

LWRC

Making Waves

The LWRC Quarterly

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LWRC: Olympic Crucible

In the 1950s, the fledgling Lake Washington Rowing Club became a training center for the Olympic rowing trials.

"When you train and compete as an athlete at the highest levels, even if you don't come out the winner, you are forced to learn more about who you are deep down."

—Stan Pocock

Lake Washington Rowing Club's official founding came about in 1957, but its presence was already recognized far and wide by that time, thanks to the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. **George** and **Stan Pocock** had established themselves as the country's premier builders of rowing shells, and Stan in particular had become an integral part of the local rowing scene due to his coaching and mentoring of the UW Husky crews. At that time, the Pocock workshop was located on the UW campus in what later came to be known as the "Canoe House" but has since reverted to its original and official name: the "ASUW Shell House." The back area of this structure served as a storage area for boats and equipment, and this is where the Olympic hopefuls trained. The Pococks had coached numerous fine rowers during their tenure at the UW, establishing the Huskies as one of the premier collegiate programs in the country.

1956 Olympics in Melbourne, Australia

Thus it came as no surprise when several highly competitive rowers journeyed to Seattle to prepare for the trials for the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, under the tutelage of the Pococks, father and son. **Duvall Hecht** (pair without,



Post-Olympics reunion at UW Conibear Shell House, 1956.

with **Jim Fifer**) describes the ambience:

*My fondest memories of rowing are the four months Jim Fifer and I spent in Seattle training for the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne. George and Stanley Pocock were our coaches. We were not the only oarsmen to occupy their time: **Conn Findlay**, **Dan Ayrault**, and **Kurt Seifert** [in the coxed pair] were also getting ready for the trip to Australia.*

Stanley arranged for some competitive races with the Canadian Olympic team, which was training in Vancouver. One race in particular

“We were really fast and always thought we would have won Gold.”



(Photo: Creative Commons)

remains in my mind. The Canadian Olympic eight came down to race our pick-up eight (Stanley had combined the four with our two pairs, with Kurt as coxswain). It was a true barnburner, and—embarrassingly—we won.

That fall in Seattle was probably the genesis of the Lake Washington Rowing Club. While Fifer and I never rowed competitively again, those in the pair with and the straight four were joined by UW graduates and other outstanding oarsmen from across the country. The latter traveled west to avail themselves of the best rowing water in the world and one of the finest coaching combinations of the twentieth century: George and Stan Pocock.

Many of my closest friends were part of that seminal group. I am proud to have known them and to have remained connected with them.

Both pairs took Gold in Melbourne. A different fate awaited the four.

The straight four

Joining the two pairs in Seattle were stroke **Jay Hall, Ted Frost, Bob Rogers**, and bowman **John Fish** in the straight four. They were considered a shoo-in to represent the United States in Melbourne. Jay Hall sets the scene:

*Frost came home from serving in Korea with the Army. Rogers was at Fort Ord. Fish was transitioning from Annapolis to the UW but was not yet eligible. I was attending night school while working that semester. Frost and Rogers had contacted Husky coach **Al Ulbrickson** as well as the Pococks to learn how the four might have their best chance at the Olympics. Both Pococks agreed to coach us, and the Washington Athletic Club purchased a new Pocock four for us. We became very fast, clocking world-class times. We moved con-*



▲ Twenty-five-year reunion of 1956 USA Olympic straight four sponsored by Washington Athletic Club. Left to right: **John Fish** (bow), **Ted Frost, Bob Rogers, Jay Hall** (stroke).

fidently to Syracuse for a month's training before the Olympic Trials, all the time getting faster and rowing without a rudder.

Yes, Stan Pocock had directed them not to use a rudder!

In those days, Olympic Trials required three days of racing. On the first day, the WAC four won its heat decisively, 11 lengths ahead of Detroit Boat Club. On the second day, the Seattle crew also finished first, eight lengths ahead of West Side Rowing Club of Buffalo. On the third and final day, however, the dream came to an end when the WAC four's bow touched the finish barge. They came in second to Detroit by about 0.04 seconds. And in Melbourne, that Detroit boat won Silver.

Jay Hall notes that Stan Pocock claimed he would “go to his grave regretting his decision to eliminate the rudder. Duvall and I took him to lunch one month before he passed, and he told us he still thought about it often. We were really fast and always thought we would have won Gold.”



(Photos: Creative Commons)

“It was very intimidating.”

1960 Olympics in Rome, Italy

The LWRC Olympic legacy continued in Rome four years later, when **John Sayre, Rusty Wailes, Ted Nash, and Dan Ayrault** won Gold in the straight four and **Conn Findlay, Richard Draeger, and Kent Mitchell** took bronze in the coxed pair—both coached by Stan Pocock. In his book *Ready All!*, **Gordon Newell** quotes George Pocock:

We were again entrusted with the responsibility of building the seven shells for the U.S. Olympic crews, which we shipped from Seattle aboard an Italian freighter. Stan accompanied the American crews to Rome. He had coached the Lake Washington Rowing Club fours and pairs with and without coxswain, all of which had qualified at the trials to represent the United States in Italy. Navy again represented America in the eight-oared event. Only one Gold Medal was taken that year: the four without cox, which Stan had coached. (See “LWRC Goes to Rome,” [page 6](#).)

1964 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan

By now, Lake Washington Rowing Club had been formally established—thanks to the efforts of Dan Ayrault and Ted Frost in particular. Ayrault believed that “Rowing talent is going to waste here.” Once graduated from the university, local rowers had nowhere to go to maintain their skills and competitive edge. This belief brought about the genesis of LWRC.

