

True Grit: Meet Wispy Runde

For many, winter is a time to slow down and enjoy the cold, dark mornings with a warm coffee mug in hand. Wispy Runde's preference is to get up, get out, and head to the boathouse to take out a boat. For her, there's nothing fun about being in a pool or on an erg during the off-season. When rowing, you're out on the water and it's beautiful—the sport is meditative, and you have a community that shares your passion and focus.

On the water, Wispy is always pushing and trying to figure out, "What can I do to be faster?" The results of her hard work and love of competition are notable: a gold medal at the 2021 Head of the Charles Regatta in the Directors Challenge Mixed Double (with **Evan Jacobs**); two golds plus fastest overall times in the F single and F double at the 2019 World Rowing Masters Regatta at Lake Velence, Hungary; and two golds in back-to-back races in the F pair after hot-seating into the F single at the 2019 Northwest Regionals Masters Championships at Vancouver Lake. And there are many more ...

I was asked to investigate how Wispy, who is a member of a team historically associated with sweep rowing, became such a successful single racer. Her story revealed much



Celebrating victory at the 2019 FISA World Masters Regatta, where Wispy won the 60+ women's single race with the fastest time of all winners.

about the benefits of possessing a growth mindset and a healthy dose of grit.

Wispy began rowing at Lakeside High School and was coached by **Frank Cunningham** in a program she described as "super-rich" for the depth of experience they got. The team rowed and raced in every type of boat including singles, pairs, doubles, quads, fours, and eights. She liked "doing everything," noting that it was better for our bodies and provided that much more opportunity for having fun. After graduating from Lakeside in 1977, she very briefly rowed in college, then stepped away from the sport for

Wispy and Tori Laughlin-Taylor at US Nationals in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 2019. They took second place in the 60+ women's straight pair and third in the 60+ double and 65+ quad. Wispy was second in the 60+ single. She and Barbara Smith won the 70+ double race.

three decades.

In 2011, **Heidi Barrett**, a Martha's Mom with strong ties to Lakeside, telephoned Wispy to see whether the timing was right to consider rowing with the team. With her children grown and her business humming along, Wispy said she was ready. As she now explains, she was destined to row with the Moms because she'd had longstanding ties to **Gretchen Hull**, a founding member of the team as well as a cherished family friend. Additionally, her mother regularly played tennis with several Moms (including **Chrissie Marshall**), and Wispy herself belonged to the Lakeside community, where **Martha Beattie** began coaching the team that ultimately adopted her name.

Once a Mom, Wispy enjoyed both the team culture and its mission to serve masters women. She excitedly recalled "winning everything" during the 2012 season (her first racing season)—San Diego Crew Classic, Opening Day, Head of the Charles, and Head of the Lake. For her, that was "the most fun" because it was just a "complete surprise." However, she became increasingly frustrated when the

coach boated "sevens" or sent rowers home if the numbers didn't quite work out for sweep boatings. She missed Frank Cunningham's more flexible approach to training by racing all manner of sculling and sweep boats during Lakeside practices. She also really wanted to get back into a single. Wispy's solution was to enlist the help of the Moms' assistant coach, **George Andreadis**, to start up a small-boats program.

Wispy's first outings in a single were with **Norma Andreadis** and **Jannie Curtin**, who regularly rowed singles on "off days" from practice. She described following them around in the dark "having a semi-heart attack" because she was so scared. Nonetheless, when noted masters coach **Marlene Royle** visited Seattle to conduct a sculling clinic, she presciently observed that Wispy (still new to the single) was going to be "a very dangerous woman in a single."

In 2014 Wispy entered her first single race with the goal of "just staying upright." Despite feeling "total panic" before racing, she ended up "reasonably pleased" with the results—and determined to find a coach who could help her get faster. With some persistence, she engaged **Guy Lawrence** as a coach, and they met regularly for the next five years. In her understated way, Wispy shared, "Guy got me to the podium." For his part, Guy shared that Wispy was (and is) the ultimate coachable athlete. "She listens, questions, and applies what she learns. She is always trying to improve and go faster. But what really distinguishes Wispy from the many people who train hard, are in great shape, and compete is her love of competition. Wispy is a racer

What really distinguishes Wispy from the many people who train hard ... is her love of competition.

