LWRC

MAKING WAVES

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Pocock and Boeing: A Future for Rowing

The restored B-1, Boeing's first commercial aircraft, hangs at the Museum of History and Industry at the south end of Lake Union. The hull is framed in Sitka spruce and covered with laminated western red cedar. (Photo by the author)

Like a lot of people who have come to live and work in the wetter parts of the Pacific Coast of North America, both **George Yeomans Pocock** and **William Edward Boeing** came because of the trees.

Bill Boeing—born in Detroit, Michigan—arrived in Hoquiam, Washington, in 1903, at age 22. He'd left Yale University early to manage family forest lands around Grays Harbor that had been purchased by his wealthy late father, Wilhelm. The low coastal rainforests Boeing inherited were rich in enormous old-growth trees, including Sitka spruce and western red cedar.

George Pocock—born in Kingston upon Thames, England—arrived in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1911 on his twentieth birthday, along with his older brother, Richard. Both were champion amateur rowers and fresh from completing boatbuilding apprenticeships alongside their father Fred, the manager of rowing at Eton College, home to 650 shells. Unable to find work in England, the Pocock boys headed west after hearing it was possible to make ten pounds a week "sawing trees down." They

brought along a few sliding seats and fittings.

Pocock shells, made in North America

After about a year of job-hopping in and around Vancouver, the Pococks landed work building shells for the esteemed Vancouver Rowing Club. From a miserable shack on a log raft in Coal Harbor, where they lived and worked, their reputation grew. They attracted the attention of UW crew coach **Hiram Conibear,** who recruited the Pococks to Seattle in 1912.

Washington started winning races in Pocock shells designed to complement a refined "Washington stroke" that was modeled on how George and Dick had learned to scull back home. They even built a rowing machine to demonstrate what George liked to call the "Thames waterman stroke."

By 1917, Conibear had died, and orders for racing shells evaporated as World War I raged. The United States entered the war that April.

In 1916, Bill Boeing and the young Pocock men met at the first shell shop of the University of Washington, on Portage Bay in Seattle, introduced by UW president Henry Suzzallo. Boeing was looking for lighter pontoons for the first "all-Boeing" engineered aircraft, the Model C, a training seaplane. He found what he needed by examining a new shell the Pocock brothers were building. "This is the very work I want," Boeing said. "Come and see me as soon as you can."

It took the Pococks almost a year to follow up on the invitation, due to prior obligations to rowing coaches at Cal and Stanford. But soon after this visit, about 200 years of innovation in shell building—including three generations by the Pocock family—helped transform an aviation industry in its infancy.

The initial seven years George worked for Boeing—eventually as foreman, and then superintendent (with about 60 people working for him)—would help shape early Boeing, contribute mightily to the growth of rowing throughout the United States, and eventually help grow a future for rowers young and old in the Northwest.

A lighter pontoon and streamlined manufacturing

George and Dick Pocock contracted to build two pairs of pontoons for Boeing at their original UW shop, outperforming engineering expectations. With a Navy order of 50 Model Cs, they had to move to the Boeing Oxbow plant on the Duwamish River, known as the Red Barn. They hired a team of 12 and delivered 150 pontoons, including 50 spares, "before a single airframe had been assembled."

"The pontoons done, the production manager sent me over to be foreman of the final assembly plant, and I could actually see where so much time could be saved," George later wrote. He identified practices that were "a frightful waste of time." After he reorganized the work, "The airframes started rolling out and the men were much happier now that they were accomplishing so much more."

Naval aircraft keep Boeing workers stateside in WWI

In 1917, George and Dick had also started working on acquiring US citizenship and had registered for the draft. George's number came up on the first draw. He dutifully reported for a physical, refusing an exemption offered for the two fingers he'd lost at a shipyard in Canada. George described what happened the day before he was to report to the Army at Fort Lewis:

"An Army general came to Boeing's in the shop and stood watching me for a few minutes. He said, "I see you are to go and prepare to fight the Germans." And I said, "Yes, sir, I will be proud to go." He said, "You will not. You can be of far more use in the war effort working here." "As you wish sir," I said.

The "general" was Army Provost Major Enoch

Boeing Boat House at the foot of Roanoke Street on Lake Union 1915-1971.

Crowder, who not only steered through Congress the legislation creating the Selective Service Act but was also in charge of the entire military draft in 1917. (Boeing gave its young men brass badges that read "Doing My Bit Building Airplanes," lest anyone suspect them of being draft dodgers.)

The military had a vital strategic interest in Seattle. War works had been disbursed throughout the country to grow talent and supply chains in multiple places in the name of national security. Boeing was at the right place at the right time. A lot of its early work consisted of building or modifying military aircraft designed by other companies.

George helps Boeing master the HS-2L flying boat

One of the disbursed Navy contracts was for the Curtiss HS-2L patrol boat. Bill Boeing alerted his factory to get ready to build the HS-2L in May of 1918. Soon afterward, he met George in New York City, where George began a tour of airplane factories—reporting his observations back to the Red Barn. Boeing was awarded a contract to build 50 HS-2Ls, and George returned to Seattle, ready to start the work. The Navy had also approved George's suggestion to use western red cedar on the hulls. He wrote:

"We at Boeing were credited with the best HS-2 hulls at far less cost. For instance, the Curtiss plant in Buffalo took 2,400 man-hours to make one; we made them in 900 hours."

