

# HUSKY CREW NEWSLETTER

A Washington Rowing Stewards Publication

March 2010

## Inside: VBC Banquet and Class Day Details

### A Legacy of Champions

We lost two Husky champions in the last few months and it reminded us of the debt we owe to a special group of men who returned from World War II, took up Washington oars and set new standards for our school and the sport. There is no Husky rowing era that shines more brightly than those post-war years.

**Rod Johnson** died in December and **Norm Buvick** followed him in death in January. They were teammates, fraternity brothers, champions and legends in the sport.

As Huskies, they each won four Class Day titles, four varsity letters, and more important races than most Huskies have before or since. But their fame rests on more than victories; it was the impact of the victories, the emphatic message they delivered to the rowing world that power had shifted to the West.

In 1947 following the IRA in which Rod and Norm's freshmen boat won, 11 eastern varsity crews came west for the first Seattle Sprints. Unhappy with the performance of his varsity at the IRA, Ulbrickson put eight freshmen in the boat for the race and they came in third. In 1948, the Huskies swept the IRA. The varsity was nosed out by Cal in the Olympic trials but the 4+ won and then took gold at the London Olympics (see article on page 2). In 1949, the last IRA held at Poughkeepsie, Cal edged the varsity but the JV and freshmen won. Then in 1950, the first IRA held at Marietta, Ohio, the Huskies once again swept the regatta.

Sixty years have passed since that brilliant period when Norm and Rod wore the purple and gold but we can think of no better way to recognize them and their magnificent teams than to shine the light on them.

G. Rodney Johnson was a Seattle product and, like Norm, a proud Scandinavian. It was Rod who was featured in the June 20, 1948, issue of *Life* magazine in a photo spread that illustrated the method and power of the Conibear stroke, and described the legacy that so many Washington oarsmen created as champions and coaches.

Those *Life* photographs were used in last December's issue of the *Husky Crew Newsletter* in a gold medal article by **Michael Callahan**. In

a stroke of unfortunate irony, Rod passed away just days before the newsletter was mailed, but he had the opportunity to work with Michael on the piece as it was developed.

Like his father before him, Rod Johnson became a successful general contractor but he made time in his life for many activities. He sang in the choir of his church for fifty years and remained an avid rower throughout his life. His typical routine was to row with his long-time friend and pair partner, Bill Cameron, three times a week and with the Ancient Mariners an additional three times a week. With both Bill and the Mariners, he competed throughout the world right up through his last days. His friend Bill described Rod best when he said in a eulogy, "There exist aphorisms such as 'a lawyer's lawyer.' Transposed to Rod, he was a nice guy's nice guy."

Norm Buvick was raised in Seattle, Alaska, Hawaii and California but he was always a Washingtonian. He enlisted in the Army in 1943 and attended the University of Washington on the GI Bill. He was a terrific athlete whose leadership skills never waned. In 1950, his teammates elected him captain.

Norm entered the oil business after graduating and ended up in Southern California. Along the way he had five children but found



**1950 Varsity - Wisconsin Race**

Roger Baird (s), Rod Johnson (7), Al Ulbrickson, Jr. (6), Norm Buvick (5), Ken Walters (4), Bob Young (3), John Audett (2), Carl Lovsted (b), Tren Griffen (cox)  
(photo courtesy of Tren Griffen)

time from 1970 to 1990 to compete in masters swimming in which he was nationally ranked in his age classification. Norm had a strong reputation for his warm, outgoing nature, and for his long dedication to community service. And he was a Husky to the end.

One of the last comments Norm Buvick made to his daughter as he lay dying was to be sure to take care of the Husky Crew when he was gone. A line in his obituary requested that in lieu of flowers, contributions be made to the Husky Crew Scholarship Fund. Conversations between Norm and Rod's families and the university's development office continue.