—Guy Lawrence



through and through. When she lines up, especially in her single, there is a savage ‘I will gut you like a fish’ mentality that she channels and applies to racing.” **Tory Laughlin-Taylor**, Wispy’s long-time racing partner, added that Wispy’s successful climb through the ranks of masters women scullers is a product of her remarkable focus, intensity, and preparation. She always has a plan: an annual racing calendar, a disciplined training plan for the season, and an expectation for the hours and minutes leading up to a race. “Even before we hit the water, there is an incredible momentum to rowing with Wispy. She has a checklist for everything and an intention for each race that is very grounding. I try to merge with her clarity of vision for the race, and it feels like we fly.”

Wispy’s perspectives on competition are refreshingly healthy and underline Guy’s observations about what sets her apart from other racers. Above all else, she considers competition “fun” as well as the yardstick by which she can measure her progress. She relishes “putting herself out there” and appreciates the “black/white objective nature of racing: either you do or don’t win.” Somewhat surprisingly, she also prefers uncertainty to certainty when competing, explaining that “if you already know what the conclusion is going to be, it’s not that much fun. I wouldn’t want to race a bunch of people I knew I could already beat. I want to race people where I don’t have any idea, or I’m terrified.”

A self-described “courageous, risk-taker,” Wispy enjoys aiming for goals that are not necessarily sure things—but are within the realm of possibility. To her way of thinking, there is nothing wrong with setting unrealistically high expectations, because “it’s okay if things don’t work out.” This resilience and her willingness to “fail forward” through reflection, learning, and working harder set the stage for Wispy’s many rowing accomplishments now and into the future.

So what’s next? Wispy told me she would love to win gold at HOCR in a single. If history is a predictor, a podium finish is in her future. We will be watching.

—*Lynne Robins*



Europe from the Water

*In our September issue, **Jon Turvey** described rowing on the Nile River. Here, he guides us to the Netherlands and Italy for further adventures.*

Travel has been a big part of my life, both professionally and by personal choice. I started rowing about six years ago; more recently, I've taken the opportunity to row in some different places around the world. Finding a rowing club and making the connections are surprisingly easy in the day of the Internet and Facebook.

Going Dutch

My first such experience was in the Netherlands, where I traveled regularly to Almere for work. Coincidentally, Almere is where the Dutch National Rowing Team trains. Not being suicidal, I did *not* try to row with the Dutch team, but I did connect with the **Roeivereniging Pampus** rowing club and a gentleman named Kees. My success in this connection would set the pattern: explain who you are, describe your skill level and where you row. *Hint:* Seattle in general, and LWRC in particular, have some cachet in the rowing world; don't fail to mention it, and be sure to include a link to our club website—it establishes instant credibility.

I finished my workday and rode the hotel bicycle to the rowing club, which is on a narrow spur off the main canal. After introductions to Kees and others, someone found a



pair of shoes for me. (Their Filippi eight has clip-in shoes, like on a bicycle—something I'd never seen before.)

After rowing under one of those cute little bridges found all over the Netherlands, we joined the main canal, which is about as wide as the Montlake Cut—but with *no* boat wake. Ever. If you had a map, you could probably row to any city in the country. I was told the Dutch National Team routinely puts in a 30-kilometer workout. (Note to **Brooke**: Don't even think about it.) We didn't go quite that far, but we put in plenty of meters. I didn't understand a word of the cox-

swain's commands, but the pause drill is something of a universal language. Just follow the seat in front of you, and you'll get by.

As we put the boat away, they broke out the beer and cheese—which I think is a perfectly civilized way to end a good row. Kees asked about our water and club, and he pointed to the several Empachers in the boathouse—all used by the National Team and, of course, off-limits to the recreational rowers. Kees commented that he thought I was on to something, using rowing as a tourist activity. After my first attempt, I had to agree and couldn't wait for my next opportunity; I was determined that this was gonna be "a thing."

Italy Brings the Heat

My next rowing adventure took place in Genoa, Italy—birthplace of Christopher Columbus and home of the *Rowing Club Genovese 1890* on the Mediterranean Sea. You generally won't see Italians going about town in rowing kit, but I did so as I made my way to the club on a day that hit 90 degrees by 0800. There I met Mario, whose English was slightly better than my Italian (none) and who had agreed to row with me. At this club, they row open-water shells—much heavier and wider than the Bays or Maas shells at LWRC; these are proper surf-pounding boats. We rowed east from the marina along the Liguri-



Coastal shells offer a very different rowing experience.

an coast. Did I say it was HOT!?! I had brought water, but Mario had not; how he made it without a bottle is beyond me—practice, I guess. As small towns and beaches slowly passed by, the views from the boat were remarkable. Mario didn't say much, which was fine; being the monolingual American, I wouldn't have understood anyway.

