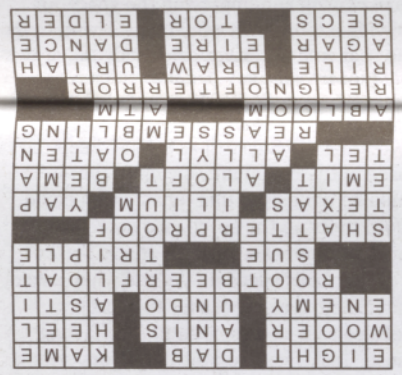
Edward St Aybyn, Local Hero

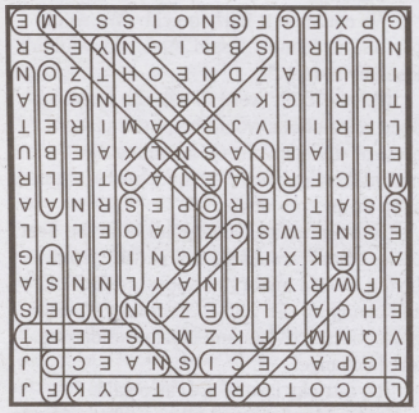
by Sick Null

Someone once said to me,
"Even animals make mistakes"
A monkey swings for a branch
and misses.
A rabbit goes left when
he should've gone right.
Happy owl.
I'm allergic to rabbits
but I breed them in a cave
never-the-less.
Surgical gown and face mask on
I enter the woods

Their crates are next to the well
I draw water for my bunnies
and they look at it
waiting to drink.
I sigh.
They gnaw.
We look into each other's eyes
and speak no language.

Answers to puzzles on page 15





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9	8	2	7	6	4	5	3
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VENDOR PROFILE

Wallace Outwater

BY SCOTT JACKSON
STAFF WRITER

From Portland, catch the bus to Seattle, hop on a boat and head more than 2,000 miles northwest, and you will make it to Wallace Outwater's hometown.

Wallace proudly said, "I am an Inupiaq Eskimo from Kotzebue, Alaska. That's 28 miles above the Arctic Circle."

As you might imagine, Wallace has stories that make Portland's apocalyptic reaction to any snow seem quite trivial.

"Growing up in Alaska was fun. I was born in 1967, and that's when we used to have huge, huge snow drifts. As a boy, we would make tunnels under the snow."

Wallace was just as happy under the snow as on top of it, as long as he was with his four siblings. He remembered fondly, "When I was 8 or 9 years old, my sister bought my brothers and me skis for Christmas, and we would all go ski down the hills."

The Outwater family remains close.

"I have a great family," Wallace said. The same sister who gave Wallace his first skis is still important in Wallace's life.

"She cares about all us brothers and sisters. She ends up taking care of us wherever we go."

And Wallace has gone quite a few places. In high school, Wallace moved from Kotzebue to Nome to attend a better school. During the summers, Wallace fished.

"I started fishing when I was 16 years old in Bristol Bay, and my first captain was one year younger than me," he said.

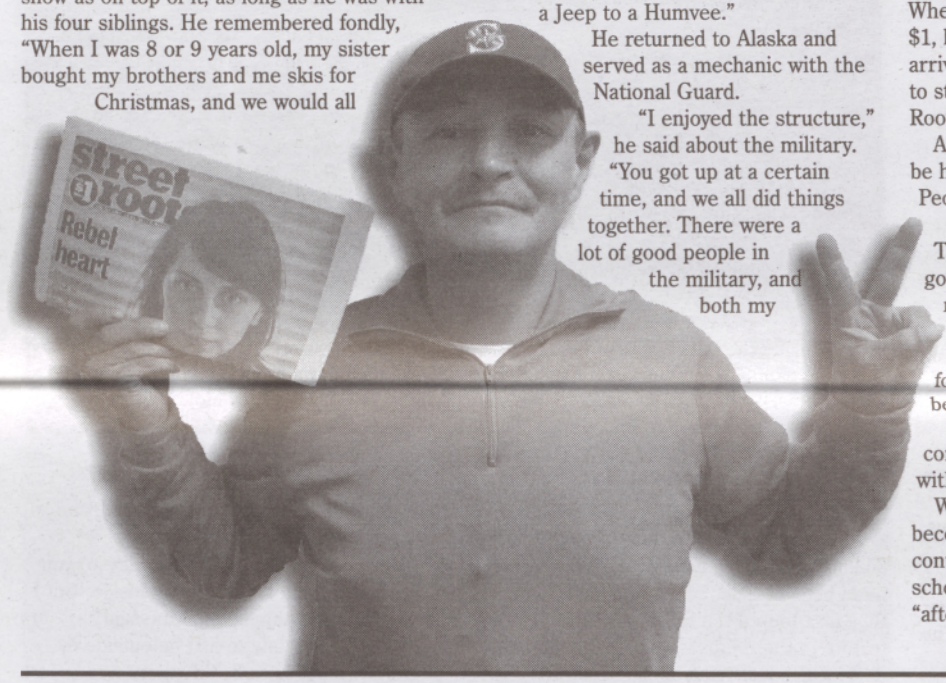
Working on the boats and processing centers provided Wallace the opportunity to travel across the state. He found the work hard but enjoyable.

When he finished high school, he joined the military. He completed basic and advanced individual training at Fort Jackson in South Carolina.

"My specialty was fixing light-wheeled vehicles," he said. "That's everything from a Jeep to a Humvee."

He returned to Alaska and served as a mechanic with the National Guard.

"I enjoyed the structure," he said about the military. "You got up at a certain time, and we all did things together. There were a lot of good people in the military, and both my dad and brother also served in the military."



Unfortunately, Wallace's service was cut short because of a vehicle accident that gave him a traumatic brain injury. He received an honorable discharge and some compensation.

His unexpected departure from the military led Wallace to live with family on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea for a few years.

"We lived off the land. We would go out seal hunting, but walrus hunting was my favorite aside from whale hunting," he said.

"My grandma would always thank me for the food I brought home."

Eventually Wallace decided to return to commercial fishing. For the next few decades, Wallace bounced around Alaska, following the fish. The fish eventually took him to Seattle. He continued to "hop on boats to Alaska to fish and make money," but that came to a halt in 2011 with Japan's earthquake and tsunami.

Wallace called Seattle home for four years but struggled to make ends meet. When he saw the Bolt Bus advertised for $1, he decided to try out Portland. Wallace arrived several months ago without a place to stay. A friend told him about Street Roots.

At Street Roots, Wallace said, he "gets to be happy and sell the papers to people. People smile back and say good morning."

Recently, with support from Transitions Project and the VA, Wallace got into his own apartment. He remembers his first night inside: "I got to turn off my lights. When I got up in the morning, I didn't have to search for a restroom. I got to take a shower before I went to bed. It was awesome!"

Wallace wants to thank his sister, who continues to support him and helps him with what he needs for his apartment.

Wallace is considering taking courses to become a cook. For the time being, he is content to have his place and hold off on school until he has the means. But, he said, "after that, the sky is the limit."

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