

Where Are They Now? An Update on Husky Alum Chuck Sanders

by Coach Hughes

In the 1960s and '70s we could not have done without a couple of good "side horse" – excuse me – pommel horse specialists. A team could not compete with other top teams without their high scores. They were usually tall, thin, wiry, and light in weight. Let me introduce you to one of the good ones, maybe the best we ever had – Chuck Sanders.

Chuck was born in 1950 and grew up as a skinny, bookish nerd in Everett, Washington (his words not mine). He was introduced to gymnastics as a sophomore in his PE classes at Everett High School. His four brothers followed him into gymnastics at Everett, but apparently were not as good as Chuck because I don't remember recruiting them. He says coach Ron Cultum looked favorably on his ability to climb around on the pommels and asked him to turn out for the sport (which he barely knew existed) the next year. At the time he was approaching six feet and 140 pounds fully clothed.

Cultum was a stern taskmaster and had his team spend a lot of time on strength exercises. Chuck had this to say about his high school career: "In my senior year I was undefeated except for one meet where I fell off the horse but snagged first place on floor exercise with mostly hand stands and pommel horse moves. At the state meet in Hec Edmundson I inexplicably grabbed a handful of crotch fabric while scissoring and fell to third place. While I was trying to explain to my coach and team mates what happened, Bruce Denton, the previous years champion and present Husky specialist, recruited me."

Sanders attended the UW from 1968 to 1973 and graduated with a degree in Communications.

While still a mostly wet-behind-the-ears freshman he pledged Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity entirely because Yoshi Hayasaki lived there. He thought it was a great honor to be the roommate of the "greatest Husky" and to tag along when he and a couple of other great UW gymnasts, Mauno Nissinen and Charlie Peters, went out for refreshments.

Because Bruce Denton was injured, Chuck got to go to the Pac 8 Meet in Los Angeles as a freshman. He was thrilled to stay at the Century Plaza with his room overlooking a movie studio. TV coverage of the meet was very good, and the next morning he was thrilled again to see himself performing an acceptable routine on the pommels.

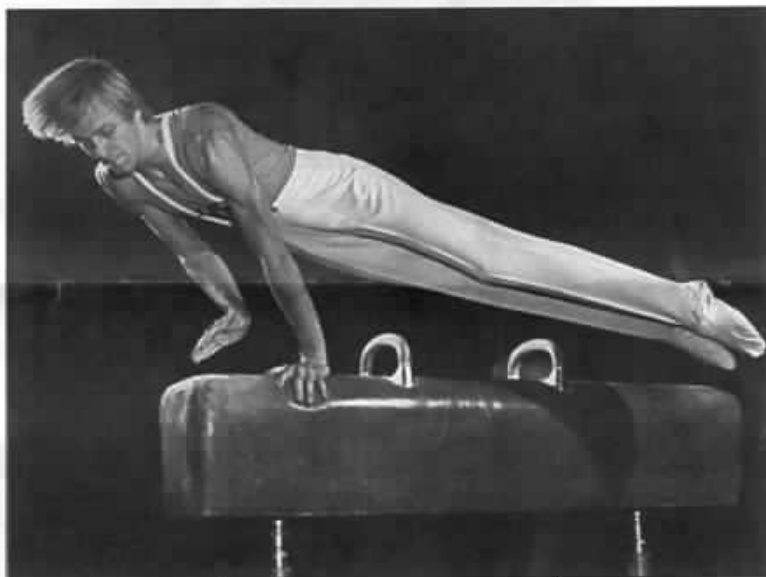
Sanders gives great credit to a former Husky, Steve Eadie, who also went to Everett High School, who regularly came back to the UW to work with him on advanced moves on the ends of the horse and on one pommel. He says Steve's help took him to a higher level. (Wherever you are – thanks, Steve.)

In the Pac 8 finals in his junior year, Chuck needed to place in the top three for a trip to the nationals. When he finished his routine the announcer said, "Sanders is now in the lead," and he knew he had made it with only two competitors left. Both had major breaks, so Chuck was Conference Champion as well. For the rest of the year, Yoshi and others on the team went around calling him "Champ."

In 1972, his senior year, Chuck did an extra circle in the compulsories and dropped way down in the standings at the Pac 8 meet. He clawed his way up in the optionals and barely made the eight-person finals. Fortunately, five of the eight fell off and he and Norm Ewald, another UW gymnast, placed second and third. Washington beat Stanford by one-tenth of a point and qualified for nationals as a team. He remembers this as an emotional victory with the whole team getting to go to Ann Arbor, Michigan. Sanders placed 14th at the nationals for the second straight year.

Chuck graduated in the era of the "Boeing recession" and found it difficult to get a job so supported himself as a bank courier, house painter, and assistant teacher. After six months hitchhiking through Mexico he found work in the field he was trained – Journalism. He worked for small nonprofits doing all the nitty-gritty

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Chuck on his signature event



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stuff as well as camera work, paste-up, typesetting, editing, and writing. In the 80's he got a job at a Seattle legal publishing company where he became Managing Editor. He finally grabbed the chance to work for a real newspaper, the Bremerton Sun (now the Kitsap Sun). For ten years he commuted from Seattle to Bremerton. He rode his bike to the ferry from Seattle's First Hill with a guitar strapped to his back aware that he was becoming a local character. He eventually moved to Bremerton where he could walk to work.

Sanders met his future wife, Ginny, at a music camp in Port Townsend and married in 2004. They moved to West Seattle and he resumed his commute, but now by car not bike.

He says, "At work I inhabit the diminishing area of

opportunity where pages are examined for flaws, be they color, fonts, or just plain failure to measure with a pica pole. I have the authority to say 'stop the presses,' but unfortunately there has to be a very good reason."

It is always a pleasure to write about one of our former gymnasts who has not only been a part of our program as a college student but who also remains active as a donor of both money and time. Chuck and his wife Ginny have been regular volunteers at the Washington Open and have attended the spring banquet on many occasions. Thanks Chuck and Ginny.

PS - Chuck would like to know if anyone has video or film of his routines as his wife would like to see them. If you know of any, please contact us at team@wmgf.us.