

Northwest heat wave suspected in 7 deaths

BY REBECCA BOONE
Associated Press

BOISE — Authorities in the Portland, Oregon, region kept cooling shelters open through Sunday night, July 31 as a likely record-breaking heat wave brought scorching weather to the normally temperate region.

At least seven people are suspected to have died from hyperthermia since the hot spell began a week ago. The most recent suspected heat-related death was announced by Clackamas County officials on Saturday, July 30, Portland television station KOIN-TV reported. County officials said the elderly man died in his home, where he did not have a working air conditioner. The other six suspected hyperthermia deaths occurred earlier in the week in Mult-

nomah, Umatilla and Marion counties.

Jessica Mokert-Shibley, a spokesperson with Multnomah County, said the county, the city of Portland and other organizations would keep overnight cooling centers open through Sunday evening. Nearly 250 people used the overnight shelters on Friday night, she said.

Temperatures have neared the triple digits in Portland the entire week, hitting a high of 102 degrees Fahrenheit on Tuesday, July 26.

The National Weather Service issued an excessive heat warning for both the Portland and Seattle, Washington, regions lasting through late Sunday evening, with temperatures expected to reach as high as 103 degrees. Shawn Weagle, a NWS meteorologist based in Portland, said Satur-

day that the region had likely tied its record for its longest heat wave with six consecutive days in a row topping 95 degrees. A new record could be set on Sunday, Weagle said.

The temperatures have remained abnormally high at night — only dropping to about 70 degrees — making it hard for residents to adequately cool off their homes before the sun rises, Weagle said. Many homes in the region lack air conditioning.

“It’s an increasingly common issue with our heatwaves, the lack of recovery at night,” Weagle said. “That really impacts people who don’t have air conditioning. It’s the ‘urban island effect’ — the downtown Portland core has been built up so much, and that concrete is slower to cool down overnight than a rural valley or even

suburban neighborhood would.”

The region’s heat waves also seem to be getting stronger in general, Weagle said. He expects relief from the hot weather will come mid-week.

“Right now it’s looking like Tuesday, we’ll start to get closer to normal but still in the 80s, and by Wednesday we should be a touch below normal temperatures,” he said.

The Seattle region was slightly cooler but still topped 90 degrees on Saturday for a fifth straight day, compared to normal temperatures in the high 70s.

Weagle said people should drink plenty of water, do what they can to stay cool and check on their neighbors, particularly older people and those who are at greater risk of heat-related illnesses.

Climate change is fueling longer heat waves in the Pacific Northwest, a region where weeklong heat spells were historically rare, according to climate experts.

Residents and officials in the Northwest have been trying to adjust to the likely reality of longer, hotter heat waves following last summer’s deadly “heat dome” weather phenomenon that prompted record temperatures and deaths.

About 800 people died in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia during that heat wave, which hit in late June and early July. The temperature at the time soared to an all-time high of 116 F in Portland and smashed heat records in cities and towns across the region. Many of those who died were older and lived alone.

Rosemarie

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Rosemarie’s path through the garden is one that tracks all the way back, over little roots and between flowers, to her earliest memories of home.

“My mom had eight of us, so she always had fruit trees,” Rosemarie says.

She spent a lot of time nurturing those trees as they came to bear fruit. Rosemarie’s experience of growing and caring for living things has continued throughout her life. She spent more than a decade working in a nursery with her sister, and many years as well working as a nurse caregiver.

Rosemarie’s sense of adventure connected her to her lifelong friend, Corrine, who is related to the Droste family of Droste Chocolates in Rotterdam, Holland. Together, she and Corrine drove cross country to New York, a trip she’s managed three times in her life, and even spent a year there.

When she was working as a nurse in California in her 20s, she’d found herself starting to burn out on the life the West Coast had to offer. She was packing and preparing for adventure, in fact planning to see the Europe her friend had described to her, when she chanced to meet Robert O’Donnell.

She’d wanted to see the world, but for her, Robert would become one of the biggest parts of it.

“I never made it to Europe,” Rosemarie says, laughing at the irony.

Robert was a Marine, a line-man and a metal detectorist,



Rosemarie O’Donnell and her daughter, Katie, gathered the rocks and installed this streaming fountain at their Huntington home.