In 1964, **Philip Durbrow** was ordered by the Army to report to Stan Pocock at his training center and prepare for the upcoming Olympics. He recalls:

I was the least experienced rower there. I’d had only two years of rowing at Menlo College but had the advantage of

having had Duvall Hecht as my coach. Hecht, who with Jim Fifer had trained with the Pococks and won Gold in the 1956 Games, recommended me.

When I arrived at Lake Washington, all the other oarsmen who had already arrived were walking around in old, tattered Olympic and Pan Am Games uniforms. It was very intimidating.

Durbrow became part of the straight four, along with **Dick Lyon, Ted Mittet, Ted Nash, and Geoffrey Picard** as backup. **Conn Findlay** and **Edward Ferry**, coxed by **Kent Mitchell**, formed the coxed pair. Durbrow notes there was a lot of talent among the various crews, yet Stan was never able to put together a fast eight, despite his exquisite coaching skills. Durbrow suggests that this came about because they had all had so much success that they weren’t capable of adapting to each other. Or perhaps they were unwilling to do so.

So Stan decided to focus on small boats. Only the coxed pair and the straight four qualified at the trials. The Ferry/Findlay/Mitchell pair took first place in Tokyo. The straight four won Bronze with Geoff Picard substituting for Durbrow, who got injured in the heats when his sinuses burst.

Forty-six years later, Durbrow received a package wrapped in plain brown paper and sent by Ted Nash. It contained “a very wonderful letter” from Ted, saying that he could only imagine the disappointment at being unable to row in the finals in Tokyo. Durbrow adds, “As a tribute to our friendship and in recognition of all we had been through together, he offered me his Olympic Medal. He requested that I not decline it, and that I understand how much he wanted me to have it. There are many stories about how competitive Ted is, but few that convey his generosity of spirit.”

**“He offered
me his
Olympic
medal.”**

Durbrow continues:

When we raced during training, the newspapers called us members of the Lake Washington Rowing Club, and that is how we were entered at the Olympic Trials. I never officially joined the club, but I expect we were automatically made members of the club. I feel very lucky to have been coached by Stan and to have rowed on such a beautiful lake.

—Duvall Hecht (1956), Jay Hall (1956), and Philip Durbrow (1964), Olympic rowers

LWRC exists today because of the efforts of those who trained here for the Olympics sixty-odd years ago. We thank these dedicated rowers and take pride in their accomplishments. Their legacy lives on.

Special thanks to Duvall Hecht, Jay Hall, Philip Durbrow, and Guy Harper for their contributions to this article, including photos.



◀◀ Straight four after winning the 1964 Olympic Trials in New York. Left to right: **Ted Nash, Phil Durbrow, Dick Lyon, Theo Mittet**

◀ The same four guys when they returned to LWRC 50 years later. Durbrow recalls: “Stan prepared a shell for us exactly like the one we raced in ‘64 and rigged it, as we had, in the Italian style (two center oarsmen on the port side, bow and stern on the starboard side). Surprisingly, the boat still felt very good when we went out on the water that day.”

For a brief account of LWRC’s early history, check out Craig Smith’s account in the September 2017 issue of *Making Waves*: <https://www.lakewashingtonrowing.com/magazine>.

For more details, see https://www.row2k.com/content/Lake_Washington_RC.pdf, a fascinating set of commentaries relating to LWRC and the 1960 and 1964 Olympics, with a focus on the role played by LWRC. Peter Mallory (<http://www.rowingevolution.com/author>) compiled the reminiscences.

Mallory’s meticulous and comprehensive *The Sport of Rowing* contains a wealth of information about the 1956, 1960, and 1964 Olympic Games: <https://www.row2k.com/features/445/Conn-Findlay--Conn-is-Conn---Part-I/>



**Happy
Holidays!**

The next issue of
Making Waves
will appear in 2021



Editor's Note

In these difficult times, we long for a return to normalcy. An inspiring glimpse into the past may help temper the frustration we currently feel in our day-to-day lives. With that in mind, this issue explores the outstanding achievements of some of our founding members who set their sights on nothing less than the Olympics. Four of these men describe their experiences vying for the ultimate victory. Without them, there would be no LWRC today.

Members Tom Kreyche, Francine Rose, and Marcie Sillman bring us back to the present—and to the future. Tom explores Seattle's occasionally volatile climate, and Francine describes Bainbridge Island Rowing's in-progress rowing center dedicated to Stan Pocock. Marcie introduces us to fellow member Carrie La Seur, a published author and land-use attorney.

Read and enjoy!

—*Roberta Scholz*



Designer's Note

Making Waves is meant to be read on-screen, laid out in monitor proportions (landscape). You can print it on letter-size paper at 94%, but text is purposely large, and underlined links are live. Use the full-screen setting (View > Read Mode) in Adobe Acrobat for the most legible view.

—*Suze Woolf*

KUDOS!

Every other weekend since October 11, several LWRC members have participated in the I Love Sushi races, also known as the SLUG (South Lake Union Gas Works) or HOTL (Head of the Lake) Lite. The course generally runs from the bottom of Lake Union through Portage Bay and the Montlake Cut into Lake Washington, with a hairpin turn at Fox Point and then back to Portage Bay. The course varies according to conditions. All entries are singles.

