dig up colored glass, cobalt blue or emerald green.” He gets glass other places, too.



WEST DISPLAYS A BRUISE FROM THE TRADE AND A BOTTLE THAT READS, “CUTICURA SYSTEM OF CURING CONSTITUTIONAL HUMORS,” CIRCA 1880.



A COLLECTION OF WEST'S HISTORICAL FINDS SIT ON SHELVES INSIDE THE PORT TOWNSEND SHOP



SOME OF WEST'S ART IS DISPLAYED ON THE KEARNEY STREET BUILDING SIDED ON JEFFERSON STREET.

And what of the poop?

"You get into the seed layer, tomato, fruit pies — they don't decompose," said West. "When you get to the seed layer you know you're in it." There's a layer of lime and ash from the wood stove. They know the terrain and have perfected technique over the years. They know how to dig without damaging goods.

West said he's had a lot of jobs over the years. "I've fished in Alaska, built houses, logged, just about everything," he said. "My daughter quit her job and I said, Don't feel bad — I'm a professional quitter."

"I make enough money and I'll go dig bottles. They understand."



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SHOOTING THE MOON

MORE THAN A COFFEE SHOP, MOON'S CAFE
FILLS A NICHE IN PORT HADLOCK



BY MEG VISGER

The kitchen of the cafe was a beehive of activity, organized and efficient, a highly-choreographed dance. Steam rose from a huge vat of boiling water as Tyler Matheson and Moon Wigginton lowered shaped bagels into the cauldron to simmer before being glazed and sprinkled with toppings, then baked.



They shared a long stainless steel work table with Heather King, as she dipped macaroons into chocolate and placed freshly-baked muffins on display trays. Even though they worked quickly, the atmosphere was friendly and relaxed.

Moon's Cafe is a recent addition to Port Hadlock, located in the former home of Metro Bagels in the Kivley Center near the stoplight at the intersection of Ness' Corner Road and Chimaicum Road.

It was the dream of the easy-going, forty-ish fellow best known as "Moon" and more formally as Thomas George Laughing Moon Wigginton. He grew up on Marrowstone Island and majored in education in college. He decided teaching wasn't for him and went into the construction industry.

Wigginton owns and operates LM Property Maintenance. His wife Myra is the owner/operator of Cerberus Tattoo, also in Kivley Center. They also have two young boys to help keep them busy.



HEATHER KING WORKS MAGIC WITH CHOCOLATE AND MACAROONS WHILE TYLER MATHESON AND MOON WIGGINTON PREPARE BAGELS.

PHOTOS BY MEG VISGER

Wigginton got the idea for a cafe several years ago and attempted to find a location. Nothing worked out until February 2024, when Metro Bagels shut down and Wigginton was able to lease the space. "I had always wanted to try my hand at a restaurant or cafe," he confided. "I wanted to offer employment to the community ... I wanted a challenge and to give something back."

He saw there was a niche to fill and he wanted to do it. “When I was growing up things were different here. Kivley Center was kind of a happening place, and I feel like it’s gotten a little stagnant. I want to try to shake that up.”

Wigginton wanted to create a gathering place where people could meet and enjoy a drink and something to eat. He wanted the food to be delicious, homemade, and quick to prepare, with seating available.

It turns out he has the personality for it. Wigginton is friendly and outgoing, and he enjoys interacting with the public. You can find him manning the front counter, making bagels, working in the kitchen or going wherever else he is needed. The cafe is currently open Mon. – Fri. from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. He will expand the hours as summer approaches.

It hasn’t been easy. Moon’s Cafe opened in August, 2024. “I did this on my own, didn’t take any loans. I did all the remodeling, built the countertops, everything,” he said, including transporting and installing all the equipment.

“My brother-in-law Curtis helped, with future payment in bagels,” chuckled Wigginton.

He also had a close friend, Tyler Matheson, who was an accomplished chef. “Tyler and I have been friends forever. I called him up and said ‘This is what I’m doing. Do you want to get on board?’” Matheson, a graduate of Le Cordon Blue in Portland with over 20 years of experience, including several 3- and 4-star restaurants, jumped at the idea.