Katie O’Donnell/
Contributed Photo

Robert and Rosemarie O’Donnell. Robert passed away March 6, 2020, from complications due to cancer. The couple were married for 54 years.

among his many talents.

“He was a jack of all trades, and all Irish,” Rosemarie said.

On Nov. 19, 1967, he also became her husband and, about a year later, a father.

Rosemarie and Robert raised four children — Annie, Mike, Katie and John.

Their eldest, Annie, had grown, graduated and moved out to serve in the Air Force full time when Rosemarie and Robert got the call. Somewhere along Highway 31, in the desolate desert stretches of Central Oregon, Annie was in a single car accident on Aug.

25, 1987. She died at just 19.

Annie’s brothers and sister went on to do well for themselves — the youngest turned 45 this year — and Rosemarie and Robert found peace with time. The couple spent over half a century together, 54 years.

When Robert was diagnosed with prostate cancer, the disease was already in its fourth stage and spreading to his other organs. Rosemarie’s skill as a nurse could at least make him comfortable.

Though he fought, an unexpected infection led to a coma. Rosemarie knew supplemen-

tal oxygen was the only thing keeping his heart going.

“You’re gonna see Annie,” she told him, as Robert passed in the company of his wife and other loved ones on March 6, 2020.

Rosemarie’s own health needed support as well, spurring her and daughter Katie to uproot and relocate to Huntington, where they could both afford land and it was an easy drive to receive treatment for rheumatoid arthritis.

Mother and daughter settled in Huntington in September 2021.

“I have to get infusions ev-

ery six weeks,” Rosemarie says. “Remicade — it’s very strong. Two to three hours of infusions every time.”

She proudly revealed the spot on her arm where the IV had most recently delivered life-changing relief.

When she was first treated, she was already feeling the broad effects of rheumatoid arthritis in her major joints. The consequences of the condition have the body’s immune system attacking its tissue at a cellular level.

Pain and stiffness are a given, but the condition can literally change the shape of

the joints, further separating a person from any semblance of an active life. Fortunately, Rosemarie’s treatment has worked wonders for the ailment, and her faith and family kept her spirits bright.

“Within three days (of treatment) I could get up on my own,” Rosemarie says. “I didn’t need Katie’s help.”

Moreover, the relief allows her to pursue her lifelong love of gardening.

Katie helps Rosemarie travel to her infusions and other appointments.

For fun, the two might pan for gold one day, travel another, and scout for rocks and flowers the next.

Just two miles away is the Snake River, which they can visit any time.

As for gardening, though, Katie largely leaves that to the expert, her mother.

And if you ask nicely, she’ll probably open the gate for a tour.

3 candidates for governor take stage in first debate

BY COREY BUCHANAN
Oregon Capital Bureau

During the first general election debate in a race for who will become the next governor of Oregon, the three candidates empathized with many Oregonians dissatisfied with where the state is headed. Each of the three women, however, offered differing solutions to the state’s myriad issues in a 90-minute forum that underscored the chasms among their political philosophies and leadership styles.

Republican nominee Christine Drazan, Democratic nominee Tina Kotek and independent Betsy Johnson — who are running neck-and-neck in recent polls — shared the stage in an event hosted by Pamplin Media Group and sponsored by the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association at the Mt. Hood Oregon Resort in Welches Friday, July 29. The debate was moderated by PMG President Mark Garber and included questions from local journalists, as well as the opportunity for the candidates to confront each other with their own inquiries.

Drazan, a Canby resident and former Oregon House of Representatives minority leader who won the Republican nomination, made clear that she views her opponents as leaders of an establishment that has brought Oregon to where it is today, and that the state needs new solutions to chronic problems such as homelessness, a lack of housing and mental health services, and economic insecurity.

“It’s a little bit ironic to me to constantly hear my opponents on the stage be (aghast) on how horrible Oregon is on this and that and the other —



Campaign photos

The three leading candidates for Oregon governor are, from left, Democrat Tina Kotek; Betsy Johnson, running unaffiliated; and Republican Christine Drazan.

‘We’re 50th (in the country) on this and we have to work on that,’” Drazan said. “They’ve been in charge. We got here because of their voices. There are not two other people in the state with more power than them besides the governor herself and maybe the senate president.”

