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150 Years of Women at Berkeley

Liz Miles

INTERVIEWED BY JEAN STRAUSS

Start off at the beginning. Where were you born and raised?

I was born and raised in Fresno, California, a family of five kids. My father, who figures in the story of the bit, was captain of the track team at Cal. Class of '32, '33. His mentor was Brutus Hamilton. The way my father revered him and my father didn't revere people, You know, just because we're just Hamilton was the type of coach we all want. You know, he was he was a mentor. He was kind and he was a superb coach.

Did you participate in any sports in high school?

I did. By high school. I was playing tennis. I was on the tennis team at Fresno High. I was, you know, reasonably good for a Fresno high school tennis. I had a lot of power and a lot of athleticism. You know, I just bashed the hell out of the ball and just had fun. And I think for about 5 minutes I was the number one single tennis player in high school tennis in Fresno. I didn't know how to have and I didn't particularly get coached, now I look in retrospect, on how to teach my brain how to manage competition. That's one of the things I got out of rowing. I had to teach my brain. It was a self taught process, but I was older and more self aware. I swam a little bit. Then I think I stopped swimming by high school. But I swam enough to respect swimming as a sport, but I realized that it wasn't for me. I said, I think I'm too dense.



Liz Miles at Briones

So I know you went to UC Santa Cruz and then you came to Cal. Why did you transfer and what were you studying when you got to Cal?

I transferred because I was floundering a little bit. Santa Cruz at that time, you know, was a beautiful campus. Really great academics in a way, but you were kind of on your own and it had no - which I thought I didn't need - I thought I was too cool for school - but it had no social core. It had no way really for people to coalesce into something other than a dorm or, you know, or maybe, you know, because you got along, you know, a group of lab rats or something. But it was kind of lonely. I had a group of friends and, you know, my sophomore year, we had a house down by the beach for probably \$100 a month or something. But I was just drifting and not in a bad way. Well, I was just not in a great place. I put in to transfer, and I think I put in transfers for University of Oregon, Berkeley, I think McGill

for some strange reason and I, and I got into Oregon and I was going to go there. And then I worked at a camp up in the Trinity Alps and made a friend with our little group of counselor friends. And one of the friends was at Cal. And she said, Oregon? Go to Cal!

And I kind of didn't because my dad went there. I wanted to, like, break away, but then I didn't know anybody at Oregon, so I thought, okay, I'll go, you know, I'll go to Cal. And I went to Cal, saw that person exactly once and ended up getting an apartment with a lifelong friend who I'm still friends with, from seventh grade French, on the north side, and so I had an apartment there and, then senior year went into I House. What I studied - you know this was in mid to late seventies - and the economy was totally unraveling. And all you heard about and all I saw around me with my three brothers and sister were kids with, you know, English degrees or history degrees or college degrees who couldn't get a job. And a lot of you know, I was picking that up in the ether. And so I disdained that as a college degree, in a way, I thought it was impractical. And even though it is probably something I'm more suited for, but I originally started studying geology and lit - literature - at Santa Cruz. By the time I got to Cal, it had evolved into I got into the college of natural resources and was studying soil science because I thought I'd pursue a career in agriculture in the Central Valley.

Okay. So you're a senior at Cal. How on earth did you end up on the crew team?

That's what I was thinking of this morning. Sometime in my junior year, I tried out for the tennis. I think it was junior year. I don't think it was in the fall and senior year. It may have been I tried out for the tennis team and in a complete absence of self awareness. You know, I don't think I'd played tennis for two years and and I walked on to the you know, and got into the tryouts and bashed my way around the court and, you know, didn't do all that badly, but I didn't make the team. And, uh, and so I was still wandering around looking for something to do. And I was in her Hearst Gym and saw this poster, and that was a recruiting poster for crew and I now, I have this image in my brain of myself standing there staring at it. And in my mind, what was going on was it was the fall of '76. The Olympics had just completed in Montreal. And I remember I was completely, you know, besotted with the Olympics. And I watched and I remember watching the crew races with my dad. And my dad, who, you know, Cal in 1932 and '33 was a smaller place. And of course, in Athletics, you know, everybody and he knew all the guys in that boat because it's a '32 Olympic eight, that Cal won the trials and that was a Cal boat. He knew all those guys and he really admired those guys. Yeah, same sort of high bar in a way as the Bruce Hamilton thing, which I've never really thought about, but I paid attention to who my father admired. And he rattled off their names. I remember Winslow Hall, who he much admired, who I think became a federal judge or something. And he said, it's great sport. It's, you know, great people, you know, and these guys, those are the guys I knew were all great guys. And it just stuck. And so there I am three months later and Hearst Gym still looking at it and that and sort of being drawn to it because what that was all I knew about rowing and also the image of these guys crossing the line, which I do remember and collapsing, you know, they're going along and it looks so fluid and it looks effortless, as everybody says, and they cross the line and they absolutely collapse. And that struck me. And what I don't remember, interestingly now, as I was thinking about this, is I don't remember watching the women. I don't know that they were broadcast. I honestly don't recall that. Maybe they were. Maybe they weren't. But somehow my lens was my dad's knowledge of the '32 eight. And there I was standing in the Gym with that awareness. And then the other part of the poster said, you know "We welcome walk ons and novices. And rowing is the type of sport" (I don't