## 1948 Olympic Games—Bringing It Home

Do you know the story of the Clipper Too? Do the names **Gus Giovanelli, Bob Martin, Warren Westlund, Bob Will, and Allen Morgan** sound familiar? They should. It was this quintet who took the Clipper Too to London for the 1948 Olympics and came home with the 4+ gold medal. And now their story has a new twist and a new ending.

After winning the Gold medal race on the Henley course at the London Olympics, the athletes from all the teams gathered for a huge party on the lawn. "After the party," Bob Will said, "we all headed for the bridge and town and spied a two foot wide gold Olympic medallion. Giovanelli, our bowman, hoisted Al up on his shoulders to 'rescue' it."

The rescue caused the medallion to break into several pieces but they were held together by burlap, a material used in plaster constructions back then. The medallion was shipped home with the Clipper Too and remained in storage for 60 years.

Fast forward sixty years. **Michael Callahan** found the pieces and took them to **Al Sherman** of Shop 53 – Masons and Plasterers, a unit of the University's Facilities Services. "Can this be repaired?" he asked Al.

"Sure," Al said, "I'll get back to you with an estimate."

When he heard the cost, Michael knew there were too many demands on the rowing budget in these hard times. He told Al he would have to pass on the repair.



Left to right the guys are: Van Sherod, Larry Mancinelli, Mike Abbott (holding medallion), Al Sherman, Tom Morse, Richard LaPeer

That remarkable acknowledgement of debt to the lessons learned under Al Ulbrickson and as a teammate of champions attests to the spirit of so many other Washington graduates.

Why is it that so many older alumni support the Husky rowing program? We suspect there are many reasons that coalesce in the words gratitude and debt. If so, it is fitting that we return that gratitude and sense of debt in full measure to the Husky greats we have just lost. They will both be missed.

Al Sherman didn't give up. His team, after all, works in a space whose walls are lined with a complete collection of signed Windermere Cup posters. With a keen sense for the history of the medallion, he asked **Rick Cheney**, the Director of Facilities Services, if his team could work on the restoration on its own time. The answer was no, but after thinking it through, Cheney said: "Go ahead with the project. I'll find the money in my own budget somehow and worry about it later."

The Shop 53 team got to work. **Van Sherod**, carpenter, constructed a special frame and strap to hold the medallion for repair. **Larry Mancinelli** and **Mike Abbott**, master plasterers, then prepared the pieces, added new burlap, a new hanging mount for the back, and special work along the break lines. Then, using materials that matched exactly those used in 1948, and plastering techniques that have been nearly lost to the world because of new methods and materials, they restored the piece to its original condition. **Tom Morse** painted the ground and **Richard LaPeer** applied gold leaf to the raised design. LaPeer, incidentally, letters the names on all our shells. The results were perfection.

But the story doesn't end there. Just a few days after Al returned the completed medallion to Callahan, **Bob Will** made it down to Conibear with a surprise of his own. He brought with him a shadow box constructed some years earlier by his son to display a bow piece of that very same Clipper Too and photos of the race finish and the medal awards. The Clipper Too had a long career after the '48 Olympics but when it finally deteriorated to the point that **Stan Pocock** called it too fragile to repair, he gave the wood splinter, which includes the shell's name and chevrons, to Bob.

It's called serendipity, friends. The bow piece, photos and medallion are on display in the Windermere Cup Dining Room at the Conibear shellhouse so come on down for a look. And as you do, join us in sending our thanks to Rick Cheney, Al Sherman, the guys of Shop 53, Stan Pocock, Bob Will and his son for their contributions. Artists, craftsmen and Huskies; each of you has a solid place in our family and in our hall of fame.

## Oh Canada!! By Bob Ernst

Being the sports junkie that I am, I was glued to the TV watching the Winter Olympic Games for two weeks. I was so pleased with the way the games have developed. What a success story, not only for Canada but for our entire region.

Hosting the Olympic Games is a tough business – years of planning, tons of money, and unbelievable risk are involved. To see the views of the snow capped mountains, wonderful shots of the Gulf Islands and people from all over the world reveling in what we call home is amazing. NBC even did a special on “Float Planes” – probably the same ones that dodge us on Lake Union!

