

Wes Era 1 Founders – Cleaned Transcript

Bob Lacy, Bill Ritchie, Bob Bischoff, Henry “Spike” Berry, Fred Hewett

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Robert Bischoff: Hey, Spike!

Bill Ritchie: Hey, look at that!

Spike Berry: Wow! I'm in!

Robert Bischoff: How are we?

Bill Ritchie: 1975 all over again.

Spike Berry: Yeah, this is bizarre. Thanks, I mean, Bill, this is fantastic. Thanks for doing this. I mean, and all the work that you're doing for, you know, pulling the website together, and your little research bits, and yeah, so it's fun.

Robert Bischoff: Oh, you've had some pretty good finds, you know, with the notebook and a couple other things. They're great.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, one of the things driving me was at Reunion a year ago. Yeah. When they were like, what was 1975 like? It's like ancient history. We gotta bring that history to life.

Spike Berry: well... Maybe.

Robert Bischoff: Yeah.

Spike Berry: Unless somebody else out there contradicts us, I guess we could say whatever we want, right?

Bill Ritchie: Well, we've got evidence that the first... we beat UConn that first game.

Spike Berry: That's right, there's a little documentation here and there, just a little enough of a snippet, you know, that we can kind of fill in the gaps.

Robert Bischoff: And one of the UConn players, who also was a teammate of Bob Lacy's in Westport. acknowledges that he went to UConn, and he had a... they had two people from Staples there. Right. And, he acknowledges that they lost their game to Wesleyan, and they had the correct score and everything.

Spike Berry: Corroborated, wow.

Robert Bischoff: Yes, exactly, by the losing team.

Bill Ritchie: Where is that published?

Robert Bischoff: In a, something that they... a little history that he did, chiming in, I think it was on a larger group page for Ultimate Frisbee, I think I have a screenshot of it, but... different people talking about founding teams, so he was talking about, okay, so I started at Staples, we beat, you know, Columbia High School, then we went on to UConn, the other... this other guy and I, we founded it at UConn, and then he did a brief... You know, a couple sentences, including the loss to Wesleyan. In it, so, yeah.

Bill Ritchie: Alright, here we go.

Robert Bischoff: Hey, Fred!

Fred Hewett: Hello, everyone!

Bill Ritchie: I'm moving in.

Robert Bischoff: Hey, Bob!

Fred Hewett: Working on my video.

Bob Lacy: Hi! Good to see everybody!

Bill Ritchie: Look at that, you're living in paradise!

Bob Lacy: Yeah. Up on the coast of Maine.

Bill Ritchie: Very good.

Spike Berry: Are you, are you... Are you really on the coast of Maine?

Bob Lacy: Yeah. Our property is.

Spike Berry: Oh!

Bill Ritchie: Is that really a picture of something real behind you, not just a...

Bob Lacy: Yeah, it's a park a couple miles from our house.

Bill Ritchie: Sweet. Yep.

Spike Berry: I'm in Augusta right now, is where we've been for thirty years.

Bob Lacy: Yeah, I'm down in Jonesboro, which is near Machias, near the Canadian border.

Spike Berry: Alright, I know in Jonesboro, yeah. Oh, it's a beautiful piece of... beautiful piece of coast, you know?

Bob Lacy: Yeah.

Bill Ritchie: All right. Well, greetings, everybody, this is great. We are putting together a history of the founding of the Wesleyan Frisbee team.

Bob Lacy: And you've done an impressive job so far.

Bill Ritchie: I can come back to the origin story. What's that?

Bob Lacy: You've done an impressive job so far of finding information.

Bill Ritchie: It's pretty amazing, yeah, Bob's been doing a lot of it, too. It's... it's really fun to dig back to these old... days, and I have a website to just put it on so that people can come and just browse it. Alright, were you guys ready to talk early history? The... so the idea is that we're gonna talk about this, we're gonna make a transcript. Clean up the transcript, and then put it on the website so that people can read it, summarize with ChatGPT.

Bob Lacy: Water.

Bill Ritchie: Memories can do. I wanted to kick it off with talking about the sort of ground zero of everything, Bob, when you put the... call in... at the Argus, and the letters to the editor, and said, I want to start a team. So we're gonna do a little, Yeah, graphics representation. Bob, you want to pop up that scene, just to get us all...

The Wesleyan Argus, March 4, 1975 "Genesis"

Letters To The Editor

FPC Left Out

To The Editor:

FPC is still alive and valuable to the University! In the issue of Tuesday, 25 February 1975, the article on the "Orange Report" omitted any mention of the Financial Planning Committee in the discussion of the means for arriving at financial decisions. The faculty and students on FPC are doing an excellent job and they deserve recognition, respect, and support from the Wesleyan community. FPC is preparing a report which will provide a student/faculty view of the magnitude of the financial problem and ways to deal with the problem. It's difficult to understand how the Financial Planning Committee can be omitted from the discussion of financial planning at Wesleyan.

Paul Haake

Frisbee Team

To The Editor:

Over the past few years Frisbee has become a popular spring sport at Wesleyan and soon the fields will again become dotted with frisbees flying between groups of friends.

Believe it or not, there exists a game of team frisbee played with goals and following rules somewhat like that of soccer. Many colleges in the east now have varsity frisbee teams and the number is rapidly growing. Recently I received a letter from the Yale frisbee team suggesting that Wesleyan form a team and enter into competition with other schools in the area. (They've already suggested a few dates for games.)

I've played on frisbee teams in the past and would like to start a team here if there is any interest. I don't care whether or not we become really good. I just want to have fun. We can have intramural games and/or play other schools. Anyone who wants to participate would be welcome, whether experienced or still a novice.

