



Chris Collins/Baker City Herald

Gary Johansen estimates his Singer sewing machine is about 80 years old.

## RETIRE

*Continued from Page 1A*

While the weather remains wintry, Gary concedes they'll probably stay close to home at first.

"I like sitting in there drinking coffee," he says, pointing to his home just in front of the shop at 10th and Place streets.

And then he and Cindy, who've been married for 47 years, plan to do some traveling, depending on the pandemic.

While he admits that he'll probably be in the shop "once in a while," he's eager to hit the road.

The Johansens hope to head for the Black Hills of South Dakota to visit Mount Rushmore and then tour Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and the Tetons.

And Gary, a mule and horse wrangler, says he's always wanted to ride a mule to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. Cindy will take up a good book while he enjoys the trip, he says.

Gary will occupy himself during retirement with more hunting and fishing as well.

The Johansen family moved

to Northeast Oregon from the Sherwood area when their three children were young. Their oldest, Corey, will be 46 in February; their daughter, Kelly Stephens, is 43; and their son, Marty, is 40. They also have nine grandkids.

Gary says he left a job working in construction to move to Eastern Oregon, where he'd always wanted to live, after drugs starting showing up at the elementary school when his oldest son was a third-grader.

The family moved to Enterprise and Gary did ranch work in the area for a while before taking a job at the sawmill in Joseph. He was forced to look for a different line of work after injuring his back.

A vocational rehabilitation counselor helped place Johansen in training with George Ziermann, who owned Hells Canyon Shoe Manufacturing in Baker City at the time. The 82-year-old Ziermann now lives in Prineville and continues to work on shoes and boots.

The Johansens moved to Baker City in 1986 and Gary and Cindy joined the community through leadership roles at First Lutheran Church and

*"I've made some really bad-looking shoes look really good."*

— Gary Johansen

as volunteers with the Boy Scout program among other endeavors. Cindy was a leader of the Cub Scout summer camp for 24 years.

Johansen's rehabilitation training hit a couple of snags in the beginning. He says he was drawn to working with leather and had first started learning to be a saddle maker at a shop in Island City.

When that plan didn't work out, he moved to shoe manufacturing and repair under Ziermann's instruction.

That plan was nearly upended as well when Johansen developed carpal tunnel syndrome after working with Ziermann for a couple years.

That put him back to training for other employment for a short time during which he supervised prison work crews for the Bureau of Land Management.

But Johansen was drawn back to the boot and shoe repair business where he became popular with customers for his desire to work meticulously to meet their requirements and deadlines. His skills brought a steady stream of orders to satisfy his desire to get back to work after his injuries and subsequent surgeries. The carpal tunnel injury, however, forced him to focus more on the repair side of the profession rather than the manufacturing.

Cindy, who says she's always worked behind the scenes in her role with the shop, speaks proudly of her husband's reputation in the community and throughout the country.

"Gary is a gifted perfectionist at his craft and it shows in the work he puts out," she said. "He stands behind his word and his work."

Johansen said he's always had an artistic bent, drawing animals even as a young child. Other things took precedent as time passed, but he has been able to express himself through the artistry of repairing shoes (and boots, saddles, bags and other goods) at Elkhorn Boot and Shoe Repair.

His shop is filled with tools



Chris Collins/Baker City Herald

Gary Johansen works on a cowboy boot in his Baker City shop.

of the trade. A Singer sewing machine that he estimates is 80 years old and other machines that cut to precision, polish, brush and trim are housed inside. He has accumulated the tools over the years, along with boot and shoe polish, heels, half soles, leather pieces — and all other shoe and boot repair supplies imaginable — that might be needed to complete the work that comes his way.

The Johansens purchased the repair shop in March of 1992 from Kenny and Minnie Errend. It had been housed in the back of the Errends' former Elkhorn Western Wear store at 1812 Main Street (the present site of Baker Gold & Silver).

The Johansens moved the business to 2009 First St. and then to 2120 Third St. In 2006 they built the 1,200-square-foot shop behind their house.

Gary has reduced his work week to Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays over the past few years and now, he says, "I'm just done."

Although he has remained open throughout the pandemic, he says his business suffered losses because of the governor's shutdown orders, which he admits has had some bearing on his decision to retire.

"Business was down several thousand this year. For weeks I didn't see one pair of shoes — and I was open," he said.

Though there is still a call for the service he has provided for 29 years, it's not nearly

as steady as it had been in the past, he says.

He recalls when logging trucks parked outside his First Street shop as drivers packed in their cork boots for repair or to place special orders.

"Corks today you just don't see," he says. "I used to rebuild and make corks."

In the days before the mill closed, his customers regularly included timber fallers and mill workers bringing in their heavy work boots for repairs.

The quality of shoes and boots has declined over the years as shoe manufacturing has moved to China where products are designed to be thrown away rather than repaired, Johansen says.

Fashion trends also have had an impact on the jobs he's called on to complete. In the past he recalls dyeing leather shoes to match women's dresses. And women's fashions required a different pair of high heels — which were always in need of repair — for every ensemble.

He recalls a former customer who lived out in the valley and traveled to town every Wednesday. She always brought him high heels to repair from her collection of 80 pairs.

Young people who used to bring in their roper cowboy lace-up and slip-on boots have since changed their style to tennis shoes, he says.

Still, Johansen's reputation for quality work has brought him business from all over the country, including Tennessee,

Texas and Alaska.

And he has numerous returning customers among the railroad workers, cowboys, ranchers and welders closer to home.

Thinking of some of his more challenging jobs, Johansen's mind turns to shoes and boots that have been torn apart by dogs.

"I've made some real bad-looking shoes look really good," he said.