When WWI ended in November 1918, the contract was cut in half—but it had built Boeing's reputation for efficient manufacturing.

The Pococks and Boeing's first commercial aircraft

In the immediate postwar years, Boeing had no orders for new airplanes. Eventually, the shop was cut to a core staff of about 30 and the company resorted to making furniture and other wood products. In 1919, it began modernizing 50 de Havilland DH-4 fighters and building the company's first commercial aircraft, the B-1, which now hangs in Seattle's Museum of History and Industry.

George, Dick, and their workers constructed the hull of the B-1 flying boat. It had a Sitka spruce frame and a hull of laminated western red cedar. At one point, George tried to alert the Boeing draftsman to a design flaw.

Same site, facing east. The boathouse was demolished in 1971 for the proposed 168-unit "Roanoke Reef" condominiums. After a 13-year battle with the Eastlake neighborhood, they were never built.

The Boeing B-1 flying boat moored on the apron of the Boeing Lake Union Hangar. Dick and George Pocock built the hull. The tail appears to sink.

"Based on boatbuilding experience," wrote his son **Stan Pocock,** "He insisted that because the ribs or frames maintained their same curvature right through the aft end, the resulting structure would appear to be sucked in rather than full. No one listened."

Afloat, the boat appeared to sink at the tail. It first took flight out of the Boeing Lake Union Boathouse in December 1919. Pilot Eddie Hubbard purchased it and flew the first scheduled international airmail service—between Lake Union and Victoria, BC—until 1927. In that time, the hull outlasted seven engines.

Boeing's 'nucleus for a new start'

George and Dick also helped Boeing construct its version of the Hickman Sea Sled, a speedboat with speeds up to 45 miles per hour. They were working on the Sea Sled one day when Bill Boeing showed up. George recalled, "He seemed to be very happy. He was sitting on the bench, as a matter of fact, swinging his legs, and I thought, I'll try, and I'll ask him, so I did. Mr. Boeing, it must be a problem for you to decide to shut this place up or not because we think you're going to shut it up every time you come down. He said oh, indeed no, he said, I'm prepared to run it like this with a nucleus for a new start for two years, and after two years, we'll never look back."

Boeing had been paying salaries and expenses out of his own pocket. He was still running his Greenwood Lumber Company, and his forest products had been in high demand during the war. Demand was so high for Sitka spruce for military aircraft during WWI that the Army created a Spruce Production Division to open up forests, mostly in Washington and Oregon, to meet Europe's demand. Over 28,000 men—"spruce troops"—were eventually enlisted to build rails and roads and to cut and mill Sitka spruce for aircraft and Douglas fir for ships.

George meets his bride at Boeing

It wasn't all work while George was at Boeing. Promotion for a rare regatta included mention of "English Amateur Champion George Pocock," rowing for the Seattle Yacht Club, who won his race. He and Dick also built a mahogany dinghy in their basement that Bill Boeing liked so much he insisted on having it for his yacht.

One Saturday a colleague at Boeing, Myron Huckle, showed up at the plant with his younger sister, **Frances,** tagging along. "As they wandered around, here came Dad, who was then foreman of the assembly department," wrote Stan Pocock. "As Dad used to say, 'it was love at first sight.'" George and Frances would stay happily married for the next 54 years.

In 1921, the company significantly underbid rivals and was selected to build 200 MB-3A attack fighters for the U.S. Army Air Service. This was the government's largest aircraft order since the end of WWI. The company's mass-production methods were credited with the low

price, which still allowed for a profit. Bill Boeing identified the contract as the key to the company's future—the new start.

Washington and the Husky Crew of 1923

After some impressive seasons, Yale recruited Husky coach **Ed Leader,** who asked George to go east with him. Dick went instead, and he built shells for Yale for the rest of his career.

"Use of wooden pontoons long since had disappeared," said George, who was then making $200 a month at Boeing. "I had adjusted myself to metal, liked the work and intended to stay."

New UW Rowing coach **Rusty Callow** came to see George at the plant, persuaded him to build a new shell, and offered him a shop in the back of the new ASUW Shell House. Washington would buy Pocock boats, George would maintain the fleet, and he could sell to anyone else.

In December of 1922, he left Boeing with a car, a new wife, no salary—and 20 shares of Boeing stock.

Before George left Boeing, he'd ordered a bunch of wood from the company's woodworking shop, which was being run by an appreciative friend whom George had first hired. "Along about the first of the year, a Boeing truck pulled up with a big load of milled spruce," George wrote, "four times what I'd ordered." The bill was $90. George said the wood was "worth at least ten times that."

> "He left Boeing with a car, a new wife, no salary—and 20 shares of Boeing stock."

