



Alexandria Community Rowing

# ACR Sliding Seat

June 2005 issue

[www.rowalexandria.com](http://www.rowalexandria.com)

## Summer Sprints: Turning Up the Heat on the Potomac & Beyond

Time for our sprint season to begin! This month features numerous races, namely Stonewall Regatta on the Anacostia River two weekends ago, Schuylkill Navy this past one, and Charm City Sprints (Baltimore) and Carnegie Lake (Princeton) coming up this last weekend in June. Exciting stuff—good luck, everyone!

This month, to provide everyone with a better understanding of how our membership has grown and changed over the years and to help disseminate information to you about ACR spending and major equipment purchases, *Sliding Seat* will provide you with some presentations from Sally Reams. (This information was prepared last

winter and presented to the January ACR Steering Committee.)

This month offers info about ACR membership demographics and program growth, 1999-2005. The July issue will address major equipment purchases and sources of funding for those purchases, and August will cover ACR income and expenses. (See this link for the full presentation:

[www.rowalexandria.com/docs/membership\\_demographics.ppt](http://www.rowalexandria.com/docs/membership_demographics.ppt).)

It's officially summer now, with the solstice just past, so enjoy the flat water and warm temps while we have them. And, stay tuned for our newly approved dock extension... See you at the boathouse!

--KM

**Note from the Editor:** Send me stuff—news blurbs, articles, fun tidbits, etc. I want to hear from you, this *Sliding Seat* newsletter is a group effort! Write me at [Kathryn\\_mullan@hotmail.com](mailto:Kathryn_mullan@hotmail.com) ... Thanks—I look forward to hearing from you soon! ☺ --Kathryn

# WeCanRow—Making a Difference

BY DORIS PARKER

Over the weekend of May 13-15, 2005, a transformation occurred. Fourteen women arrived at Capital Rowing Club on Friday, and 14 rowers left on Sunday. This was not your ordinary learn-to-row weekend, however. All of the women who participated had been diagnosed with breast cancer, and learning to row was a means to their recovery.



*This was this year's DC group who participated in May 2005.*

WeCanRow (**Women Enduring Cancer Row**) is a program that originated in Boston at the Row As One Institute, Inc., and is quickly spreading throughout the country (see [www.rowasone.org](http://www.rowasone.org)). I learned of it during my recovery in 2003, having started rowing myself to get back in shape after a mastectomy and chemotherapy. I immediately started dreaming of how I could get a WeCanRow program to the D.C. area and 2 years later, in May of 2005, the dream came true.

There were many wonderful and unique aspects of this particular event. The 14 women who came bonded immediately. The weather held. Everything went as smoothly as planned. But, one of the most impressive things to me was the collaboration among the local rowing clubs. Capital Rowing Club generously hosted the event, but volunteers, contributions, and other offers of help came from ACR, Potomac Boat Club, D.C. Strokes, Thompson's, and Occoquan Boat Club. Working together, members of the various clubs got to know each other and presented a positive, cooperative impression to the novice rowers. I expect all of the clubs will benefit from new members as a result of this collaboration.

I would like to acknowledge the people from ACR who participated in the inaugural D.C. version of WeCanRow and thank them for their tremendous support and giving spirit: Michelle St. George and her friends Shane and Scott catered the weekend, and the food was a major highlight! Ruth Roberts coxed on Sunday, and Krista Maslyn helped register the

participants. Jack Hickey brought coffee, and Virginia Drewry was my personal cheering section. You guys are the best!

The new rowers want to form a twice-a-week recreation program or at least have a reunion later in the season. And we have been invited back by Capital to hold another learn-to-row weekend next spring. I hope more of you from ACR will take the opportunity to be a part of this very powerful and affirming experience. I can guarantee that you will be impressed and touched by the courage and joy displayed by the survivors as they learn to row, and to heal.

For more information, please contact me at [dparker271@comcast.net](mailto:dparker271@comcast.net).

