

# The Constancy of Sports in Our Lives

BY NORA GIBSON,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I'm a sports fanatic. I got it from my paternal grandmother who followed the Boston Red Sox after spending a brief time in Boston even though she lived most of her life in Canada. My 80 year-old mother is also a huge sports fan. She loves college football, especially the Ohio State Buckeyes. Even though she worked for Penn State University, she will only root for the Nittany Lions if the Buckeyes' season is hopeless. Following her recent move to Seattle after 25 years in Pennsylvania, she was faced with a difficult dilemma when my brother who lives in Pittsburgh asked her who she was going to cheer on in the Super Bowl. She called him back professing her love for the Seahawks and is now suffering from low-grade depression (with the rest of us).



Photo by: Lani O'Conner & Kristina Goudey

In addition to college football, I have an intense love of baseball and basketball—a serious addiction that has been passed on to my children. I've never been more proud of my daughter than when we were sitting in the cheap seats at Safeco Field during the Lou Pinella/Edgar Martinez era, and—after a series of complex moves on the field—she says, “Lou’s going to call a suicide squeeze play.” I’m thinking, “He never calls a suicide play.” A moment later, I and the people in the rows around us turn and look at her in amazement because that’s exactly what he did, and it won the game.

Fast forward to this year’s Rose Bowl. I’m helping out at Gaffney House and we’re getting ready to watch the game on television. Most people living there are into the game and as we are rearranging furniture around the television one gentleman wants to place a bet on Purdue University. I gently break it to him

that Purdue is not in the Rose Bowl and that this year it’s USC and Texas. He looks at me like I’m crazy and let’s me know in no uncertain terms that there is no way that Texas can be in the Rose Bowl. I decide against a lengthy discussion of the Bowl Championship Series because he has a good point; I miss the old rivalry between the PAC-10 and the Big Ten. He then moves on, looking for a gambler and finds someone who’ll accept his bet: two extra cookies if his team wins. A second gentleman walks in, sits down and says “Is there any wine or beer in this place?” I’ve never heard him ask for that before but I guess that’s what anticipating a good college match-up does for you. I ask the staff and we find some non-alcoholic Merlot in the house.

I ask the second gentleman if Merlot will do and he says that’s fine. The Purdue fan has settled in to watch and I offer him a glass. He looks up at me, wine in-hand, and says, “A bet and some wine with a college game. This is a great day.”

Another sports moment at Gaffney House but this time under very different circumstances: I’m there because one of the residents who is on hospice is in the final stages of his life. He was my favorite graduate school professor and I’m available to help his wife and sons along with the hospice nurse as the process of his dying unfolds.

When we’re not at his side, many of us are in the living room and I ask who would like to watch the Mariners’ game on TV. I find the play-by-play call and the rhythm of a baseball game very reassuring somehow. The sons of the dying man take turns away from his bedside and we offer them soup and grilled cheese to eat. Both are Mariners’ fans and as the afternoon moves on they stop by to check the score—a comforting distraction from the sadness (and relief) that accompanied their father’s death. It was his time to go. I was pleased we could help him in a humane environment where his family could be present with the sounds of life around.

## OUR FUNDRAISING BREAKFAST

It is with great excitement that I announce this year’s fundraising breakfast at Safeco Field (no, we haven’t grown to 47,000 attendees) in space they have available for events. Edgar Martinez (yes, that’s Edgar Esta Caliente Martinez) and

sports writer Art Thiel (who provided caregiving to both his parents) will be our special guests. Information: (206) 224-3772.

**We would love to see you there on Thursday, May 4th at 7:30 am. Play Ball!**