All interested students should leave a note in P.O. Box 370 with their name, some idea of the most convenient times for games and practices, and any suggestions, comments or questions. I'll send a summary of the rules of the game to anyone who wants them and try to arrange a time for Wesleyan frisbee players to get together.

Bob Lacy

Bill Ritchie: And what we have, just while we have it, is Bob and Bob and I were on the original 75 team.

Spike Berry: Yeah.

Bill Ritchie: And then... Fred and Spike, you guys came in in the fall of 75, right? So you have memories after that.

Spike Berry: Right. I wouldn't oversell that. I mean, we were there.

Bill Ritchie: Well, come on. It was all good back then. Those were mythic times.

Bob Lacy: True.

Bill Ritchie: Here's... Bob, do you want to tell us a little bit about your memories of... Going and doing recruiting during that spring of 75?

Bob Lacy: Yeah, I don't have detailed memory of it. It was, you know, as you know, about 50... almost 50 years ago, or more than 50 years ago. But I had played frisbee in high school, one of the few high school frisbee teams that started out in the sport. In fact, the sport was first invented in Maplewood, New Jersey, at the high school there, in terms of the formal rules for playing ultimate frisbee. So when I came to Wesleyan, I guess my freshman year, I didn't do anything about Frisbee. I was probably too busy settling in at Wesleyan, and... I was taking courses and such, then decided to have more fun. And several of the players on the first team were actually my, apartment mates on a William Street apartment. So we had a 10-person apartment there, and 4 of them joined me on the first team. So that was one thing that helped me get going. And what also helped was the fact that they were all better athletes than I was. So, I was enthusiastic, but they had the skills. So, people like Lyle Rudensey, who is much faster and bigger and stronger than I am, but a good guy, and others. So we... got the team going and, you know, put out this letter to the editor to sort of recruit people to join us, and we're very pleased that some of you did, as well as others. I also recall that I went to the athletic director at Wesleyan. Sometime around that first year, and said, we're trying to form this Ultimate Frisbee team, and I was expected to get just laughed out of the office. That they would just say, you know, that's not a sport, it's not a real sport, go away. But in true Wesleyan style, they are very flexible and willing to be open to other ideas. And so the athletic director said, what do you need? And, well, we didn't need equipment, we didn't need a coach, we didn't really need much of anything except for transportation to get to other schools to play games. And what he offered was that we could borrow the athletic department van to get to somewhere for games, which was a big help, because none of us had cars. So, you know, even at that level, Wesleyan was supportive of us and gave us a little bit of money to buy a few frisbees and such. And as you guys know, I got it going in that first year, and we still had a few more games in the second year, but I think it really took off by about the third year when, some of you guys, whether it's Bob or you, Bill, took over sort of leading team and recruiting more people and making it a bit more... systematic. I mean,

our first year, I think we didn't have anything in terms of, you know, drills or you know, define practices, we just got out there and played. And that was... that was the way we learned how to do it, just get out there and see what we could do. And when I've looked at some recent pictures of frisbee tournaments, in the past year, nationally, it's impressive what people are doing. Compared to the limited skills that we had. Now, I was never any good at forehand throws, or over-the-head throws, or anything like that, and most of the team wasn't either. But people got better quickly, and learned new techniques. So, it was fun to get it going, and especially encouraging that it really took off and grew since then.

Bill Ritchie: Do you remember that first spring when you were recruiting? You put the letter in the editor, you got people from... did you say high-rise?

Bob Lacy: Yeah, from the low-rise apartments on Williams Street.

Bill Ritchie: Huh.

Bob Lacy: So there are some, you know, 4-person apartments and a couple 10-person apartments, and a group of us were in a 10-person apartment.

Bill Ritchie: Bob, do you remember, like, notices at Downey House?

Robert Bischoff: I was gonna say, I remember a notice pinned to a bulletin board at Downey House. the, you know.

Bob Lacy: Yeah, I don't remember exactly how we got the word out, but the word did get out, and probably moved among people that were already playing frisbee with their friends, which was encouraging. Yeah.

Bill Ritchie: Definitely.

Bob Lacy: And, you know, we had the rule that anybody could join. There was no requirement that you had to, you know, pass a test or anything like that.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, I remember doing a lot of yelling. Get on it, get on it, go deep! Go deep! You gotta make it stop! Yep, that was... That was the strategy that I employed, just hollering.

Bob Lacy: And I think we slowly developed some, techniques in terms of plays that we would run and things of that sort that sort of emerged from the practices, but nothing very formal in that first year or two.

Bill Ritchie: Right. Cool. Well, let's go back and talk about it before Wesleyan, even, because, you basically were at the core of, like, the early history, right?

Bob Lacy: Yeah.

Bill Ritchie: Bob, do you wanna... Click up the next picture?

Robert Bischoff: Show the picture of that.

Bob Lacy: He probably has some embarrassing pictures of us.

Bill Ritchie: Not one, it's not embarrassing.