The following message was sent to Michelle and the other major sponsors of the event from one of the participants: *"I wish to send you my personal thanks for sponsoring the "We Can Row" event for breast cancer survivors last weekend at the Capitol Rowing Club. To say this was a transformative weekend doesn't do it justice. I came into the weekend excited and hopeful that rowing would be as poetic as I had always imagined. What I came away with was beyond what I think any of us who participated could have wished for: a deeper awareness of my body and its capabilities; a full-bodied joy that is still reverberating in my cells from the knowledge that I did something I never thought I could do; and an overwhelming feeling of gratitude that life holds such surprises: from the dark experience of cancer comes such a life-affirming event.*

*There was such love and enthusiasm from all the volunteers that I was feeling successful before I ever stepped foot in the barge. It was a professional, class act: the amount of planning and attention to detail showed the entire weekend. Doris Parker, Holly Metcalf of Row as One, the Capitol Rowing Club, and all the planners and volunteers were completely focused on the participant's safety and comfort: they literally thought of everything. The food was fantastic, the yoga wonderful, and the lectures excellent: We were treated like star athletes, and I can't describe how that felt to women who have put their bodies through so much. It was run so smoothly, I can't think of a single thing they could have done better. Except to keep it going, as it is far too good to be a one-time event. So thank you a million times over for taking a chance on this, and recognizing the importance of offering breast cancer survivors an opportunity to stretch themselves in such a positive way. Please know that you have managed to keep a smile on my face non-stop for over a week now! And the women that participated have been burning up the Internet with discussions of how to keep rowing together. So, look for us on the water!*

*Blessings to you all, Carole O'Toole"*

# Announcements & Notices

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## Births, Weddings & the Like



*Our ACR girls look awesome in dresses, too—beyond spandex unis! Left to right: Janice, Becky, Jessica, Ellen, Angie, Lorea, and Jenn.*

On June 5, 2005, sculler Janice Kupiec married Todd Cohn in an outdoor ceremony at Woodend Estate, in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

In attendance were ACR members Ellen Zienta (maid of honor), Becky Hollins, Jessica O'Connor-Petts, Jennifer Bright, Lorea Wetten, Stephanie Doyal, and Angie Farinas. Other ACR “alums” included Brian Montgomery and Duncan Morhardt.

# News from the Teams...

## Women's 4-Day Sweep Program

### Christening of the New Nancy Dunning Women's Eight

BY SALLY REAMS



*Chris & Jim proudly presented this boat in honor of their mother & wife, Nancy Dunning.*

Joining the Women's 4-Day Sweep Team at the May 22<sup>nd</sup> christening ceremony were family members, Jim Dunning, Christopher Dunning, and two of Nancy's sisters, Patty Moran and Kathleen McNeil. Jim spoke on behalf of the family and expressed their appreciation for remembering Nancy in this way and for all the support they had received from the community.

There are several things in addition to rowing that our team had in common with Nancy, all of which are things that help bind our team together. Most of us are not only from the same generation as Nancy Dunning but also are mothers who were introduced to rowing through our children. The many rowing moms on our team, including those who didn't know Nancy personally, know and respect all that goes into being an active crew booster parent. Early in spring 2004, when we were talking about buying a new boat, and Karen Snyder suggested naming the boat after our friend, Nancy, everyone supported the idea.

We honor Nancy as a former dedicated crew booster parent, who spent 10+ years actively supporting the rowing endeavors of her family. Elizabeth Dunning rowed for TCW in high school, Chris rowed at TC and at Georgetown University, and Jim Dunning and Patty Moran are former ACR rowers. It didn't matter to us that Nancy was not a rower. As Liz Dunning wrote in the christening program, "Nancy dove into rowing—hosting boat dinners, going to races with her trusty video camera, and buying more dollars worth of supermarket dollars and t-shirts than she could have possibly needed. As always, Nancy didn't just show up as a parent or a spectator, she brought her energy and enthusiasm with her and found a lot to love and relate to in the world of TC Crew."