For the first time in his life, George was building an eight *all by himself.* "I felt I had made the mistake of my life," George wrote, "from foreman to over 60 men to working alone in a garret workshop."

That year, Washington easily finished first at the Intercollegiate National Rowing Championships on the Hudson River in Poughkeepsie, New York. It was the first team from the West Coast to win the race—and Washington's first national championship in any sport.

George now had new orders for "eight eights." He hired three men—the best of his team from Boeing —and they never looked back. By 1925, George was building shells for California, Harvard, Navy, Princeton, and Syracuse in addition to Washington. Pocock Racing Shells thrived, at one time producing 80 percent of shells in use by colleges in the United States.

Epilogue

Of boatbuilding, George said in 1934, "one must get his joy out of the job, as there is no possible chance of getting any other riches."

With passage of the Air Mail Act of 1934, Congress broke up United Aircraft and Transport Corporation, a holding company Bill Boeing had created that acquired and controlled many aircraft-related businesses. Disillusioned by the politics, Boeing left the business, sold all of his Boeing stock, and moved on.

George would often get jobs at Boeing for the men in his shop when shell orders were scarce. He became a Boeing subcontractor during World War II, building wood decking and other parts for the interiors of the B-17 "Flying Fortress" at the ASUW shop. During the war, Bill Boeing returned to serve as an advisor to the company he had founded.

After the war, shell orders picked up again; the cost of a Pocock eight was $1,250—the same price George had first set in 1922. Stan Pocock tied his father's reluctance to raise prices to that Boeing stock George never sold.

"As that company grew, my Dad slowly realized that he had become financially set for life," Stan recalled. "He was very conscious of trying to help out the sport of rowing financially, and so he passed on his good fortune and kept selling shells at 1922 prices. Well, nobody could compete with that, so the unintended result was that nobody could go into the business." George's generosity

helped grow rowing at colleges and clubs throughout the United States and around the world.

Bill Boeing raised Thoroughbred horses and cattle and also invested in real estate. He sold his timber holdings a few years before his death in 1956.

George stuck to building, and rowing, shells. He died in 1976.

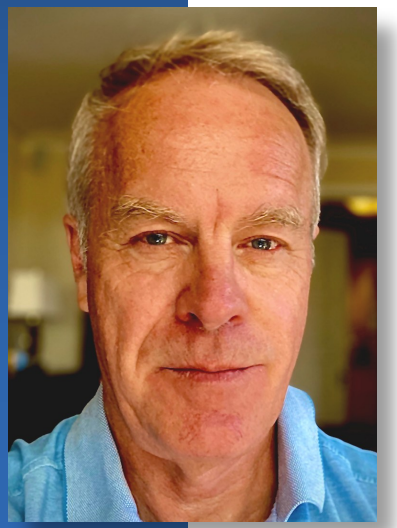
When friends and family decided to memorialize George by establishing a foundation and building a rowing center in his name, Frances Pocock became a fan. Stan said that when he asked his mother for a donation, she replied, "How much do you need?"

The Pocock Family gift to the George Pocock Rowing Foundation was essential to its establishment, according to its founders. "After that, I knew we had to get something done," chief fundraiser **Al Mackenzie** told me recently.

Over $2 million was eventually raised from donors all over the country to finish building the George Pocock Memorial Rowing Center, which opened in 1994, as a community resource and to advance the sport of rowing in the Northwest into the future.

According to Stan, that essential donation from Frances Pocock came from a familiar source: it was the Boeing stock.

—Rick Olson



Rick Olson, a former broadcast journalist, spent a career in media and public policy.
He started rowing three years ago.
Rick cites these books as the three main sources for this story:
Ready All! *by Gordon Newell (1987)*
"Way Enough!" *by Stan Pocock (2000)*
Memories*, by George Yeomans Pocock*
This last book is lovingly edited by Al Mackenzie, who hopes to publish it this year. A copy is now available in the LWRC members' lounge.

Editor's Note

Boeing (rhymes with rowing), safety, Austria, terminology, octogenarians, officiating—once again, our members have come up with some unique perspectives to enlighten you.

We are grateful for their contributions to our community. Enjoy!

—Roberta Scholz

Reader's Note

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

—Suze Woolf

IF YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR A STORY
Please contact us at lwrcnewsletter@comcast.net

*Gastrudern** in Gmunden, Austria —and Other Tales

Gmunden Ruderverein

True confession: The first time I tried rowing, I broke the oar. It was wooden—one of eight, I think—and probably had already cracked before it came my way. But still. I was 19 years old, in college, and less than athletic. Trying out *Rudern* was supposed to be fun.

It was in Heidelberg, Germany—an exchange program during the spring semester of my sophomore year. The famous *Schloß* (castle) loomed above us on the Neckar River. Picturesque bridges crossed it before and above us, clear water flowed below us, and red-tile roofs in the distance dotted the Neckar's banks. The views were to die for. And you could see why that little town, famous for its Philosophers' Walk and unique circle of Romantic poets, attracted throngs of tourists each year.