Bob Lacy: Yep. Yeah, so the Staples High School team was formed by Al Jolley, a math teacher who was in that second row. And he actually wasn't my math teacher, but I knew him because every summer he would take a couple, up to a handful of guys out with him to just go hiking and camping through the Rocky Mountains. And I went out with him one summer after, I guess, my sophomore year in high school. And while we were camping, we played a lot of frisbee. So, one sort of game we played with each other was to see how many times we could pass it back and forth, always catching it behind our back. And managed, I think, to hit 100 at one point, tosses before we dropped one. So he knew about it because he went to Maplewood High School, which is where Ultimate Frisbee was invented. He was there a couple years before they invented it, but his younger sister was still there, so he had heard about it from, you know, family relatives down there in Maplewood, New Jersey. So he decided to form the Staples team. And the fact that it was a rather informal sport is reflected in the fact that after winning one game against the Maplewood High School team, we declared ourselves the national champion because we beat the only other high school team. So therefore, obviously, we were the national champion. Right. And they came back and challenged us for a rematch about a month later and totally creamed us, but we don't publicize that part of it.

Bill Ritchie: What's that, 73?

Bob Lacy: That would have been... yeah, probably 73. Yep, so... in, or maybe even a year before, I don't remember exactly when we started the Staples team.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, well, I mean, let's really get it out. The Maplewood team invented this sport. And they're undefeated until they played you guys, and you guys beat them.

Bob Lacy: And we beat them, yep. Now, admittedly, it's also the case that their star player wasn't able to be there at the game. That helped us out, and he was back on their team when they did the rematch, when we didn't do so well. But we had fun anyways, in either case. And as you can... as you've noted in some of the stuff that Bob's pulled together, or you've pulled together, Bill, a number of the players that were on the Staples team went on and formed some of the college teams. So Dan Buckley at UConn, And, let's see, who are some of the others that did it?

Robert Bischoff: I think Ron Kaufman.

Bob Lacy: Oh, yeah, Ron Kaufman.

Robert Bischoff: Brown, maybe...

Bob Lacy: And some of these guys played on other teams as well. I think Ed Davis went on and played in college.

Bill Ritchie: Right. Now, Al... Al Jolley had a... he had a Wesleyan connection, right?

Bob Lacy: Yeah, he... and I hadn't remembered that until I saw the information you sent around, that he did...

Bill Ritchie: That's Bob's research, yeah.

Bob Lacy: Yeah, he did his, you know, training to be a teacher, his, I guess, graduate degree in teaching at Wesleyan, so he already knew about Wesleyan, and Wesleyan was actually a popular place for people from Staples to go. So, I knew about Wesleyan and applied there because I knew several other people from Staples who were already at Wesleyan, and several others who were applying the same time I was. So, he was actually a good recruiter for Wesleyan among the Staples students.

Bill Ritchie: Right.

Bob Lacy: And was also, therefore, very encouraging when we formed the team at Wesleyan.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, so it... I mean, the Wesleyan goes right back to, essentially, you know, it's like an origin story.

Bob Lacy: Yeah, I don't know who at Maplewood really got things going there. It'd be worth finding out sometime, and, you know, where they all went off to, and probably continued to play in various schools, etc.

Bill Ritchie: That's awesome. Anybody else have any thoughts about the early days, like, there?

Spike Berry: Well, I... I just, I mean, I... Bob says an embarrassing picture. This is a... this is a... Because it's just a bunch of kids playing frisbee. To me, that's really iconic of what was happening, because we were not starting a movement or anything, we were just having fun.

Bob Lacy: Fair enough.

Spike Berry: like you say, on a camping trip, you just toss a frisbee around, because that's where it starts. It's just playing with the disc, and it's just because it's fun, you know, toss a thing around.

Bob Lacy: You don't need a lot of equipment, or a specialized field, or anything else, you just get out there and do it.

Spike Berry: And you look at... I mean, you just look at the faces, I mean, how serious is this? I mean... Kind of. No, this is all just fun. I mean, it's beautiful. It's a great picture, I think.

Bill Ritchie: It is a great picture.

Bob Lacy: Yeah. It also points out another fact, which was, at least back then, there weren't men and women's teams. It was just everybody. So... William had two girls playing with us who were both pretty good. And I don't remember... I don't know how long it was before separate women's teams started being formed at colleges and Elsewhere, but... At least at the beginning, it was just co-ed.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, that's Title IX, that's a whole topic in itself.

Bob Lacy: Yep.

Bill Ritchie: But anyway, that's... I had not known about the high-rise, low-rise connection, and you guys bringing in people from there. But I... I'm also interested in other through lines of other team members, like, we've been trying to get in touch with Bill Bath.

Bob Lacy: Hmm.

Bill Ritchie: who I don't remember that well, but he put in a note to... one of the websites, talking about the first game, and I was Bill Bath, and I did that, and I did this, he was a central player. So he's one of the people that would be good to know, but then Bob and I, We, we're in... we came in in 73, fall of 73, and we roomed in Harriman Hall. The fourth floor of the now the Frank Center Public Affairs Center. It looked out directly over Andrus Field. And so, Bob and I, like, we would, like, carry frisbees around all the time. It was like Andrus Field was our front yard. And there was no ultimate frisbee then, but, you know, it was all

doing tricks and, you know, cut left and go long, and... Catching behind your back, all that stuff. Yep. Back when Frisbee was just fun, but I, you know, that's... that's sort of the way I remember it, is coming into the team. In spring of 75, being a really good frisbee player, because we were playing all the time, just fooling around.

Bob Lacy: Yeah.

Bill Ritchie: So stepping into Ultimate was... was easy.

Bob Lacy: Yeah, although there's no requirements that people had great skills or expertise when they joined, obviously a lot of people around campus already did. Which is why I think a team could be formed pretty quickly and be a pretty good team.