Nancy's name is on the boat as a way for us to remember the many hours that she and so many other parents have spent supporting this sport and making rowing opportunities possible for everyone who rows at this boathouse. I first met Nancy and Jim about 20 years ago in Del Ray, before Nancy sold real estate, before Jim became sheriff, and before I became a rower.

I recall in particular a conversation Nancy and I had about 10 years ago. She was sharing with great enthusiasm her real estate "brag book" with me, which was a scrapbook of her sales successes. What stood out most was how much she loved what she was doing. I told her I wished I could find a niche I loved as passionately as she loved real estate. She told me she was sure I would, and it was not long after that conversation that I found rowing!

Having her name on the boat will inspire us on the water to be as successful and passionate about racing, as Nancy was about selling real estate...and those of us who knew her will hear her cheers every time we cross the finish line.

The women's 4-Day Sweep Team raised the money for the boat through letter-writing campaigns, a huge multi-family yard sale, and more. We appreciate everyone who donated so generously so that we could have this boat. It's a dream-come-true for our team...

# Sculling Program

## Notes from the Mosquito Fleet

BY LOREA WETTEN

ACR's Open Sculling Team is a new team currently made up of 10 women and 2 (lucky) men. Some competitive scullers are returning for another season, whereas some are totally new members. We even have some defectors from the sweep program! The team is coached by Gus Mackay, who is new to ACR. Lots of thanks go out to Gus for agreeing to coach sculling and especially this jumble of a group!

One of the goals in forming this specific team is to develop specialized training and racing skills for scullers who are ready and committed to racing at a highly competitive level. This means committing to regattas such as Independence Day, Diamond States, and Master's Nationals where the competitive pool is

wider and more challenging. It also means committing to training in a variety of boat classes, namely the single, double, and quad.

Stonewall Regatta was a good start for the first official race of the first official season of the Open Sculling Team, medaling in pretty much every event (never mind the fact that ACR made up at least half the entries in each of our events) and sweeping the Women's 2x A and Women's 1x B events (never mind that all the event entries were ACR). A special round of support goes to our novice, Nathan Schuett, who participated in his first single event and left his competitor behind. Way to go, Nate! Definitely keep that novice classification for as long as you can!

## The Real Flip Test: The Entry

*[EDITOR'S NOTE: Unfortunately, although I DID save you some room here, we have no photos to print here—no live coverage of exciting flips that we have seen at ACR. However, we will install cameras out there—perhaps off our new dock??—for next time, scullers! @]*

June is usually the month when ACR conducts the flip test, a requirement for scullers to check out club singles. It's a dreadful thought, falling in and remembering the date of your last tetanus booster, but a necessary reality-check because the maxim is not "if it happens" but "when it happens".

The flip test in itself can be a great source of amusement, simply because one has to force upon oneself the act that is so desperately avoided. There are two basic flip test entry styles—the "just get in" style that involves as little fanfare as possible; and the dramatic entry that, for some, will require an Oscar nomination between the flailing and (optional) screaming.

However, in "The Real Flip Test," anything goes. Many rowers tell of the "I didn't see that one coming" flips. Rowers have reported being at a standstill, in calm water one second, then in the water the next.

Others tell of getting into their "zone" and finding their rowing groove, then suddenly finding themselves in the swimming event.

Gus Mackay, Open Sculling Coach, describes the experience of watching one of his rowers flip, as something that "seems so unnatural—the hands come off the oars—something you hardly ever see in rowing boats. The entry into the water is always ungraceful, like a cat trying to right itself when falling. Feet also come way up over the head."

Then, of course, there is the "too late when I saw that one coming." A good number of flips occur under circumstances when the rower realizes—a touch too late—that water entry is inevitable. For example, the rower tries to leave the dock with the starboard oar not pushed out (splash). Or, the rower is coming in and realizes that the approach is too close and too early, and that the oar will meet the pylon and pulls it in to avoid having to purchase another oar (kathunk-splash).

And there will always be a rower who realizes that the group has already left the dock and in the zeal to catch up, fails to notice the wake from the barge that ambled by (uh-oh, splash!).