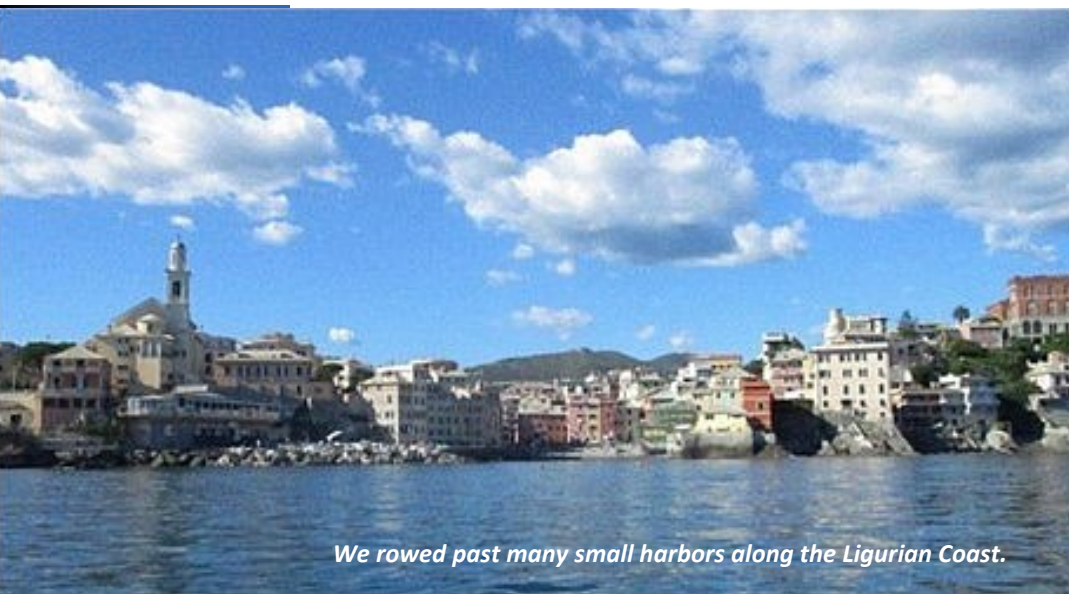
We didn't make it quite to Cinque Terre, but by my estimate we rowed about eight miles, round-trip, in a hefty sun. Miraculously, I had somehow remembered the sunscreen! Otherwise, I would have been lobster-red by the time we got back to Genoa. I was DONE.

As we put the boat away, we did our best to have a conversation with limited skills in each other's language. Mario asked where I was from. When I said, "Seattle. Do you know Seattle?" Mario replied, "Si, Huskies!" I told you Seattle has some rowing cachet!!

I came to rowing somewhat later in my life, and I regret not having done so sooner. It's a great sport with a great community. It also offers the opportunity to make person-to-person connections literally around the world, based on nothing more than a shared enjoyment of this unique sport. I have since rowed on the Seine in Paris (upstream a bit from the Eiffel Tower) and in Los Angeles. Conceding that the likelihood I would fit into the equipment available in Hanoi was small, I passed on that opportunity in Viet Nam. Still, I think it could be done.

In one sense, I can say I'm an "international rower"—though not in the manner usually implied by that term. In each case the club members were welcoming, truly interest-

As we put the boat away, we pulled out beer and cheese — a perfectly civilized way to end a good row.



We rowed past many small harbors along the Ligurian Coast.

ed in giving me a positive rowing experience. And, of course, I issued a reciprocal invitation, should any of them ever find their way to Seattle. I sincerely hope one day they will—as I have found LWRC to have the same welcoming attributes that I experienced abroad.

—**John Turvey**

John wrote about his Egyptian rowing adventures in our [September 2021 issue](#).

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

Check out our programs!

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

Editor's Note

With spring comes the new regatta season. It's time to set some goals for competition, and we are here to help. You'll find profiles of our two competitive coaches, **Alex Mazick** and **Leo Pedrosa**. You'll also meet our 2022 co-captains, **Barry Brown** and—you guessed it!—**Alex Mazick**. Both bring a wealth of experience to our club.