Robert Bischoff: Well, I remember, you know, my freshman year, I was, you know, very much into, you know, serious sports in high school, and ran cross-country, and freshman year, went out for the cross-country team, and then played lacrosse, which I'd never played before. I was very disenchanted with both the cross-country team, which was a pretty good team. and lacrosse, just the kind of paramilitary intensity of it. Also, the distance, the additional distance in cross-country didn't agree with me. And my sophomore year, I decided I'm not gonna go out for, you know, organized varsity sports in my sophomore year. And, was playing frisbee incessantly with Bill. And, knew nothing about Ultimate, or the rules of Ultimate, the game, until we saw your notice, and you... explained the rules, and then I just fell in love with the sport. I mean, I... just everything about it is just so much fun, and the, you know, self-refereeing and less intensity, but did not diminish the athleticism at all. I think, ultimately, so to speak, at the end of the day, you know, as the sports, you know, evolved and you got better at it yourself. It was really just as rewarding and challenging as any other sport, but with... without many of the negatives. So, for me, it was great, and I think in your letter to the editor, you know, just come out and let's have fun was really what it was all about.

Bob Lacy: Yeah, and I think it was... a lot of the early players, probably still, are people who were good athletes in high school on various, you know, formal teams of the traditional sort. And wanted to keep being, you know, out there playing on the fields, but without all the structure of, say, a football team with, you know, a coach football team, or the baseball team, or whatever. Just wanted to get out there and play. Yeah, and see what they could do.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, one of the wild things is the students now, or the young people. There is one guy, Isaac, he wrote an essay saying that at the 50th reunion, "I remember talking to some of the old-timers, and my god, they were just kids like us."

Bob Lacy: Alienated again.

Bill Ritchie: We couldn't figure out where to fit in, and then we found this sport. It's like a 50-year history of the same person, same type of people, again and again and again. And to me, that's one of the really most...

Robert Bischoff: Yeah, I would say, you know, Bob Lacy, you weren't at the 50th reunion, but what struck me, coming back, having been under a rock in oblivion.

Bob Lacy: That's true.

Robert Bischoff: this history that had gone on for the next 49 years, or what I... I came back and played in one game, because I was on exchange, but in 78, but that was it, was that it was so similar, a sport still. I thought, look, after all these years, it will be a whole different animal. And yet, underlying all of it, really, was that spirit of the game. And that... and that you felt like these were kindred spirits. The current players were...

Bob Lacy: Unbelievable.

Robert Bischoff: You would have gravitated toward if you were a current student.

Bob Lacy: Hmm.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, very cool. Okay, so, there's a mystery that's happening. The first year was spring of 75. And then after that, I took a year off, and Bob, you left and took a year off, other people might have as well. From the fall of 75 to the spring of 76 how did the team do?

Bob Lacy: Hmm.

Bill Ritchie: Spike, you and Fred were freshmen there, right? I mean, you come up from playing high school together and then joined the team at that time, right?

Fred Hewett: That's right Yeah.

Bill Ritchie: Do you have memories of that first year? For you.

Fred Hewett: Indeed.

Bill Ritchie: 75?

Fred Hewett: Fall of 75, there was a lot of carryover from... High school, because we both played... there was a Frisbee culture, sort of a, you know, again, this sort of considered weird by the rest of the student body, but we did have a page in the high school yearbook, which, when I look back, is a little surprising. But one memory that I can share from that fall was, just being, sort of. Wowed by the fact that there is this great athletic field right outside my door, and... Great place to throw the bee. But I can clearly remember being... Yeah. a Friday night, you know, the chosen activity was field goal frisbee, where we would, try to throw field goals on the football field from... I don't recall the distance now, but I'm sure it was in the 50-yard range. Spike threw them a lot further than I did, but... That... I can... I... vivid memory of that fall playing field goal frisbee.

Bill Ritchie: This is Fall 75.

Fred Hewett: Fall 75, yeah.

Spike Berry: Okay, let's...

Bill Ritchie: Do you remember playing any other schools?

Fred Hewett: it wouldn't be until 76, I believe, that we played, that we sort of... got the message from Bob, and... And... started doing the organized thing with the team. They all kind of blur. I know we came to Cambridge to play at Harvard. I know we went to Brown, I know we went to UConn, I know we went to Amherst.

Bill Ritchie: 1976.

Fred Hewett: I think it was in 76, yeah. No. Spring? Yeah. Again, I apologize, my memory is for not good.

Robert Bischoff: One of the documents I posted, is, you, Brown had a schedule from 19... spring of 76, and it shows the score against Wesleyan, so... we... we know in April of 76, Brown played Wesleyan.

Bob Lacy: Yeah, and I think... I think a lot of those games were arranged by just people on the team having old high school friends who are now at those other schools, and calling up our friends and saying, hey, can we arrange for a game? So, yeah, we played Brown, and I don't remember exactly which years, which games occurred. We had a game against Yale. Amherst. Harvard. Uconn. I think I had a couple games against UConn. They always beat us, but...

Bill Ritchie: Not always.

Bob Lacy: Oh, that's right, I think we did have one win against them.

Bill Ritchie: It's in the spring of 75, when UConn was just getting going.

Bob Lacy: Right.

Bill Ritchie: No, that's so... okay, that's great, because the research that I had done until Bob started coming up with stuff recently, nobody could remember any games being played that year, or who was organizing, or how... how it went, and so the fact that there was an active team, playing frisbee, doing all kinds of things, and playing with other... against other teams.

Spike Berry: Yeah.

Bill Ritchie: That's big news. And I mean, it's... you know, yeah, I can't remember any of that shit myself, but... It's good to dig it up, collectively.

Spike Berry: This Frisbee club, or whatever it is, this page that Fred's talking about in our high school yearbook.

Bob Lacy: Hmm.