I was living in an exchange family and had taken a vow to speak only German for the months spent there. My German was coming along nicely, but I suspect my tone was less than nice, and my expletives most likely not *auf Deutsch*, when that oar split and left me holding a stub of the shaft and the handle, with the rest of the oar hanging from it loosely, like a broken bone. The hosts were nice about it, but that cracking sound both frightened and humiliated me. I didn't try rowing again for 33 years.

Fast-forward to September 2019. My niece, **Olivia Zilavy**—then a freshman on a full rowing scholarship at University of Portland—urged me to learn to row. "C'mon, Auntie! I think you'll like it! I'll help you find a class," she said as she proceeded to take my phone and begin tapping her way through various Seattle offerings. I landed here at LWRC, and our beloved coach **Andy Reese** tamed all my fears—about learning to row, being too old to start, breaking anything, or flipping.

Now I'm a Mom. No children, mind you—technically, I am still just an Auntie. But I row, practice, and race with the LWRC-based women's masters team, Martha's Moms. I joined the team as a rookie because I figured racing with that incredibly accomplished group of women would be the thing to get me progressing the most quickly. I'm pretty sure I was right.

In addition to lots of great technical instruction from LWRC coaches **Theresa Batty** (we miss you, Ms. B!) and drop-in sculling with Andy, the coaching from Moms coaches **Sienna Mathes**, **Molly McDonald**, and **Meghan Ricci**, plus mentoring from teammates **Carolyn Fletcher** and **Pati Casebolt**, built my confidence, especially as a sculler.

Olivia in Gmunden

So, when it came time to plan a vacation and help niece Olivia pack up her apartment after her year of teaching ESL in a rural Austrian school district, I jumped at the opportunity to once again try rowing overseas. Before heading out, I pestered our inimitable coach **Karolin Neubert** for a list of rowing terms. (My German is excellent, but like I said—I had not tried rowing again since that early nonstarter … so how would I know?)

I also got to take part in a wonderful guest row at Vashon Island that fellow teammate **Lara Norman** had set up for Martha's Moms in May. So I had a good idea of what I might expect from such an arrangement, although ours wound up being on a much smaller scale.

Moms' Vashon row

Olivia's assignment had landed her in the tiny town of Gmunden, Austria, located about halfway between Salzburg and Vienna. Austria is known for its destination ski resorts in winter, but also in the warmer seasons for rowing and *Wandern* (hiking). Gmunden and the surrounding region of lakes are stunningly gorgeous, with many small rowing clubs, mountain trails, and lakeside footpaths. I dare say it's even better than Heidelberg.

View from Olivia's apartment

And the view of the Traunsee, Austria's largest and deepest lake, from Olivia's balco-

ny included a little rowing club! She had kept her eyes on it all year but felt shy about going there alone. The notes on their website made clear that they were open to guest visits, so she emailed them ahead of time.

> "It was one of the most wonderful rowing experiences I have ever had."

After a few days of touring around and sightseeing, we walked over to the clubhouse and knocked on the front door. No one answered at first, but eventually we found our way inside and met Wolfgang Öhlinger, the board chairman of the *Gmundner Ruderverein* (GRV), and made our arrangements.

Olivia, her mom **Melissa Pailthorp**, and I would be back the next day, we promised. (Melissa now rows with Conibear but rowed with LWRC/MMRC for a season during the pandemic.) The GRV's women's masters team came out to host us for one of the most wonderful rowing experiences I have ever been part of. We launched two quads, and they urged me to stroke one of them! I did. Olivia and Melissa were in the middle of the other quad. We rowed across the lake, past *Schloß Orth*—a medieval castle on an island reached by a causeway!—and up the river to a dam. We crossed below the dam and rowed back down to the Traunsee, past the castle again and back toward the GRV dock.

Olivia, Melissa, Bellamy, and Wolfgang Öhlinger

On the way back, they asked what I wanted to do. I suggested the "cut the cake" drill along with "five and glides" that I had learned in my classes at LWRC. They had never heard of these, but we did it! It was perfect and so much fun—almost like a taste of a "ham 'n' egger." Even they said it was fun! And for them, that was something new, because they're serious athletes—many of them also moms, one a schoolteacher. They were all busy people, trying to get everything done and to stay fit and win medals. Kind of like our own Moms.

Afterward, we shared some refreshments on the deck of their sweet little clubhouse, with a view of the lake. I suggested they come to us someday—and that, between Melissa and me, we should be able to return the favor here at LWRC or somewhere else on Lake Wash-

German Rowing Terminology

Ruder halt!	Way enough!
Steuerbord	Starboard
Backbord	Port
Bug	Bow
Heck	Stern
Ausleger	Rigger(s)
Rollsitz/Sitz	Seat
Schlag	Stroke
Rückenwind	Tailwind
Gegenwind	Headwind
Rhythmus	Rhythm
Rollbahn	Tracks
Ruder	Oar(s)
Skull(s)	Sculling oar(s)
Riemen	Sweep oar(s)
Steuersitz	Coxswain's seat
Steuermann	Coxswain
Anlegen	Dock/docking

—Karolin Neubert

ington. I hope that's true!