When it comes to competitiveness, few of us can match the determination of **Wispy Runde**, who decided a few years ago to *seriously* take up sculling. Through hard work and persistence, she medaled at major national and internationals regattas, including gold in the mixed double with **Evan Jacobs** at Head of the Charles last October.

Jon Turvey introduces us to his experiences as a guest rower in Italy and in the Netherlands. And dedicated LWRC rower/volunteer **Mike Rucier**, the linchpin of preparing us to host Head of the Lake each November, has an active life outside of rowing.

Each of us has a contribution to make; that's why we thrive as a community. The more we put into supporting our club, the more we will get out of it!

—**Roberta Scholz**



Designer's Note

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

—**Suze Woolf**



Meet the Board

Thanks to our new and returning board members, who give so generously of their time and energy



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Also on the bulletin board in the boathouse

BOARD UPDATES

Spring 2022 Focus Areas for LWRC

- ▶ Re-engaging in the social aspect of the LWRC community as we begin to emerge from COVID restrictions
- ▶ Coordinating smaller Learn to Row sessions similar to those held last year. These were a great success!
- ▶ Beginning preparations for land-lease negotiations

As always, the Board welcomes all members to join our monthly meetings.

Please contact Allison

Thomas, Secretary, with any questions (board@lakewashingtonrowing.com).

—Allison Thomas, Board Secretary



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LWRC Rowers Are in Good Hands

Alex Mazick shares his rowing philosophy

Rowing has given me more than I'd ever imagined. In my 20-plus years since taking my first strokes on the Snohomish River, it has rewarded me with an immersive and all-encompassing passion, my best and dearest friends, opportunity and privilege I'd never imagined, and—in brief moments—the elation of triumph. It has also given heartache, heartbreak and loss, sleepless nights, and gray hairs in my beard: such is the balance of life. Rowing is truly an art form, and from those first strokes it captured my imagination with all its creative possibilities, its brutal honesty, and its legendary pageantry.

Perhaps rowing really isn't that unique, compared to other sports. In all sports, diligence and hard work generally pay off, a trope that was my singular focus in high school. Most sports have storied histories that create a sense of legacy and continuity; as a Gruntie (UW freshman rower), such fables and tales became integral to my being. Athletics provide a path to empowerment as we attack new challenges. In coaching juniors,



Leo Pedrosa shares his rowing and coaching experience

I was born in the province of Mendoza, Argentina, 47 years ago and started my rowing career at the age of 15. A few months later, I began competing, and at age 18, won a sub-championship in Argentina. Later, as a lightweight, I competed in the 1995 Pan American Games in Mar del Plata, the 1998 South American rowing championships in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and in the 1999 Nations Regatta in Piediluco, Italy. I participated in the qualifying races for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games in Xochimilco, Mexico.

During this same time, I was studying for a master's degree in physical education, awarded in 2003. This knowledge gave me a deep understanding of physiology, anatomy, pedagogy, and psychology of human movement, all of which I can apply in my profession as a rowing coach and personal trainer.

I understand the value of a coach in an athlete's training process. During all these years, I went through many stages as a coach and finally



it wasn't the crews' victories that inspired me, but the kids' growth in, and ownership of, the process. Sport breeds passion, and shared passion is where communities grow. In coaching masters for years at Everett, it was evident that rowing itself was important, but the community that grew around it sustained us all and continues to do so even now, some 15 years later.

Few people succeed alone in sports. When I "retired" from coaching (the first time), I dreamt of rowing my single with carefree abandon, on



my own terms. Many years on, the truth is, this has never really happened. It's just too hard to win against the alarm clock when no one is waiting for you at the boathouse. No, perhaps rowing isn't that unique, all things considered. LWRC is special. LWRC is a storied club. LWRC is unique and original, and I want to help continue to strengthen pride in that white-tipped blue blade. This is the club of the 1960 coxless four's gold medal, of rowers whose names still grace so many university hulls. This is the club of **Frank Cunningham** and countless other coaching legends whose names are spoken with reverence nationwide. Our boathouse is the heart of masters and amateur rowing in the Pacific Northwest. Whether through competition or as a meditative release, the club experience should be as diverse as its membership and should cater to all aspirations in rowing.

