

# EAST OREGONIAN

# LIFESTYLES

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Mike Ferguson proudly flies the Seattle 12th Man flag at his home.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

## The old fan and the sea



Mike Ferguson stands with the Seattle Seahawks theme boat he is restoring in his shop outside of Pendleton. Ferguson is restoring the 1974 Clipper Craft in the colors of his favorite football team.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

## Long-time Seahawks supporter rebuilds boat

By KATHY ANEY  
East Oregonian

Mike Ferguson doesn't don face paint before every Seattle football game. He doesn't airbrush Seahawk green onto his shirtless chest like the Seahulk and, except for the number 12 banner hanging from his home's siding, his house is devoid of Seahawk blue.

But, make no mistake, Ferguson is a superfan.

The Pendleton man, a retired builder, logger and commercial fisherman, expresses his fandom in his own way. In Ferguson's large shop sits a wooden fishing dory that he calls his Seahawk boat. He bought the craft last year to restore. The 1974 Clipper Craft had been used as a dive boat and before that for fishing. The dory was structurally sound, but cosmetically it needed work. A lot of work.

Ferguson took it apart, removing floorboards, seats and the wheelhouse, and used fans to dry out the hull for several months. He's rebuilding the pieces and the interior, everything except the hull. For a paint job, Ferguson decided to honor his favorite football team, the Seattle Seahawks. The team's colors and logo now adorn the boat. Eventually, he'll paint the name "Seahawk" with a number 12 below, which symbolizes Seattle's fans collectively as the "12th man."

This week, Ferguson applied a coat of varnish on the hull as he listened to music from his boom box. The boat, sitting on a trailer, fit easily into his roomy shop. Around Ferguson were artifacts from his life: a crosscut saw, a salmon net, the rack from a Roosevelt elk.

Here, working on his beautiful boat, Ferguson finds intense satisfaction. And if he can honor his team with the boat, so much the



Mike Ferguson applies a coat of stain to the railing on his Seahawks-themed 1974 Clipper Craft on Wednesday at his home outside of Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

better.

"I love wooden boats," he said. "I love football. The more I thought about this idea, the cooler it seemed."

Ferguson is normally a reserved, some would even say introverted, guy. That all changes when he arrives at Seattle's CenturyLink Field for a Seahawks game. "He is like a little kid who just got to the playground," said friend Dave Gibson, who sometimes comes along as Ferguson's guest.

"You get swept up with 70,000 others who are reacting at the same instant," Ferguson said. "It's fun to cut loose."

The pair had planned to drive to Seattle for the NFC championship game against the Green Bay Packers on Jan. 18. When Gibson twist-

ed his ankle hiking a couple days earlier, Ferguson sold his tickets and they watched the game at Gibson's Walla Walla home with their wives and another couple. For most of the game, the mood was subdued, even downright glum, as the Packers dominated. The Seahawks trailed 19-7 with about four minutes to go.

"Everyone was pretty resigned," Gibson said. "Then all of a sudden, the momentum shifted."

The Seahawks scored two touchdowns in 44 seconds, recovered an onside kick, completed a two-point Hail Mary and sealed the deal in overtime.

"We were jumping up and down and hugging and high-fiving," Gibson said. "It was pandemonium."

"It was a Cinderella story," Ferguson said. "They were getting their butts kicked and they somehow pulled it off. We were acting like idiots."

The group had noticed that some of the fans had given up and left CenturyLink Field before the astonishing finish. One of the people in Gibson's living room asked the others, "Would you have walked out?"

For Ferguson, the answer was a resounding "no." He started buying season tickets 15 years ago and has stuck with the Seahawks through the lean times, such as 2008 and 2009 when the two-year tally was 9 wins and 23 losses. He remembered the Seahawks organization calling him on the phone to convince him to renew his tick-

ets. For Ferguson, it was an easy sell. He has loved football since his high school days of playing at Henley High School in Klamath Falls. His idea of nirvana is watching live professional football, no matter the outcome.

"Even if your team loses, you don't have to cry in your beer," he said. "You're at a professional football game — it's a fabulous experience."

He doesn't bash fair weather fans who jumped onto the Seahawk bandwagon only after they morphed into an NFL power. Everyone has their own reasons and motivations and Ferguson said he respects other fans' individuality.

His list of favorite players includes quarterback Russell Wilson for his ability to motivate and make things happen in a hurry. He's also "the nicest person I've ever come across in sports — he's an absolute gentleman."

Ferguson also likes Richard Sherman "because he's not." Sherman, Ferguson said, is smart both on and off the field. He said the Stanford standout "can turn it on and turn it off — he's a showman."

Ferguson cheerfully predicted victory on Sunday for the Seahawks. He'll be watching the game on his living room flat screen surrounded by friends, wife Delanne and their dog, Teddy, who doesn't yet have a Seahawk collar, but might in the future.

Win or lose, he will continue to root. As for his Seahawk boat, he plans to launch the dory for the first time in June. Ferguson will haul the boat to Portland to a mechanic who works on old Volvo motors. They will launch into the Willamette River.

Contact Kathy Aney at [kaney@eastoregonian.com](mailto:kaney@eastoregonian.com) or call 541-966-0810