LWRC's **Cody Jenkins** has placed first in each race—yay, Cody! **Jordan Tigani, Wispy Runde, Damon Ellingston, Christian Roth, and Carolyn Fletcher** also did well.

Other local clubs participating are Pocock with the bulk of the entries, the UW, College Club of Seattle, and Lake Union Crew. Some races were organized by decades.

Congratulations to everyone who represented us, and special congrats to our winners! Thanks to Pocock for organizing the race—and to the LWRC members who helped with buoys, launch driving, and organization.

Click for [results](#) and [videos](#) of LWRC racers, courtesy of Janet Walker.



Cody Jenkins

**“It was the
hardest
training I’d
ever done.”**

►► *Symbol of the
1960 Rome Olympics
(Creative Commons
photo)*

LWRC Goes to Rome

Olympian John Sayre describes the LWRC journey to victory in the 1960 Olympics

The Lake Washington Rowing Club four with, stroked by John Sayre, returned victorious from the 1959 Pan American Games in Chicago to begin training for the 1960 Olympic trials. Two of their crew, Rusty Wailes and Dan Ayrault, had won gold in Melbourne in 1956; Ted Nash completed the foursome. This time, the crew was uncoxed. Another LWRC entry, the four with, was powered by former UW rowers Jay Hall and Geza Berger together with Roger McDonald and Charlie Bower. They did not qualify for Rome.

1960 Olympics: Trials

In Seattle, we started a formidable training program of several months for the US Olympic trials and, hopefully, for the Olympics themselves. This included serious weight training, running the stairs in the UW basketball pavilion until we almost dropped, consistently testing ourselves by rowing against eights, and long-distance rows of twenty-plus miles. It was total focus for an Olympic Gold Medal—the hardest training I’d ever done. We were all married and had kids and jobs, so we had minimal spare time.

Finally the Olympic trials arrived at Lake Onandaga in Syracuse, New York. Our main competition seemed likely to come from the US Naval Academy, which had a strong four. We easily moved to the finals, as did the Navy crew. As we sat awaiting our final race, we noticed them sitting by the dock.

We got the crazy idea to mess with their minds. We grabbed our shell from the boathouse and ran out to the dock for a turnout. We



jumped into the boat, rowed up the river at a high rate, and disappeared around a river bend. The Navy crew had watched this performance with perplexed faces, surely thinking: These guys are nuts. Nobody practices just before the final race.

Once out of sight of the launching dock, we pulled to shore, got out of the boat, and lay in the grass under a tree. Twenty minutes later, we got up, splashed each other with water so we’d look like we were sweating, got back into the boat, and rowed at a high rate back to the dock. We put the shell back into the boathouse and disappeared. The

“We got the crazy idea to mess with their minds.”



(Creative Commons photo)

Navy guys watched this entire charade, knowing the finals were less than an hour away.

Our performance seemed to work because we quickly took the lead in the race and kept it. We were on the US Olympic Team and going to Rome.

Rome: Heats

We had no illusions that we could fool the foreign crews in Rome. The venue was beautiful Lake Albano, where the Pope has a summer residence. It was an extinct volcanic crater and offered a perfect, calm rowing course.

In the first heat, we started well but hit a buoy marking the lanes. Ted Nash's oar was broken: a piece of wood hung by the metal strap, making it impossible to take a full stroke. Ted gutted it out, but we finished second to the British crew.

This meant we had not qualified for the final and had to go through a repêchage heat, in which we would either win or be eliminated. In our practice row that evening, we hit another buoy and broke another oar. Our coach, Stan Pocock, said, "I am running out of oars. Don't break any more." This disaster was hardly what we had imagined for the Olympics.

The next day, as we lined up for the repêchage, the German boat next to us looked across and appeared to be laughing at us—surely because of the double buoy crash. They certainly were not intimidated by us. This made me mad. The stakes of the race—our possible elimination—were not funny.

In this six-boat race, the Germans were the target. However, at 500 meters into the race, we were dead last. We knew what we had to do and went to work. At

1,000 meters, we were a distant second to the Germans; at 1,500 meters, a close second. We had 500 meters left to save ourselves for the final.

At this point our mindset was "do or die." The next minute of rowing would either eliminate us or keep us alive. A mysterious power kicked in and we took off. We caught the Germans and set an Olympic record for this event that lasted for 12 years.

The German crew was from Ratzeburg, famous for its rowers, and in reality was the next-best four in the competition. Our race with them showed us what the final would be like and clearly gave us our plan—row from behind for most of the race and then go for it, no matter what.

We were in the Olympic finals! This was the place we had trained for over the previous two years. These do-or-die races were damned hard on us, but one more needed to be done.

Rome: Final Olympic Race

Again, we were dead last at 500 meters, with the Russians having a big lead because of their fast start. We were a distant second at 1,000 meters, then a close second at 1,500 meters. At this point, after all the problems and tension with broken oars and with the repêchage, we four went through a dangerous mental process, each of us dealing with it in his own way.

In my case, I was suddenly struck with the concept of just holding on and winning a silver medal in the Olympics. Not bad! But then reality intruded. Gold had been our goal from the beginning. We would probably never have a chance like this again. I thought, "Go for it,

In his classic book *Way Enough*, Stan Pocock comments on the amazing come-from-behind Olympic victory of the four without in Rome in 1960:

Before the race, I whispered to Sayre: Well John, if anybody can do it, you can. I knew only too well how much he hated the idea of losing. He had proven that time and time again. I also knew that this desire dominated the lives of the other three in the crew.