Johansen says he feels pride in knowing he can restore the mangled footwear: "Knowing I can fix it, getting it done and showing people what can be put back to life again."

His friend and customer, Paul Omann, spoke highly of Johansen's abilities during a Tuesday morning stop at the shop to visit and share a cup of coffee.

"He's a fine boot maker," Omann said.

And Johansen's son, Marty, who also stopped by for a morning visit, marvels at his father's skills.

"I've seen other people's work, and I guarantee you, you won't find anyone who does better work than he does," Marty says.

Following in his father's footsteps in the profession wasn't an option he'd ever considered, however.

"I don't have the finesse or the patience he does," Marty said. "I've always been good at destroying stuff. That's why I fall trees."

"To do what he does takes a lot of patience," he said.

# Director of land advocacy group calls 2016 Malheur Refuge takeover 'dress rehearsal' for US Capitol riot

By Maxine Bemstein

The Oregonian/OregonLive

Five years ago this month, Ammon Bundy led a 41-day armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge after protesting the return to federal prison of two Oregon ranchers convicted of setting fire to public land.

Bundy was acquitted of all charges after his arrest on allegations of conspiracy and impeding federal employees through intimidation, threat or force.

On Wednesday, Jan. 6, the extraordinary images of a violent mob of right-wing Trump supporters storming the nation's Capitol, incited by a president who refused to accept the 2020 election results, were no surprise to groups that have tracked extremists in the West.

Jennifer Rokala, executive director of the Center for Western Priorities, called the 2016 refuge occupation a "dress rehearsal for what we saw at the Capitol." The center, based in Denver, advocates for land and water conservation in the West.

"The extremist ideologies and tactics that led to the violent occupation of public lands in Oregon are the same ideologies that President Trump has stoked among his supporters," she said in a statement Thursday, Jan. 7.

"You can draw a straight line from the Bundy Ranch standoff and Malheur takeover to the Trump insurrection in Washington," she said.

Before Malheur, Ammon Bundy, father Cliven Bundy and brother Ryan Bundy were accused of rallying militia members and armed supporters to stop federal officers in



Steve Ringman/SeattleTimes-TNS, File Photo

Protest leader Ammon Bundy, holding papers, and others walk up from the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge headquarters compound on Jan. 7, 2016.

April 2014 from impounding Bundy Ranch cattle in Nevada. Cliven Bundy owed more than \$1 million in grazing fees and penalties that he refused to pay for two decades after federal authorities moved to limit his cattle's access to public land. Their federal prosecution in Nevada was dismissed due to prosecutorial misconduct.

On the family's Bundy Ranch Facebook page, a post with Cliven Bundy's name under it cited support for the insurrection at the Capitol.

The Jan. 6 post read: "You can't clean the swamp by standing off at a distance and smelling it. At Bundy Ranch we had a job to do, go get it done, and We the People went forward and finished the job."

It also praised Donald Trump:

"Today President Trump had hundreds of thousands of people and he pointed the way - pointed towards congress and nodded his head go get the job done. We the People did clear the chambers of Congress and 100,000 should have spent the night in the halls and 100,000 should have protected them. Trump blew his trump of retreat and the sun goes down."

What happened in Washington, D.C., was just the latest in violent clashes and standoffs by right-wing extremist groups, according to watchdog organizations.

Erik Molvar, executive director of the advocacy group Western Watersheds Project, said the mob mayhem in Washington was a "direct result of a growing movement of domestic

terrorists within the United States, paired with a systematic failure by law enforcement to bring them to justice."

The nonprofit conservation group has sued the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to challenge the return of a grazing permit to the Oregon ranchers whose prison sentences sparked the refuge occupation. Trump administration pardoned father Dwight Hammond Jr. and son Steven Hammond in 2018.

Ammon Bundy, reached Thursday, Jan. 7, said he was in the mountains and wasn't tracking what occurred at the Capitol, yet Bundy had urged people to attend Thursday's rally in Washington, D.C. and "stand for a constitutional republic" through a video posted last month by a group he's helped form called People's Right. "Don't wear a mask and stand for freedom," he urged on the video.

On Jan. 7, he told The Oregonian/OregonLive that he believes legislators meet behind closed doors without public oversight, constituting a "deliberate attack on personal liberty." He was arrested twice in two days in August for protests at the Idaho Legislature and in October caused the cancellation of an Idaho high school football game after he refused to wear a mask or leave school grounds.

"It's dangerous to all of us for officials in a government capacity to claim rights that belong to the individual, whether it's travel, what you wear over your face, or when you can go to church," said Bundy, who has been protesting coronavirus emergency safeguards. "I also don't

believe a republican representative form of government should make decisions without public oversight and without the participation of the people."

Greg Magarian, a law professor at Washington University Law School in St. Louis, said there's a significant difference between what the nation witnessed in Washington this week and racial and social justice protests in the last year.

"When a group violently attacks other people or attacks a public place in a way that puts other people's lives or safety in jeopardy, that's a severe crime. It's a violent riot, an attack," he wrote Thursday for an in-house university publication. "When a group violently attacks a government institution in an effort to change the lawful governmental order, that's insurrection. It's terrorism."

As other examples of insurrection, he cited the Malheur takeover, the militia takeover of the Michigan state Capitol in April and the militia-backed shutdown of Oregon's Capitol in June 2019.

"The takeover of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, incited by the president of the United States and his agents, was terrorism, insurrection and an attempted violent coup," he wrote.

In an interview Thursday, Jan. 7, Magarian also discussed similarities between the Malheur refuge occupation and the siege of the U.S. Capitol.

"These are both instances where people essentially trespassed on federal property, overwhelmed law enforcement and seized federal institutions by force," he said.