LWRC is an egalitarian club, managed for its members by its members. As a member, I work to make this club the place where I want to be—and I hope you will, too.

[Alex Mazick, cont. on page 11](#)

came to the conclusion that a good coach never blames his athletes but rather questions himself, session after session, as to whether his way of communicating with the athletes is effective enough to achieve the expected results. A good coach has to know beforehand what the best strategy is for each athlete and for the team.

After coming to the United States in 2012, I worked as a personal trainer and coach on rowing machines. Six years later, after we moved to Oregon, I started rowing on the water again and began to coach junior and masters crews.

Two months before the 2019 Northwest Regionals at Vancouver Lake, I started training in single, double, and quadruple sculls. In the single and double, I trained only twice a week; in the quad, we had only three sessions. The results were amazing: I won the single with the best time of the year, in the double we finished fourth, and in the quad we finished second by 0.8 seconds. This competition was like an epiphany for me, because I realized that it is not necessary to train by accumulating a high volume of miles—the important thing is to row *efficiently*.

We later came to Seattle for a weekend to explore housing options and tour neighborhoods. We also visited several boathouses, but they were unstaffed due to a holiday weekend. However, **Cody Jenkins** happened to be at LWRC, so we chatted for quite a while and exchanged phone numbers. Although Sammamish is much closer to my home and had also offered me a coaching position, I chose LWRC because I felt that meeting Cody was a sign. I am glad to be here.



—Leo Pedrosa, Competitive Sculling Coach



Alex Mazick and Barry Brown Coordinate LWRC Regatta Participation

How Barry came to rowing

Barry Brown has always loved the water. He grew up on the West Coast, in San Diego, and in his youth spent much of his free time in or on the ocean. He became a triathlete in the early 1980s, as the sport was being born. In 1983, at age 21, he secured a sponsorship and traveled

on the national triathlon circuit, placing thirty-third that year in the Hawaii Ironman. After college, he retired from triathlons and joined an elite running club in Houston, where he competed in local road and track races before entering medical school in 1986.

Barry first visited Seattle with his wife in 1988. They vowed to settle here after his medical training was completed. Seattle has been their home since 1993.

After arriving in Washington, and having left his triathlon and running obsessions behind, Barry focused on mountaineering, backcountry skiing, and (briefly) ultrarunning. He has summited many of Washington's prominent peaks and has descended Mount Rainier, Mount Baker, Mount St. Helens, and Mount Hood on skis. He has run the entire Wonderland Trail around Mount Rainier, though (alas) not all on the same day.

Throughout his early years in Seattle, Barry was rowing-

curious but assumed that, at five feet eight inches tall, he was not well suited for the sport. In 2015, hip arthritis forced him to back off from higher-impact pursuits. He took a Learn to Row course at Pocock in 2016 and immediately fell in love with this ancient pastime.

Barry loves the purity of rowing, the immediate connection between effort and results. This pursuit offers the physical demands of the triathlon, the aesthetic smoothness of skiing, and the advantage of being accessible almost every day of the year. He sees parallels between rowing and ballet, in that both demand deep internal connection with the body and the never-ending pursuit of perfection. He believes that every person in Seattle who is rowing-curious, regardless of age or demographics, should be given the opportunity to pull an oar on the water.

Barry has been a physician at Seattle Indian Health Board, Providence and Swedish medical groups, and many rural hospital emergency rooms on both sides of the Cascades.

In 2007, he joined the Everett Clinic's urgent care department and has worked there ever since. When not rowing, Barry enjoys the company of his wife, local writer and historian Paula Becker. In his remaining free time, he writes fiction and plays piano, cello, and guitar.

—Barry Brown

Co-captains Barry Brown and Alex Mazick share regatta coordination. Alex also coaches the large-boat competitive group, and you can meet him on [page 8](#).

For questions relating to regatta participation, contact either captain at barry@timestep.org or mazick@gmail.com.

Regatta Updates

We are lucky to have a plethora of opportunities in the Pacific Northwest (including British Columbia) for all levels. We have local regattas (sprints and head races) and regional regattas (also sprints and head races). Those with aspirations should be thinking even further afield: Masters Nationals, San Diego Crew Classic, Canadian Henley, and—yes—perhaps someday Veterans Henley or even Royal Henley, if we have an eligible club crew.