I even have a pair of coveted red Canadian Olympic mittens given to me by our rowers. For days I have been bursting with pride for the job the Canadians have done and the beauty and thrills they have brought to the world.

Canadians have been key players in our winning crews: Blair Horn, Marius Felix, Dave Calder, Rob Gibson, Will Crothers, Max Lang, Nicole Borges and now Anthony Jacob, Conlin McCabe, Rosie De-Boef, Erika Shaw and many more. World class athletes who have pulled an oar for Washington and then gone on to win Olympic and World Championships with the red maple leaf on their oars for Canada, make us all proud.

I intend to call all of our Canadian athletes together and remind them of how proud they should be of these tremendous Olympic Games in British Columbia. We all need to reflect on how lucky we are to live in the Northwest and more important how fortunate we are to have our wonderful Canadian neighbors.

Well done, Canada!



## Meet the Tom McCurdy '52

Welcome the Tom McCurdy '52 to Conibear shellhouse. The new design Pocock eight is the latest in a long line of McCurdy boats, a tradition that goes back to the mid-1950s.

The boat was christened with Montlake Cut finish line water by **Betty McCurdy** just after her husband, **Jim**, gave a short speech about his brother and his family's commitment to Washington rowing. Looking on were the three McCurdy children, their spouses, the McCurdy grandchildren, and a large contingent of student athletes, coaches and fans. Betty told everyone that she was delighted to do the christening honors at the ceremony for more than the normal reasons; it was her future brother in law, Tom, she said, who introduced her to Jim.

**Tom McCurdy**, like his father Horace, was an oarsman. After Tom's untimely death, Horace and Jim thought a donated shell

for the Washington rowing program would be a fitting memorial. The tradition has continued in this community-spirited and philanthropic family through the last half century and more. Since that first eight, Conibear Shellhouse has never been without a McCurdy shell in its racks.

Jim McCurdy was an All American center for the University of Washington football team and was the PI Sports Star of the year in 1948, but he keeps the memory of his brother alive with his support of the rowing team with both the boat donations and an endowment in the name of his brother.

There is no way to thank the McCurdy family sufficiently for their long support of our program but we will do our best to make sure they know how much we appreciate their involvement.



## VBC Banquet

It's going to be another sellout so get your reservation in today! Seriously, **Al Erickson** has sold out this event the last three years so don't be left outside looking in. The date is March 26, time is 6:00 p.m., and the location is – where else? – Conibear Shellhouse.

Al and the coaching staff have put together another great program for you. The festivities begin with the traditional reception followed by dinner, the program, and the induction of the newest members of the Varsity Boat Club.

The cost is \$40 but you can help the program by signing up as a sponsor at \$65 or as a patron at \$100.

The registration form follows. Fill it out today, enclose your check made out to the Washington Rowing Stewards, and mail it today to the address below.

**Special Note.** Sound Transit construction has begun so you might want to avoid the large stadium parking lot. Parking passes for E-8 (Conibear Shellhouse parking lot) can be purchased for \$7.00 inside the boathouse from 6:00pm-7:00pm on the day of the banquet. Parking is also available for \$7.00 in the pay lot to the north of the boathouse. All parking is cash only. Detailed parking directions can be found on [www.huskycrew.org](http://www.huskycrew.org) so you might be wise to read and print out the parking instructions there.

See you there!

### VBC BANQUET 2010 - Registration Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Number of tickets at \$40.00 each \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of **Sponsor** tickets at \$65.00 each \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of **Patron** tickets at \$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \_\_\_\_\_

I want to sit with the following people \_\_\_\_\_

I am a friend/parent of current athlete \_\_\_\_\_ and would like to sit with them.

Make checks payable to the **Washington Rowing Stewards** and mail them to:  
University of Washington Rowing, Attn: Katie Gardner, Box 354070, Seattle, WA 98195

## Class Day: 2010

Competition has been fierce over the last few years for the bragging rights that go along with victory in this highly spirited opener to the spring racing season.