Johnson, a Scappoose resident who was a Democratic state senator before resigning to run as an unaffiliated candidate, emphasized that she represents a middle ground between what she described as extremes on her political right and left, noting Drazan’s pro-life stance on abortion and positing that Kotek is a part of a progressive left that is responsible for mounting problems.

“Oregonians are distrustful of the radical right and they are terrified of the progressive left ... What could be more different and impactful than a governor with an allegiance only to Oregonians and not to a party agenda or special interests?” she said.

Kotek, a Portlander who was the speaker of the house for nine years prior to winning the Democratic nomination, framed herself as a candidate who seeks solutions rather than simply rejecting the sta-

tus quo.

“No matter what the other candidates say today, there are no quick fixes. There are no miracle cures to take on these large challenges. Only hard work is going to allow us to ensure that every part of our state can thrive,” she said.

On the issues, Drazan clarified that she considers Joe Biden to be the fairly elected president of the United States — despite efforts from members of her party to sow distrust in the 2020 election results — while also stating that she would maintain the current gun and abortion laws in place in Oregon and expressing opposition to Gov. Kate Brown’s executive order directing state agencies to reduce carbon emissions. Regarding her and her colleagues’ decision in 2020 to walk out of the Capitol to combat Democrats’ cap-and-trade proposal while she was the House minority leader, she said she may have supported some form of policy incentivizing businesses to reduce emissions — but not in the form proposed by Democrats.

“The need to lead a Republican effort to deny quorum on this was simply because of the intensity of single-party majority control,” she said.

Drazan also said she felt the state was focusing too much on housing to address the homelessness crisis, and not enough on other issues like treating addiction and mental health.

Kotek described the walk-out as a decision to throw in the towel on the issue of addressing climate change and expressed support for the governor’s executive order.

Further, she was the only candidate to firmly say she would direct public resources to helping people living in states where abortion is illegal to access that service here. Johnson also emphasized her staunch pro-choice stance on abortion, but felt organizations like Planned Parenthood could support people arriving from other states without governmental funding.

“We are in too big of a moment in our country to say no to women who need access to care,” Kotek said. “And I’m the only person in this race who is a champion on this issue, who has believed in access to health care — and that is what abortion is — and that’s why I’m backed by Planned Parenthood and Pro Choice Oregon.”

Drazan, meanwhile, said she is pro-life but that her responsibility as governor would be to uphold the laws in place.

Unlike Drazan and Johnson, Kotek said she supports IP17 — a ballot measure that would require background checks for purchasing firearms, prohibit the sale of large-capacity magazines (except for military and law enforcement) — and established herself as the candidate in support of gun control measures. She clarified that she’s not

interested in “taking people’s guns away,” however, after a quip from Johnson suggesting that intention.

Johnson, meanwhile, castigated Gov. Kate Brown and state leadership for Intel’s decision to build a new chip manufacturing facility in Ohio rather than Oregon, saying that she had talked with Intel executives who said state leadership was not receptive to their needs and that she would make sure she consulted regularly with major industry players. Further, Johnson addressed her decision to vote for the corporate activity tax to add school funding even though she now is against it, saying that she felt schools needed more money at the time but now believes the tax is too big of a burden on businesses and should be altered. Similar to Drazan, Johnson felt that Kotek’s leadership has led to there being “tent cities all over Portland.”

“This is a humanitarian crisis and we must never lose sight of the fact that it’s inexo-

rably tied to drugs and mental illness in our streets,” Johnson said.

In closing remarks, Drazan commented on what she felt was a divisive attitude exuded by Johnson, saying she was tired of being yelled at and adding that she felt Johnson left the Democratic Party when it was politically convenient to do so.

Johnson said choosing Drazan would be moving from one extreme to the other and told voters she does not care whether you voted for Biden or Donald Trump.

“I want to recapture the maverick spirit and get us back on track,” Johnson said.

Kotek, in her final remarks, talked about how she fell in love with Oregon when she moved there 35 years ago and that she views it as a state of possibility toward what it could become.

“I am sure I know how to work with people and solve problems because I have a track record to show that,” she added.

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