Heather King, the cafe’s pastry chef, has also been with him from the start. “She’s an amazing baker. I got lucky,” said Wigginton. King started baking when she was 18 at a wholesale cookie bakery in Port Townsend. She loved it and has baked ever since, including stints at Chimacum Corner Farmstand and Farm’s Reach Cafe.

The first month of operation was difficult. Besides the expected challenges any new restaurant faces, the cafe experienced a lot of equipment failure. Wigginton bought used equipment from other restaurants and discovered all but two needed repair or replacement.



MOON WIGGINTON, LEFT, AND TYLER MATHESON POSE AT THE COUNTER OF MOON'S CAFE IN DECEMBER.

PHOTO BY MEG VISGER



BAGEL PULL APART IS A CROWD FAVORITE AT THE NEW CAFE.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MOON'S CAFE



It was also tough starting in August, because they missed the boost in business that comes during the big summer season. By the end of the year things had smoothed out.

Wigginton pointed to other staff, like Tristan and Sam, who also work in the kitchen, and Shayla and Casey, who work the front counter, for important contributions. “Every one of them is amazing. They all put in a lot of effort to make this place what it is.”

The staff feels the same way about him. “This guy is a great boss. It’s a very friendly work environment, family-like,” said Tristan.

Moon’s Cafe is hard to categorize. It is more than a coffee shop yet not really a restaurant. Wigginton wants the food to be homemade and different than other cafes. “We put a little more work in it and have a product that’s really good.”

The food is presented in to-go packaging, but can be enjoyed at one of several tables in the cafe (or outdoors in summer).

During a December visit a glass case was filled with luscious pastries, such as pecan rolls, berry hand pies, macaroons and generous slices of luscious cakes. The savory items, such as ricotta foldovers, were also tempting.

Moon’s serves breakfast, such as breakfast sandwiches, burritos and tacos, a breakfast plate, and biscuits and gravy, until it runs out.

Bagels of different varieties are made on the premises daily. Over a dozen toppings are offered, including sun-dried tomato and garlic. Homemade pizza is popular, and sold by the slice.

Lunch items are available all day. The menu features colorful organic salad, homemade soup or stew, and sandwiches served on bagels, wraps or homemade rolls. Dinner entrees, such as Kahlua pork, shredded pork and teriyaki chicken, are also available.

There is a full range of espresso drinks, including cold-brewed coffee. In addition to craft beer, Moon’s features dark nitro beer. Relax with local wine, cider, or beer. Hand-crafted root beer on tap? Soft ice cream? You betcha’.

I tried several items and split them with friends: a macaroon (best I’ve ever tasted), GF banana muffin (super-moist, rich with flavor), and toasted jalapeño cheddar bagel (crispy and flavorful). All were excellent.

Wigginton has more dreams for the cafe. With an easy smile, he starts listing them, from expanded hours to a courtyard out back, Prosecco on tap for mimosas, live music in the summer, more dinner items ...

TAKE A HIKE

A LOOK AT SOME OF OUR REGION'S BEST TRAILS FOR WINTER HIKING

COMPILED BY MALLORY KRUMI

The Pacific Northwest, especially the Olympic Peninsula, offers an abundance of hiking opportunities thanks to the countless trails that wind through its diverse landscapes. This region is a hiker's paradise, from lush, green rainforests and towering old-growth forests to rocky beaches and snow-capped mountains.

Whether you are in the mood for a quick stroll or a challenging trek, you'll find it somewhere on this list.

1 FORT WORDEN HISTORICAL STATE PARK

Port Townsend's Fort Worden Historical State Park features a variety of scenic trails that lead visitors through coastal bluffs, forests and historic military sites. Its origins date back to 1896, when Congress authorized the Secretary of War to build three forts, including Fort Worden, to protect Puget Sound. The forts are known as the "Triangle of Fire." Fort Worden was established in 1902. Military activity here ended in 1953.

