

# There and Back Again

by Sven Peterson



1976 Nationals



2013 Nationals

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I've been fortunate to play in the Ultimate National Championships every decade. My guess is I'm not alone. My hope is I won't be, that other players from the '70s will come out and play. It was an awesome time for Ultimate. It still is.



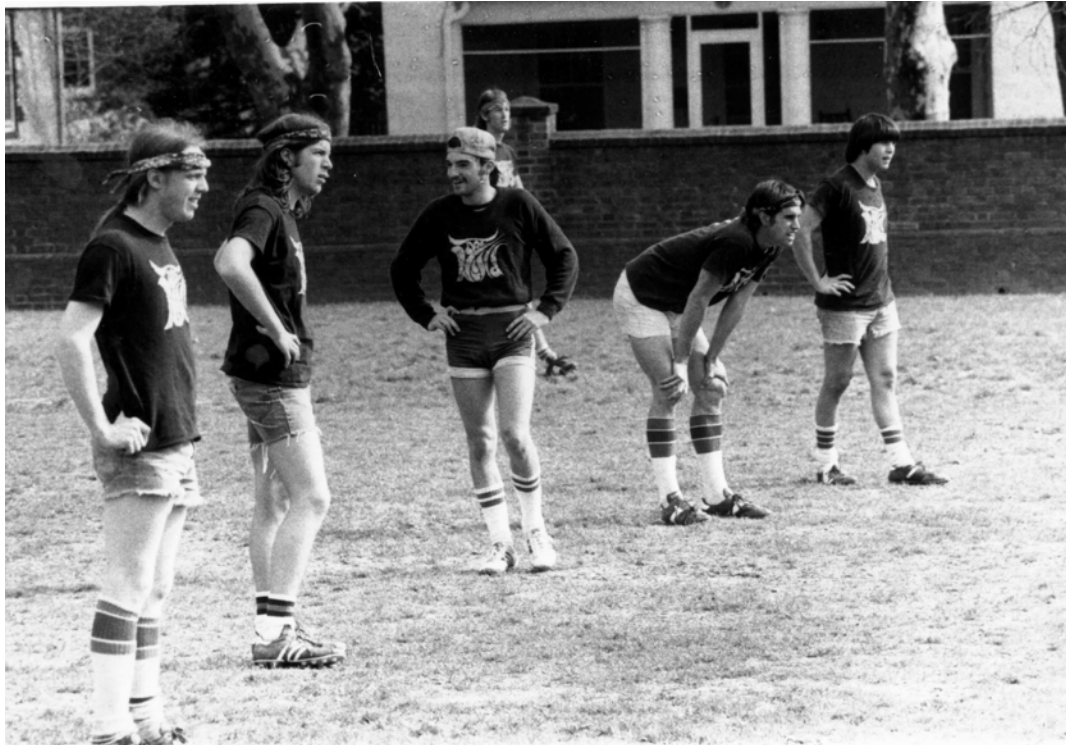
Corey and John circa 1976, Delaware Ultimate teammates

Back in 1975 a few Columbia High School graduates at the University of Delaware got my attention, and I was immediately hooked by Ultimate. We played whenever we could. In '76 my co-captain buddy John (from CHS) and I hitch-hiked up the Jersey Turnpike to join his high schoolmate's Michigan State team at Nationals in western Massachusetts.

Ultimate was different in the **1970's** - We played 24 minute stop time halves with a Master Frisbee (~155 grams?), so the scores were different - I remember losing 36-30 to Igor's Glassboro team in overtime at Amherst. There were no observers, coaches or parents. It was the only sport you couldn't score on your own.

There were fewer players. It was more playground. The Spirit of the Game was the first rule in our rulebook. We played in any weather. At WAFC's April Fools Fest in the 80s we played in the eye of a hurricane (it blew the roof off our hotel); another year the cones floated away while we played on. Almost every player at Nationals in 1976 was a white male college student - thank goodness that changed.

There were so many teams at Nationals in 1976. I think it was my first tournament with multiple opponents. Before that we had played one game in a day, then drove home. I remember my calves cramping crazily at Amherst. John and I can't remember all the teams we played, but I'll bet Sholom (our captain) has a record of that glorious weekend. We had a blast playing Ultimate all day for days. It was so much fun.