Twenty-five years ago, a wise woman I know set up a paddling exchange between dragon boat clubs in Tacoma and in Fuzhou, China. I went along as part of a two-person media crew, so I didn't touch any paddles or oars. (I was probably still too scared. Plus, I had a mic to hang on to.) She drew an analogy to the ping-pong diplomacy of the Nixon-Carter era. These experiences matter, as we move through our worlds. Such contact helps create human connections, family to family, clubhouse to clubhouse, across national boundaries—politics be damned!

Here's to more rowing exchanges in 2025 and beyond. And fun! And medals!

—Bellamy Pailthorp

Bellamy Pailthorp covers the environment beat at KNKX Public Radio in Seattle/Tacoma—and rows at LWRC and with Martha's Moms. You can find her audio pieces for KNKX and NPR news here: https://www.knkx.org/people/bellamy-pailthorp.

Check out our programs!

http://lakewashingtonrowing.com/home/programs

Board Notes

LWRC Leadership

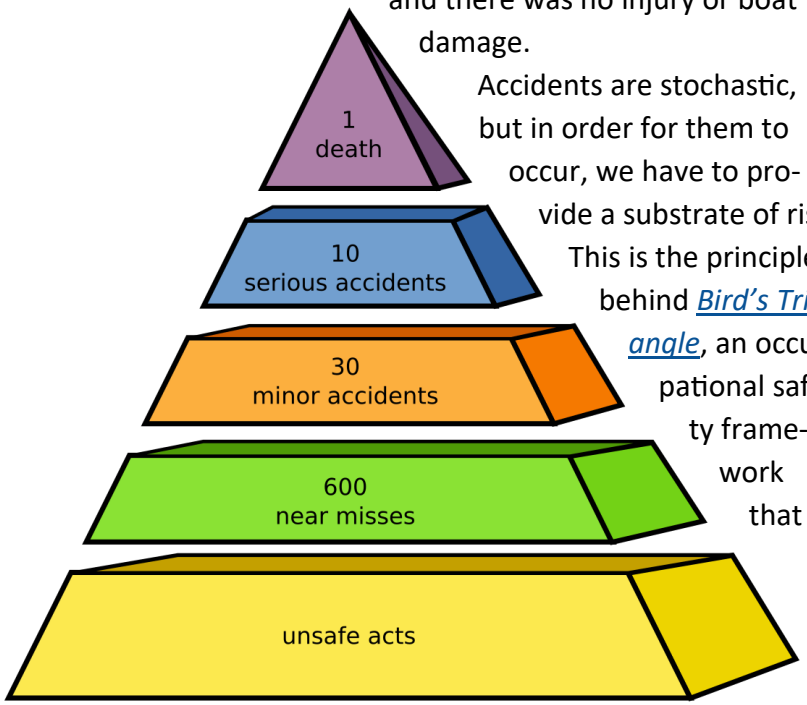
Stability and transition characterize our 2025 Board of Directors

President: **Carolyn Fletcher**
Vice President: **John Robinson***
Secretary: **Jean Lee**
Treasurer: **Dianne Casper**
Members at large: **Layne Fisher, Joel Osborn, Amy Yunis***

*New to board this year. Members can be reached at board@lakewashingtonrowing.com.

Rowing as Occupational Safety: A Case Study

Years ago, I was coaching the Pocock sweep team out in singles. It was dark, and at the Fremont Bridge, one of my rowers (who had lost their bow light early in the practice) crossed the traffic pattern and collided with an LUC pair, flipping both boats. LUC's launch was not nearby, and in a shocking moment of bad luck, my own launch ran out of gas about 30 feet away from the rescue. Thankfully, I had a spare can, all three rowers were able to self-rescue, and there was no injury or boat damage.



Accidents are stochastic, but in order for them to occur, we have to provide a substrate of risk. This is the principle behind *Bird's Triangle*, an occupational safety framework that supposes that a percentage of unsafe acts *will* result in accidents, and thus the only way to reduce the possibility of a serious accident is to reduce the number of unsafe acts we take.

While this seems obvious, it's not so simple. Most of these acts are minor, and thus we either don't recognize them, or we choose to act anyway. Choosing to act unsafely is not inherently bad—consider that the best way to avoid injury in rowing is to not row at all—so it's a matter of choosing which unsafe acts we perform *and* excluding all others in service of it.

In our example above, what were the unsafe acts? Well, crossing the traffic pattern, surely, but here are a few more:

- We chose singles, in which the athletes had less experience.
- We went to a part of the waterway we were less familiar with.
- We rowed in the dark.
- We rowed in the cold.
- The bow light in the single had gone out.
- The rower in the single didn't wear high-visibility clothing.
- I failed to correct the rower's point before he crossed the traffic pattern.
- I chose to take a spare gas can instead of filling up the first one.
- The LUC launch was not close enough to adequately support their crews.

If you call it bad luck that my launch ran out of gas where it did, then it was only by *good* luck that the collision hadn't resulted in serious injury; in that case, the 30 seconds it took me to change cans could have been critical. I would never have considered taking a spare gas can to be unsafe, but these are the kinds of decisions that we make hundreds of times without realizing it.