know how they said it, but this is what the impression was) "Rowing's the type of sport where, you know, if you really work hard and are good, you can get into the varsity eight in first year." You can get in. You know it's not like tennis where it takes years and years. And that struck me as an opportunity. And then the then the other thing was, is that Nationals in that year were in Philadelphia and the balance just went 'Ding!' because my oldest brother lives and still does live outside Philadelphia. And I thought literally, I thought, you know, a free trip to Philadelphia. Great.

So I went to the recruiting meeting and watched that "Symphony in Motion" Pocock film, and Daig and Dean Wright were up there and there we all were in some auditorium and some classroom. And I signed up. And instantly was connected to it. It was. I remember, you know, it was just this is finally I found what I was looking for. And it was just, you know. I just like the people. The van rides. You know, the thing I was looking for that I couldn't find. I'm going to find it and send it to you. Or maybe you have this. The one time I made the Daily Cal, I was in a photograph. And then, you know, even before they got to the barge, even before they got the barge down on Aquatic Park, they set up a kind of funky tanks, rowing tank situation in the reflecting pool in Hearst Gym. And so there's this picture of (I forget now who) somebody rowing along in the reflecting pool in Hearst Gym with Daig and Dean kind of looking in a Dean sort of way, and three others of us watching this. And the caption was, you know, "New recruits for Cal Women's Crew" or something. And I just love that, you know, in this age of, you know, very early Title Nine that our rowing tank was a reflecting pool in Hearst Gym.

That's where they put me. The first time. I even knew how to row, and they still stuck me down there. How many people were on the team back then?

Oh, I don't know. I don't know. There were probably 40 or something, you know, or up to 40. There was. Maybe not that many. I don't know. I don't know. You know, Varsity eight, JV eight, lightweight eight, maybe a four.

What do you remember about the first time you were in a boat?

I can remember - I think it was the Miss Italy, too. I remember getting in and thinking, this is really small and that I was really close to the water. It was just, you know, it was like, whoa. (laughing) The thing I remember is, you know, some months later, it must have been a box of rocks, because I was rowing along totally loving it out there around the turn at Briones, you know? So it not way in the back, right around the turn, rowing along, and I remember wondering, "does anybody ever row with all the oars off the water?".

And just was just a complete shit show. I had these moments of complete arrogance and naivete. It's like, wow, do they really row with oars off the water?

Do you remember anything about that first Fall? Did you race at the Head of the Harbor or anything like that, or was it all just working on Briones mainly?

I didn't race. I think that San Diego race in the spring was my very first race. I didn't race. What I remember of the fall in Briones were, you know, these these are my anecdotes that are sort of stuck in my head. I've always remembered one is that, you know, to me, Daig O'Connell's great ability, the thing that I benefited most from Daig O'Connell was that he imprinted these really basic concepts that have been true and remain foundational through my entire rowing career. Stayed with me all through

it. And I think they are so basic that many coaches don't do it. And one is - YOU NEVER QUIT. It's like -you never quit on the course. You're going to feel crummy, you're going to be losing, you'll be winning. Whatever's going on. But you never, ever, ever back off. And he somehow said that in a way that just locked in, in my brain. You never back off. You can be - and I have been - many lengths down, again, you know, I'm just like hammering along. And that was perfect for me. So that was one thing.

The other thing that I did that was the other end of the spectrum (to my cluelessness) was, it was - in those early rows. You know, you'd row by pairs, and row by fours. We were out at Briones. And it was boring. Because you'd sit there and they'd go by pairs, especially early on and there was nothing to do. And so I took a book out, because I like to read and I couldn't study, so I might as well read some book. And I remember I was in I was like in four seat or something and I was reading my book while people are doing pairs and Daig came over and was like, "What are you doing?" And I looked up and it was sort of this - uh oh. Is this bad? - sort of moment. And I was like...I'm reading. And he's like, "Don't do that. Put it away." And I was like, okay, so that was another good lesson. I took that to heart.