The Wind on the line, University of Delaware frisbee field, circa 1979, Flipper, John, JohnF, Brian (behind JohnF), Sven, Steve

I played Ultimate as much as possible for about 20 years. Often 3 evenings of practice (or pickup) during the workweek, then all weekend playing tournaments with various teams, including the 7 Sages of the Bamboo Grove, Philmore, Philly Rage, Crusaders, Titanic, Peggy Cronin, the Wind and just about every Delaware Club team.



Probably one of 5 Tidy Bowls - Fall 1981 (Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove vs. Knights of Nee). Fid reclines, Bobby sits, Gak akimbo. Nee: Karl, Toby & Tom standing, Joe sitting.



Mars 1982: Left to Right standing- Zo, Irwin, Sven on stump, Scott. --- Sitting - Gary, Iron, Nicky, Touch, Bobby Rydell, Whitey, Bobby. Deli laid down.

These ultimate teams were my brothers - we shared many excellent adventures.



European National Championships  
Jambes, Belgium, 1983  
Sin jumping, JC in blue pants,  
Twisted Noses (Sages) vs.  
Westernik, Sweden



World Championships, West Germany, July 1989  
Sven high5ing StuBear, then Frankie.  
DanZo and Bruce are bookends, John Hanson in middle.  
Philmore vs. Boston Massacre

We played less frequently during our **Masters** years.



Sages in Masters WFDF World Championships, England near the Tor, 1995



2004 WAFC April Fools Fest - Lily, Sven, Zeno. Hat & shirt by Dr. Gil.



Sages - what a blast! Laird, Sven, Sin, Henry 1991 or 1993

The new millennium began with 5 good years with OLDSAG...



OLD SAG at Masters National Championship 2002, Captain Wherry facing us

...until a collision broke my back laying out at Fort Belvoir in late August 2004.

It was a devastating injury. Part of a vertebrae broke off so I herniated, and my coccyx was twisted and misaligned, which stretched my sciatic nerve for 8 years. I was forced to lay prone for long hours for the first 3 years. I was completely out of Ultimate and lost touch with so many good friends. Unable to do normal things around the house, unable to sit on chairs or drive much, unable to lift and carry most things. I was dormant and I atrophied.

Eventually I recovered enough to run, so I got in shape by running streets. When I tried to play competitive Ultimate, though, my Achilles' tendon snapped in two at April Fools.



My buddy Trev brought me home after rupturing achilles at April Fools 2008

Dormant again. The calf atrophied one inch smaller (circumference). Out of Ultimate for another year. Came back to play **Grand Masters** the next year but cracked my sternum laying out at Edgely (2009).



Getting the D-block but breaking sternum at Edgely 2009

Thought I was done. Couldn't play much the next few years, just some local pickup and league.

We have ~660 different muscles in our body. Ultimate strains a lot of them, and my weakest link was constantly blowing out. Kept pulling new muscles or hurting tendons and ligaments in weird ways. Whereas in the 70s, 80s and 90s I was playing Ultimate to stay in shape, now I need to get into shape to play Ultimate. C'mon! I started swimming year round again, and then lifting weights to strengthen most of those 660 muscles. This resulted in fewer injuries while playing League Ultimate.

Last Fall (2012), my daughter Lily found Joe Seidler's [www.ultimatehistory.com](http://www.ultimatehistory.com) and said "Dad, you should play in Nationals because you'll break the world record for longest time between playing in Nationals." I said no way. Playing in a major tournament like Nationals requires an athleticism which I no longer possess. More importantly, I don't want to subject my family to nursing me (again).

But Lily persuaded me. As I became more healthy, Ultimate became more enjoyable. I wanted to hang out with old friends on the Ultimate field again, so I contacted many Ultimate friends my age. It was fun to reconnect, but less than a handful still play at all. Often I'd hear woes of getting injured from playing Ultimate. I could relate.

