

Where Are They Now? An Update on Husky Alum Mike Lovell **by Dr. Eric Hughes (May 1, 2011)**

Mike Lovell was born in Seattle in 1944 but moved to Antelope Valley in California in 1959 when his dad, an electrician at Boeing, was transferred to Edwards Air Force Base. He and his brother Steve began their high school gymnastics there. The sport was big there with 55 team members, one of whom later became an NCAA champion. Mike said modestly that he was fifth man on floor ex. Fortunately for us, Mike's dad was transferred back to Seattle a short time later. He took Mike, Steve, and a friend, Mike Flansaas, to an invitational meet at Highline High School. Mike says that all three of them were blown away with what they saw. Terry Hildebrand, a future Husky, won five of the six all-around events. Mike Flansaas also became a Husky and was featured in this newsletter a few issues back. They were so enthusiastic they had to get started right away; so they lashed a two-inch pipe between two trees so they could do pull-ups and teach themselves gymnastic moves. Mike Flansaas kicked up to a handstand and attempted a giant but was unable to hang on to the two-inch diameter pipe and peeled off into a wood pile. Fortunately there was no major injury.

The next gymnastic season Lovell turned out for gymnastics at Highline and became one of the top all-arounders on the Highline team that was perennially the best in the state. Steve and Mike Flansaas were also regulars on the team, but the next year Flansaas was forced to transfer to Glacier High School, which had no gymnastics team. Lovell attended the UW from 1963 to '68, receiving a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering in '66 and an MSME in '68. These were the years that the UW dominated Conference competition (called the Athletic Association of Western Universities at the time) and was a major power nationally. Competition among team members for a place in the line-up was fierce. These were dream years for a coach. In 1963 the team went undefeated in dual meets, won the Conference, the Western University Intercollegiate Championship, and placed ninth in the nationals. Mike won the Most Promising Freshman Award.

In 1964 the team was again undefeated in dual meets, won the Conference, the Western Intercollegiate Championship, and placed fourth in the nationals. Lovell won the Pacific Northwest high bar championship. In 1965 Mike was an all-rounder on the most successful UW team ever. The team again won all their dual meets, the Conference, the Western Intercollegiate Championships, and placed second to Penn State at the NCAAs. Lovell was ninth in the all-around nationally and was elected captain for 1966. Lovell's senior year was his best and a good one for the team although not up to the previous outstanding year. Washington placed second in the Conference, second in the Western Intercollegiates, and seventh in the NCAAs. Mike won almost all the dual meets in his two best events – floor ex and high bar – and received the Outstanding Gymnast Award at the end of the season.

After graduating from the UW in 1968, Lovell went to work for Boeing in their group supporting the Apollo program. About a year later he moved to Detroit to work for the Ford Motor Co. in the engine design and development area.

In 1993, he transferred to the alternative energy group at Ford and spent 14 years working on design and development of battery electric hybrid and fuel cell cars.

Mike met his wife Jan, a school teacher from California, in 1971 and was married a year later. They have three children, a boy and two girls, and now have six grandkids who are, Mike says, being properly spoiled and are, again Mike says, above average in looks and intelligence. Mike is retired but Jan still works as a substitute teacher.

Lovell bowls and golfs but says he is not very proficient at either. He also drove a Zamboni as a part-time job for a while. I'm sure that is something we would all like to do. He goes to the gym three to five times a week but says his main activity is sedentary – reading. He has become addicted to several current and past authors.



Mike mentioned to me the relaxing affect gymnastics had for him. He recalled that he was always mentally taxed at the end of a school day and worried about doing his homework for the following day, but when walking down to Hec Ed from upper campus for practice, he relaxed and for a few hours became totally absorbed with his gymnastic activity. He also recalled with fondness the singing the team did in the cars when traveling

to away meets. The "team" song in those years was "King of the Road," a Mike Lovell hit by Roger Miller. The song leader was Gary Finne, an accomplished singer and trumpeter as well as one of the better gymnasts on the team. On one occasion Gary whispered to Mike, "please just mouth the words Mike and we'll sound a lot better."

Lovell also recalled, just as I do, that in 1965 when we placed second at the nationals that we probably could have won if we had used "the other Mike," Mike Flansaas. He was redshirted that year because of academic ineligibility, but became eligible at the end of winter quarter so could have been used at the nationals which fell in spring quarter. I have always regretted not using him, as an NCAA Championship was something I always wanted. It should be mentioned that Steve, Mike's younger brother, was also an important member of these midsixties teams. His best event was also horizontal bar and without his team points we would not have done as well as we did. (www.wmgf.us May 1, 2011 WMGF News)