**Bob Ernst** and **Michael Callahan** will tell you that the seniors are favored in both the women's and men's races but they say that every year. On the men's side, we like the class of 2012 and we expect them to show the field what wire-to-wire racing is all about. After all, these guys have never lost and they are the reigning national champions.

On the women's side, the Senior class of 2010 are the reigning champions, and they are looking to finish their careers with a repeat performance. They will have some tough competition from the other classes, and we expect this race to be down to the wire. We think it could be the race of the day. Don't miss it. Racing begins at 9:00am.



**Class Day Champions 2009** - Front (from left): Justin Hopkins, Jeff Gibbs, Ambrose Puttmann, Jay Thompson, Laura Denman. Back (from left): Rob Munn, Conlin McCabe, Tom Lehmann, Mathis Jessen, Luke McGee

## Cruise with Croissants and BBQ

Once again, **Dwight Phillips** has arranged the popular **Cruise with Croissants** on board the Goodtime II. It's a "can't miss" party for those who like to see races from start to finish and close enough to see the effort and sweat. It helps that there is a warm cabin with great breakfast snacks and coffee just steps from the rail. To catch a ride on the Goodtime, send a check made out for \$35.00 to Washington Rowing Stewards to Dwight Phillips at 24,319 Crystal Lake Rd. Woodinville, WA 98077. The boat will leave the dock at the Waterfront Activities Center at precisely 8:15am so don't be late. Due to Sound Transit construction near Husky Stadium, Parking Permits will ONLY be available

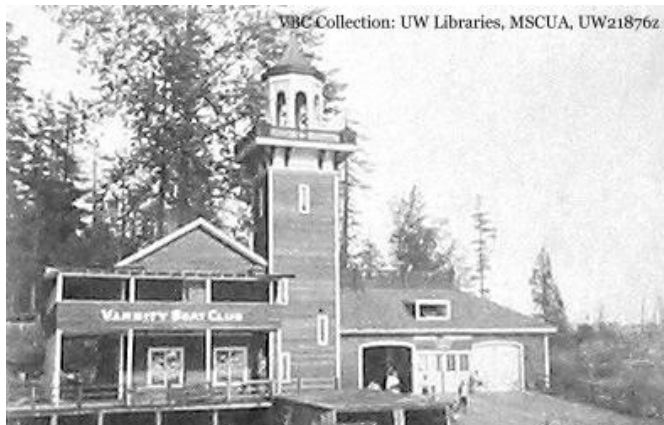
for purchase at time of check at the Waterfront Activities Center. Cost is \$6.00, cash or check only.

When the racing is over, be sure to gather at the shellhouse apron for the traditional **Stewards BBQ** and awards ceremony. **Tristine Drennan** and her team will have another fine lunch for you. **George Teasdale** tells us that some sort of cooking skills competition has been scheduled, so with that and el Niño weather, you know it will be a great, sunny party after the races.

Be sure to be there for this annual party.

## 100 Years of the VBC by Michael Callahan

This year marks the 100 year anniversary of the Varsity Boat Club. The Varsity Boat Club was established by the first varsity head coach **Hiram Conibear** as a social organization for all the upperclassmen who rowed on the team. The Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition (AYP) was a world's fair held in Seattle in 1909, publicizing and developing the Pacific Northwest. In 1909 Conibear procured the Coast Guard Station and the lighthouse, built for AYP, as the new crew headquarters. This building, at the foot of "Pay Streak", the main amusement corridor linking the upper exhibits to the lower fair, would become the new Varsity Boat Club in 1910.



**Bill Collins '66** recently gave me a reel to reel audio tape from 1965. I asked Laurel Sercombe, an Archivist in our Ethnomusicology Division on upper campus if she could take a look at it, and we were able to recover the audio from the antiquated tape. To my delight, the tape started with **Fil Leanderson's** introduction of **George Pocock** as the keynote speaker of the 1965 Varsity Boat Club Banquet. I didn't have the opportunity to meet either of these men or hear their voices, so it was great to be able to hear their words straight from them.

