



Making Waves

The LWRC Quarterly

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WATER WAYS

Up in the Air over Lake Union

In the previous issue of "Making Waves," we discussed the history of seaplanes on Lake Union and the ties between the rowing and seaplane communities. This article discusses current seaplane operations on the lake and how rowers and pilots can work together to enjoy this amazing resource.

Introduction

Rowers share Lake Union with many types of watercraft, including seaplanes that can rapidly cover large portions of the lake. Rowers should therefore understand their basic operations. Seaplane pilots are alert to watercraft on the lake and receive specialized training, since seaplanes operate both as boats and as aircraft and must observe two sets of regulations.

Schedules

Early-morning rowers may not encounter seaplanes because a noise-abatement agreement allows their operation only after 8:00 a.m. (9:00 on Sundays). Seaplanes are often flown into Lake Union from Kenmore to pick up passengers for flights to the San Juan Islands or for local sightseeing



Aerial view westward toward Fremont Bridge and Ship Canal (Seattle Seaplanes photo)

flights. Later times are a little unpredictable, since many flights are not on fixed schedules and cannot fly unless visibility exceeds three miles. Seaplanes avoid afternoon hours of heavy boat traffic on summer weekends.

Facilities

There are two seaplane bases on Lake Union. Kenmore Air's facility lies in the southwestern corner of the lake, and Seattle Seaplanes is at the southeastern corner, a couple of docks south of the LWRC Garfield boathouse. Kenmore Air has a fleet of aircraft and provides scheduled and charter flights, and Seattle Sea-

Designated seaplane waterways. Lesser numbers are used for landings, greater ones for takeoffs.

KA=Kenmore Air Dock, SS=Seattle Seaplanes Dock.

(Photo: Washington State Department of Transportation)

planes is a smaller operation that offers charter flights and flight instruction. Private seaplanes occasionally fly into Lake Union, but they mostly operate on Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish, where there is a lot more space and fewer boats. Seaplane instruction is commonly conducted on Lake Washington near Sand Point.

Pathways

Seaplanes can operate anywhere on Lake Union, although there are designated seaplane waterways, identified by their magnetic bearings. Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, warning buoys are installed down the center of the lake, with flashing lights to advise boaters of impending seaplane

activity. Boaters are not obliged to avoid any of these areas.

Seaplane operators prefer not to spend time and gas taxiing, so from south Lake Union the most convenient option is for pilots to take off to the north and land to the south. This pattern works only in calm-to-light winds; when it picks up, pilots must take off and land into the wind. On Lake Union, the wind is funneled by the hills along a north-south orientation. When airborne, seaplanes fly underneath the air traffic using Boeing Field and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. This airspace is shared with helicopters and other small aircraft and is not administered by an air-traffic controller.

Pilots must keep a sharp eye out for other aircraft, and they

communicate on a common radio frequency—especially because the Ship Canal is an aerial pathway used by small aircraft crossing the city.