[Meet the Coaches, Alex Mazick, from page 9](#)

As coach, my task is to help rowers improve, raise the standard of oarsmanship, and help create the type of environment that leads to success. In the post-pandemic landscape, we should have a robust racing calendar for which we are training. It is my intent to improve skills and to push competitive ambition while creating racing opportunities for everyone—from our top crews to our novices who wish to test themselves.

Similarly, I dream of putting the “club” back in “rowing club,” especially after the isolation brought by the pandemic. It is time to rebuild it, to make it a place where we know each other, our home away from home. A place where

Date*	Title	Location	Approximate Distance*
March 19	Spring Regatta	Green Lake, Seattle	1K
April 2	Husky Open	Seattle	2K
April 9–10	Covered Bridge Regatta	Eugene, OR	??
April 23–24	Spring Sprints	Lake Stevens	1K
May 7	Opening Day	Seattle	2K
June 17–19	NW Masters Regionals	Vancouver Lake, WA	1K
July 15–17	Cascadia	Burnaby Lake, BC	1K
August 6	Summer Extravaganza	Green Lake, Seattle	1K
September 17	Head of the Nikomekl	South Surrey, BC	6K??
September 18	Row for the Cure	Lake Union, Seattle	3.5K
October 2	Tail of the Lake	Lake Union, Seattle	4K
October 9	American Lake Fall Classic	Tacoma/Lakewood	5K
October 21–23	Head of the Charles River	Boston, MA	
October 22–23	Head of the Gorge	Victoria, BC	4K??
November 6	Frostbite	Green Lake, Seattle	
November 7	Head of the Lake	Seattle	

**Dates and race distances subject to confirmation*

friends and community gather not just for athletic pursuits, but also to enjoy this beautiful building, which we are so lucky to call home. What is better than a beer or two on the balcony at the end of the week, with that priceless view? Coffee in the lounge after a hard row, sharing stories of Big Water adventures? Not

much, as far as I’m concerned.

Let’s continue to make LWRC a place of community, to help the fast boats go faster, to pursue ever greater challenges as we continue on the drive, together.

—Alex Mazick, Competitive Sweep Coach



Mike Rucier Finds Balance in Life

Longtime LWRC member Mike Rucier wouldn't quibble with the legendary **George Pocock**. But if you asked his opinion about great art forms, Rucier might be tempted to add a few more options to the list.

Make no mistake: Rucier finds joy and companionship in the sport. It's been part of his life for almost 30 years. But rowing isn't just about physical activity for this man. Something that's kept him interested in rowing since his college days as a novice at the University of Puget Sound is the way the sport dovetails with music. "There's a rhythm to it, and you have to maintain the rhythm," Rucier says. "Because of my music, I just have that steadfast rhythm, and it's made me a good stroke."

*It's a great art, is rowing.
It's the finest there is. It's a
symphony of motion.
—George Pocock*

The Sacramento, California, native started piano lessons when he was just three years old. He kept at those lessons until he left for college 15 years later. Music wasn't Rucier's only art interest. He was part of the theater crowd at his high school, too. The arts were central to his identity, yet somehow he also made time to play soccer and tennis. Rucier is quick to agree that he's the quintessential Type A personality, making time for a wide array of interests.

Rucier didn't pursue a degree in music or theater at UPS. Instead, he studied international politics and economics, with a minor in Asian studies. And he decided to take up rowing. A buddy in his dorm who was on the team convinced him to give the sport a try. The early-morning workout sessions didn't leave much time for theater rehearsals—besides which, Rucier discovered that affinity between music and rowing. Plus, the college student discovered another artistic passion—social dancing.

"I had a dancing partner, and we'd go to Seattle Center at least once a month, on Fridays, for ballroom dancing."

Rucier's skill on the dance floor caught the attention of one of his rowing teammates, **Jen**. She asked him to teach her to dance, something she once told me was a naked ploy to get to know this cute guy a little bit better. They've been married for 24 years and have two daughters, **Anna** and **Emily**. Rucier says they're a water-oriented family. They water-ski, and both their teenagers learned how to handle *Boss Hog*, one of our trusty wherries, at an early age. There wasn't an escape from rowing in the Rucier family.