Spike Berry: There was a group of us that, that, we're just sort of fanatic about... about frisbee. We... we established a frisbee golf course right around the high school, so in our free periods, we would play around the school. And, you know, much to the chagrin of my biology teacher, who would look out the window wondering why I'm not doing my homework. But we actually had an official IFA-sanctioned Club. the CEFGA, the Cape Elizabeth Frisbee Golf Association. We've registered with the IFA, you know, the International Frisbee Association.

Bill Ritchie: In high school.

Robert Bischoff: Which high school was it?

Spike Berry: Cape Elizabeth. Cape Listen, it's outside of Portland. And, So, we were... we didn't have... didn't have any Ultimate, going, but we, we kept up with Frisbee World Magazine, and we were up with, all the new throws and the tricks, and... We kept up with, of course, the new discs that would come out. the Pro was first, but then the Super Pro came out. And, we even formed the Maine Frisbee Championships one summer. In Portland.

Fred Hewett: That's true.

Spike Berry: We had expeditions down to the... The Eastern Regionals in New Jersey, a couple of summers, 76 and 77, we took these Big trips in the old Volkswagen bus. This is... so mostly, this was, individual competition, you know, freestyle, distance, and... Accuracy, so we're developing all of these skills, And... But, there was no ultimate happening in Maine at that time. So, we arrived at Wesleyan, wondering what was going to happen, and the first thing I see is down at Fisk Hall at the post office, there's this sign on the door. from Bob Lacy, you know, if you want to play Frisbee, you don't have to know anything. This game that, you know, has rules just show up at whatever time it was. I said, "Fred. they got Frisbee here!" You know, you arrive at... and they... all the orientation materials has this whole list of... Clubs and activities that you can join. And it's not on that list, right?

Spike Berry: Not an official... Activity from the... from the college. It's just something that Bob has stuck up. With tape on the door. And I'm thinking, This is us.

Robert Bischoff: No.

Spike Berry: Nice.

Fred Hewett: I just want to interject one thing quickly, and then when we did go to the Eastern Nationals in New Jersey, Henry won the competition. And, you know, an all-around athlete, I forget the exact scoring, but then he went on to the Nationals in Los Angeles, I think, right?

Spike Berry: The Rose Bowl in Pasadena, 1977.

Fred Hewett: Yeah.

Bill Ritchie: What year?

Spike Berry: 1977.

Bill Ritchie: So you were in college then, but you were representing your high school team?

Spike Berry: Well, so it wasn't really a team. It was just a bunch of us that, played frisbee when we saw each other. A bunch of friends got together.

Bill Ritchie: I don't know. towards the Wesleyan team, and then also your bunch of friends out of Maine. Who were going around the country.

Spike Berry: So, in the summer, we...

Bill Ritchie: Wow.

Spike Berry: just got together. So this was a kind of a one-off. We'd see what was happening, And, so this was just a road trip down to the eastern regionals. And, the Octad, they called it, I think. And, on the way home, I stopped off and played in the first ever Professional Disc Golf Association Department. Someplace in... I don't know where it was, even New Jersey. I was... I had a disc golf association number 291. I had... I... everybody else was ready to go home, but they said, I think you won some money, so we had to stay around to collect, like, \$12 for... Or 46th place, or something.

Bob Lacy: Yeah.

Spike Berry: I was ridiculous. It was a... they had just cut this disc golf course into the woods, and it was terrible. You couldn't even get through the trees, but they had these disc pole holes, and anyway...

Bill Ritchie: Well, talk a little bit more about the Rose Bowl. That's, like, what year...

Spike Berry: So, yeah, so Wham-o, of course, the manufacturer of the Frisbee. Had this, arrangement where the top 3 finishers in the regionals would get an all-expenses-paid trip out to the World Frisbee Championships, which started in... the first one was 1974. So, this... And this is part of what I want to get across, is this is a new sport. evolving as, you know, as we're starting this Ultimate Team at Wesleyan, and as Bob says, we had to call around to see what other schools even had teams that we could play. Because it's not something that was happening at high schools. We didn't have... we didn't have people coming into Wesleyan who had experience playing on high school Ultimate Teams, and... and it saw, even at the individual level. The World Frisbee Championships had just started in 1974. So, I went out there in 77, and... I shared a dormitory with... room with Mark Dana, who... wrote a book, I don't know if you... Sort of a classic book at this time about Frisbee, and... And they had, the competitions happened Over 2 or 3 days ahead of time, the distance, and... Maximum time aloft, throw-run-and-catch, accuracy... And then they whittled it down, and then the finals were happening in the Rose Bowl, along with a

freestyle competition, and... I didn't make the wrong on that, so I got to be a spectator, and of course, they had the frisbee dogs that everybody likes to watch. begin.

Spike Berry: They get all chewed up by these dogs that are jumping up in the air, and they think, oh, isn't that cute? So, people like to watch. But, you know, it was great fun for me to see... because... There's no internet. There's no electronics. And so the only way you get to know some of these people who are some of the best frisbee players in the world is to be there. And so I got to see, you know, John Kirkland, who won that year, and his name is on the... is on the frisbee the next year, is engraved on it, and Monika Lou, who was the women's champion. So, You know, these... and... Jens and Erwin Velasquez were the freestyle champions. These are, you know, mostly from California, but there's some East Coast frisbee players, too. So, I arrive at Wesleyan and kind of... Just loving Frisbee. And having those skills, not having any kind of, formal background in organized sports. Which sort of turned me off. But here's this little game that we can play, just. come up Foss Hill, and... And it's low-key, low pressure, we're just gonna have fun. And that just played right into... into what I was looking for.