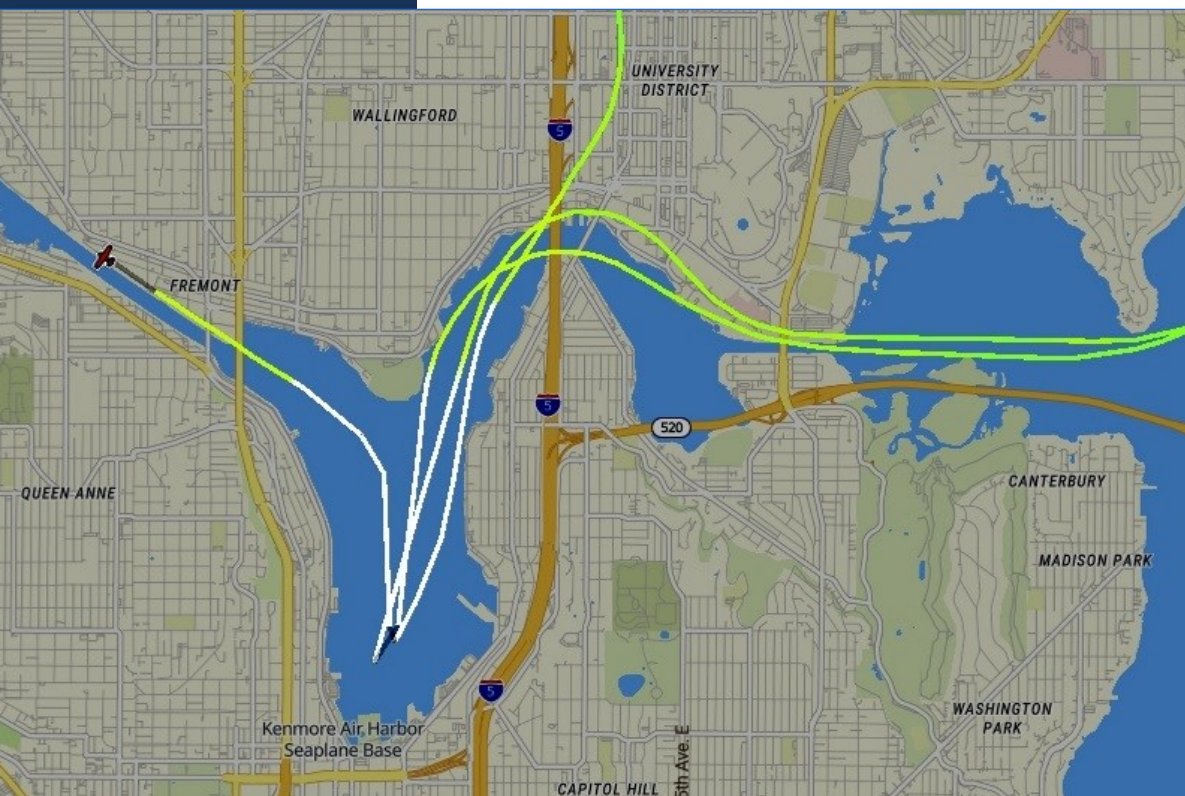
Operations

Seaplanes operate in three distinct phases: landing, taking off, and taxiing. When landing, pilots have excellent visibility and can easily choose an open stretch of water. They are quiet, since engines are throttled back, and boaters can be surprised by them whooshing overhead. After touching down, the seaplanes slow down rapidly due to pontoon drag, so not much room is needed.

Takeoffs are a little trickier because a longer run is needed to get airborne, taking about 20 to 30 seconds. Pilots must be vigilant, since forward visibility is a bit restricted until the rear ends of the pontoons lift out of the water. Seaplanes have water rudders and are highly maneuverable—they don't need to follow a



Typical seaplane flight pattern on Lake Union, with takeoffs to north and landings to south. Yellow lines show flight path when airborne, white lines at low altitude or when taxiing.



straight path when taking off. Their engines are revved up, and the sound bounces off the hills and buildings: they're easy to hear but often difficult to spot against the background clutter.

Seaplane pilots are aware of rowers and our usual counterclockwise course around the lake. Encounters most often occur when rowers are turning around the red buoy in the southwest corner of the lake and seaplanes are taxiing into dock. Regulations dictate that seaplanes must

give way to unpowered boats, but common sense must prevail. Rowers should operate in a predictable manner and give seaplanes plenty

of space. Pilots have good visibility, except directly ahead and below, so boaters should not attempt to cut close in front of a seaplane. In a stronger south wind, rowers could encounter a seaplane starting its take-off run in the high-traffic area just to the east of Gasworks Park.

Noise and safety

Over the years, issues between seaplane operators and other users of the lake periodically resurface. Seaplane operators are concerned about potentially having to curtail flights due to increasing boat traffic on the lake, while houseboat owners and other nearby residents are upset about noise. In 2019, one of the seaplane operators alarmed the boating

community by proposing to the City of Seattle that a seaplane-only zone be created on the lake, causing furious lobbying campaigns among the various parties, but no major changes were implemented.

Local commercial seaplane operations have an excellent safety record. On the other hand, private seaplane pilots have recently had two accidents on Lake Washington. In both cases, the aircraft were amphibians (pontoons for water and retractable wheels for pavement); apparently, the pilots did not retract the wheels for water landing, causing the planes to flip.

Understanding the nature and operations of local seaplanes can help every rower feel safer on the water. After all, we are all part of the same community.

—Tom Kreyche

Tom has previously written about his experiences competing in the SEVENTY/48, a race from Tacoma to Port Townsend, and about rowing while dealing with cardio issues.

Pass the Word Has an LWRC member done something worth recognizing, on or off the water? lwrnewsletter@comcast.net

MEET THE BOARD

Don Kuehn: A Driving Force

When **Don Kuehn** decided to take up rowing more than 20 years ago, he thought it would be a good way to meet women. Instead, at LWRC, Don found what he calls a “family.”

“I have three families, really,” Don says. His ex-wife, their children, and their grandchildren remain close. “I work at Lake & Company Real Estate. After 38 years, my co-workers are family, too.” And his third family? LWRC rowers.

If you’ve ever raced at Masters Regionals, Head of the Gorge, or other “away” regattas (remember regattas??), you’ve seen Don; he’s the person at the wheel when the LWRC trailer rolls into the parking lot. In the days before masks, you’d recognize him by the perpetual smile on his face.

Don arrived at LWRC as a complete novice when he and his daughter enrolled in a Learn to Row class. He jokes that, when she found out that rowing meant getting up early in the morning, she quit. Don kept at the sport, joining the Mixed Sweep Team (MST), then coached by **John Tytus** and **Padraic McGovern**.