While I was laid up, my OLDSAG buddies had won GM Nationals. Last year (2012) two Philly teams, each with my OLD SAG teammates, had placed well at Nationals. I love those guys. I assumed one of those teams was my route to Nationals this year. But unfortunately Nationals got scheduled for Wildwood Weekend. Wildwood is huge and my Philly/Jersey buddies have been a part of it for years. So neither Philly team went to Nationals this year. That meant I had to find a team, and make the team, in order to fulfill Lily's wish.

How the heck was I going to do that? I am much older than most GM players. I didn't know most of the players anymore. Earlier this year I was rebuffed when I tried to play Henlopen with a Grand Masters team. Totally understandable. So I went to Sas's GM tourney in the Hamptons, hoping to connect with a GM team. The tournament was a blast, and I got an invitation to try out with Baltimore Old Line. I started practicing Saturday mornings and made the team. So much fun. We won Regionals! Unfortunately I pulled a hamstring late in a practice 2 weeks before Nationals. That put a serious damper on my play at Nationals, but the whole experience whet my appetite for more.

Ultimate has changed so much throughout my career. Yet it is still the same basic game I fell in love with in college. Most importantly, Ultimate players are still the coolest people on the planet, so the experience remains very enjoyable. I hope more of my old friends will come out and play.



Playing in GM Nationals July 2013, Denver



Sven & Blob in Denver at GM Nationals.



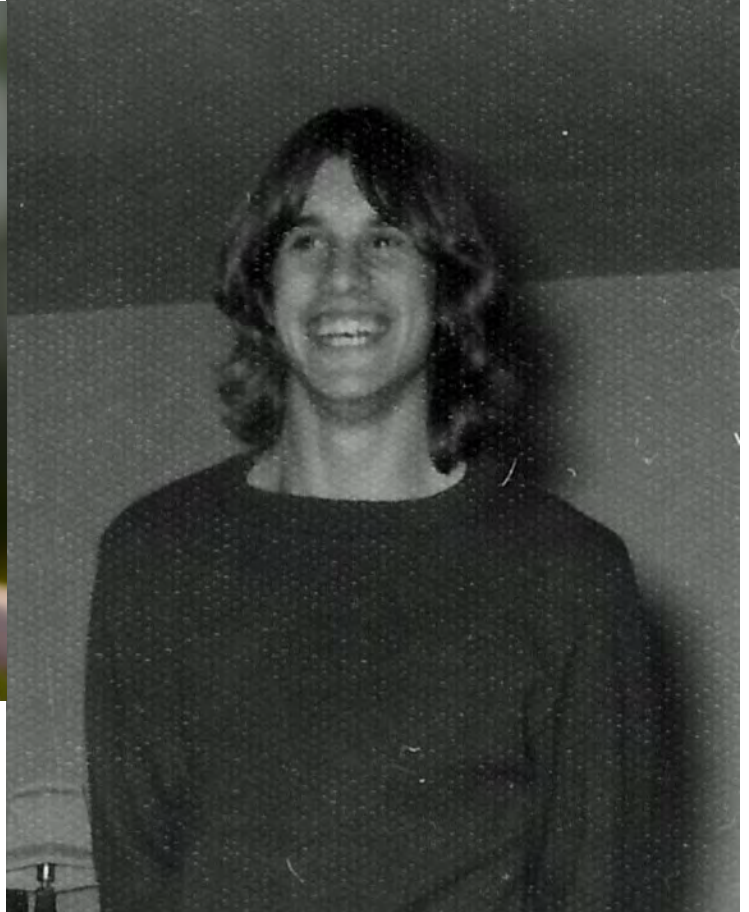
Old Line (Come on!), GM Nationals in Denver, July 2013, including Philmore teammates Vinnie & Johnny G., Delaware teammates Mel & Brian, travel-mates Jimmie & Pat.

## Acknowledgements:

Ultimate taught me so much. It informed my ethics and made me a better person than I was. I am very thankful to all who have contributed to truly make this the ultimate of all sports. I'd especially like to thank the Gatherers - those tournament organizers, captains, UPA leaders, and others who gathered us together for so many years for much healthy fun, receiving little or no payment for your services. I met my ultimate wife playing ultimate. Thank you for improving our world.



