

In this issue:

[Coxing the Charles, page 6](#)

[Southern Style, page 8](#)

[Life before Title IX,](#)

[page 10](#)

Have Oars, Will Travel Eastern Europe's Rowing Scene

Dennis Williams revisits Prague, then enjoys Slovenia and Croatia

Anticipating five weeks without rowing while vacationing in Eastern Europe and the Balkan Countries in September and October, I did a little online research before contacting several rowing clubs to arrange visits and time on the water.

Prague

Vacation started in Prague, which has a vibrant rowing scene on the Vltava River (aka the Moldau). I have rowed with **Český Veslařský Klub Praha** on several occasions since 2015. ČVK is located on an island (named “Rowers Island” in Czech) it shares with Veslařský Klub Blesk; across the Vltava lie Veslařský Klub Smichov and Veslařský Klub Sokol. All these clubs are geared toward junior rowing, but last year a masters eight from Blesk rowed in the 2022 Tail of the Lake Regatta in Seattle. “My” club (ČVK) has a group of old men (*staří muži*) who meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3 to 5 to row, train in the tank, or play ping pong—depending on the weather. Afterward, they all retire to the clubroom to drink beer.

I teamed up with Zdenek Mejstrik in a double and proceeded upriver to the Branik Bridge, about four kilometers south of the club. Zdenek proved to be a strong rower, challenging my endurance but identically matched with me at 70 kilos and 76 years. The bridge



The gain after the pain: beer and ouzo!

was built during Communist times and reflected their lack of foresight: a two-track train bridge, it immediately enters an existing one-track tunnel. Czech humor demands that it always be called the “Intelligence Bridge.”

After we launched, I discovered that my stretchers were set for someone about four inches (or even more) taller than I—with no means of adjusting without a wrench. Fortunately, as stroke I could keep the rate low, given that I faced about 10 kilometers of feet-out rowing. Launch and recovery are done on the narrow channel between the island and the shore, from a con-

Below:
Boathouse
and dock
on the
Drava,
Slovenia
(All photos
by Dennis
Williams)

crete dock more than 12 inches above the water. It's almost impossible to launch or recover without some help.

It was a sunny afternoon. After rowing, we all moved to the patio overlooking the Vltava for beers and ouzo while watching the river flow by.

Slovenia

A week later, we were staying in Maribor, Slovenia—a great wine area—on the Drava River. Maribor is a lovely town (second largest in Slovenia) with an ancient history. It's large enough to be interesting and small enough to be friendly. In a brochure at our pension in the wine hills, I saw a photo of a college crew rowing on the



Drava, so I headed out to find the club.

The Drava is dammed, forming a wide, quiet reservoir. About five miles west of town, I found the

Veslaške Klub Dravske Elektrarne. The club is over 60 years old, and its members have medaled in the 1960 Rome, 2000 Sydney, and 2008 Beijing Olympics. There was no activity that morning, but the boathouse captain



was there, tidying things, so I got a chance to see their equipment and facilities. There are two bays in the boathouse, with four rows of boat storage, mostly singles. Under the arches of a nearby road, more boats and three trailers are stored. They even save their broken shells, but I didn't see evidence of a triple. The local waterfowl are swans, so club members must deal with swan poop on the docks each morning. I really regretted that I couldn't take out a single on that beautiful water.

In Drava, Slovenia, excess shells are stored in an archway under a nearby road.

Croatia

Crossing the border into Croatia, we left Slovenia's

mountains for an introduction to salt-water rowing on the Dalmatian Coast at Zadar, which occupies both sides of a long, narrow inlet of the Adriatic Sea. I had arranged to meet with Petar Milan, the coach at **Veslački Klub Jadran**, the next morning and so took the time this afternoon to locate the club. It lies in the central area of Zadar, on the upper level of a two-story building with a long, concrete ramp leading to its dock.