So, if we have an unsafe act that we *want* to make (such as giving sweep rowers time in singles), and if we have some unsafe acts over which we have no control (LUC's launch), then we can structure our practice around making that decision as safe as possible. To wit:

- The rower should have followed the traffic pattern.
- We should have gone to a more familiar part of the waterway.
- We should have gone out on a warmer day.
- The rower should have worn high-

visibility clothing.

- The rower should have turned back when the bow light died.
- I should have corrected the rower's point before he crossed the traffic pattern.
- I should have filled up the gas tank.
- With a little more conscientiousness, we could've gone from *ten* unsafe acts to *two*.

In winter, it is cold, dark, and rainy. Choosing to row in these conditions constitutes not *one* unsafe act (rowing), but *three* (rowing in the cold, rowing in the dark, rowing in rain). If you row alone, that's another. If the water is choppy, another still. None of these by itself is a deal-breaker, none of them makes you reckless, and, of course, all of them are still justifiable. But in such conditions, there are heightened consequences to additional lapses of safety beyond that. This is where proper clothing, proper supervision, and proper choice of location on the waterway can all mitigate accidents. Could you row to Ballard by yourself at 5:00 a.m. when it's below freezing? Sure, but it's far safer to make laps of the lake with your friends when the sun is up.

Minimizing the bottom of our pyramid makes not only ourselves safer, but also the entire waterway. After all, if in our case study, we'd done all of the above *and* LUC's launch had been present, then the only unsafe act we would have made that day was to row in the first place.

—Steve Genise

Steve Genise coaches Learn to Row at LWRC and varsity girls at Lakeside School. He has been coaching since 2012. In his noncoaching life, he is an author and book editor.

(Creative Commons photo)

Harbor Patrol 206-684-4071

Also on the bulletin board in the boathouse

YOU ASKED FOR IT — NOT!

Everything You Need to Know about Stopping—and More

Way enough!" All righty, then, I'll stop rowing. "Weigh enough!" What's that, now? Do I weigh enough? That's kind of a cheeky question. I mean, I am a lightweight rower after all, so I believe that I weigh enough, but not too much. Is that what you meant?

Is it "way" (yes) or "weigh" (no, no, no)? This seems to be an ever-ongoing issue in rowing land.

A couple of years ago, a prominent local coach was interviewed in a rowing podcast. They asked her whether it should be "way" or "weigh" enough. She "weighed" in, and she was way wrong. I was so disappointed.

I have some history with this question. Sometime in the early 1990s, Andy Anderson ("Dr. Rowing") wrote a piece about the weigh/way controversy. It was the first time I had heard that there was a controversy. He was leaning toward "weigh."

I knew the right spelling way before I read Andy's column. It's "way" because ships get underway the moment that they are not moored to the shore or anchored. When they are moving, they're *making way*. Ships don't make *weigh*, or make *whey* for that matter (although making whey could come in handy for the nutritionally minded), although they do weigh anchor, which has nothing to do with the weight of the anchor and everything to do with the anchor no longer lying about at the bottom of the ocean. You can tell that a ship's anchor is aweigh when you see the chain start to swing (way before you actually see the anchor). The moment that the anchor is aweigh is when the ship transitions from being anchored to being underway. (The anchor must be aweigh—no longer touching the ocean floor—in order for the ship to be underway.)

Back to Andy's column: he annoyed me, so I wrote him a letter. This was way before we had email on the ship—or just about anywhere else, for that matter. I typed up and sent a letter to him via what you digital types call snail mail. The letter carefully explained to him why it's "way," that it has always been "way," and that (in no uncertain terms) he was wrong. He did not take it well. We had a letter exchange, after which he liberally slandered me in his next column, wondering where I had found time to write him letters when I was supposed to be way busy driving ships and keeping them off Bligh Reef. It didn't help that at the time I was chief mate on the *Overseas Valdez*, not be confused with the way different *Exxon Valdez.* In a follow-up column in 2002, he admitted that his thinking had led him to the wrong way, that he was way wrong, and that it is, in fact, "way." Yay.

"He liberally slandered me in his next column."

And yet … none other than US Rowing spells it wrong on their website. Ugh.

So, why am I way right, and those other folks are way wrong? To begin with, "way" in this case is a noun. "Weigh," as in to weigh anchor, is a verb. "Aweigh" is an adjective, and I've certainly never heard a coxswain say, "aweigh enough!" That wouldn't be right at all!

There are other reasons, too. In order to become a

merchant marine officer, I first had to earn an Able Seaman's endorsement. That included learning how to cox a whaleboat. The Monomoy whaleboats we learned in (*see photo*) were big, heavy boats that seated up to ten people sitting two abreast, with the cox standing aft while holding a sweep oar at the stern. (This was a way longer oar for steering – not the same as the oars the rest of the crew used for rowing.) A typecast, grizzled old boatswain taught us the ropes. The command to begin rowing was "Give way together." And those commands are right there in the *American Merchant Seaman's Manual*, too. Would a reference like that lie to you?