Jen and Mike joined LWRC in 1997, the year they graduated from college. They were stalwart competitors on the Mixed Sweep Team, and Mike has been an indispensable part of the organizing group for the annual Head of the Lake Regatta. He's the one who sets and dismantles the course buoys, a job he's been doing for more years than he can remember. (By the way, if you haven't found your LWRC niche yet, Rucier is looking for younger, able-bodied club members to step up to the plate for this task.)

That said, when LWRC beckons, Rucier is always happy to answer the call. He considers the club to be more than an impersonal gym. After 25 years, he's built a community of lasting friendships—folks to grab a drink with, head off with on family camping trips, or just shoot the breeze with

in the locker room after an early-morning workout (something he hasn't done since the pandemic started).

"I've missed coming to the gym and working out whenever you want," Rucier says.

"Standing around, yakking in the locker room for an hour before you have to go to work."

Rucier looks forward to the time he can bring his laptop to the club to spend a few hours after practice getting some work done. He's built a career helping American companies bring



Mike ponders his situation: nothing like being on the water!



Having fun at Head of the Troll: Tyler Peterson, Josh Proctor, Mike Rucier, Evan Jacobs

their products to overseas markets and is now partner in a small firm.

That's not to say Rucier has abandoned music. He plays in what he calls a "casual quartet" with fellow LWRC member **Hugh Lade**, although he doesn't consider himself to be a "real" performer. "I've played at people's parties, I play the occasional wedding," he says with a laugh.

But Rucier tries to sit down at a keyboard every day. "I'm just go, go, go, every day for work," he says. "It's exhausting. I just need the mental break, and music affords that."

Since the pandemic started, Rucier also has found mental respite in his newfound passion for mountain biking. "It's one of those sports where you truly have to shut out everything that's going on, except for the trail in front of you," he explains. "Otherwise, you're going to crash."

He's devoted to biking but says it won't ever replace rowing, especially rowing with his friends. Last fall, for the return of Head of the Troll, Rucier hopped into a quad with **Evan Jacobs, Tyler Petersen, and Josh Proctor**.

"Our only practice together was rowing to the start line," he says with a laugh. "Then we killed everybody!"

So the quad made a second appearance at Head of the Lake. They didn't win, but that wasn't the point. Rucier simply enjoyed being out on the water with his best friends.

"LWRC is a community," he stresses. "It's our space, with wonderful people. I mean, it's pretty awesome."

—Marcie Sillman

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SAFETY FIRST

A Tip

Surviving a cold-weather capsizing

Well, it was more than a tip. In the first week of February, while rowing a single without a companion, I capsized. Both water and air temperature were 44 degrees. This was my first flip in winter. It happened at the west end of the Ship Canal, in front of the gravel barge.

Examining how things go wrong, whether it be your own or other people's stories, is good safety practice. Another person's experience offers an opportunity to avoid a future bad outcome.

I go into the water about once every couple of years. The obvious cause in almost every case has been a failure to fully tighten an oarlock gate. In such a case, you can row forward with no problem. But when you brake or row backward, you're suddenly holding an oar handle that is no longer seated in the oarlock, and you're going to get wet. Knowing this, I double-check my gates before every row, even when I know they're tight.

On this day, my gates are tight. The oar is in the lock. No crabs caught. (I have never caught a crab rowing a single.) Perhaps my starboard blade is too deep to release easily, and so the blade pulls me down. I am not exactly sure what happened, but I remember entering that slow-motion phase where I know I am going to get wet. The boat tips as I slide into the water.

I am not afraid of going into the water. Ten years ago, when I started rowing a single regularly, I practiced flipping a

Maas 24 in the Port Townsend pool. It was great! My first flips were in warm water, so I could repeat the exercise for better and better results. Soon I could flip out, turn the boat upside-down, right the boat, and get back in—ready to row—in a best time of 15 seconds. Outdoors, in our region, the second challenge is doing this in rather cold water.

I read accounts of people in cold water every chance I get. The common wisdom is that after seven minutes in the water you get stupid. As a rower with warm muscle mass, you may get a little extra time. The first few minutes are your best minutes; then you can make the choices that will keep you safe.

As I slide into the water, I'm conscious of the cold: feeling cautious, perhaps a little anxious, but not fearful. The experience is familiar. My boat is upside-down. I focus my mind, then parallel the oars, so the boat can turn over. With the opposite-side oar parallel, it is a challenge to reach its handle. Kicking vigorously, I grasp both handles and hoist my upper body across the boat. I am very consciously practicing composure, moving as quickly as I can—but slowly, not making mistakes. I think about how no one saw me go into the water. I am aware of that—but also aware that most of the time, spectators are of very little help under such circumstances. Today it was clearly self-rescue or perish. Keep working, Dave.