After the race, Pocock stated: These four were the toughest, most determined racers that I have ever come across. Had they not been, they would never have reached Rome in the first place; nor would they have ever won that race. It was an emotional moment for them, and I don't think I imagined the tears running down their cheeks. I know they were on mine.

***“Go for it,
whatever the
price—to hell
with broken
oars.”***

“Can we do it?” and mentally answered, “Hell, yes!”

I yelled, “Taking it up.” The boat seemed to leap out of the water as the mysterious power kicked in. We sped by the Russians and the late-charging Italian crew to win the coveted Gold Medal by a length.

What is the mysterious power, and what did we learn about it?

Even with the most extreme training program, the essential ingredient is your heart and mind. You need to couple your desire to reach for the stars with a conscious willingness to pay a physical price way beyond your training. You need to do this as individuals and as a boat to-

whatever the price—to hell with broken oars. We are the best boat here on this day.” Each of the other men had similar thought processes. Rusty Wailes recalls thinking: “Winning a silver medal would be like taking an aspirin.” But all four of us asked,

gether. Only then can you draw on the mysterious power to become champions.

It clearly was one of life’s greatest experiences for all of us. What I learned in rowing competition has served me over and over as I dealt with successes and failures over the next 60 years. Stan and George Pocock, and Al Ulbrickson, taught me how to deal with both.

—John Sayre

Harbor Patrol 206-684-4071

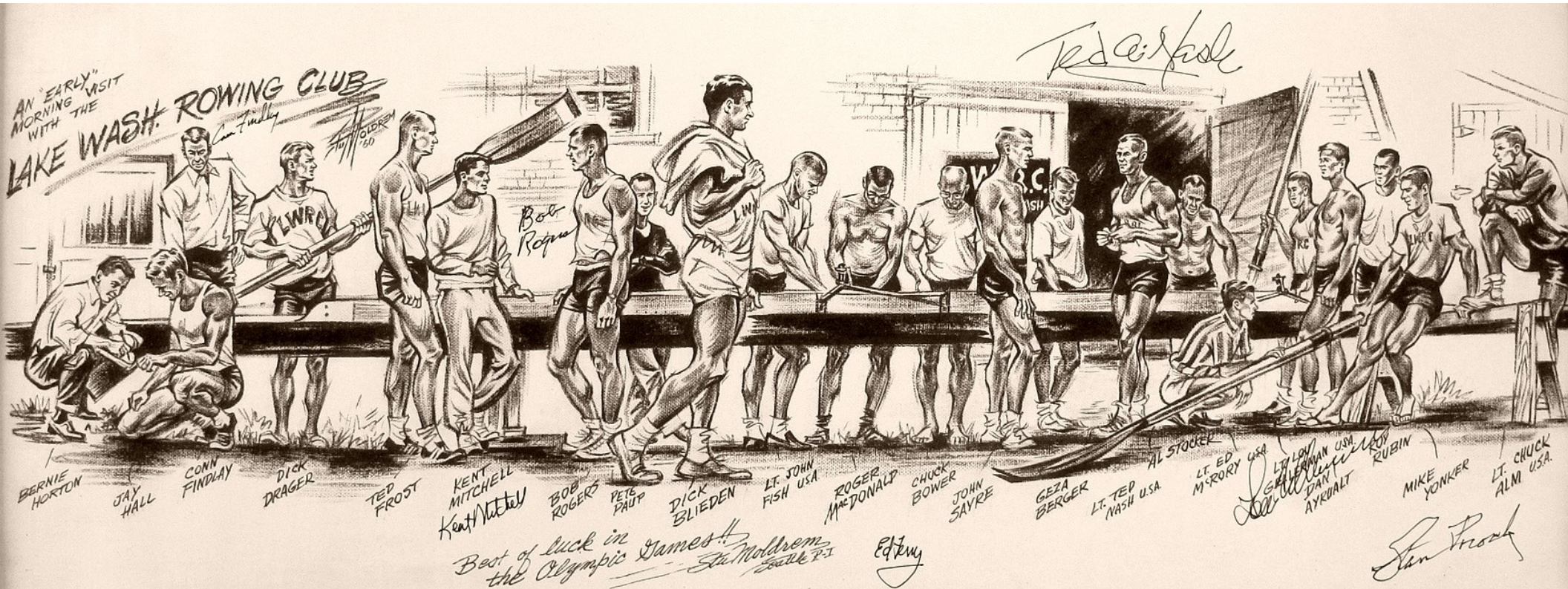
Also on the bulletin board in the boathouse

Check out our programs!

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



Rigger (Helen Newman photo)



▼ 1954 UW Varsity crew (Photo courtesy of stroke Guy Harper)

▲ The late **Stu Moldrem**, former staff artist for the now-defunct Seattle Post-Intelligencer, sketched this group of several Olympic hopefuls for the 1960 Olympics in Rome. Some of them even provided autographs.

Eric Cohen, archivist of all things related to Husky rowing, has kindly contributed the original sketch to Lake Washington Rowing Club, in the belief that this is its proper home. Thank you, Washington Rowing and Eric!



Member Profile

Carrie La Seur Finds Adventure

As a rule, masters rowers are an interesting lot: we're the kind of people who get hooked on a sport that requires discipline, passion, and tenacity, and we often have professions and hobbies that demand those same qualities.

You'd be hard-pressed to find an LWRC member who has parlayed those traits in more interesting ways than **Carrie La Seur**.

Published author? Check.

Rhodes Scholar? Yep, check that box too.