The club dates from 1888, when the area was controlled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Italy acquired Zadar at the end of World War I. After WW II, Croatia became part of Yugoslavia. Finally, with the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991, Croatia became an independent country—one rowing club, four different nations! More recently, the city of Zadar built the club facilities in 1980; a restaurant and some other businesses occupy the ground floor, while the club facilities and boats are on the upper level. I met with Branimir Vujević that afternoon. He was conducting a final session with the juniors, who were leaving that Friday for the Croatian National Championship Regatta. Branimir showed me through the club, boathouse, and trophy room.

The next morning, Petar filled me in on Branimir—he was stroke on the Croatian 2000 Olympic team that took bronze. Bob Ernst invited the team to the 2001 Windermere Cup, which Croatia won with a course record of 5 minutes, 31.75 seconds, with Branimir again stroking. Jadran has produced 18 Olympic medalists! Petar has his own claim to fame: he rowed three



Heading out of the harbor for open water on the Adriatic, Zadar, Croatia

seat of the 4- at the Athens 2004 Olympics.

Petar was conducting a learn-to-row class for middle-school kids that morning, so there was no opportunity for me to team up in a double. He explained that former members use the gym and training facilities but don't usually row. The club's goal is to train juniors and produce national and Olympic champions.

Rowers can stay within the harbor or venture out onto the Adriatic. The harbor has a pedestrian bridge a few hundred meters from the club, which limits any racing there to about 500 meters. Every summer, VKJ hosts a sprint race in the protected harbor, providing shells for all participants. Since the course is only 500 meters long, I can imagine the frantic stroke rate (start, high ten, then sprint?).

A few days later, we took a ferry to the island of Hvar. About 40 kilometers from the ferry terminal (via a narrow and treacherous road) lies Jelsa with its [Veslački Klub Jelsa](#). We fell in love with Jelsa: about 3,000 people, a beautiful harbor, historic buildings. The club, founded in 1978, is the major activity hub for all the local youth, and the rowing program runs year-around. It appeared that just about every kid on the

island had rowed, or was rowing, in the club program.

Jerka Božikoviač, a gentle soul and strapping giant, runs the program. Jerka was on the Croatian national team in 2016 and 2017 and is the 2023 national champion in singles.

It was Saturday morning when I showed up. Jerka had already put in his personal practice and was coaching his star rower, Emma, in a single. Then the kids showed up. They ranged from six to about 14. Jerka boated them in singles, doubles, and a quad, sending them off out of the harbor and onto open water. Within the harbor, boats have about 1,000 meters of clear water. For longer practices, they must row in the Hvarski Kanal, which separates Hvar from the neighboring island of Brač.

I was impressed with how fearless his students were, and how much fun they were having. Besides the obviously talented Emma, I noticed two 12-year-old boys in a double who are destined for the national team. I couldn't keep up with these kids, so I rowed a single, mostly in the harbor.

Takeaways

Rowing has a long history in the Balkan countries. Clubs emphasize training youth rowers rather than masters rowers. Instead of leaving training to elite schools, clubs are established and structured to provide opportunities for all youth. The clubs enjoy sponsorship



Dennis enjoys the harbor at Jelsa, Croatia

and support from local government, and the coaches and trainers whom I met have sterling qualifications.

—Dennis Williams, long-time LWRC member

Thanks to Dennis for sharing his rowing adventures and insights. He notes that after the experiences described here, “We stayed on a fjord in Montenegro, and the pension had some water toys. Not quite rowing, but it was a treat to see where you were going instead of where you had been.”

For his earlier description of rowing in Prague, see the [Winter 2016 issue of Making Waves](#).



The sign at the entrance to Veslaške Klub Dravske Elektrarne in Maribor, Slovenia

Harbor Patrol 206-684-4071

Also on the bulletin board in the boathouse

Check out our programs!