Vintage Monomoy whaler above, modern Monomoy whaler below

If you don't like that explanation, how about this: The International Maritime Organization, the United Nations–chartered organization for compiling international maritime laws such as the Safety of Life at Sea Treaty, publishes the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea—the "COLREGS," for those of you who are in the know. Rule 3(h)(i) states, "The word 'underway' means that a vessel is not at anchor, or made fast to the shore, or aground." There is no "weigh" to be found in that book.

Dr. Rowing and other folks have made mention of certain old-timey sailing-ship captains as having logged such things as "At first light, upon the W'ly breeze filling in, we weighed for Singapore" to describe weighing anchor to get underway for Singapore" or some such thing. Meh. It still refers to *getting underway* by *weighing the anchor*. I don't buy this as an excuse for using *weigh* instead of *way.*

Finally, the Google itself says "underway" is the preferred spelling, and that "under weigh" is an alternative – but only because it was used mistakenly often enough that you can let it slide. Well maybe you can, but I don't.

And that's why the coach's "weigh" was way wrong, and I'm way, way, way right. So there. Enough weigh already. I mean way enough!

—Saul Stashower

In his own words: Saul, a reformed sea captain, has come ashore after 25 years of seafaring. He is currently employed in the official capacity of "Oil Tanker Smarty-pants" (also known as a maritime consultant), which keeps him on his toes and traveling too much. He is a rower of some (some say ill) repute and has been a member of LWRC since 1995.

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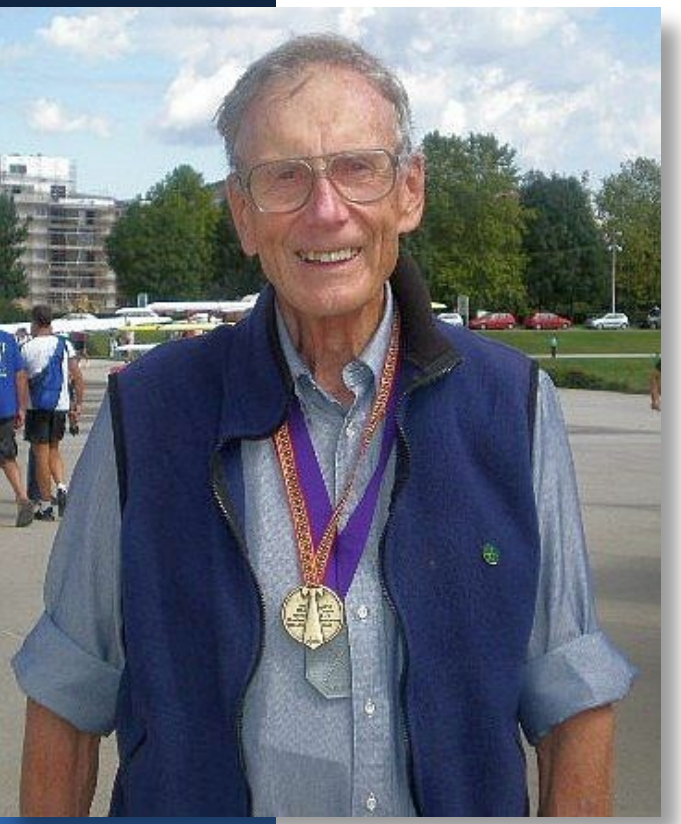
Feeling Old These Days?

In your 70s? Past 80? Get over it!

First of all, the really good news is: *You're still here!* Second, *now* is the time to go for the brass ring! So stop feeling old, and sign up for next September's FISA World Rowing Masters Regatta in Banyoles, Spain!



Burk Ketcham ten years ago

Now, you may think you're not good enough, but go back to the top paragraph. If you can row, and *you're still here*, you're good enough! For men in particular, there is a worldwide virtual rowing club that aims to compete at the Worlds level every year. Organized by Seattle rower **Art Wright**, these seniors call themselves the *Octos.* But more on them later.

Since I like the idea and the cachet of competing—and hopefully winning—at the international level, I was fortunate enough to be able to connect and compete with the Octos last September in Brandenburg an der Havel, near Potsdam in Germany. That was a *huge* deal, with 148 events over five days, and over 3,600 participants representing 721 clubs from 51 nations. In addition, the format at FISA WMR events—unlike the practice at most other regattas—divides all the entries in one event into *finals-only* races of maximum eight entries each. This means there are no qualifying heats. For example, if 80 boats are entered in an event, 10 finals-only races will be held. Only the first boat across the finish line in each race gets a medal—and it's gold. Everyone else in that race goes home a loser. Intimidated? Don't be.

Thanks to the work of one formerly local rower, **Burk Ketcham**, there is now more room and opportunity for those of us approaching the sunset of our lives. But remember, the sun hasn't set yet, so start thinking of following in Burk's footsteps. When he was 80, he felt unrecognized for his accomplishment of continuing to row beyond the then-oldest age category for FISA events: the "I" category, for all those over 75. He believed he shouldn't have to be pitted against those younger whippersnappers, so he organized a worldwide petition-signing effort to persuade FISA to create an 80+ age category, separate from younger competitors. Together with 200 other petition-signers from around the world, Burk convinced FISA to add the "J" age category for rowers 80 and over, which FISA did in 2009. (Side note: FISA now has K, L, and M age categories for 85–89, 90–94, and 95–99+ years old!)