Law degree, founder of a public-interest legal non-profit, mother of two, independent bookstore co-founder? Check, check, check, check.

"I was just doing a lot of things at once," La Seur says, a wild understatement if ever there were one.

Maybe we can trace La Seur's eclectic interests and accomplishments to her peripatetic childhood. She was born in California and grew up around the world (her father was in the military), but both of her parents have deep roots in Montana, and that's the place La Seur calls home.

If Montana is La Seur's geographic home, writing is her vocational North Star.

"It's just been my fundamental means of self-expression," she says, "since I was really young."

She's tried her hand at everything from nonfiction

essays to poetry, even fan fiction. More recently, La Seur has been working on a young-adult novel. But the wide-ranging literary interests seem par for the course of a life lived around the globe.

La Seur graduated from Bryn Mawr College with degrees in English and French, and she earned a master's degree in modern languages from Oxford University. After finishing that degree, La Seur became a teacher. She'd already started to publish articles based on her academic research, in what she calls "obscure journals." It wasn't long before La Seur realized this wasn't how she wanted to spend her professional life.

"I thought, 'Well, at least if I practice law, or I'm a professor of law, I can do work that will matter to somebody and have a real impact.'"

So, she applied to law school and received her degree from Yale.

La Seur spent a few years in private practice before founding the legal non-profit Plains Justice, which provides public-interest energy and environmental legal services to clients in the Northern Plains states. Even before setting up Plains Justice, La Seur was drawn to the kinds of cases they ultimately took on, but the private firm where she was employed often represented the other side.

La Seur describes her work with Plains Justice as "part litigation, part fundraising, and another part trying to represent the issues we were working on." In that last capacity, she was able to continue writing, publishing a series of articles about everything from mining and clean-energy reforms to the Keystone XL Pipeline.





Marcie Sillman served three years as LWRC Board president. Many members will recognize her as Senior Arts and Culture reporter for KUOW radio. She retired a few weeks ago after 35 years at KUOW.

Despite balancing the demands of this job with mothering her two sons, La Seur continued to write fiction and poetry. Her first novel, *The Home Place*, was published in 2014 to critical acclaim.

Given the hectic nature of La Seur's life, it's hard to imagine where rowing fit in. She took up the sport at Oxford, where she was part of a lightweight women's eight. La Seur still laments she never received the coveted Oxford "Blue"—she arrived too late to compete in the renowned annual Oxford/Cambridge Boat Race.

She returned to rowing after moving with her family to Seattle from Billings, Montana, two years ago, settling into LWRC and a seat in the mixed eight that competed at the Head of the Charles. This is actually her second stint with the club: in 2002, La Seur was in Seattle to participate in a summer elite rowing program coached by **Bill Tytus** and **Frank Cunningham**.

"I remember I was doing a summer clerkship with a downtown law firm," La Seur says. "I would come and row at like 5 a.m. I learned to scull with Frank behind me in a double wherry." Once you have that experience, says La Seur, you can never row without hearing Frank's voice yelling from behind you, an experience many of us can relate to.

These days Carrie La Seur is recovering from some injuries, but she's back on the water, often in the *Boo*. Although she took a leave from her work with Plains Justice, the current political climate is pulling her back toward environmental law. In the meantime, she's working on another novel and more poetry, seeing her younger son through his high school years, and dreaming of the next big adventure.

—**Marcie Sillman**



LWRC coach **Theresa Batty** is an accomplished artist. Her photo of a gnarled madrona was recently selected by King County for a bus shelter mural.



From Your Board

Volunteer Shout-Outs!

Thank you to the amazing members who have generously volunteered their time and energy to support the club this year. Special kudos to **Don Kuehn, Alex Parkman, Susan Kinne, Dave Rutherford, Carolyn Fletcher, Jonathan Turvey, Nancy Egaas, and Molly Corrigan** for going above and beyond.

Reflecting on 2020 Goals

Facilities Improvements Maintenance and repairs were completed on high-priority projects at both Fremont and Garfield boathouses, including:

- ▶ Garfield: Repaired exterior siding and shored up structural integrity of roof trusses
- ▶ Fremont: Improved dock gates, strengthened wherry dock, upgraded lighting on second floor, improved gym flooring, deep-cleaned carpets, and fixed emergency hatch door to roof
- ▶ Additional upgrades and repairs for Fremont and Garfield boathouses to be planned after COVID-19 subsidies

Fundraising and Endowment Goals

- ▶ Board postponed formal fundraising campaign during height of COVID-19—thank you to all members who have offered donations during this time!

Equipment Purchases

- ▶ Shifted priorities from acquiring large boats to increasing number of club-owned singles, obtaining six singles in 2020 via purchase and donations
- ▶ Recently purchased six new ergs, two new sets of bantam oars and additional gym weights to support solo training

Membership Growth

- ▶ Efforts shifted from attracting novice rowers to enrolling experienced rowers who could row independently during COVID-19, including advanced rowers with small-boat skills and novice/intermediate rowers interested in private lessons

Fall/Winter Priorities

- ▶ Preparing members for cold-weather rowing via flip-test instruction and safety education; finalizing guidelines and opportunities for indoor exercise and land-based training
- ▶ Expanding options and support for safely rowing in doubles/pairs based on updated COVID-19 guidance from Governor Inslee
- ▶ Developing instructional content for member education regarding common questions (e.g., proper boat-carrying while launching/landing, member safety, etc.)



Thanks!