<http://lakewashingtonrowing.com/home/programs>

Editor's Note

In this issue, we explore the history of women's rowing in the Northwest, thanks to Marilyn Goo's eyewitness account of the pre-Title IX scene at the UW on [page 10](#). Johanna Knight reveals the intensity of her preparations for the Head of the Charles ([page 6](#)). Amy Hildebrandt describes her new life at Clemson University in South Carolina, where she is an assistant coach for women's crew ([page 8](#)). On [the Back Page](#), you'll find information about the new MOHAI exhibit containing memorabilia related to the UW's victory at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Ready all, read!

—**Roberta Scholz, Editor**



Designer's Note

Making Waves is designed for screen reading in monitor proportions. You can print it on letter-size paper at 94%, but text is large, underlined links are live. Use [full-screen setting](#): Menu > View > Full Screen Mode, or the page icon in the lower-right sidebar, in Adobe Acrobat Reader.

—**Suze Woolf, Designer**



Board Notes



Another Successful Head of the Lake! And welcome to HangYee Chin

A huge thank-you to everyone who helped LWRC host another successful Head of the Lake Regatta! Over 150 volunteers, including non-members, alumni, supporting members, and many of our newest members, contributed hundreds of volunteer hours to pull off this year's event.

Amidst the preparations for Head of the Lake, we welcomed **HangYee Chin** as our new Boathouse Operations Manager. While we envision the LWRC Board of Directors remaining a working board, we look forward to seeing HangYee assume many of the day-to-day operational responsibilities previously shouldered by board members.

This upcoming year will bring significant changes in the club's financial landscape, marked by the introduction of a new staff position and, per the terms of our renegotiated land lease, an adjustment to our rent. This calls for a thorough reassessment of our fundraising and operating budgets. We invite all members interested in understanding these developments to attend our December 2 celebration as well as the Annual Meeting in January.

Several Board positions will be open for election in



LWRC Women Victorious at the Charles

KC Dietz, Susan Kinne, B.J. Connolly, and Katharine Schubert, coxed by Kayleigh Durm, placed first in the Masters Women's Grand 70+ coxed four. Way to go!

January. If you are interested in joining the Board or are curious about what a Board position might entail, please reach out! As always, the Board extends an open invitation for all members to join our monthly meetings, either in person or via Zoom, and to peruse our monthly minutes. Please direct questions to Jean Lee, Secretary, at board@lakewashingtonrowing.com. Your engagement is valued and encouraged!

—**Jean C. Lee, LWRC Board Secretary**



Prepping for the Charles A Coxswain's Point of View

Johanna Knight Knows the Course


Each piece down the three-mile Head of the Charles course is different from the previous one, even for coxswains with the privilege of calling the Charles their home. As the seasons change, crews come and go. The river goes from being a bustling waterway every morning under the Eliot Bridge, with up to six eights proceeding single-file, to being much quieter once the regatta is over. After training on the river for six months, I was asked to describe my experiences this year in training and prepping for the race, versus last year's training. The major change that you all know is that I am now one of those coxswains who call the river a permanent home.

Let me tell you, I have seen a lot of different things on the Charles. These experiences have taught me how to become a better coxswain: the river being at different levels; the river gradually becoming busier as schools come back to rowing; and, lastly, dealing with the haunting dark as fall shifts to winter, bringing that new added element. I still have a lot to learn, and the cul-

ture of the East Coast is very different from that of the West Coast, but these changes challenge me to step up my game and become the most confident and skilled coxswain and coach I can be for Community Rowing Inc., my home club.

If you can cox successfully on the Charles River, then you can cox on pretty much any other body of water successfully. In a given week, the river will throw all the elements, tricks, and learning challenges a coxswain could want—and more. I realized this very quickly as we started official Charles training in August. I didn't know at the time how mild the summer was, compared with the cold and dark of fall. I recommend starting coxing training during the summer or late summer, to become familiar with the body of water you are practicing on—because knowing the course will make you feel more confident when that darkness and cold do come.