In addition, Burk had almost single-handedly organized a virtual worldwide group of those newly recognized J'ers into *The Ancient Order of the OAR* (OAR = Octogenarian Active Rowers). The group began competing at the FISA World Rowing Masters Regatta in 2007 in Zagreb, Croatia. That first year, the group—which subsequently became known as the "Octos"—had 14 participants. The Octos went on to compete in every subsequent WRMR in Europe, Australia, the US,

South Africa, and, finally, Germany last September. That's where I came in.

Even though I'm not yet 80, Art Wright was kind enough to allow me to join the Octos and get boated in six different events in Brandenburg. Even though I am usually welcome in boats because I help bring the average age *up,* with Art's group, unfortunately, I helped bring the average age *down.* But it's not all bad. In Germany, a few of the Octos needed canes to get down to the launching dock, so carrying a boat can be a burden unless you have some younger guys to help shoulder that weight. The problem, of course, was where to stash the canes! But we gladly met the returning winners at the Gold Medal platform to hand them back their canes and help carry the shells back to the storage area.

> "The problem, of course, was where to stash the canes!"

So how did the Octos do at Brandenburg? Out of 28 men participating in Art's group, we won 42 gold medals. The goldest of the gold was Californian **Don Tanhauser**, age 90 and from the US, who won eight gold medals. Of course, there is one more benefit of continuing to row into our sunset years, and that goes back to the beginning of this story: *You're still here!* Remember, the WRMR format means that only the first participant across the finish line gets a gold medal. Well . . . if you happen to be the only entry in your age category in that event, *and* you show up at the starting line, *and* you cross the finish line—well, just row over to the medal dock after your race and collect your gold.

I am not embarrassed to say that I "earned" a gold medal in the J men's pair (2-) with my 84-year-old partner in that fashion. It's not my fault that most other rowers don't like the pair and didn't bother to show up at Worlds. And, gold is gold!

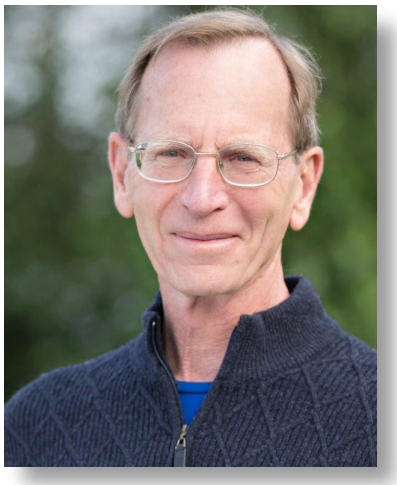
Isn't life good?

In a recent letter to me, Burk said that at 99, he still gets on his erg every day. He is active in writing fiction and in acrylic and watercolor painting. Rowing may be one of his best secrets for longevity.

Burk turns 100 on March 25. We wish him a happy birthday! We oldsters also want to express our deep and heartfelt appreciation for all he has done to expand our rowing opportunities. His efforts encourage and allow those of us still here to find a place on the world stage, one where we can still step into a rowing shell and head out to the starting line for one more run down the course—often with real gold at the end of the rainbow!

Thank you, Burk. We are all indebted to you for everything you have done for us and for this sport.

—Dale Peschel



If you would like more information on joining the Octos, contact us at lwrcnewsletter@comcast.net.

PASS THE WORD

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

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We thank and appreciate all the officials who make regattas possible!

Making Regattas Possible

Referees: "Official, but not officious"

This unofficial motto explains how US Rowing referees undertake their role overseeing safety and fairness at regattas. A "good" regatta is one where the referees remain almost unnoticed. A successful regatta requires numerous volunteers including dockmasters, launch drivers, warm-up marshals, and finish-line timers. Referees have emerged from the purely volunteer category and now enjoy designated parking, a complimentary lunch, and—generally—a small stipend from the Local Organizing Committee in return for running the regatta in a safe, fair, organized, and on-time manner. The rowers are appreciative, and each referee has the satisfaction of a job well done and of having worked alongside a good crew of seasoned fellow officials. A US Rowing Championship Membership is also given to the referees.

As a sport, rowing is enjoying significant growth in both Juniors and Masters categories, especially in the Northwest. In fact, unlike other areas, the Northwest region requires three days to complete each of the Junior and Master Regional Championship regattas. Many other regattas require a complement of referees. Once licensed, a referee can travel to other regions and apply to be named to the jury for national regattas.

So if you have a closet full of medals (or don't) and would like to wear the badge as a US Rowing referee, there is always room for more. You can find the process described on the USRowing website by clicking on COMMUNITY and then scrolling down to REFEREES. And you can always inquire with any referee at regattas.

—Alex Parkman, USRA referee