Every time I swim in cold water, I think of Lynne Cox. In 2008, she wrote a terrific New Yorker article (she is a skilled writer as well as an athlete) about swimming in four places along the Northwest passage. (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/04/21/a-dip-in-the-cold>). At this point, if you have only enough time either to

finish reading my article or to read hers, by all means read hers. She can save your life. I think of her as the patron saint of people who find themselves in very cold water.

Lynne describes swimming in an ordinary bathing suit for 30 minutes in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, in 30-degree water. In Greenland, she swam a mile in 29-degree water. That's not supposed to be possible. Whenever I'm in cold water, I always think of Lynne, and I get a shot of confidence. Lynne could do this. That confidence might be the difference between survival and death. It is real. Fear will rob you of your chances.

Now atop the boat, I'm upright and straddling. With a leg in the water, each side, my center of gravity is lower. My swamped boat rides a little lower. As always, getting on the seat is a struggle, because one hand has to hold the oar handles. The boat is unstable. I don't want to capsize twice.

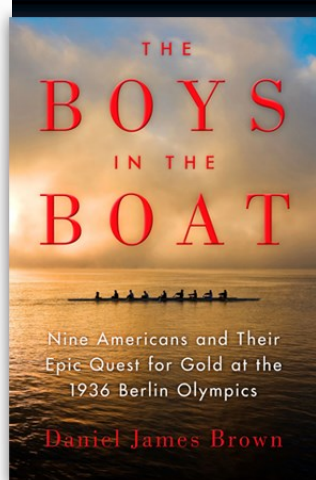
With my butt on the seat, feet in the stretchers, I start pulling, trying to swish the water out of the boat over the "transom." At this point I feel safe. The temperature loss/gain tips in your favor once you resume rowing. I am pleased to be alive to row again. I

also have a formidable adrenaline high. Today I decide that returning to the dock instead of finishing my row is the better choice, given the cool air temperature. The fact that I even considered rowing further shows my judgment was undependable. At this point, best practice is to default to safest choice.

What I get from reviewing my own mishap, more than anything, is the importance of practicing on easier days. When in the water, I was very conscious, and also reassured, that I knew exactly what to do. I didn't have to figure out anything, with the possibility of making wrong moves. The cold-water experience was familiar. I felt caution rather than fearfulness. I thought of Lynne. Getting back to pulling the oars was a sequence of steps. It worked.

—Dave McWethy





Update: The Boys in the Boat

For the past several years, the rowing world has eagerly anticipated the movie version of Daniel James Brown's epic book *The Boys in the Boat*. We know that George Clooney bought the film rights some time ago and that he will co-direct it. We also know that it will not be filmed here in Seattle, except for a few local-color shots. For the most part, it will be shot in England. [Here's the latest word on the cast](#), courtesy of "Mossback's Northwest." [Author Brown will speak at on March 15, 2022, at Benaroya Hall.](#)



A Most Beautiful Thing

In the early months of the pandemic, Arshay Cooper's touching rowing memoir *A Most Beautiful Thing* was published. At the same time, a film based on his book was due to be released in theaters. Eventually, the movie became available on several streaming sites by the end of 2020.

If you're looking for inspiration, you'll find it here. If you think you face obstacles in life, think again. If you ever wonder whether rowing is an elitist sport, you'll find an answer here. And if you need to be reminded of the role that hope plays in survival, read this book. Watch this movie. <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/arshay-cooper/a-most-beautiful-thing/> and <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/a-most-beautiful-thing-movie-review-2020>



(Creative Commons photos)

Stephen Hawking, Oxford Coxswain

Famed physicist took risks

Stephen Hawking's brilliance as a physicist is well known. But many of us may not realize that he was also a passionate coxswain for Oxford club eights during the 1960s. He viewed this experience as an alternative to academics, where he found himself "bored and unchallenged," according to Bernard Ryan, author of *Stephen Hawking: Physicist and Educator*. Read more at <https://heartheboatsing.com/2018/03/14/stephen-hawking-remembering-the-cox-with-his-head-in-the-stars/>.

—Contributed by Nelson Miller