As I said in [an earlier piece for the newsletter](#), you can mimic the challenging 90-degree turns of the Weeks and Eliot Bridges by navigating around any buoys on



*Left:
Training for
HOTK, as the
mornings
slowly turn
cold and dark
on the Charles*

*Right:
Community
Rowing's
women's comp
team racing in
the last Head
of the Kevin
before Head of
the Charles*



Above: Training in late September for the fall season

any body of water. Knowing where certain landmarks are to execute turns anywhere will be helpful for a cox-

swain. This past summer, I also got to know several of my new bow people at CRI, learning how they communicate with coxswains during multiple runs down the river. You can learn a lot from your bow persons, and I recommend doing so as soon as possible.

Another aspect that was different in this year's training was a racing series called the Head of the Kevin. Kevin, a real person, is a well-respected member of Riverside Boat Club, located close to the Basin and Boston University Bridge, at the beginning of the early powerhouse stretch going upstream. Crews based here on the river participate all year round in this event, which consists of practice Head of the Charles pieces, timed and based on the gold-medal standard for each event of the Charles. In all, there are three Kevin races leading up to the HOCR. Each crew has a bow number. Everyone starts together, still staggered, and the boats chase each other down. This made me more confident in my ability to deal with more crews than will actually be in my event on race day. In the first Head of the Kevin, I was racing in an eight for the first time on the course. I was nervous, but having the camaraderie of everyone in the community, and seeing friendlier faces that I now

recognized, helped calm my nerves. We had an excellent time, placing 34th in the senior women's eight. We walked on an MIT alum boat and were battling it out with another four for pretty much the entire course. My rowers said I had a great line—great positive feedback!—and I conquered my fear of racing down the course in an eight. I cannot wait to do it again.

My last piece of advice: In every practice on the water, treat every stroke like it is the most important stroke—even if it is a bad one—and learn from it. We are so lucky to get to go out on the water each practice and learn something, even if it's not going to be perfect every time. I had set really high expectations for myself this year for racing in general and for fall racing in particular. Each race, each stroke is a chance to try again and learn from what we can do differently. No matter which lineup or boat we're in, what matters is being in the community that we choose to create on and off the water. That was the most gratifying thing about the Charles this year, and the journey leading up to race day—seeing the boathouses along the river prep for the races and get ready to welcome friends and family from all around the world to the Charles—to celebrate our sport that we love so much together.

—Johanna Knight

NK Recognizes Johanna Knight

Nielsen Kellerman, manufacturer of high-performance coxboxes and other rowing equipment, has awarded Johanna Knight a \$500 grant in recognition of her performance as cox for the US national para team. Johanna used the grant to purchase the latest version of the NK CoxBox®. Read more about it at [Becoming a Para-Coxswain](#).

CALLING ALL ARTISTS

We'd like to feature your work. Please share your creations with us! lwrcnewsletter@comcast.net

*Left: First
day on the
water: Lake
Hartwell*

*Right: Fall
practice*



Amy Hildebrandt **It's not the Pacific Northwest!**

Coaching at Clemson

It's been about two and a half months since I arrived in South Carolina. There is always a huge learning curve when you start a new job, and even more so when you're in a new state. There is a different vibe here in the South (neither bad nor good, just different), and southern hospitality is a genuine thing. I'm still not used to hearing "Yes ma'am," as I don't feel I am old enough to be a "ma'am." The continuous warm weather is not my cup of tea, as I am a four-seasons gal. Where's my fall? I've barely touched my

sweatshirts, long sleeves, and light jackets. There's been a handful of "cold" mornings, but not the same type of "cold" as in the Northwest. As I write this, the temperature has dropped to the 40s/50s but is expected to go back to the 70s. We'll see what the winter months bring.