“John had charisma,” Don recalls of the young coach, son of **Bill Tytus**. At the time, the



Dennis Barry, Graham Hill, Don Kuehn, and Liam Lavery row in Head of the Lake, November 2016.

MST was overwhelmingly female. Although Don didn’t appear to meet his true love on the team, the relative dearth of men in the group meant that he, a newbie male sweep rower, had the opportunity to make it into racing boats. Don had the added advantage of age; now 76, he could “age up” any entry.

Even as a relatively new club member, Don got involved in LWRC administration, first as club vice president in the early aughts, then serving three terms as president. This year finds him back on the board as VP. He’s particularly interested in negotiating, a skill he’s honed over more than 40 years in the real-estate business. He first used his negotiating chops hammering out a lease agreement for the club’s wherry dock with Fremont landowner Suzie Burke.

Don’s stellar leadership skills predate LWRC. He served as a Marine Corps platoon heavy

tank commander in the Viet Nam War era. In fact, he credits that particular job for saving his life—early on, military leaders realized heavy tanks fared poorly in the Southeast Asian jungles, so Don’s platoon didn’t see combat in Viet Nam.

Don shared his military experience with the late **Frank Cunningham**, a fellow Marine Corps veteran. Don was one of a group of volunteers who helped Frank build two large dories, one of Frank’s last big projects at the boathouse. Don has since turned his woodworking skills to more personal endeavors: more than a decade ago, in what passes for his spare time, he built a 3,000-square-foot “cabin” east of the Cascades.

These days, at an age when many people are happy to slow down, Don is busier than ever. He’s still working at Lake & Company as the managing broker. He’s got four grandchildren,



Editor's Note

Experienced pilot **Tom Kreyche** familiarizes us with the floatplane activity on Lake Union, Seattle's own "working lake." **Lynne Robins** profiles LWRC

trainer **Rob Foreman**, who knows how to keep us in shape for good rowing and good competition. **John Alberti**, fresh off the Big Climb, describes his experience in this year of virtual living. **Jeanne Neal** of Martha's Moms describes what rowing means to her.

We continue to explore the decades-long links between LWRC and Husky rowing. If you've never heard of *Old Nero*, check out former UW rowers' reminiscences—not all of them flattering!

—*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*

and some days, Don rushes out after practice to assume babysitting duties for one of them.

Despite his very busy life, Don has been a steady presence at LWRC. Over the past year, as the pandemic has limited opportunities for sweep rowing, he has worked diligently to improve his sculling technique. "I am a doer," he says simply. But he says he was gratified when coaches Bill Tytus, **John Robinson**, and **Dave Rutherford** noticed his improvements in the single.

Although he's eager to show off those skills in the next regatta, Don *really* dreams of the time when he can represent LWRC again in one of

the big boats at Masters Regionals. "A mixed eight, a quad," he says, although he doesn't rule out racing in a double. "I don't think I'm cut out to race in a single," he laughs.

No doubt about it: whenever and wherever that future regatta is held, Don Kuehn will be there, on the water—and behind the steering wheel, piloting a trailer full of LWRC racing shells.

—*Marcie Sillman*



From the Board

Spring 2021 Focus Areas

- ▶ Refining the membership handbook to incorporate safety guidelines for all boat sizes, open-water rowing, and boat transportation
- ▶ Offering opportunities for members to enhance their skills when it comes to safety and steering on the waterways, especially in pairs and quads
- ▶ Planning for coached programs to transition into coaching bigger boats and race preparation

As always, the Board welcomes all members to our monthly meetings. Please contact Allison Thomas, Secretary, with any questions (amthomas2448@gmail.com).

Check out our programs!

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

Calling All Artists

Please share your creations with us! lwrnewsletter@comcast.net

MARTHA'S MOMS

Why would anyone want to row?

To an outsider, rowing looks like a lot of work. (Digging a ditch looks like just about as much fun). And who wants to get up so early? That's what I thought before I had an opportunity to try it for myself. My husband, **Guy Lawrence**, was a rower at LWRC and did some intermittent coaching for Martha's Moms. I'd heard a lot about it and had even read *The Boys in the Boat*, but I wasn't really interested.

One season, Martha's Moms put together a novice sweep rowing class and asked Guy to coach. The class consisted of four novice rowers and two experienced rowers. The night before the first class, one of the novice rowers unexpectedly dropped out. The Moms were in a bind, needing an even number, so I agreed to fill in—just this one time. Why not?

Well, that was the start of an unexpected and fantastic journey. I loved it! I ended up joining the Moms and LWRC. I was super-intimidated by the athletic, experienced women. However, the Moms were very encouraging, and our coach was very patient. I was up to speed in no time. Next thing I knew, I was racing in Opening Day—such a fun experience with the crowds in the Montlake Cut! Before race day, we got together and painted “Moms Cut Loose” in our designated space on the wall in the Cut. I have never been around

such a smart, athletic, competitive, and yet kind group of women. I am so grateful to be a part of it.