September 22, 2013



October 23, 1975

### Photo credits:

Thank you Brian Canniff, Bob Hume, Mel Iwasko, Sheryl Kuo, BethDeli, Lillian & Zeno for taking some of these photos. Some of these were found in boxes - If anyone knows a name to credit, please send to me:

[stevepete1@verizon.net](mailto:stevepete1@verizon.net)

And please let me know how you're doing!

Sven

in Delaware, September 2013

## Names and nicknames:

(In the approximate order that they appeared on these pages)

John = John Husted-Sherman, originally John Sherman, my ultimate buddy in college.

Sholom was known as Eric Simon when I knew him. The original ultimate historian.

Igor = Kevin Harper.

Flipper = Ed Wheatley.

Brian = Brian Barney.

Steve = Steve Minor.

Fid = Richard Speer = Dick Speed.

Bobby = Bob DeBruin.

Gak = Jeff "Norm" Gigon.

Karl = Karl Davies.

Toby = Toby Hankins.

Joe = Joe Hankins.

Zo = DanZo = Dan Perry.

Irwin = Irwin Mulnick

Nicky = Nick Pushak.

Deli = Eric Nesseim.

Sin = John Sinnenberg.

JC = Jon Cohn.

StuBear = Stu Downs.

Frankie = Frankie Morrow.

Laird = Larry = Cake = Laird Williams.

Henry = Henry Thorne.

Zeno = Lauren Richards-Peterson.

Dr. Gil = Doc = Gil = Dr. Gil Wernovsky.

Captain Wherry = Steve Wherry.

Trev = Trevan Houser.

Blob = Bob Yokota.

Vinnie = MVP = Mike Pascal.

Johhny G. = John Gallagher.

Mel = Mel Iwasko.

Jimmie = James Mentzer.

Pat = Pat Wright.

Stu = Stu Case.

Harvey = Harvey Edwards.

Ron = Ron Borchardt

Bogota = George Bowden.

Jelly = Steve Jelinek.

Danny = Dan Doyle.

Sven = Steve Peterson = Pete.



Yippee! Scoring 1st goal of Fall League,  
September 22, 2013, Wilmington, DE





Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove circa 1983

standing left to right - Stu, Harvey, Sin, Bobby, Gil, Ron, Fid, Bogota (on my shoulders), Jelly (arms spread) and a few unidentified.

Sitting left to right - Danny, Bill Bray, Irwin, unidentified.

## **About the Author:**

**by Steve Wherry**

In this compilation of glorious memories entitled "There and Back Again", Steve "Sven" Peterson shared with us wonderful pictures and stories of friendships formed through many experiences both on and off the Ultimate field. Just like Bilbo Baggins in "The Hobbit", Sven traveled with his brothers across the world on an ultimate journey, and he not only slayed the dragon, Sven captured the gold.

Sven may be more like the wizard Gandalf, since Sven truly is a Grand Wizard of Ultimate as he's the current holder of the "Longest Range in Playing at a Club National Championship". Sven first appeared as a Spartan in the 1976 Ultimate Frisbee Nationals with Michigan State, and most recently appeared in the 2013 Grand Masters National Championships with Old Line, thereby spanning five decades of Ultimate played at the highest level!

One of many qualities everyone instantly associates with Sven is his 5,000-watt smile of pure love that can light up any room. In the 2002 National Championships, this Grand Wizard helped to light a fire of inspiration which gave his team "Perma-Grin" when we captured the Gold.

Prior to winning the 2002 National Championship in the Masters Division, no one would have referred to OLD SAG (One Last Ditch Shot At Glory) as "Dragon Slayers". In OLD SAG's first year in 2000, we were burnt to a crisp in our first game at Nationals by "Old & In the Way" 15 to 1. In our second year in 2001, we were scorched by "Herniated Disc" 15 to 7. Even when we won the B Pool Division at 2001 Nationals, the "NY Masters" humorously mocked us in parody by serenading "You are the Chumpions of the World".