When team practices began at Clemson in late August, I didn't do much coaching. Even though the rowing stroke is essentially the same, every program has its own style. The team was on land for the first week, and I did a lot of observing and asking questions. There were 60 names to learn, the lingo, flow of practice, culture, coach/athlete dynamics, general expectations, and style of rowing. It was a lot to absorb all at once, but I took it one day at a time. The athletes were very patient with my asking

what their name was multiple times, and the staff with answering all my questions.

Once we were on the water, I could finally coach—or at least be comfortable enough in coaching the athletes. This was the part of the job that I knew and likely couldn't fail. I always preface a practice with athletes I haven't worked with before by stating that what I say may be different from what they're used to hearing and that they should ask clarifying questions.

I was still nervous because I was on a new waterway. Lake Hartwell is an expansive body of water that makes the interconnected waterways of Lake Washington and Lake Union look like a puddle. There are so many offshoots from the main lake that a perimeter row would take you multiple hours, if not days. I was fortunate that the general practice plan was for everyone to go the same direc-

Right: Zoie, Amy's long-time coaching assistant, stands guard.



tion, and the other coaches could make sure I didn't guide my boat the wrong way. It was a beautiful morning with a gorgeous sunrise over the stadium—it was hard not to have a good practice. We finished the workout with no crashes or flips. Successful first day back on the water!

As the weeks progressed, I became more comfortable in my role, my duties, and working with the athletes. I had begun missing my previous coach/athlete relationships and wanted to create new ones here, but I knew that would take time. After a few weeks, the athletes became more comfortable with me, asking for direct feedback and showing more of their personalities. With a few, I couldn't help but compare them with athletes I'd had at Seattle Pacific. Personalities or facial features were just too much alike!

It always adds to my joy in coaching when I know more about the athlete instead of just being a rower/coxswain. It's always helpful when they feel heard and when they actually respond to you.

I was also able to travel to our two head races: Head of the Oklahoma (Oklahoma City) and Secret City Head Race (Oak Ridge, Tennessee). Traveling with a team is always an interesting part of the job. It can be either a giant headache or smooth sailing. Fortunately, I am a seasoned traveler and had done travel logistics for SPU for seven years. I had experienced almost everything that could go wrong with traveling and knew how to troubleshoot on the fly. I'd thought that I wouldn't need to do much for travel with Clemson—just show up on time and maybe drive the extra vehicle. However, I was put in charge of travel gear and updating the itinerary. I was stressed for a few days as I learned what that actually meant. Again, with my having done all this before, I figured it out and thankfully had no complaints from athletes or staff. Overall, the two regattas went well. OKC had a few hiccups behind the scenes, but the staff made sure the athletes were able to focus on racing and enjoy the experience. They raced well and had a blast racing in the night sprints under the stadium lights. Tennessee was smooth sailing and was

also my first time at Oak Ridge.

As I wrap up this first fall season at Clemson, I feel there is still more to learn. I am excited to see what the spring brings, with sprint racing at the DI level. I am a giant nerd when it comes to results, and I am sure I'll be doing a deep dive into the stats—similar to what I did while at SPU. I am also looking forward to exploring more of the area. Of course, the northwest part of me will be seeking higher elevations for hiking and snow. Folks here speak highly of the Appalachians, but I will wait and see whether they live up to the hype.

*—Amy Hildebrandt, longtime
LWRC member and coach*

It has been a grand adventure so far with highs and lows. Even as I settle into my life here, I still greatly miss my Seattle community. I have felt the support from here and I look forward to seeing familiar faces some time soon.



PASS THE WORD

Has an LWRC member done something worth recognizing, on or off the water?
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We've Come a Long Way, Maybe

Women's Rowing and Coxing before Title IX

The Way We Were

Prior to the implementation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, women's rowing was not widely practiced. When women rowed, it was largely as a social event and a mild exercise activity. Green Lake Junior Crew started in 1963, and here girls were taught to row—and to row hard. Long-time LWRC member **Barbara Gregory** and her sister, **Rosemary**, were in that first group. Across the nation, few clubs allowed women to row—and if they did, it was on an unofficial basis. Similarly, most collegiate boathouses were open to men only.