Many of you rowed or were coached by Fil and many more remember the days when George would pontificate about rowing, the world around, and life. Some were lucky enough to have rowed in the boats George's hands made. I have relied on reading his famous notes left in Washington's boats before key moments in our history, or even flipping the pages in *Ready All Row*. When George's voice came over my computer speakers I was

mesmerized, hanging on every word. I listened to it three times in a row, hoping to take some of his wisdom with me to that afternoon's turnout. For me it was like hearing your great grandfather's voice for the first time, one of the patriarchs of this great program and legacy at the University of Washington. To hear the voice of one of the men on whose shoulders we are currently standing was a meaningful experience.

George delivers a message of harmony, balance and rhythm to the inductees and other attendees at the Varsity Boat Club banquet, and it remains as fresh and meaningful today as it was then. If you would like to hear George's comments from 1965, you can listen to it at the following link: [www.huskycrew.org](http://www.huskycrew.org).

At the 2010 Varsity Boat Club Banquet we will celebrate 100 years of the fraternal and social aspect of the Washington Rowing Program. **Al Erickson '82**, the Steward of the VBC banquet, has kept this tradition alive and thriving. I'm always reminded of the contributions people have made to the rowing program and the Varsity Boat Club. The mission of the Varsity Boat Club is as alive today as it was in 1910 and 1965. Here's to the next 100 years of the VBC!

One final note from the AYP. As part of the cultural celebration of the fair, Igorot Tribesmen - indigenous people of the Philippine mountains - put on a show of native dances. Conibear, in a way only he could, began to reference his freshmen as "igorotes", said in a way that every syllable dripped with a certain disdain. Although today such a reference would be unthinkable, please keep in mind the times. In fact, it was in the counter-culture revolution of the sixties that the name evolved into the as-endearing "gruntie" that is invoked today.

Many of you have been in the Conibear captain's room, and seen the photos of all of the UW Rowing captains throughout history. Unfortunately, our record of VBC officers is not as comprehensive as our record of captains. With this being the 100 year anniversary of the VBC, I think it is a perfect time to start to rebuild that record. Were you the Commodore of your class? Do you know who the VBC officers were during your time as an oarsman? If so, please send me an email or give me a call so that we can complete this record. The VBC is such a critical part of the history of rowing at the University of Washington.

## PoWer<sup>3</sup> Campaign Update

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary alumni, fans and friends.

We are happy to report that our poWer<sup>3</sup> campaign is ahead of schedule. To date, we have raised \$222,000 in cash gifts, an additional \$67,000 in cash gifts to existing endowments, and \$113,000 in pledges for the next two fiscal years. These numbers put us ahead of our revenue last year at this point and, happily, we have expanded our donor base.

But, as good as this progress appears, we still have a long way to go to cover our expenses during this reduced endowment payout period. Remember, beyond the normal deficit we have tradition-

ally funded with the Annual Appeal, we have an **additional** annual shortfall of approximately \$250,000 until the Board of Regents revisit the endowment payout policy. All sources indicate that the review is still scheduled for 2013. That means that we need to find something over \$200,000 by the end of the current fiscal year (June).

We also need volunteers who are willing to talk to their classmates and friends. To date, the work has been done by a handful; we need more of you if we are going to reach our goal. If you are willing to make a few calls for us, contact John Wilcox on 206 443-3344 or Mike Hess on 206 571-5613. Call today.

### PoWer<sup>3</sup> Pledge/Gift Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home or Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ **3 Year Pledge.** *I want to support the Husky Crew with a 3 year pledge as follows:*

2009 \_\_\_\_\_ 2010 \_\_\_\_\_ 2011 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Check or credit card info enclosed for 2009. Please bill me in \_\_\_\_\_ (month) for 2010 and 2011.