And then the rest of that fall was - you know it to me - I didn't mind it. Everybody says, oh my God, I've got to get up at 6:00. Which was mildly annoying for a minute, but I'm sort of a nature girl, and you go out to Briones at 6:00 in the morning and you know - what's not to like? It's absolutely beautiful. And so the early mornings, just the sense of - it was just fun. You know, everybody's funny and nice. Betsy Jake. Every Monday would recite the latest Saturday Night Live skit. Usually it was the Roseanne Roseannadanna and the whole drive, she would go through Saturday Night Live. And it was just hilarious. And so there are just these. You know, it was all that just pure delight.

So you got through the fall. You get into the spring. When did you find out that you made a boat that was going to get to race at the crew Classic?

I don't really remember. I don't remember. I was excited. I didn't have any concept of what the Crew Classic was. And it was a much smaller race then. And it was over in the other bay over perpendicular to the current course. But it was a big deal and I was so excited to be traveling with them. The thing about that - that may or may not be worthy of note was - for some reason, this would never be allowed today - Annie Simpson, whose ambition was to be a pilot, invited four of us, three or four of us, to fly with her down to the to San Diego in some four seater small airplane. And I probably told my parents, I don't think my mother was fond of the idea if I did. But we did. We flew down and Annie's in there, flying along and looking down. And I remember looking down at the coast range and it just was an extraordinary sort of thing to do then and now. And now you couldn't do it.

But we went down and the race was, you know. Whatever Daig told me about not giving up, he didn't tell me about arranging my mind for a race. And I went absolutely nuts. I was in the four and I just pulled my brains out and over-stroked everybody else in the boat. It was just a box of rocks. It was terrible. But I pouted all the way home. But it was, you know. My first race.

I think you impressed some people, but you also earned the nickname of the eggbeater, I think.

Yeah, exactly. There was one thing where, you know, my senior award. They gave me a mens oar. Because I was relatively stronger and nobody you know, we had these kind of uninformed, not particularly well-organized or well-understood, weightlifting workouts that we did like five times I

think. It wasn't nearly as organized as it is in these days, but I was just sort of naturally strong. And so they gave me a men's oar which was two inches longer than the other oars, to kind of slow me down. It didn't help me with my stroke rate, however. So.

Do you remember doing the other kind of training? Do you remember? Or the fire trails? You remember the stadium at all?

Yes. Oh, yeah. And stadiums were hard. I never did do a whole around the world thing, whatever that's called. Fire trail was great. I loved it. It was out in the woods, sort of. And the view. But the thing about the fire trail was the first time we ran, you couldn't even make it to the bottom of the connector. Six weeks later, you're crawling up the connector. And then by the end of the year, you can do the whole thing. And that was cool. I remember being very amazed with how that worked. Actually, you get better. The fire trail was the place... I kind of remember the turn that was past the connector, and it was kind of the last turn before you go up to the bench. And one of those inside turns. And that was the first place where, for whatever reason, I thought maybe I could try out for the Olympics. That's where the Olympic sort of draw connected. And again. And I think it was like in January or something. It was really early on and it must be that Daig had been talking about the Olympics, that the women rowed. Something must have spurred it. And that's where it kind of became a thought that that might be a possibility. So that was the Fire Trail for me.

Stadiums were just hard. I remember watching you on stadiums. You had come in late or something and you were like, you know, dashing up and down like crazy. And I was like, Well. That was crazy.

Yeah. I started in March. When did you know you were good? On the water. To me, what fascinates me about your story, about you as an athlete was, we were on the quarter system. You started late September. And within October, November, December, you know, like five months, you're at the Crew Classic. And by the end of that year, even in January, you're thinking - sort of very high aspirations. But on the water. When did you know you were good?

I didn't equate the two. I never would have called myself that (good). And I still, in a way, wouldn't except, you know.

Except you were.