Thanks to all our board members for their tireless efforts to guide us through the past months of the COVID-9 pandemic. It hasn't been easy, but they have worked hard to keep us all safe in uncharted waters. We are grateful.

LWRC Board Members 2020–2021

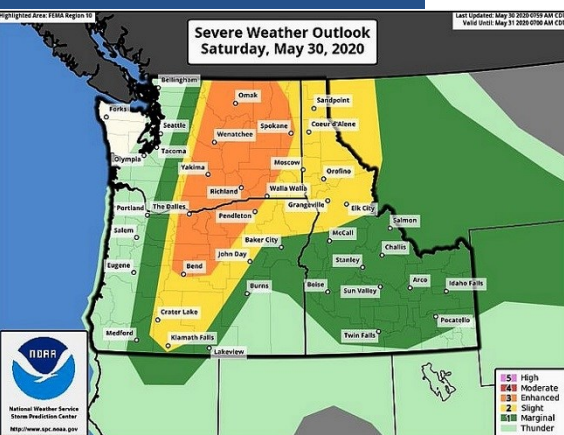
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—Gavin Gregory, Secretary, LWRC Board

Weird Weather

Appearances can be deceiving, especially when it comes to the weather.

The inattentive rower may be in for a surprise.



▲ Severe weather forecast for May 30, 2020 (National Weather Service)

Lightning Zaps Seattle

An intense lightning storm surprised Seattle earlier this year on Saturday morning, May 30, when weekend rowers were out on the water. I had checked the forecast the night before, and rowing conditions looked normal—showers in Seattle with thunderstorms predicted for Central Washington (see severe weather outlook map). In the morning, I'd glanced at the weather radar and seen that a blip was moving up from the south, so I expected showers to show up later in the morning. If I'd checked closely, I would have seen that the morning forecast had been upgraded with warnings.

A few other rowers and I were at the Locks when we heard some low rumbling. At first, I couldn't quite figure it out and looked for a train going over the Salmon Bay Bridge. Then lightning lit up the sky, and everyone beat a hasty retreat up the Ship Canal. By the time we got back to Fremont, the lightning was flashing continuously overhead and thunder was booming off the hills. The show kept up for another hour, until the storm blew off toward the north. I was surprised to see Lake Union stay perfectly calm—dangerous wind gusts are common with thunderstorms. And no gusts were recorded at the UW Atmospheric Sciences weather station.

This was such an unusual event for Seattle that I'm not going to bother discussing lightning safety, except to state the obvious: **no one should be out rowing in an electrical storm.** I expect this is a standard topic for clubs where such weather is a common threat. I wasn't too worried during the storm,



(Creative Commons photo)

since the Ship Canal lies below the hills and man-made structures, and seems protected. But Lake Union and Lake Washington are not, and I wouldn't bet my life exposed in a small boat. A couple of years ago, I was impressed after witnessing the matchstick remnants of a large tree in the Arboretum that had suffered a direct lightning strike.

Thunderstorms were a great source of entertainment when I was growing up in Arizona—and an equally great source of disappointment after moving to Seattle. The local variety, called "one-clap wonders" by local weather watchers, are pitiful. This storm was a different animal. The National Weather Service radar showed that the storm's tops reached nearly 50,000 feet—unheard of for western Washington and more typical of midwestern U.S. storms. In a storm-watcher interview, a meteorologist with the National Lightning Detection Network stated that in the morning, western Washington registered almost 16,000 lightning strikes, a quarter of which struck the ground.

Meteorologists called the Seattle portion of the storm

Weather, continued

►► Thunderstorms move
into Seattle area, May 30,
2020 at 8 am.

***“No one should
be out rowing
in an electrical
storm.”***

a once-in-a-lifetime event, and a once-in-a-decade event for central Washington. It was especially rare since most thunderstorms are energized by the sun and typically occur later in the day. This storm was caused by an unusually warm, moist, and unstable air mass as well as other favorable atmospheric conditions.

Seattle rowers need to watch for a few windstorms during the late fall and winter, but they are typically well forecast. Normally, we don't worry about thunderstorms because Washington has the fewest by area than anywhere else in the continental U.S., thanks to the cold water and temperate climate. However, rare events do happen, and on that day I learned a valuable lesson in complacency!

The Locks Run Over

In between rainstorms back in early February, I rowed out to Lake Washington and noticed that I was making poor headway through the Montlake Cut—my SpeedCoach showed a measly 3 miles per hour. There was only a slight headwind, so it became obvious that something unusual was going on; the current is usually minimal. On the way back, rowing at a moderate pace, I was just flying: the GPS was clocking over 9 mph, so the current must have been running about 3 mph. Surprisingly, there weren't any current rips to indicate the conditions. (By contrast, the 4+ mph current in Rich Passage gets pretty rowdy, as experienced by participants in the Sound Rowers Bainbridge Island Marathon. And for sheer terror, nothing in my rowing experience matches rounding the south pylon of the Golden



Gate Bridge during a race, against an incoming roaring 5+ mph tide.)

I didn't think too much about the strong current in the Cut until I saw a news report that the Ballard Locks had reached their highest-ever recorded flow rate during that period. My curiosity was piqued, so I checked up on rainfall amounts for January and February. Seattle got blasted with an atmospheric river in January and had rain every day, except on New Year's Day. This wasn't just drizzle—the total rainfall was 9 inches; the monthly amount averages 5.5. And this was before another series of wet storms hit in early February (see rainfall chart).