Getting up at 4:30 in the morning was tough at first, but I quickly appreciated how beautiful it was out on the water at first light. Then being off the water by 7:00 a.m.—what a perfect way to start the day! No matter what else happens during that day, you always feel good because you started it on the water.

In the fall of 2019, we had the opportunity to send an eight to the Head of the Charles Regatta. I was lucky enough to make the boat. It was so much fun, and the competition was fierce. Little did I know that the following year (2020), the Head of the Charles would not take place for the first time since 1965, due to the pandemic. This may turn out to be a once-in-a-lifetime chance to row in the Head of the Charles for me. I feel so lucky and so honored to have participated in that regatta. It was my good fortune that that novice-class seat opened up four years ago. I now know that [\(continued on page 8\)](#)



Top: Head of the Charles, 2019

Below: Martha's Moms bask in the glory of rowing in the Head of the Charles. Left to right: Page Crutcher, Pati Casebolt, Jeanne Neal, Gunilla Luthra, Jan Chow, Lynne Robins, Carolyn Fletcher, Kathleen Crowe, coach and coxswain Rachel Le Mieux. (Claire Boynton photos)

MEMBER PROFILE

Rob Foreman: Right Coach, Right Place



During the pandemic winter, and now into spring, my Monday-morning routine has included Zooming into an exercise class led by **Rob Foreman** and attended by at least a dozen “regulars.” Attending Rob’s class is an affirming weekly ritual, with the side benefits of increasing strength and balance and preventing injury. It’s “an easy entry to the week,” explains **Tory Laughlin**. “He gets us rolling without any fuss or bother, just calm words and good humor ... and at the end of an hour, we’re moving into the day feeling a bit looser, considerably sweatier, and a lot more powerful.” Rob is distinctively positive. “I’ve always

found him to be so respectful,” shares **Carolyn Fletcher**. He’s “always calm and cool-headed and has an easy humor about him.” Adds **Barbara Smith**: “He makes working out fun.” Group regulars can reel off “Rob-isms,” including phrases such as: “Do what feels

comfortable,” “Do what feels good,” “Nothing too crazy,” and “No worries.” Rob’s good-natured response to hesitancy about tackling a particular exercise? “I can sense your enthusiasm.”

At his core, Rob really likes people, likes working with people, and counts himself lucky to be doing what he is doing. One day, Rob told me, he considered the life of his rowing coach and mentor Chad, a personal trainer with a decidedly “chill” California approach. Rob thought to himself: “That looks like fun ... I should do that.” Rob became a full-time trainer in 2008, earning a BS in kinesiology at the University of Maryland along the way.

Rob’s first-hand experience with a catastrophic back injury that threatened his identity as an athlete was pivotal in his professional development. “Injuries and failures are important because they teach you that your actions have consequences.” In Rob’s case, he learned that *how* he was training wasn’t smart or sustainable—and that his body could “break, and break in a big way.” The experience shaped his approach to coaching and shows up in admonishments such as “Don’t lift too heavy,” “Stay hydrated,” and “Remember to sleep.” As **Page Crutcher** observes, “Rob is very in tune with how to avoid injuries.”

Rob relishes coaching for the myriad opportunities at hand to help people achieve their goals, stay injury-free, and do things long-term. One of the most satisfying of his coaching accomplishments occurred early in his career, as a trainer at a D.C. athletic club. He successfully guided a client to make a major lifestyle change that stuck, creating a lasting bond between them.

After moving from the East Coast to Seattle, Rob was able to reconnect

with the rowing community through a serendipitous encounter with **KC Dietz**. Entitled to a free session with a trainer at Ballard's Olympic Athletic Center, KC was paired with Rob. She was "instantly impressed" with both his ability to establish rapport and the exercise session he conducted. Fortunately for Rob, LWRC, and the Seattle rowing community, she invited him to teach classes for our club's expanding gym program. Rob is excited to be back in a rowing community, especially one as vibrant as Seattle's. He enjoys coaching rowers because they are so passionate about their sport and committed to doing strength training to improve. He jokes that he has to remind rowers more frequently to moderate their training rather than to amp it up. In the future, he would like to extend his coaching reach and help young rowers establish healthy exercise habits to last a lifetime.

As an athlete, Rob savors participating in **Bill Tytus's** Saturday-morning sculling classes. He looks forward to learning more about masters rowing in the Pacific Northwest and participating in regattas. With few restrictions on his life right now, Rob avidly pursues the outdoor adventures available to him in the Cascades and the Olympics. He loves climbing, mountaineering, and back-country skiing and dreams of numerous "risky adventures" to notch while he can.

Our most memorable teachers and coaches are so affecting because their teaching embodies who they are at their core. Rob genuinely loves working with people to achieve their goals and possesses deep knowledge and appreciation of the body's capacity. Try a class with Rob—you might just find yourself coming back for more!