To my relief, Sven was still on board for 2002, but we both knew significant improvements were needed if we wanted to be Champions instead of "Chumpions". After heavy recruitment of many great Philly players, we had an army of winners, a new playbook and a new outlook – "The Third Year of the Three-Year Plan". Although we knew we were better, there were many doubters. In fact, in the UPA pre-tourney newsletter, it was predicted that "seeing Herniated Disc take out 5<sup>th</sup> seed O.L.D. S.A.G. would be an unsurprising upset."

At this point, right before 2002 Nationals, it would have been easy for doubt to creep into our minds with so many naysayers thinking that we'd go down in flames again. I asked Sven if he would talk to the team on the Sunday before Nationals, hoping he could instill an image of victory in everyone's mind.

Sven talked us through each game, and told us exactly what would happen in each leg of our journey. On this blank canvas in our minds, Sven painted a masterpiece. We envisioned laying out for a score, sprinting past our opponent for a D, holding the disc in the end-zone, getting ready for the next point, and never being satisfied until we took care of the last point of each game. In our first game we'd get a rematch against "Herniated Disc", and yes we would win that game. Then we would win against Minnesota and even in the final game on Thursday against New England. Wow - it felt incredible to think we'd go undefeated on the first day of Nationals.

However, we all knew we'd be playing top-seeded "Old & In the Way" in the first game on Friday. But almost to my surprise, Sven had us winning that game too. I'm not sure why – but at that moment it sunk in like it was real to me. Yes - on our quest we really could slay the dragon! Sven took us through the remaining games, and had us winning them all. After that experience of inspirational visualization, in my mind's eye and in my heart, I felt nothing could stop us now, and I could tell from the vibe in the circle that everyone felt the same way. It was pure magic.

The rest, as they say, is history, as all games played out just as Sven the Sage had told us.

So who is Steve Peterson? Dragon Slayer, seeker of gold and Grand Wizard? Magician, snake charmer and hypnotist? Prophet, Sage and inspirational visionary? Yes – all that and more. Because to me and so many other teammates he's played with over five decades, he'll always be the guy with the contagious smile who helped give his Ultimate brothers Perma-Grin.

## Steve “Sven” Peterson’s National and World Championship Titles:

Year	Team	Tournament	Tournament Location
1989	Philmore	World Club Open Champions	Cologne, West Germany
1991	Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove	World Club Masters Champions	Toronto, Canada
1993	Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove	World Club Masters Champions	Madison, Wisconsin, USA
1995	Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove	World Club Masters Champions	Street, England
2002	One Last Ditch Shot At Glory	UPA National Masters Champions	Sarasota, Florida, USA

### Other interesting facts about Steve Peterson’s Nationals and Worlds Experiences:

- ⇒ Only Champion in each of the first four WFDF World Club Championships (1989, 1991, 1993, 1995).
- ⇒ Very first "Chief Observer" at Nationals in 1984 held in Santa Barbara.
- ⇒ Holder of the "Longest Range in Playing at a Club National Championship" (37 years)!

### Sven’s Nationals Appearances – across all five decades:

Year	Team
1976	Michigan State
1988	Philmore
1989	Philmore
1991	Philmore
1992	♠Club Nimeo
1994	Old Bay
2000	One Last Ditch Shot At Glory
2001	♣One Last Ditch Shot At Glory
2002	♥One Last Ditch Shot At Glory
2003	♣One Last Ditch Shot At Glory
2004	♠One Last Ditch Shot At Glory
2013	♣Old Line

- ♣ Regional Champion
- ♠ Regional Champion and National Semi-finalist
- ♥ Regional Champion and National Champion

### Other Tournament Victories in Sven’s Ultimate Career:

Year	Team	Tournament Title	Tournament Location
1983	Twisted Noses (aka Seven Sages)	European National Championships	Jambes, Belgium
1983	"S**t!"	Mars	Mars, Pennsylvania, USA
1993	Peggy Cronin’s Lunar Ultimate	+April Fools	Fredericksburg, Virginia, USA
2001	Peggy Cronin’s Lunar Ultimate	+April Fools	Fredericksburg, Virginia, USA
2008	Peggy Cronin’s Lunar Ultimate	+April Fools	Fredericksburg, Virginia, USA