Ever since the Ship Canal was built, the water from the Cedar-Sammamish Watershed has emptied into Lake Washington, then into Puget Sound through the Locks. I'd noticed the seasonal height change in the water level and was curious about this event. So to get more information, I called up the Public Affairs Office

Weather, continued

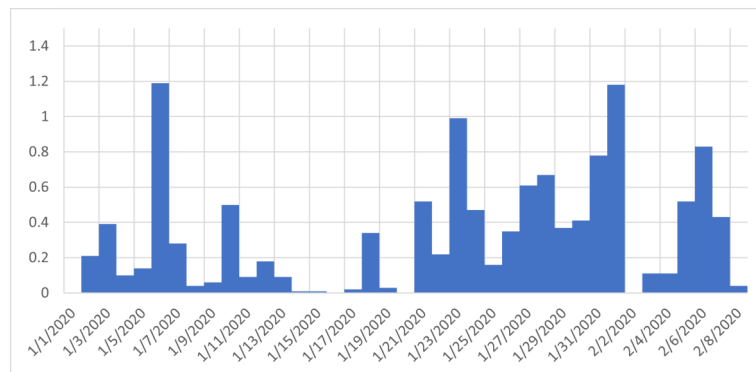
at the Locks, which are operated by the Army Corps of Engineers. Eric Zimdars, a Water Quality Engineer in the Hydrology Section, patiently answered my questions about the Locks and water flow.

Managing the water level behind the dam is a question of balance. Some change is allowed, but the level must be kept within a couple of feet to prevent damage to docks and tied-up boats. The water level is drawn down before the rainy season to allow for a buffer in case of

heavy rainfall. The floating bridges are built with a large safety margin, so they're not the primary concern. The Army Corps of Engineers has a meteorologist on staff who works with the Northwest River Forecast Center to continuously monitor the watershed and manage the wa-

ter height. A localized storm will have some effect on water levels. But only a series of storms such as those last winter can have a notable impact—they covered the entire watershed for an extended period.

This year's record flow was the largest since 1946, when logs were first kept (there was another large flow in January 2009). On February 8, it ran about 16,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), compared to the typical 13,000



cfs. Flow gauges are installed on rivers, but for the Locks the rate is calculated based on water height and gate setting. The flow rate is controlled by gates on top of the dam. In February, the conditions required fully opening the gates—a rare event—and you can see the results in the photo taken just downstream of the dam.

I've never felt comfortable anywhere near the dam, so when I row down to the Locks I keep to the north side of the jetty extending from the large lock and turn around in the basin by the Locks maintenance yard—it's protected water and offers no chance of getting swept over!

—Tom Kreyche

For another cautionary tale about the Ballard Locks, see "Whitewater Sculling" in the Fall 2020 issue of *Making Waves*: https://cc0f58f3-2631-43b2-aacc-6e774c54b002.filesusr.com/ugd389c3_2ec0a3eb39514413bbb-baa6b15abe519.pdf?index=true.

In the same issue, Tom Kreyche writes about his scary cardio experience on the water.



▲ Gates running wide open, February 2020 (Locks Facebook page)
▶▲ Rainfall, Sea-Tac, January 2020

*“Rowing isn’t
just a sport. It’s
a community
... a family.”*

Bainbridge Honors Stan Pocock

Bainbridge Island Rowing honors its past and looks to the future

I remember that cold, damp January morning in 2015, sitting in our quad along with dozens of other Northwest rowers to bid **Stan Pocock** farewell at the Montlake Cut finish line. I was already hooked on rowing, but I didn’t yet understand the link to the Pococks. That day, I finally “got it.” Rowing isn’t just a sport. It’s a community ... a family whose Northwest roots trace back to the Pococks.

The Pococks

The name **George Pocock** has been immortalized countless times, from Pocock Racing Shells to the best-selling *Boys in the Boat* to Seattle’s elite Pocock Rowing Center.

Fewer people know his son Stan, who took over the family’s wooden-shell dynasty from his father. [Stan Pocock](#) is best remembered as a U.S. Rowing Hall of Fame coach who sent eight different crews to the Olympics between 1956 and 1964, winning a record four gold and two bronze medals. He was LWRC’s first coach.

As a coach, Stan was humble, fierce, and creative, like his father—“MacGyvering” devices such as [wrist splints](#) to prevent carpal-tunnel syndrome and a “gimp pad” for an oarsman with one leg shorter than the other. His style was peppered with classic Pocock humor: he called his randomly drawn seat races “ham ’n’ egggers.”

The Hamiltons

Jump to 2001 and another family—**Thom** and **Karen Hamilton** and their daughter **Kacy**, who had fallen in love with rowing at the Pocock Center’s summer camp. She was so determined to pursue her passion, Kacy commuted from Bainbridge to Seattle and back every morning before class.

When Kacy and her friends approached her father about starting a rowing club, he thought they were talking about rowboats! Before long, however, Bainbridge Island Rowing had started, with a few high-school students in a single shell. They launched from a member’s hillside waterfront while coaches ran along the beach, yelling instructions.

As interest and enrollment grew, the club reached out to the city and was relocated to a dilapidated old tennis court in Eagle Harbor’s Waterfront Park with no water, no electricity. The shells and equipment were stored in an area enclosed by a chain-link fence, out in the weather. If anyone forgot the key, they’d have to climb over the fence and pass



Bainbridge, continued



Previous storage area
(All photos courtesy
bainbridgerowing.org)

the shells back over the top. This went on for years.