—Lynne Robins

Harbor Patrol
206-684-4072

Also on the bulletin board in the
boathouse

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

Washington Division of
Emergency Management

(Moms, continued from page 9)

rowing will be a lifelong activity for me!

If you have the chance to join LWRC and/or the Moms, I highly recommend it!

—Jeanne Neal

Jeanne continues: Membership in Martha's Moms is open to LWRC members. Started in 1984, it is the second-oldest women's crew team in the United States. For more info, contact Pati Casebolt, captain, at captaincasebolt@mail.com.

"Crushing it since 1981—old enough to know better, young enough to do it anyway!"



REGATTA UPDATE

Last week, USRA announced that **Northwest Masters Regionals** would not be held this year. It was scheduled for June 18–19–20 at Vancouver Lake. We look forward to returning to its high level of competition in 2022.

SEVENTY/48 AND MORE THIS WEEKEND

You can live-track this race at <https://seventy48.com/>. Racing starts in Tacoma's Foss Waterway at 7 p.m. June 4. Look for the first arrivals at the finish in Port Townsend early the next morning!

The traditional follow-up to this race, the R2AK (from Port Townsend to Ketchikan), has been canceled due to COVID restrictions in Canada. In its place, the Northwest Maritime Center has designed the WA360, "360 miles traveling through Washington and Puget Sound with nearly every water puzzle there is: currents, crushing seas, night navigation, flat calms, localized weather, and the siren song of a town at every horizon promising warmth and rest if you just quit." Racing starts June 7 at 6 a.m. in Port Townsend, and you can track it here: <https://r2ak.com/wa360/>.

SPARTACUS REVISITED

The Quest for Old Nero

Training methods vary from coach to coach and from program to program. A century ago, especially on the American West Coast, novice rowers in college pro-

grams arrived on campus with little or no experience in rowing shells. They were recruited based solely on their physical attributes and apparent strength: loggers and farm boys were especially coveted. This practice continued for decades. Often coaches would greet new arrivals on campus by inviting them to

turn out for crew *if* they were taller than a nearby measuring bar. Former LWRC member **Geza Berger** (UW '59) describes his introduction to collegiate rowing: *My best friend from high school and I were walking around the UW campus in the fall of 1955 when we saw a sign that said: "If you are taller than this bar, we want*

to talk to you." We were both taller, so we ended up signing up for UW crew.

Berger ended up in the varsity eight and won gold in the coxed four at the 1963 Pan Am Games in São Paulo, Brazil. His crew narrowly missed qualifying for the 1960 Olympics in Rome.

Crews on the East Coast typically trained indoors in winter, given that lakes and rivers were often frozen over. To hone their bladework, novice crews were relegated to indoor rowing tanks accommodating eight rowers—four on starboard, four on port. Coaches stood by, next to the tanks, offering their critiques. Only after the novices had demonstrated blade proficiency were they deemed worthy of graduating to rowing in an actual shell, weather permitting.

Thanks to a temperate climate, the University of Washington enjoyed year-round access to local waters: Lake Washington, Lake Union, the Ship Canal, and even Puget Sound on rare occasions. Even so, the challenge of training newbies to handle an oar competently before assigning them to racing shells remained. Instead of land-based tanks, coaches created on-the-water opportunities to roughly simulate being in a shell. There are reports that coach **Hiram Conibear** used a waterborne "rowing barge" as early as 1908 to help new and inexperienced recruits adapt to the finer points of mastering an oar—and the tradition of *Old Nero* and its successors was born. With a

Nero in the channel,
Union Bay
(Al Mackenzie photo)

“Imagine a galley-like, slave-driven thing that transported ancient people.”

(Guy Harper photo)



length of forty-four feet and a width of six feet (to accommodate eight rowers on starboard and another eight on port, with a walkway in between), the most recent incarnation was truly a behemoth. *Nero* was unwieldy, to say the least. But it didn't need to be fast or nimble; after all, its purpose was to perfect blade work.

In contrast to the indoor tanks, coaches could not stand directly next to a floating barge to assess their rowers. (They could, and did, coach from nearby launches, however.) To allow for more “up front and personal” coaching, a narrow platform ran between the two rows of oarsmen. Thus a coach (sometimes more than one) could walk up and down this aisle and stand next to anyone needing input. The size and weight of *Nero* provided enough stability to allow this without danger of capsizing due to the higher center of gravity. It also limited *Nero*'s ability to move well.

