



Photo by Chuck Riggs

SUPER FANS

MANY VISITORS TO THE NFL HALL OF Fame in Canton may scratch their heads and walk past with a confused look on their face. They might not recognize the blue and orange barrel worn by Tim McKernan or Monte Short's ballcap covered with foam feathers, or even Mike Torbert's favorite floral print shift. The eclectic collection of obscure relics can easily be overlooked in a place that houses the memories of all of professional football's greatest moments.

If you don't recognize the names, that's okay, too. Because even though, on any given gameday, these men will score more camera time than most of the players on any NFL roster, their fans rarely know them by their legal names. Instead, it is their alter egos that become legends, their monikers that become household names. They are Barrel Man,

Arrowman, or Boss Hogette, and their role and their legacy in the league are unforgettable.

A small collection of these elite Superfans have been recognized for their contributions to the league, and inducted into the Hall of Fame. They have organized themselves into Pro Football's Ultimate Fan Association (PFUFA), and every year they gather for a reunion in Canton during the Hall of Fame Weekend. I had the privilege of joining them this year for the festivities, and talking with current President Danny "Sergeant Colt" Dillman about PFUFA, their fans, and the future.

What is PFUFA, and how'd this all get started?

Pro Football's Ultimate Fan Association is more than just a bunch of fans hanging out. In 1999,

Monte "Arrowman" Short came up with the idea of bringing back the first Visa class for a 'reunion' during the Hall of Fame Weekend. He was unsure how deeply passionate fans of rival teams would manage to get along, but it has worked out far beyond his imagination. Ten years later, we are still going and are stronger than ever. In those first years, Monte led the group to form the "3 Legged Stool" foundation of the group: fellowship, sportsmanship, and charity. Today, this is our motto.

Tell me how you got involved with PFUFA.

After being selected for the Hall of Fans, I was invited to attend the 2003 PFUFA Reunion. There, I met the wonderful fans that you have come to know as well. The Hogettes, Barrel Man, Arrowman, The



Bonelady, Packalope, Big Nasty, and many others, welcomed me with open arms. Within two hours of being at the reunion, I told my wife, "I am going to join this group. This is home." Since then, I have volunteered to do everything I could for this group. One thing has led to another, and now I'm the president.

What makes PFUFA so special to you?

As you know, you will be very hard pressed to find a better, kinder, more passionate group of fans under



one roof. Here, we have Brownies drinking with Bengal fans. We have Packers, Vikings, Bears, and Lions fans standing shoulder to shoulder grilling, laughing, breaking bread. We have Raiders, Broncos, and Chiefs fans that have, at the drop of a hat, traveled across the country for each other. We have Redskins, Cowboys, Eagles, and Giants fans literally giving the shirt off their backs for the other.

We have... too many examples to list. In short, PFUFA is a family.

How is PFUFA continuing to grow?

This group has made a transition that most fans do not make. We have gone beyond ourselves, beyond our own team and our own interests. We have embraced the idea of charity and fellowship. For many years, we have held our annual United Way charity event in Canton during Hall of Fame weekend. This event is targeted at those kids that do not have the opportunity to go to games. In addition to this, each fan is encouraged to seek out his or her own outlet for charity. We believe charity can be defined simply as "improving someone else's life at a cost to your own — with cost being defined as time, money, or resources."

So how can Superfans like you become a part of PFUFA?

PFUFA does not take volunteers. Instead, we seek out fans that we believe will be a valued addition to our group. From 1999-2006, only persons selected by Visa could be a member of PFUFA. In 2007, we changed our By Laws and formed the PFUFA Draft. Now, we go throughout the stadiums and parking lots of the league to seek out and nominate new members. Learn more at PFUFA.org.

What do you think your passion brings to football?

The NFL is the most successful sports league in the

country, without question. The foundational element in that success is the FAN. Without the fan, there is no league. I believe the passion of our fans add to that success. When you have Al Michaels and John Madden spend two whole minutes of Sunday Night Football specifically talking about Barrel Man, one of our members, and his importance to the Denver fan base it speaks volumes. Our fans are the ones that have been set apart to serve as examples. We lead our fan base in different ways, but always while maintaining the "3 Legged Stool" at all times. Our fans are the ones that lead visiting fans into the Linc, the Blackhole, and the Dawg Pound and tell the home fans, "Back off, they're with me!"



These Ambassadors of good will can be found in parking lots across the league, always happy to stop and pose for pictures or sign autographs. They're not an "official" part of the team, though many of them have access to places that ordinary fans would



never be allowed to go. They're not on salary from the team, but instead are paid with the smiles and cheers of their fellow fans. They make life in the lots a bit more colorful, and we are proud to count many of them as citizens of the Tailgate Nation. 🔥

Photos courtesy PFUFA