POINT WILSON TRAIL

An easy 2.7-mile loop, the Point Wilson Trail takes about an hour to complete with an elevation gain of 209 feet. Offering picturesque views of the eastern side of Fort Worden, including the Point Wilson Lighthouse and the San Juan Islands, Alexander's Castle and the Battery Kinzie.



HISTORIC LOOP

This easy 2.9-mile loop is ideal for hiking, biking and running. With an elevation gain of 265 feet, the forested trail takes about an hour to complete, weaving by a network of abandoned military bunkers and tunnels.



2 FORT FLAGLER HISTORICAL STATE PARK

Marrowstone Island's Fort Flagler Historical State Park features a variety of trails for visitors to explore shorelines and historic military sites. Fort Flagler is also part of the "Triangle of Fire" and was used as a training center for soldiers during World War I. Fort Flagler was established in 1899. Military activity here ended in 1953.

FORT FLAGLER TRAIL

A moderately challenging 3.4-mile loop, the Fort Flagler Trail takes about an hour to complete with an elevation gain of 242 feet. The trail has sweeping views of the Olympic Mountains, Whidbey Island and nearby Port Townsend, and it passes by historical military bunkers and batteries.

3 FORT TOWNSEND HISTORICAL STATE PARK

Yet another historical state park, Fort Townsend was built in 1856 and operated by the military until a fire destroyed its barracks in 1895. The 367-acre park features 3,960 feet of saltwater shoreline on Port Townsend Bay.

BLUFF TRAIL

An easy 1.3-mile loop, the Bluff Trail takes half an hour to complete with an elevation gain of 190 feet. The trail weaves through a thick forest before descending to the Fort Townsend beach.

4 DOSEWALLIPS STATE PARK

Located in Brinnon, this 425-acre park features a variety of mountain and shoreline trails, attracting visitors for hiking, clam digging, fishing and boating. The park has 5,500 feet of saltwater shoreline on Hood Canal and 5,400 feet of freshwater shoreline on either side of the Dosewallips River.

MAPLE VALLEY AND STEAM DONKEY LOOP

This moderately challenging 3.1-mile loop gains 554 feet in elevation and takes about an hour and a half to complete. The trail winds through a dense forest, crossing Phantom Creek and a few small streams.

5 WASHINGTON COAST

Washington's coast is known for its breathtaking scenery, tidepools, bluffs and driftwood-covered beaches, made accessible by several trails. The coast is biodiverse, with waters full of marine life, including whales, sea otters, seals and seabirds.

THIRD BEACH TRAIL

This easy 1.4-mile out-and-back trail in Forks has an elevation gain of 240 feet and takes about an hour to complete. The trail winds through a coastal forest before descending onto Third Beach, a popular spot for beachcombing and sunset viewing.

CAPE FLATTERY TRAIL

An easy 1.2-mile out-and-back trail, the Cape Flattery Trail has an elevation gain of 229 feet and takes half an hour to complete. The cape, where the Strait of Juan de Fuca meets the Pacific Ocean, is the northwesternmost point in the continental U.S. and is home to sea stacks and deep, narrow coves.

6 OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

Olympic National Park, which covers nearly 1 million acres, features a rainforest, coastline, and mountains. With over 3 million visitors annually, the park has trails for all skill levels.

SPRUCE NATURE TRAIL

An easy 2.1-mile loop, the Spruce Nature Trail takes about an hour to complete with an elevation gain of 95 feet. The trail winds through the Hoh Rain Forest, home to Western Hemlock and Sitka Spruce trees.

MARYMERE FALLS

This easy 1.7-mile out-and-back trail has an elevation gain of 314 feet and takes about an hour to complete. The trail weaves through an old-growth forest before reaching the mossy 90-foot waterfall.

HURRICANE HILL

A moderately challenging 3.4-mile out-and-back trail, Hurricane Hill has an elevation of 826 feet and takes about two hours to complete. The paved trail climbs to a panoramic view of the Olympic Mountains, Puget Sounds and Vancouver Island.

SOL DUC FALLS TRAIL

This easy 1.8-mile out-and-back trail has an elevation gain of 259 feet and takes about an hour to complete. The trail weaves through an old-growth forest before reaching Sol Duc Falls.

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