In 1963, LWRC sponsored and trained a group of competitive women rowers. They hosted the first National Women's Rowing Association (NWRA) national championship regatta in 1966. The Philadelphia Girls Club won the eights race that year—after receiving some help from **Frank Cunningham**, who was coaching at Green Lake. In 1969, LWRC won the women's eight championship at NWRA Nationals; as such, it was sanctioned as the first U.S. women's team to go to the World Championships.¹

In the fall of 1970, I was a freshman at the University of Washington. A sign at the Husky Union Building encouraged women to try crew. I didn't know anything about the sport, other than that they needed small people to be coxswains. The UW Women's Crew (UWWC) was a club sport that had been started in 1969. Rowing was run by the intramural activities department, even though it was

considered an “extramural” sport because we raced outside teams. We were lucky in that we actually had a coach, **Bernie Delke**. Women attempting to row at other colleges did not always have that opportunity.

The UW women learned to row in *Old Nero*, a 16-seat barge parked at Conibear Shellhouse. (Read more about *Nero* in the [June 2021 issue of *Making Waves*](#), “The Quest for *Old Nero*” on page 9 and “Shenanigans” on page 13.) We used the barge but were not allowed to enter the shellhouse, because it was considered male territory. We then graduated to wooden wherry-type fours that took eight women to carry. Those heavy boats were stored in a lean-to shed attached to the old ASUW Shell House, commonly referred to at that time as the “Canoe House.” (Originally a World War I airplane hangar, it still stands today at the eastern entrance to the Montlake Cut. It is currently being refurbished, thanks to generous personal and corporate donations. The shed had been home for the LWRC men while they trained for international competition from 1958 through 1964.)

Training conditions

The shed had no restroom facilities and very little light. But women's heavyweight and lightweight crews showed up at 5:30 a.m. and learned to row—and then to race. The women's crews were not allowed into the newer Conibear Shellhouse, except during the week



before a race. This was the only time they could practice in racing shells. We were allowed to shim down the riggers on those shells, but otherwise we had to make do with equipment that had been designed for men. Additionally, boats were not equipped with speakers and cox boxes. We coxswains wore megaphones strapped snugly around our heads such that they could freeze to our lips in cold weather. Rowers in eights usually had to pass back the commands, because the coxswain's voice could not always be heard in the bow, especially during races. Occasionally there were races *for* coxswains: we rowed in boats that had to be coxed by a rower weigh-

Marilynn Goo with megaphone, spring 1973 (Photo by Abraham Goo)



ing at least 150 pounds. There were also races for flyweights, where the average weight of the rowers was 115 pounds or less.

Competition in the early years

Competitions were 1,000-meter events on Green Lake,

on the Willamette River at Oregon State University in Corvallis, and at Seward Park. Since the women's crew did not have any racing shells, they usually borrowed equipment from whichever crew was hosting the regatta. For uniforms, we bought shirts at a store and had the UWWC logo printed on them. We raised money by selling purple buttons with "Crew" printed on them, primarily to the spectators at Opening Day—we paddled out from the Canoe House and sold the buttons to spectators on the yachts lining the entrance to the Montlake Cut.

In June 1971, we went to NWRA Nationals on Rogers Lake in Old Lyme, Connecticut. (Press coverage of women's sports was light in those years, but the *Seattle Times* reported that 21 "coeds" were making the trip with coach Bernie Delke. It also reported that "the women are selling buttons to raise money for the trip. They are about \$600 short of a \$5,500 goal.") The race was hosted by the Blood Street Sculls, which had been founded by Fred Emerson, Jr. He had been an Olympic oarsman, was an early champion of women's crew, and personally [sponsored](#) the 1971 NWRA Nationals.

There were six boats in the heavyweight eight race and three boats in the lightweight eight race. The UWWC won the lightweight eight, four, and wherry events. Vesper Boat Club of Philadelphia won eight of the 18 events.