*Note: Next "official" flip test is this Sunday, June 26.*

# ACR & Me (Part Two)

BY MARY CLAY BERRY



*ACR's First Men's 8, Head of the Occoquan, 1990.*

During the winter of 1991, Frede Ottinger started the first winter conditioning program. There were about seven of us, including two marines, large jovial men who ignored Frede's coaching. They left abruptly for some military engagement and we never saw them again. On the basis of our similar sizes and ages, Frede, an accomplished sculler, asked me if I would like to race a double with her. The club owned one Vespoli double by then, the first of a series of boats named for Royce Drake. I was flattered but, although I was strong, I wasn't yet a very good rower. Frede struggled with me for several months and we entered a sprint at the Occoquan. Frede stroked and I was bow. We had a perfect start, the first ever as far as I was concerned, and came in second. However, our next race was a disaster. Frede went back to single's rowing, and I joined a sculling class with Steve Weir.

Steve assigned Alice Reid, Bette Gorman, Anne Buck, and me to a quad. First we rowed the Douglas, then the club bought two Vespoli quads and we got to be the first crew to row the City of Alexandria. In various permutations, this quad continued for years. We rowed through Anne's divorce and departure for graduate school and then recruited Debbie Bigelow to take her place. Since Debbie wasn't keen on racing, Therese Crahan would join us for the quad race at the Head of the Schuylkill (where the pumpkin hats made their appearance). Then, Anneliese Schmidt joined us for a season, but when she had to stop (injury), we convinced Debbie to come back for the year's end.

One morning, we arrived at the boathouse to find a photographer from *U.S. News and World Report* on the dock. He went out in the launch with our coach. The water was rough, so we hugged Daingerfield Island.

Several weeks later, one of us opened the magazine to find that we were part of the lead article on "New Active Retirement." Since none of us was then (or is now) retired, we were annoyed to discover that he had picked our boat solely because of our graying hair!

I'm skipping through the years now. We had lots of rowing programs and lots of coaches. First, we hired our children. My daughter coached a men's four in which her father rowed. Her friend Pam Gordon coached me. Alice's son, Dave Digilio, coached several women in singles. Later Eric Peterson's son, Nick, a member of the National Team and an Olympian, was our coach. Another National Team coach was Charlotte Hollings, now of Calm Waters Rowing. Other coaches included Tom Burke, four of the five Rubinis, and a wonderful sculler named Bridget Sawitsky who was hugely pregnant at the time. Meanwhile, the club grew by leaps and bounds.

Almost by accident, I became ACR's first racing coordinator. This was before the arrival of Pete Stramese, so my job was to rent a U-haul truck to pull the ancient trailer the school system lent us and cajole some rower into driving it to the regatta. It was asking a lot of someone to row and drive both, particularly since the driver had to rent the truck using his or her credit card. However, there were rowers who never failed to come through as drivers: John Sheridan, Richard Hawe, Tom Fannon, my husband John (who rowed in those days) and Joan Schindel's husband Steve (who didn't). My husband's specialty was driving to the Head of the Schuylkill. Once there, he would vanish into the Canoe Club, reappear in a suit, and hail a taxi to take him to meet with the president of the Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank. Everyone at the bank inquired solicitously about the fortunes of ACR's team.

John also made the trailer's lights work. They were not compatible with those of a U-haul truck so he built a device resembling a land mine that we suspended between the truck and the trailer to get the lighting systems in sync. It got lost a number of times and had to be remade, a tiresome process. After five years, I was happy to relinquish this job, briefly to Deborah Sliz and then to Susie Gilbert, who had the grace to make it all seem easy.

ACR has grown and prospered through the years. Even the scullers have gotten organized, thanks to Allison Kornet (organizing scullers is a task akin to herding cats, so well done, Allison!). I wish I could say I've gotten stronger and faster but, alas, the world doesn't work that way.

I thought about giving up rowing at the end of last year, selling my boat and making a clean break of it, but then I thought, if I do that, I'll never see all my wonderful friends.