Jay Hall vividly describes the scene:

“Imagine a long, low-to-the-water, wooden barge with oarlocks. Imagine a galley-like, slave-driven thing that transported ancient people. The coach walked down the center, coaching the aspiring young freshman oarsmen. The result had little to do with anything. The coaching was more about how to handle an oar. Catching a



Freshman crew practice (UW Libraries, Special Collections)

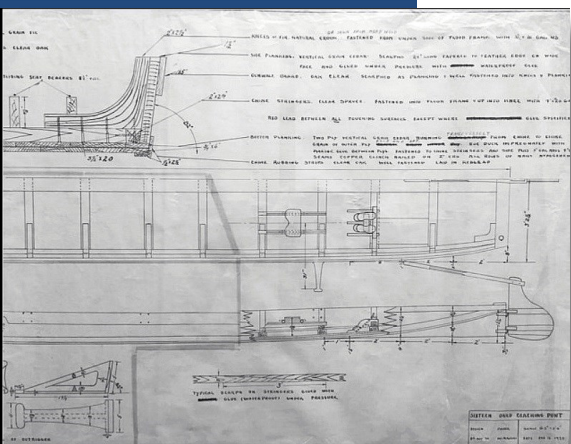
crab was deadly. We never rowed in a tank, like the eastern crews did. And never indoors—including never an erg. There weren't any.”

Needless to say, *Old Nero* did not venture far from shore. Most of the time, the barge did its work in Union Bay, just around the corner from the original A.S.U.W. Shell House (later known as the Canoe House but recently restored to its original name) at the eastern end of the Montlake Cut. In later years, this area was also accessible from the new Conibear Shell House. During the fall racing season, *Nero* was typically moored at the dock, where the novices and the coach would board before heading out a few hundred feet for blade work in Union Bay. During the rest of the season, it was parked behind the lower sleeping quarters, out of the way but still near the shell house.

Fred Raney ('61) recalls that “Docking was as in an eight. Most practices were held not far from shore, in Union Bay.” After the practice session, the barge would row up to the dock and the rowers would disembark. Then the next crew would repeat the process, he reports. Fred not only learned to row in *Nero* but also later coached from it.

Chuck Turbak ('61) remembers arriving at the UW as a freshman from Spokane, with no idea what crew was. He refers to his *Nero* experience as “my Ellis Island moment”—just as newly arrived immigrants had been casually assigned

“Out in the bay, the launch was doing donuts around us, so we started throwing oars at it.”



Nero's design is generally attributed to George Pocock (Courtesy Al Mackenzie)

new names as they passed through that facility more than a century ago, he was given a new identity. “When I first stepped into *Nero*, the coach was directing traffic and telling us where to sit—port or starboard. With that, I became a starboard rower.”

Old Nero displayed some design oddities. The riggers were much shorter than normal riggers and the inboard proportionately much longer, to accommodate the extra width of the vessel. In a normal eight, the oar handle projects slightly past the opposite gunwale; however, this is not feasible in such a wide barge, due to the presence of the paired rowers and the coaching aisle. There is more space between the rower and his gunwale—hence the greater inboard. Additionally, the oars (“pencil” blades, somewhat narrower than “tulip” blades) were modified, as **John Magnuson** (’62, LWRC ’63) describes:

“One memory of Nero was the oars. The blades were shaved—probably an inch, perhaps less, off each side. I imagine that was because with a bunch of inexperienced frosh yanking on the handle, breaking one would be considered a feat of enormous strength! Hah! A good memory.”

Many UW rowers had a love/hate relationship with *Old Nero*. Turbak describes engaging in high jinks one evening:

“That spring, we busted into the launch house and rigged the launch to start it up. We also picked the lock for Nero, and a bunch of us jumped in with the shaved oars. Out in the bay, the launch was doing donuts around us, so we started throwing oars at it. The launch ran over an oar and bent the prop. We sheepishly returned everything back



Frosh prepare to launch, 1971

to shore.

“The next day, the coach was all over my ass and actually moved me down to the last boat—because I had allowed it to happen. But another coach thought the prank was a sign of good things to happen in the coming season. He convinced our coach that we had shown spirit. The next day, I got moved back to the second boat.”

Information about the most recent *Old Nero*’s fate is scarce. Former LWRC member **Al Mackenzie** (UW ’68) has spent countless hours researching the barge’s history, especially its current whereabouts. *Nero* reportedly was used as recently as 1995 at the UW Waterfront Activities Center for teaching novices the finer points of the rowing stroke. In 1996, it was replaced by a “modern” Stillwater fiberglass barge that is now in use at the Renton Rowing Center.

Old Nero was later towed away as scrap in order to make room for the Husky far docks. The consensus is that it sank or was scuttled sometime in the late 1990s. Mackenzie has embarked on a quest to discover the whereabouts of *Old Nero* and, if feasible, raise her to the surface for possible restoration. Recently, Mackenzie and former LWRC member **Art Wright** conducted a fruitless search of Union Bay, using sonar. Should any more information regarding *Nero*’s cur-



rent resting place become available, another search will be undertaken. Ideally, the refurbished barge would find a final home in or near the recently renovated A.S.U.W. Shell House on the Montlake Cut.