Bill Ritchie: Yep, know that well. So, Bob, you were the... you had 2 years when you were organizing the team and bringing it on, and then... Did you go on... Beyond that, and was there a handoff to Spike? And how did... how did the... The continuity go?

Bob Lacy: I... I don't remember.

Bill Ritchie: Fair enough.

Fred Hewett: Bye.

Spike Berry: I don't really remember either, except that I've... I found this notebook up in the attic that has a bunch of Names and phone numbers of, people to contact at at UConn, and... and Yale, and Brown, and so... and that's how we had to do it, I mean. We had... We had payphones down the hall. I mean... And, so it was... it was hard work to try to set these things up, but I... In the fall of 77, which is... so, Bob graduated in the spring of 77, right?

Bob Lacy: Yep.

Spike Berry: So, in the fall of 77, I think I was the one that was making all those contacts and those phone calls. To try to set up, some games.

Bill Ritchie: Well, you're... you're... Playbook, player... player roster playbook, that... that makes it clear that you were doing incredible work. Very detailed.

Spike Berry: But that's, of course, also the fall when the... Nick Donohue showed up, so the world changed, you know.

Bill Ritchie: Right. Yeah, we did an interview with Nick and Chris Heye and Mooney and David Garfield, Nietzsche.

Spike Berry: Yeah, I saw that. That was fantastic. I loved it, yeah. But it's a whole different... whole different... feel. I mean, the whole transitional Feel to what... You know, so Nick did come from competitive sport. He came from organized sports, from lacrosse, and so he had that Kind of a mindset, which was... really different from where I was coming from. and, I hadn't played Ultimate since 1979, so... you know, I left Wesleyan, and that was... that was the last I saw of it. Until I got this phone call out of the blue in April of last year from from Nick Donohue, who somehow found me. I think Bob Bischoff may have... Looked me up somehow.

Robert Bischoff: Yeah, I found your contact info.

Spike Berry: Because you've got to watch out, you're not safe, Oh, you found me, but I don't need to know. Anyway... And it's like, hey, this is Nick, you remember me? Yeah, everybody remembers Nick Donohue. And I remember him being really fast. And having a really powerful forehand. just being a very enthusiastic player. We had a great conversation, but I hadn't thought about Ultimate Frisbee in whatever that is, 48 years or something. And... He says, You're the one that turned me on to...

Bob Lacy: Ultimate.

Spike Berry: Changed my life! Wow. I mean, I didn't know I was gonna do that. But I did... I think that it was such a great thing. I mean, I just... That frisbee! The way that it just floats through the air, or sails through. Flat, flip, flies straight, tilted, flip, curves, experiment! I mean, they embossed that right on the bottom of that professional frisbee. experiment. It's... like, you'd never quite know what it's gonna do. It's not like a baseball, where you... you practice, and if you get it right, it's gonna do the same thing every time. No, because the wind's gonna come up, or something's gonna happen, and it's gonna go a little bit different than what you hoped. So, there's all that sort of mystery and excitement in the thing. That's just fun!

Bob Lacy: And one thing that... one thing that did is made it really fun to... Sort of chase down throws that you think are going nowhere, but they might just keep floating.

Bill Ritchie: a floaty.

Bob Lacy: So if you keep going, you can sometimes get to it.

Spike Berry: You work on it. Yeah, right. Yeah. It's not hard.

Bill Ritchie: The harder you spun it, the longer it'd float.

Spike Berry: So if I'd see somebody out just outside the dormitory who could just play frisbee, say, alright, that's all you need. is just, you've got an interest in Frisbee, I can just see, because you're... you're doing it. You're throwing a frisbee. That's all you need. You want to come try this game. And so I would round up, because I can't play Ultimate by myself, we need some people. So, I did, you know, round it up. anybody, especially if, you know, like, Nick was out there, you know. throwing this thing the length of the football field,

and I go, okay. I think he's gonna be worth talking to. But I wasn't trying to change anybody's life, I didn't know, but you never know! Sometimes, you know, it's really gonna catch somebody, you know.

Fred Hewett: Pretty good.

Spike Berry: Be just the right thing for him. But sometimes, you know, they show up a couple times, and then they walk away. Okay, whatever happens. It's not up to me, you know, it's... Whether it connects or not.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, no, that's pretty amazing. You know, one of the things about Wesleyan is, I mean, if you take a survey of all the teams around the country, and probably around the world. Wesleyan, I think, has a unique place of being... Just really in it for fun. spirit of the game. Donohue was big on that, on doing it the right way. Being weird, being incredibly intense. And just a lot of different things that... You know, just... we're more... idiosyncratic, I guess, than most teams were. I mean, Wesleyan, it's a funky bunch of people, and has been from the beginning. Very good.

Spike Berry: Yeah, I saw.

Bill Ritchie: Alright, well, I got one more specific... Question, and then we can... Go continue to reminisce, but the name of the team...

Bob Lacy: Hmm.

Bill Ritchie: The name of the team in the mid-'70s was the Bees. And then Donohue tries to claim that it was the WES-U-Bees going way back, but I know that through spring '78 we were called the Bees. But does anybody remember the origin of the team name?

Bob Lacy: No, I didn't even remember that we had a team name until I saw the stuff you sent around.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah. Well, there's documentation, and that's good enough, but nobody has a recollection about that.

Spike Berry: No, we didn't really... we didn't have meetings, we didn't have votes, we didn't have captains, we didn't have... I mean, we just showed up and played. I mean, there's no team names or... I mean... That's all organized, guys.