**Another fun fact:** Sven held record for most April Fools tournaments played in, including 27 straight: 1978-2004.



**The players on the 2002 National Champion Roster of One Last Ditch Shot At Glory:**

**Standing, Back Row, left to right:**

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Jim Brose               | Founder of OLD SAG & Philly Ultimate Camp. PADA & Discfilms President. Gets things done!                              |
| Paul Minecci            | Best QB in MA region for years! Offense always went thru this rock solid, top-line clutch player.                     |
| Chris Kelly             | Huge problem for opponents, and yet hysterically funny! Hosted Sarasota parties @ "the Beef's"!!                      |
| "Big Rick" Atkins       | "Big Rick" also won a College National Championship with UPenn & 3 World Championships!                               |
| Marc Schoettle          | Professional disc golfer could do professional stand-up. Huge pulls, great speed, excellent defense.                  |
| Jim Viner               | Founder of OLD SAG and most underrated player on team. Always tremendously solid & clutch.                            |
| John "JFK" Kennedy      | Philly legend- classic battles vs Mooney, Cribber. Ask not what your Ultimate team can do for you.                    |
| Mark "Nacho" Cornacchio | Many Nationals & Worlds in Masters, Coed, Open divisions! Coached Peppers & PA HS Champs.                             |
| Steve "Sven" Peterson   | Record holder: April Fools (consecutive years), Nationals (longest range) & Worlds (#1 1 <sup>st</sup> 4 WFDF events) |

**Kneeling, Middle Row, left to right:**

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Dave Russ        | Shutdown-defender, free agent from Delaware tirelessly ran the field working his cuts non-stop!                      |
| John Bellwoar    | "The Man with the Golden Arm" pulled disc to back of end-zone every time! Never turned it over.                      |
| Steve Wherry     | Captain of OLD SAG. Also played with Lunchmeat, SWAT, Nasty Habits, Double Secret & Rage.                            |
| Dave Dillon      | Also a Grand Masters National Champion, was drafted 1 <sup>st</sup> overall in 1 <sup>st</sup> Philly Summer League! |
| Doug Seifert     | Former Lehigh MVP with exceptional break-away speed, tremendous gritty, man-to-man defense.                          |
| Hector Hernandez | Shined with Rage & OLD SAG! Dominator who always played with fire & incredible passion!                              |

**Sitting/Reclining, Front Row, left to right:**

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| John McDonough | "Johnny Mac" - clutch layouts in 2001 Regionals - an unselfish workhorse and great teammate.   |
| Curtis Maier   | Brilliant, unstoppable MVP of 2002 Nationals!! Also won a Grand Masters Nationals title.       |
| Bill Eidson    | Sweetest flick in Philly for years! Tough man-cover defender who could jump through the roof.  |
| Chris O'Connor | Tremendous deep target/defender! Many Nats trips with The Gang & OLD SAG. GM Nat Champ.        |
| Gerry Garzone  | Legendary North Catholic wrestling coach played on great Philmore and Looney Tunes teams.      |
| Bruce Kuo      | Captain of North American Grand Masters champs & won College Nationals! Great break-mark!      |
| Dan Spicer     | Completely swung semis in SAG's favor by shutting down Skeleton Crew's top squirrely handler!  |
| Samson Sackett | Incredible heart and courage, inspirational strength of will. Captain of 2011 EUC German team. |

**Not Pictured - Mike Adlis** Founder of the Wildwood Beach tournament – largest annual beach tournament in the World!

**One Last Ditch Shot At Glory's scores at 2002 Nationals:**

- Pool Play: 1. OLD SAG 15 - Herniated Disc 5  
 2. OLD SAG 15 - Minnesota 10  
 3. OLD SAG 15 - New England 4  
 4. OLD SAG 15 - Old & In The Way 13  
 5. OLD SAG 15 - Hoss 7

QuarterFinals: OLD SAG 15 - Chicago 9

Semi-Finals: OLD SAG 15 - Skeleton Crew 11

FINALS: OLD SAG 17 - Old & In The Way 14