

The Happy Heretics of Fauver Field: A Founders' Commentary

THE HAPPY HERETICS OF FAUVER FIELD

6/9/26

What emerges from this transcript is not the founding story of a great athletic machine. It is, instead, the story of a handful of bright, slightly eccentric young people who stumbled into creating something that would outlast them by half a century.

Bob Lacy stands at the beginning of it all, though he resists the role of heroic founder. Having played at Staples High School, itself part of Ultimate's earliest genealogy, he arrived at Wesleyan carrying little more than enthusiasm. He posted notices, recruited apartment-mates from Williams Street, and persuaded a surprisingly receptive athletic department to lend the team a van. The entire enterprise rested on an audacious assumption: perhaps if enough people showed up, there might actually be a team.

Bill Ritchie emerges as the institutional memory. He is less interested in polishing legends than preserving fragments before they vanish. Newspaper clippings, notebooks, faded photographs, forgotten scores against UConn—he approaches the past with the zeal of an amateur archaeologist. He recognizes that institutions survive because someone bothers to remember them.

Bob Bischoff provides another essential thread. Disillusioned by the paramilitary atmosphere of varsity sports, he found in Ultimate an athletic home. The self-officiating appealed to him. So did the absence of authoritarian structure. It was serious competition without joylessness.

Spike Berry may be the transcript's most memorable voice. Raised in Cape Elizabeth's flourishing Frisbee subculture, he arrived at Wesleyan

already steeped in disc culture. He competed at the World Frisbee Championships in the Rose Bowl. Yet what mattered most to him was not prestige. It was experimentation. The Frisbee floated, curved, betrayed expectations. The wind transformed certainty into possibility. His recollections of Fauver Field become a philosophy of life: throw, adapt, chase, laugh.

Fred Hewett serves as the keeper of texture. Friday-night field-goal contests. Weekend road trips. Steve Lewin Berlin continuing to play long after graduation. He reminds us that institutions are built not only by charismatic figures but by reliable companions who keep showing up.

The comedy throughout is irresistible. The founders cannot remember who named the team. They had no uniforms, coaches, tryouts, or organizational charts. Games were arranged through pay phones and handwritten notebooks. Their most sophisticated recruiting strategy involved taping notices to dormitory bulletin boards.

Yet beneath this improvisation lies a serious critique of conventional athletics. Again and again, they describe turning away from excessive structure and discovering a sport built on trust. They wanted intensity without authoritarianism. Excellence without exclusion. Competition without cruelty.

The remarkable thing is not merely that Wesleyan Ultimate survived. It is that its culture endured. Fifty years later, current players still recognize themselves in these founders: intelligent young people searching for community through play. The same odd mixture of earnestness, irreverence, idealism, and competitiveness persists.

There is pride here, but not triumphalism. They do not congratulate themselves for building a powerhouse. They marvel that something so informal lasted at all. The enduring achievement was cultural. They

preserved the conviction that games should welcome newcomers, accommodate different ambitions, and remain fun.

Perhaps that is why this origin story feels unusually moving. So many institutions begin with grand plans. Wesleyan Ultimate began because a few people liked throwing a Frisbee. They chased floating discs across Fauver Field, argued with the wind, borrowed vans, and made phone calls.

Against all reasonable expectations, generations of students are still chasing after them.