In 1972, NWRA Nationals were held at Green Lake in Seattle. Most of the competition came not from colleges



Program cover from 1972 NWRA Nationals (Courtesy Mike Stanley)



but from clubs, including Lake Merritt Rowing Club (Oakland, California), Long Beach Rowing Association (Long Beach, California), and Vesper Boat Club. The University of Washington

Marilynn Goo holds the lightweight eight trophy at NWRA Nationals in Old Lyme, Connecticut. June 19, 1971. (Photo Abraham Goo)

Women's Crew won the lightweight eight event by 8.5 seconds over the Seattle Junior Crew, which rowed out of Green Lake. **Sandee Vanderbilt** from LWRC was second in the lightweight single and first in the lightweight double, racing in a composite boat. **Norma Jean Sands** of LWRC was fourth in the heavyweight single.

In the fall of 1972, **B.J. Mitchell** (later **Connolly** and currently a member of LWRC and Martha's Moms) had joined the UWWC team.

Gaining support

The following spring, the 1973 NWRA Nationals were held on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia. The team received \$7,500 from the UW Intercollegiate Athletics Fund for the group of 20 athletes and two coaches who made the journey, even though crew was still normally funded out of the intramural activities budget. Prior to leaving for

Philadelphia, the team also sanded, varnished, and painted the men's oars to raise money for the trip. And for the third consecutive year, the UW won the lightweight eight championship. Additionally, the eight was split into two fours, who won gold and silver. That year, I was the coxswain for the lightweight four A and the heavyweight four. At that time, the water in the Schuylkill River was very polluted, so rowers tried hard not to splash. Our team waited until we returned to Seattle to throw the coxswains into the water.

Years of rapid growth

In 1972, approximately 800 women competed for 37 teams. The rise of the women's movement, the 1972 decision by the International Olympic Committee to include women's rowing in the 1976 Olympics, and the 1972 passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments led to a rapid rise in the growth of women's rowing. By 1974, there were 2,000 women competing for 75

The photo below shows the lightweight eight at Green Lake in 1973 with B.J. Connolly—a lightweight at six feet tall and weighing 120 pounds!—in 3 seat. (Wooden shells and wooden "tulip" blades were the standard racing equipment of the time.)



teams.² That same year, for the first time, women were allowed to row out of Conibear Shell House. Men's coach Dick Erickson had given them equipment for their own use—but still the heavy men's shells—and a space in the shell house all to their own.

In 1975, a group of UW alumnae (including me) and **Sally Brumley (Keller)** joined LWRC, where Norma Jean Sands and Sandee Vanderbilt were still rowing. Sally had rowed at Wellesley and Cornell. (At Cornell, she was not allowed into the boathouse and was totally on her own.) Frank Cunningham coached these women at Conibear Shellhouse but was secretly working on getting LWRC a place of its own. LWRC members training for the national team (including **Jan Harville**, **Carol Brown**, and **Liz Seneary**) were coached by **Bob Ernst** after he finished coaching the UW freshmen. There was no lightweight national team, but Sally and UW alumna **JoAnn Williams** were allowed to join Bob's group twice a week. Sally and JoAnn won many medals for LWRC in lightweight singles and doubles events.

Rowing became an NCAA sport for women in 1974. In 1975, President Ford signed the Title IX athletics regulations, which clarified that collegiate athletics were included in the 1972 Title IX stipulations. Institutions had three years in which to implement them. In 1976, the NCAA challenged the legality of Title IX, but the suit was dismissed two years later.³ Consequently, 1976 became the year of some "firsts" for the women of Washington: the first time they raced at the Western Sprints (now known as the Pac-12 Championships) and the first time women were invited to compete in Opening Day races. In 1982 the NWRA merged with the National Association

of Amateur Oarsmen, becoming USRowing. By 1978, the "heavyweight" class had been changed to "Open." On April 7, 2007—35 years after Title IX was signed into law—women who had rowed or participated in other sports at the University of Washington prior to 1974 received letters.