\_\_\_\_ **1 Year Gift.** *Sorry, a one year gift makes the most sense for me right now.*

#### Payment Information

\_\_\_\_ Credit Card (V/MC/Amex) Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Check (Payable to University of Washington)

Return to: University of Washington Athletics, Attn: Husky Crew Fund, Tyee Office – Box 354070, Seattle, WA 98195

(CREWFC/64-1511)

## Notable News



**Top Scholar-Athlete.** Coxswain **Sam Ojserkis** received notification recently that he had the highest grade point average among University of Washington male student-athletes for autumn quarter 2009. Congratulations on your achievement, Sam, we couldn't be more proud.

**More Academics.** The men's varsity squad turned in the top GPA for autumn quarter, 2009, for teams with more than 20 student-athletes. Further, they were within a bow ball of the top scoring smaller teams. The Husky men placed 13 student-athletes on the Dean's list for the quarter.

**Hall of Fame.** Husky and Olympic champion, **Matt Deakin '02**, and Husky captain '02, will be inducted into the National Rowing Hall of Fame. Matt won the honor as the five seat in the 2004 Athens Olympic Gold Medal Eight. Also inducted as members of

the same eight, are two men with coaching connections to the University of Washington, **Bryan Volpenhein** and **Wyatt Allen**.

**Passings.** In addition to Norm Buvick and Rod Johnson, we lost **Ralph Warford '61**, a staunch supporter of the rowing program through the Holtz Scholarship, the Varsity Boat Club and the 101 Club, and a friend to legions of Husky fans.

### Interested in a Planned Giving Arrangement to Husky Crew?

Contact the **Tyee Club Office**  
[huskies@u.washington.edu](mailto:huskies@u.washington.edu)

or call Roy Shick on 206 221-2105

# Sports Star of the Year

The Seattle Sports Commission stepped up to the plate for the Seattle PI, took over the Sports Star of the Year program, and hit a home run .

Our own 1958 Husky varsity won the honors as the most memorable sports event of the last half century. It was **Al Ulbrickson's** last race and, fittingly, his last victory, and the event helped launch **Keith Jackson** in the national broadcast scene. The race marked the first athletic break in the Cold War and has remained a memorable event for many reasons. Most of the '58 bunch was on hand to receive their honors; it was a thrill to see them on the stage accepting their well earned award.

Our 2009 men's varsity was in the running for Sports Star of the Year but lost to the Huskies **Jake Locker**. Also in attendance and on the stage was **Jim McCurdy**, the oldest living Sports Star of the Year who won in 1948 for his exploits on the Husky football team, and a long time supporter of the Huskies and Husky Crew. (See article on page 3)

It was a great, successful affair with many old oars in attendance. Let's win it next year.



## Washington Rowing 2010 Schedule

March 27 - Class Day; Montlake Cut, Seattle, WA, 9:00 a.m.  
 April 3,4 - Stanford Invitational; Redwood Shores, CA, All Day  
 April 10 - Oregon State/WSU; Montlake Cut, Seattle, WA, 8:00 a.m.  
 April 24 - California; Redwood Shores, CA, 8:00 a.m.



May 1 - Windermere Cup; Montlake Cut, Seattle, WA, 10:00 a.m.  
 May 16 - PAC-10's; Sacramento, CA, All Day  
 May 28-30 - NCAA Championships (Women); Sacramento, CA, All Day  
 June 3-5 - IRA National Championships (Men); Cherry Hill, NJ, All Day



### Washington Huskies: 2009 National Collegiate Rowing Champions

Published by the Washington Rowing Stewards four times a year in October, January, March and June. Editor: John Wilcox Production Manager: Katie Gardner. Subscription free on request by email and regular mail. Send subscription requests to [kgardner@u.washington.edu](mailto:kgardner@u.washington.edu). Send submissions to [jwilcox3@msn.com](mailto:jwilcox3@msn.com). To unsubscribe, send an email titled "UNSUBSCRIBE" to [kgardner@u.washington.edu](mailto:kgardner@u.washington.edu).

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