Readers may wonder about the origin of the barge's name: Why "Nero"? Why not "Husky" or some other moniker more closely identified with the Northwest? Jay Hall's description above answers this question: the rowers viewed themselves as modern galley slaves, with the overseer walking up and down between the rows of the suffering while virtually



cracking the whip. From this image, it's just a short step to watching Nero fiddle, though nothing is burning except calories.

Several UW veterans and others contributed their recollections, fond and otherwise, to this article. We thank Geza Berger, Tom Buckingham, Jay Hall, Guy Harper, Kirk Knapp, Al Mackenzie, John Magnuson, Fred Raney, Chuck Turbak, Art Wright, and others for sharing their past with us.

Sunday outing in Union Bay
(Courtesy Tom Buckingham)



The search for *Old Nero* continues. If you have any information that might help locate her remains, please contact Al Mackenzie at prc@seanet.com or *Making Waves* at lwrnewsletter@comcast.net.

Barging In

- ▶ See *Old Nero* in action in 1929 in this newsreel clip: <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/video/washington-u-navy-takes-row-seattle-crew-coach-ulbrickson-news-footage/865805268?adppopup=true>
- ▶ Training barges for novice rowers have been around for nearly a century. Read more at: <https://heartheboatsing.com/2020/04/15/the-other-parts-of-rowing-topor-i-barging-into-training/> This site has excellent photos.
- ▶ For a glimpse of standout UW Husky crews, see pages 39 to 42 in the June 20, 1949, issue of *Life* magazine: https://books.google.com/books?id=cU4EAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA40&lpg=PA40&dq=old+nero+rowing+barge+univ.+was+hington&source=bl&ots=FUJt-UXCf8&sig=ACfU3U3KjZ-GWhj3q23H_Vt1h6BP-Gw5WQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiM-ZmZleXvAhXXv54KHUiYBi4ChDoAT-AHegQIBxAD#v=onepage&q=old%20nero%20rowing%20barge%20univ.%20washington&f=false

—Courtesy of Al Mackenzie

How Nero Got Boat- napped:

Kirk “Lucky”
Knapp recalls
his extra-
curricular
adventure

*Right: Sculling back to
the dock, using sweep
oars*

Shenanigans

Old Nero was out of the water, being worked on during summer break in 1975. I remember her being right side up and work being done on the inside. Then she was eventually flipped over, upside down.

We had cut out any rot and scarfed in new lumber; then came various layers of preservatives (stuff you can't buy today) followed by a coating of hot tar. Summer was coming to a close, and *Old Nero* was ready to be relaunched to school yet another “Gruntie” class. **Dik (Dick Erickson**, head coach) called the boys from Physical Plant, and they showed up the next afternoon with a “crane.” They set up their slings, lifted her gently, and set her in the water—upside down. (Worried about how tough the old girl was, we all thought it would be best to put her in upside down, then roll her over in the water with the crane so that the water would supply some level of support.) By then, it was quitting time, so they tied her to the dock upside down and promised to return in the morning.

After they left, I said to Dik: “We don’t need those guys. All we gotta do is drag her out into our little lagoon and roll her over.” He replied: “Now, now, Lucky, you just leave it be—they’ll be here in the morning.” He went home, and I retreated to my “apartment” carved out of a corner of the

condemned launch house. A couple of beers later, I fired up the *TNT Anacortes*, our diesel-powered Boston Whaler, cut *Old Nero* loose from the dock, and dragged her out into the middle of our little bay. I tied an anchor to both the bow and stern riggers on the near side. I threw a line over the hull and tied it to a center rigger on the far side. I eased the *TNT* into



gear and brought up the slack, then gave her hell. *Old Nero* completely disappeared; bubbles and all manner of shit churned to the surface. I backed off the throttle, and up she popped—right side up, right as rain. I towed her back to the dock, pumped her dry, and then dragged her down the channel by the old “dime” parking lot (it’s probably the 20-buck lot now).

The next morning, the crane crew showed up. Finding *Old Nero* missing, they headed for Dik’s

office to ask where she was. At first, he thought they were just joking; then he looked and saw it was really not there. In a bit of a panic, he set them up with coffee and donuts from the kitchen. By now, I was no longer pretending to be asleep in my “apartment”—I was watching from my window as Dik walked onto the dock and looked out at the bay. I could hear him muttering as he headed back into shell storage to grab an oar. He walked back onto the dock and began to tamp the bottom of the lake with the oar handle. Finally, he



Above: In 1949, UW women train in Old Nero (Al Mackenzie photo)

turned toward my apartment and yelled, “LUCKY!!!!” Eventually, I came stumbling out, still acting like I’d just woken up. And of course, I acted like I had no idea where *Old Nero* could be. Dik sent me and **George Teasdale** out to look for *Nero* while he went up to make sure the crane crew would stick around.