Bob Lacy: Oh, And it may have been very informally used just by you know, people referring to other people on the team, but I don't remember, you know, we didn't have uniforms or anything like that.

Bill Ritchie: No. I... I... there were a number of games I played where I didn't even have any shoes. Which was... which was great.

Spike Berry: And that field, I... I don't know. Well, go ahead, Bill, you've got an outline there you follow on.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, I think we've pretty much gotten that. There may be gaps, but does anybody have any other... thoughts on life back then? What other things associated with Frisbee? When we come back for the next big reunion, we're gonna... you know, this is the early history... we're the origin story right here.

Spike Berry: I mean, you just... you mentioned shoes, or no shoes, and I was just thinking that... it made me think of Fauver Field, and... And, you know, a few years ago, I was trying to remember it, and I was looking for it on the air photos, and it's like, where did it go? And it's... you've built dormitories on top of it now.



Spike Berry: So I was just trying to refresh my memory, but my memory is pretty good, alright, because it had... I mean, I can remember that field, and it was really just right. Because it had that... that banking up toward the road that was, you know, where you... if you weren't playing, you could sit on it, you know, if you're waiting to come in. And then... it had this, like, fence with the trees on it that... that were at the crest of this big slope down to Vine Street. And the wind would come up over that slope. And it would just add this bit of chaos into the thing all the time. Like, you don't know... which way it's gonna go. And, And it's just the wind right on that field was... Just added that extra dimension of, chaos. What have you got here?

Robert Bischoff: Fauver Field right in the center there.

Spike Berry: Oh, yeah, yeah, see that... that slope I'm talking about, on the far side, up toward the road, that was... that was a great place for, you know, for resting. and for watching the game when you were not playing, and then the trees, you can't really see the extent of the slope, but the road, so that's Vine Street right in the front. And, and there's the trees that are obscuring the fact that that's a pretty high slope. And the wind would come right up. from the side a lot of the times. So it was a side wind. That would catch. Boy, with some... some games... You couldn't even throw it at the other end of the field. It would... it would blow right back at your face. But it was, it was kind of out of the way, and yet it was. close... it was still... it still felt like you're... you're part of the community, part of the school. And, you know, the fields now... they're way out, I mean, you're gonna... hike a half a mile or whatever. They're beautiful fields, but this... you know, they're manicured. I mean, there's artificial turf on that thing we played... 50th? But this, I don't know, this, to me was an ideal field, and... It's... it's named for Edgar Fauver? Who was, you know, 26 years, chair of the... Phys ed department. And he... It was really pushing intramural education And... You know, universal athletic, Participation for students? Which, to me, is... Ultimate Frisbee, I mean. So, I thought it was just a classic, place for a frisbee to be happening.

Bill Ritchie: Wow, yeah, that's a great testament.

Spike Berry: Okay, kind of...

Bill Ritchie: So, one thing is... Yeah, sorry. I was just gonna say, one of the things that... as I've interviewed... And over the years, it keeps coming up as, doing drugs and drinking. I remember one time we played Yale. It was an away game, and I think it was a Saturday morning, and I think I had a six-pack of Michelob, and I downed one or two of them. It was 9 o'clock in the morning game. And damned if I couldn't jump 2 inches less than I was. that I used to, you know, would normally grab right on the tip of things just went over me. The most upsetting, unhappy feeling of just being out of it, so... Didn't do any of that, but it... in one of the newspaper articles I wrote, I... I don't remember anything about it other than I said the game began with a traditional passing of the bowl ceremony. So there must have been some getting high. Does anybody remember, sort of in... were we getting high when we were playing, or... Any recollection of that?

Bob Lacy: I recall the drinking. I didn't recall the getting high.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, that might not... that might have been a later group, the 80s team.

Bob Lacy: Yeah.

Fred Hewett: Okay.

Spike Berry: I would... I mean, I'd say that's a matter of individual choice. There was... You know, we did not... as... at what... as I recall, you know, personally, for me, it's, it was not

something I was involved with, and, You know, it was not a sort of a team group activity of any sort.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, yeah, I don't... I don't remember that, but... Over the 50-year history, it weaves in... it is part of the fabric of the story of the team.

Fred Hewett: Interesting.

Spike Berry: Well, of course, you know, I mean, the drinking age was 18 back then, too.

Bill Ritchie: Right.

Spike Berry: Downey House was... was.

Bob Lacy: with...

Spike Berry: And we spent time down there.

Bill Ritchie: Good! Well, how about any other recollections, or thoughts or things to put into the record before... We wrap up.

Fred Hewett: I just want to throw out one more name that we haven't mentioned. That's Steve Berlin, who today is known as Steve Lewin Berlin. But, he was a... player. And, it turned out... Later in life, long after college, he and I We're... we're partners in a business, and He used to try to get me to... go down to MIT with him, because he had a lot of MIT connections, and play Ultimate. And I don't know, by this time, I'm like. 26 or 27, and I'd already lost my... ability to keep up with the college kids running up and down the field. Sort of painful memories of... people running past me and scoring on the ultimate field in front of MIT's dome. But Steve was in a very active in Ultimate, long after. he left Wesleyan, and he should be remembered in the history.

Bill Ritchie: Very good.

Bob Lacy: Hmm.

Bill Ritchie: Bob, is that picture from this past year? Is that the reunion picture?

Robert Bischoff: That's from 1988. Somebody, posted this, of a series of... a tournament they had at Fauver. In 88.

Spike Berry: Oh.

Bill Ritchie: Cool.