From today's perspective, it's hard to grasp the humble origins of women's crew. Now, more than 50 years after Title IX, our sport is thriving.

—Marilynn Goo

Thanks to B.J. Connolly and Sally Keller for contributing to this history.

¹ Norma Jean Sands. "My Recollections of Dick Erickson." Lake Washington Rowing Club Newsletter, September 2001.

² Jan Palchikoff, "The Development of Women's Rowing in the United States," December 21, 1978.

³ [Title IX timeline: 50 years of halting progress across U.S. | AP News](#)



UWWC 1972 lightweight eight after their repeat National Championship performance at the 1972 NWRA nationals in Seattle, Washington. Holding the trophy is Marilynn Goo, currently a longtime member of Lake Washington Rowing Club. (Photo by Abraham Goo)

For more information on the history of UW Women's Crew, check these sources:

- [University of Washington Magazine, September 2023](#). "Making Waves," article on the history of UW Women's Crew, page 30.
- [Washington Women's Rowing History \(UW archive\)](#)
- [Paddling Against the Current: A History of Women's Competitive International Rowing Between 1954 and 2003](#). A.N. Schweinbenz. 2007. University of British Columbia.
- [Jinx Becker: An Early Champion Reminisces. 2017.](#)
- [Title IX timeline: 50 years of halting progress across U.S. | AP News](#)

New at MOHAI

Northwest

Rowing History

Featured in New Exhibit

In connection with the upcoming release of the “Boys in the Boat” movie, Seattle’s Museum of History and Industry has curated a micro exhibit of artifacts related to the past century-plus of rowing in the Northwest. The exhibit, called “Pulling Together,” will run from November 24, 2023, through June 2, 2024.

Besides featuring items related to the remarkable achievements of the Husky varsity crew at the 1936 Olympics, the exhibit also emphasizes the boatbuilding legacy of the Pocock family, the history of both men’s and women’s rowing at UW, and the history of rowing in Seattle overall.

Centerpiece of the exhibit is the *Husky Challenger*, on loan to the museum from the Tuf As Nails women’s rowing club in Port Townsend, whose members restored the shell. The *Challenger* was engineered in the same groundbreaking style as the *Clipper*, which dominated rowing throughout the 20th century.

Thanks go to former LWRC member Mike Stanley, president of the MOHAI Board of trustees, for his strong support of this project.

For more information and updates regarding this exciting exhibit, check [MOHAI’s exhibit page](#).



The Boys Are on Their Way!

The film version of our favorite rowing saga, The Boys in the Boat, is scheduled to arrive in time for the holidays.

Published in 2013, Daniel James Brown’s riveting account of the University of Washington crew’s epic victory at the 1936 Olympics has captured the attention of countless readers. You don’t have to be a rower to appreciate the fine storytelling evidenced in this book, but as rowers we rediscover some of the reasons why this sport has become our passion. Not only does the author explore the technical and mental requirements for championship performance on the water, but he also delves into the historical and sociological challenges faced by this somewhat ragtag crew during the

national elite crews. Their stunning victory focused the world’s attention on little-known Seattle and the UW. At the same time, it brought humiliation to the much-vaunted German rowers and their most famous fan, Adolf Hitler.

For the past several years, we have patiently and eagerly awaited the release of this film, directed by George Clooney. It is scheduled for release to theaters on December 25.

Read more about the film version [here](#) and in this more recent [interview](#) with George Clooney. For more information on the book version, see [Brown’s website](#).

Great Depression. The upstarts confronted a milieu dominated by East Coast elite crews and their wealthy supporters, all of whom failed to recognize the power of the Husky men. After qualifying for the Olympics, and with the financial support of the residents of Seattle, they headed off to Berlin to face inter-

(Photo Diane Roberts for Rat Island Rowing Club)