I let George in on the whole caper and had him drive me around for a bit. Then he took me down the channel, where we found *Nero*. George dropped me off and continued on the pretend search mission. Meanwhile, I had left a pair of sweeps in her the day before, so I ran out the oars and sculled her back to the docks. Yes, she is just an old barge, but I would like to find her and see that she gets the respect she deserves!

—Kirk “Lucky” Knapp ('77)



Above: Nero often lay beneath the water’s surface at the dock, due to accumulation of rainwater. (Courtesy Guy Harper)



Below: The latest incarnation of Old Nero now rows out of Renton Rowing Club and was crafted using composite materials. (Courtesy Al Mackenzie)



Below: Trapped in the weeds on a Sunday outing in Union Bay (Courtesy Tom Buckingham)

The Big Climb, Revised

LWRC ADAPTS TO SUPPORT LEUKEMIA AND LYMPHOMA SOCIETY

The Seattle Big Climb is a fundraiser for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Before COVID, volunteers would encourage friends and family to sponsor them in a race up the fire escapes in Seattle's Columbia Tower. The funds raised were used to support research into cures for blood cancer and for education and patient support. In 2020 and again in 2021, sending 6,000 people into two fire escapes seemed too much like a superspreader event, so we were charged with finding our own socially distanced venues for climbing an equivalent to the 1311 steps to the top of the Columbia Tower.

Every year since 2007, Lake Washington Rowing Club has fielded a Big Climb team. This year we were represented by three stout-hearted members of LWRC Racers: **Maria McCoy, Michael Cheung,**

and me, **John Alberti.**

I guess I started this serial insanity. I was (and still am) grateful for the past research that saved my life in 2005 and 2006, and I've been passionate to pass the favor on. Maria worked as a nurse at Seattle Cancer Care Alliance for several years and saw first-hand the effects of blood cancers, and she joined the fight. Michael mostly just blames me for dragging him into this, but he has become a stalwart warrior and a prodigious fundraiser.

Michael ran nine sets of the 172 steps at Richmond Beach.

Here is Maria's story, in her own words:

My Big Climb took place on the South Cooper Street Stairs, where 145 steps climb up from Rainier Avenue South and offer gorgeous views of Lake Washington and Mount Rainier the whole time. I am heading up Mount Rainier in a

few weeks, so I carried 25 pounds of weight in my pack that day for my ten trips up (and down) the stairs. My total time was one hour and six minutes, the elevation gain was 697 feet, and the distance 1.67 miles. I took my time, enjoying the views and fresh air; I was truly thankful for everyone who lived through another year.

—*Maria McCoy, Harborview ER nurse and former LWRC rower*
John continues:

My venue was the stairs up the northeast side of Mount Tabor, a small, extinct volcano in Portland. There are 405 steps from the park entrance to the top.

I completed my Big Climb 2021 on May 15 — four sets up the northeast side, with an elevation gain of 915 feet—and not looking tired enough, people tell me.

Since starting this in 2007, we have contributed significantly to research leading to improvements

in blood cancer treatment. This includes exciting developments in cell therapy where the patient's T-cells are altered so as to attach to, and destroy, cancer cells. This therapy has saved thousands of lives.

We are grateful to the good friends and teammates who have encouraged, sponsored, and inspired us since 2007. Thank you!

—*John Alberti*



Finding Nero, continued

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST 200 YEARS

An article in the June 19, 1937, *Saturday Evening Post* describes how UW coach Hiram Conibear was inspired in 1907 to aim for competing against the elite crews of the East Coast. A Husky supporter had congratulated Conibear on his victorious crews, saying: "Have to send you to Poughkeepsie if you keep this up!"

Poughkeepsie! A new light swept into Conibear's eyes. How he would love to enter a crew back there, meet and exchange ideas with such great rowing authorities as Courtney, Ten Eyck, Vail, and others. Why shouldn't Washington be represented on the Hudson?

Connie began building for that distant day. [The original] *Nero* was inaugurated. It was a flat-bottomed scow with straight sides, tracks, and outriggers. Down the center was a catwalk on which Connie could pass from one man to another, correcting his rowing form. It was a training ship for beginners and proved so successful that a *Nero* still exists in the rowing family.

A newer version of *Nero* was built much later, after the *Pococks* arrived in Seattle.

—Courtesy of Al Mackenzie

THE BACK PAGE

WRC member and coach **Theresa Batty**, an accomplished glass artist, finds inspiration in fluid environments, both on and off the water. She has taught at the Pilchuck Glass School, where she worked as a hot shop coordinator. Theresa received a one-year scholarship to the Swedish Academy of Art and Design, where she studied with **Bertil Vallien**, noted designer for Kosta Boda.



Left: Pilchuck pour

Below: Fused glass, photosensitized to accept image. Look carefully!

Lower left: Rowing in Sweden

Lower right: Twilight Bathers, Key West. Purchased recently by the City of Seattle for their Portable Works Collection. It will travel within the network of Seattle City Light offices and buildings.