Spike Berry: Yeah, I'm gonna remember. So, I saw on the, the other interview, they mentioned Dave Flynn, and I remember it. Passing. anything that I could float out toward the end zone, he would run out. He was the fastest guy I ever knew. We never knew if he was gonna show up, so that was... that was the only issue. He didn't always make it Saturday mornings for the game. As I recall, but when he did, it was, grease lightning. And the... Sort

of a... The give-and-go kind of a... of an offense, you know, he was... he was great, and... and Nick also, but... so there were a few, few people That just had that timing thing down.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, well, I have a recollection of Bischoff taking off to the end zone. Yeah. Your cross-cut was very helpful, and... I could throw a bomb, and Bob would be under it, and that would be that.

Spike Berry: Yeah, yeah, you, Bill, you... You did a lot of the throws at the beginning, you know, pulls... you had a pretty strong arm, as I recall.

Bill Ritchie: I did have a strong arm, and as a matter of fact, just this fall, we did a challenge. on Harriman Hall, which is 55 yards long from the front of it to the back of it, I could throw the frisbee the length of the hall and hit the far end.

Spike Berry: Yeah, they...

Bill Ritchie: Which I know, I never really thought about it, but then 50 years in, it's like, holy shit, I could challenge these...

Spike Berry: Yeah.

Bob Lacy: And you can...

Bill Ritchie: today.

Bob Lacy: And you could still do it.

Bill Ritchie: I can't still do it, no, but I can... I can... tell them I used to be able to do it, and there's a measurable thing. Matter of fact, Bob got this, some sort of stands, , large... Wickets. Aluminum poles 7 feet wide by 7 feet high. And we put three of these things onto the field, distance 55 yards and had the kids do a challenge, an outdoor simulation of Harriman Hall Challenge. And 2 of them actually did it.

Spike Berry: Well, I... I love that they... that they've got 3 teams going now. You know, sort of two, the men's and the... and the, And the women's, more competitive teams, and then this throw culture. That is really... at least advertised, I don't... I mean, I don't know... Firsthand, but it's advertised as, you know, inclusive. low pressure, which is kind of the way that I envisioned it. To work back when we started, you know, everybody's welcome, just show up, you know. mixed gender. participate. And have fun. So, because, you know, if there's just... the competitive team that's headed for nationals every year, that's... I think you miss a lot of people. That could be enjoying the sport, so... I think this is a beautiful evolution, you know, the way that it's worked out. Because back when we just had one team, I mean, we'd try to do everything with everybody, and there were some people that really were frustrated by the fact that Not, you know... Not everybody can catch the thing. You know, we want to play better, and there are some other people that say, we don't want to do drills, we just want to show up and have fun and go home, and so you can't please everybody with just one team. At the beginning, it was not much of an issue, but, you know,

it didn't take very long to evolve a little bit of tension around that. And I think this is the... this is the perfect solution, is just, you know, to have these options. So people can migrate toward the one that's That fits them best.

Robert Bischoff: As alumni, we deliberately talked about how to, you know, you had Nietzsche alumni talking to Nietzsche alumni, but not Vicious Circles. And then they had their own kind of network. And so that's why the alumni, you know, sponsored site, you know, they're working on, the history in the archives, is Wesleyan Ultimate, not Nietzsche, not Vish. And same with the, you know, the 501c3 charity, it's Middletown Ultimate. You know, deliberately not naming team names to make it more inclusive of everybody playing Ultimate at, you know, at Wesleyan, and perhaps even extending out to Middletown High School. With some kind of initiatives as well. So, that's the idea, to really not try to maybe break apart some things that naturally evolved, just from, kind of, team spirit and all that, and not diminish it in any way. And we saw that, there were a couple of sites that... I guess that Scott Michaud had done... started around 2002, and then Jody Avirgan recently, I think beginning maybe more like in 2010, was kind of rallying people for alumni games, and... And chat strings and, you know, things like that, email strings, so... Anyway, we're hoping to just, you know, with their blessing, which we have, just kind of... this is the new version, 3.0, and try to get it organized and make it as inclusive as it can be.

Spike Berry: Yeah, great.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah. Awesome. Well, that's a good summary. I was going to ask if we had any messages for the young people from us. Spike, I think that was one message. Anybody else got anything? Great philosophy, or great... Just go out there.

Bob Lacy: Have fun. Go out and have fun.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, that's a message from the very beginning. Go out and have fun.

Bob Lacy: And I think there's pressure on people, but only... the only pressure on people is the pressure you put on yourself. That you want to try to, you know, do well, but not pressure from others.

Bill Ritchie: Very good, that's awesome. Good. All right, any other memories or thoughts or comments? You guys are round and available in case we want to call back and keep things going?

Fred Hewett: Yep.

Bill Ritchie: This is great. I learned an awful lot today. This is... this is important. sealing down in the early history, so I really appreciate that.

Spike Berry: You think you heard something useful? That's great.

Bob Lacy: Oh, yeah.

Spike Berry: Well, I, you know, again, I thank you, Bill, for... for doing it. And even looking back at your little news articles from whatever it was, 1975, 6, those are precious, so thank you for doing those, too.

Bill Ritchie: Yeah, that's what I figure, is you dump a bunch of stuff in and let people just click on it. So, there's... there's desert-y patches, About, you know, halfway through, or into the early teens. Certain things, but there's a lot of rich history that we've got for these early days, and this adds to it in a big way. So, thanks for joining it.

Bob Lacy: Thanks.

Fred Hewett: Thank you, Bill.

Fred Hewett: Bye-bye.