But what they lacked in facilities, the juniors soon made up for in enthusiasm, holding their own wherever regattas were held and even taking gold at Regionals. Their accomplish-

ments drew even more members to the club, eventually adding adult and masters programs. Success was paving the way for BIR to offer a comprehensive rowing program on the caliber of a Pocock Center, Lake Washington Rowing Club, and other facilities across the Sound.

Today

The BIR dream was to create a comparable facility, not just to develop West Sound rowing but also to host regattas for competitors throughout the Pacific Northwest. After five years, that dream is very close to [becoming an exciting reality](#). So far, \$2.9 million of the \$3.4 million goal has been raised.

The lower floor will be for the shells themselves. The top floor houses coaches' offices, a conference room, locker rooms, and a large workout/multipurpose community space with kitchen. As the only facility of its kind in Kitsap County, the 12,000-square-foot building will not just serve the rowing community but also be open to the public for private events. Board member Jennifer Ames-Karreman states,

"We've already had people calling us to ask, 'Can I have my wedding here? Can I have my bar mitzvah here?'"

The warm wood framing, emblematic of Pocock's wooden shells, will give visitors a taste of rowing's rich history.

At the center of it all hangs the legendary [Quinault](#), a Pocock wooden eight that beat Navy's "Great Eight" in the 1951 IRAs—an astonishing feat, considering Navy remained unbeaten for their next 23 starts. **Guy Harper** (Husky stroke in that famous regatta) and **Jim Buckley** (Rat Island Rowing) engineered RIR's donation of the *Quinault*. BIR coaches Bruce Beall, Tom Coble, and an army of volunteers restored it beautifully. (See <https://bainbridgerowing.org/news/historic-pocock-shell-donated-to-bir/> for more info.)

Like the Pococks and the Hamiltons, West Sound rowers are family. When one of them hosts an event or has a need—the others show up. But their current facilities are limited. And having a comprehensive rowing program in the area will no doubt offer more participation opportunities to seasoned and aspiring rowers alike. New, expanded facilities are a must.

The name Stan Pocock Legacy Rowing Center stems from BIR's partnership with the Pocock family. But the ["Raising the Roof"](#) fundraising effort has truly taken a village ... from the City of Bainbridge and charitable organizations down to individual donors. All share Stan's dream of community-oriented rowing for current and future generations.

At the annual "Dream Big" fundraiser, communications director Meloni Courtway asked everyone to stand. "This," she said, "is what a family looks like."

—**Francine Rose**

*LWRC member **Francine Rose** enjoys rowing the lightweight quad Lucy Stillman Pocock, an outstanding exemplar*

Bainbridge, continued

of George Pocock's boatbuilding skills, with her buddies at LWRC.

Read more about the Stan Pocock Legacy Rowing Center here: <https://bainbridgerowing.org/news/birs-rowing-center-gets-a-big-name-and-major-donation/>.

A four-minute video condenses the progress of its construction here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqNbE6CVcxE&feature=youtu.be>. For more information on Navy's "Great Eight," see https://navysports.com/news/2002/9/26Navy_s_52_Olympic_Gold_Medal_Crew_Team_to_Hold_Reunion.



Social distancing at
HOTC ... NOT! (Pelle
Cass photo)



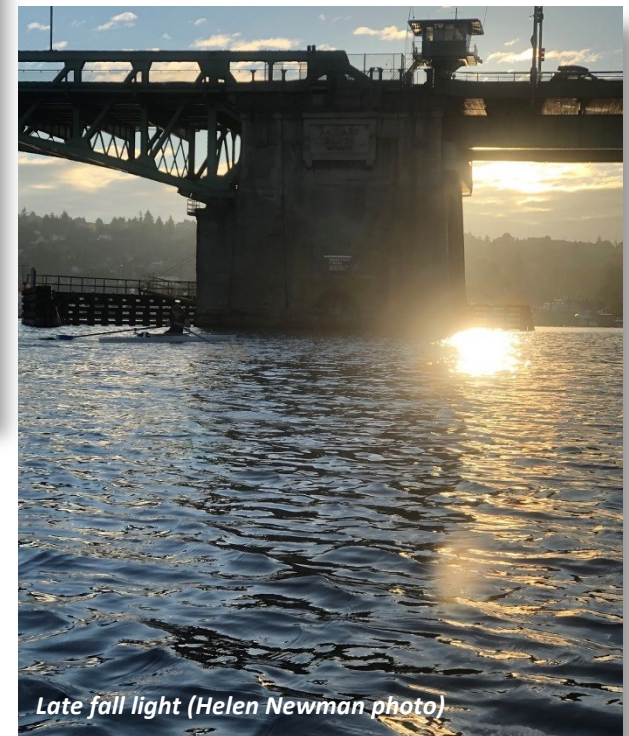
THE BACK PAGE



Fishermen's Terminal Rower, watercolor by Roger Whitlock <https://www.rogerwhitlock.com/>

Beirut Blast

If you think we've had it tough over these past nine months, think again. At least we still have our boathouse and equipment. The Lebanese Rowing Federation suffered a devastating blow on August 4 when a nearby warehouse blew up. See how they are coping: <https://www.bbc.com/news/amp/world-middle-east-54013623>.



Late fall light (Helen Newman photo)

Report Oil Spills 24/7
1-800-OILS-911

Washington Division of
Emergency Management

Pass the Word

Has an LWRC member done something worth recognizing, on or off the water? Help us share the news!

Calling All Artists

We'd like to feature your work. Please share your creations with us!