

Neighbor: Navy veteran lands in Pendleton to test drones

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she saw him. They made a connection, he said, which led to a first date — seeing the 2010 animated comedy “Megamind.”

Shawn rather sticks out, however, even in a crowd. He is quick with a wide, beaming smile, and there is the obvious stacks of muscle.

He said he got into bodybuilding and powerlifting while playing football in high school. He was 14 the first time he lifted and soon fell in with a crew who were serious about their workouts.

“To them, it was just like, lift, lift, lift,” he said, and a couple of the guys turned pro as bodybuilders.

“That still keeps me going to this day,” he said.

He often hits the Club 24 gym well before dawn. He said he prefers bodybuilding to powerlifting, but he believes in lifting heavy.

“There’s no point in looking strong and not being strong,” Shawn said.

The workouts translated into post-Navy work as a personal trainer.

“It made decent pay for a single guy,” he said.

But when Noel became pregnant with their first child, Shawn said it was time to get a regular job.

That job was with a small California company manufacturing



Shawn Williams Murray uses resistance bands to work out his chest and arms Thursday at Club 24 in Pendleton.

lasers for photolithography scanners as well as precision sensor devices for drilling rigs. Or, as he put it, the job was making sub-assemblies.

He then entered aerospace work with SSL, formerly Space Systems/Loral, one of the world’s largest designers and producers of

satellites. He said he had to learn electronics, and his boss assured him he would do just fine.

“And sure enough, I pretty much did just fine,” he said.

He worked on projects with budgets pushing half-a-billion dollars. That was all just being part of the team, he said.

His next stop was at SpaceX, entrepreneur Elon Musk’s endeavor to make space transportation more affordable. But married and with two children, Shawn said he needed to be more available for his family. He had job offers, and picked A^3 for the stability it would bring his family.

Shawn, like the rest of the small A^3 crew, works at the unmanned aircraft systems range at the Pendleton airport.

“My job is to make sure we’re ready for flights and to build whatever we need,” he said.

And, again, he said, that’s all a team effort with a co-worker and a supervisor.

He arrived in Pendleton on Oct. 1. The barren and tawny landscape of Eastern Oregon in autumn did not put him off.

“I’m kind of used to this type of area,” he said, explaining the wilderness less than an hour’s drive from the San Francisco Bay Area resembles Eastern Oregon.

Still, he said Pendleton was not quite what he expected. The food scene, for example, impressed, as did the community feel. And the better job hours allows him to work out and have that family time. He said they enjoy movies — his personal favorites include “The English Patient,” “Old School” and “First Blood” — and they recently took in the Live Nativity on Dec. 16 at Roy Raley Park.

How long Pendleton remains home depends on A^3. He said he likes aerospace in general and probably will start an aerospace business. At the moment, he feels pretty grounded.

“Two kids and seven years later,” Shawn said, “the rest is history.”

Presents: Regift or refund? What to do with unwanted gifts

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from the sale will go to local programs for those in need.

“Things that still have tags on them are very coveted,” she said.

Some people would rather hang onto the gift, even if it isn’t something they would have purchased for themselves. Tera Kelhanek of Hermiston wrote on Facebook that she might exchange a clothing item for a different size, but exchanging a gift for money or regifting it to someone else was disrespectful to the gift-giver.

“I keep it and use it,” she said. “When someone gives me a gift, they are thinking about me.”

Shelly Parmelee of Umatilla said she has sometimes given away gifts she has received, such as clothing a certain relative used to send her that didn’t fit her preferred style.

Other times she has kept gifts even if they aren’t something she would necessarily buy for herself.

“I have received gifts from family members, something that I really didn’t like or care for too much,” she said. “However, they had a special reason for giving it to me, and that is what made it special to me. And so I kept those because it is a memory of that person now that they’re gone.”

She said people should appreciate gifts given to them out of love, but they also have a responsibility to pick out thoughtful gifts the receiver would likely appreciate.

“I don’t buy stuff just to buy stuff,” she said.

Krista Lynn of Hermiston wrote in a message to the *East Oregonian* that it’s not uncommon for her to get a gift that’s not quite what she’s looking for. But she said that’s not surprising considering she usually doesn’t spell out for people exactly what she wants for Christmas. If it’s something she really doesn’t think she will ever use, she said she thanks the person for their kindness and then finds

someone else who would be happy to use the item.

Others said they don’t hesitate to return a gift to the store or regift it to someone else if it isn’t something they can or want to use.

According to the etiquette experts at the Emily Post Institute, regifting is acceptable in circumstances that are unlikely to hurt the feelings of either the person who gave the gift or the person receiving the regift.

The institute’s online how-to guide to regifting states people should only regift items that were not homemade or otherwise represent an extra amount of thought or effort from the

giver. The item should be new and in its original packaging and something that the next recipient would truly enjoy. Rather than wrapping the gift up for someone’s birthday or Christmas, guide suggests the best method is to pass it along in a more casual way by saying something like, “Ellie, I received two copies of this book and want you to have one.”

Some people would rather get something out of the gift by returning it to the store for something more to their liking. Many retailers won’t accept a return without a receipt, but others will exchange an unwanted gift for another item from the

store, or even for cash.

In most cases the item must be in its original packaging or have its original tags on, and there is usually a time limit on how long after the purchase the item can be returned. Some retailers ask for identification and then track the number of returns a person makes per year, banning people who return a suspiciously high number of items.

In 2017 Optoro, a firm specializing in retail returns, estimated \$90 billion worth of Christmas gifts would be returned to the retailer after the holiday — about one fourth of all items returned to retailers in a given year.

Home surveillance video leads to arrest of package thief

BEND (AP) — Home video surveillance led to the arrest of a man suspected of swiping holiday packages from multiple front porches in the Bend area.

The Bend Bulletin reports that Steven Edward Stout, a 39-year-old Bend resident, was stopped Sunday and officers discovered packages stolen from at least two homes in his car.

According to Bend police, Stout was caught thanks to video surveillance equipment that captured a theft at a home in Bend on Dec. 21.

Thanks to the video, an officer identified the vehicle and its license plate.

Two days later, another officer recognized the car and stopped Stout.

A search of Stout’s car turned up more stolen property.

Bend police say Stout had heroin and methamphetamine on him. He was arrested on theft and drug-possession charges.

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