In the first year, I never would have called myself good. It wasn't out of any sort of disingenuous sort of aw shucks thing. It was like I literally didn't think that way. It must have been because I was strong. And I just loved it. And I thought it was a possible path for me to the Olympics

In sixth grade, I wrote an essay that I wanted to be in the Olympics because I was all besotted with Wide World of Sports. That theme song and watching the Olympics and it was so cool. And it's like - I want to do that just like everybody else does. It's like I want to do that and. And I want I wrote this essay in sixth grade. I want to be in the Olympics on the tennis team, on the swim team, on the equestrian team and on, you know, everything but rowing because didn't know about rowing. But I can do all those things and I want to be in the Olympics. And in spite of the naivete of doing it in, you know, 18 different sports, it was a true ambition. It was a true, sort of, I want to go there. But by high school I knew that wasn't a possibility. And so, I'd given it up, without knowing that I'd given it up. And then that day on the fire trail, it came back around as - well maybe this is something I could do it in.

You ended up going on that travel squad to Philadelphia and forgive me, but I don't remember what boat you were in. Were you in the four? You were in the eight, weren't you?

I was in the eight. Probably in the four seat. I raced the whole year in the J.V. and then he put me in the eight for Philadelphia. So I squeaked in.

And do you have any memories of that trip or that race?

I don't have I don't remember the race too much. I was just kind of thrilled to be there. It was really cool to be in a totally different environment. You know, it's that sort of lush East coast humid, green place and very different from what I'd grown up with. I love the river. Where did we boat out of? Did we row out of Canoe Club? I don't remember. I don't think we were down in Boathouse Row.

We were. We have pictures of us on boathouse row, and I was in the eight that won the silver - the lightweight eight. And we threw Robin in off the dock. I think we rowed out of Vesper.

Really?

You were in varsity. Do you remember how you guys did.

Not really. Fourth maybe. I don't remember. Do you know?

I don't know. Do you remember where we stayed?

I remember the door when our. (laughing) I mean, the facade of that little townhouse thing. Was it Westchester State or something?

It was the Textile Institute.

That's right. Textiles. Textiles? Yeah, that's right.

Great townhouses. We each had our own bedroom.

I remember that more than my race.

I look back on Philadelphia. What was interesting to me was how do lifelong friendships get made? And it's like, I don't know, sometimes over the course of just like an hour. At the end of a trip where we weren't even in boats together. But we had some laughs and yeah.

We were messing around and teasing each other, but yeah, and I don't remember. Yeah, I remember you on the stairs at the stadium. I remember you. You know, it must have. Did you go the Classic?

Yeah I, yeah I, I couldn't eat.

That's my other story though, you know. Being in the boat with you guys, on Briones. And Ellie started talking about what she was going to have for lunch. And everybody was just enraptured with, you know, a hard boiled egg. And I was sitting there the lug that I am just looking down my feet going, I'm not going to say anything. I'm going to go home to pancakes. And it's terrible.

I just remember thinking how strong you were. And we kind of were horsing around with chocolate cake and that last night, and you sort of smashed some in my face. But then you held me up against a wall with one hand. I know I was a lightweight, but it was impressive. I want to bring up one thing about

Philadelphia that I thought was important, which is that your parents came to the race from California. And then what did your family do for the entire crew team?

The tipping point for my trying out for this team was so I could go see my brother, who I adored but didn't see much of because he lived in the East Coast since I was in second grade. But he was married now and he lived out in a place called Downingtown on this absolutely postcard-perfect little farm plot with a 250 year old stone farmhouse. And it was just a lovely piece of property. And they very kindly hosted the whole team for a picnic barbecue thing. They had acreage and a big lawn and stuff. And so we had the whole team out. And it was fun. I just remember we have pictures. I have pictures of my niece and nephew now, you know, now who are in their forties. But, you know, they're little pinafore dress and shorts and tie or whatever he was wearing, and they were running around and it was fun. I just remember it was really fun. I remember Kate Murphy's parents came and I think they wanted to pitch a tent on the front lawn and my parents went to one or two of my races. They were delighted that I rowed, but they I don't you know, they weren't camp followers. They came up for maybe the Stanford race or something and came to a race at the estuary. They didn't go to San Diego, but they came out to Nationals and that was as much to see. You know, it was all this stuff revolves around excuses for us to all get together. And rowing has actually provided that over the years in a very nice way. So, yeah, they had 45 people over for dinner one day.

I just remember your dad with cowboy boots on so proud of you. And I think he had a cigar and he was talking to me. That's my daughter, Lizzie.

He had a pipe. He didn't smoke a cigar. He had a pipe. There are a couple of things about my parents in this. One was that one of my brothers, Jamie, that year, who went to Bowdoin College, took his year abroad, quote unquote, at Smith. And so he spent a year at Smith for I don't know what.

Girls.

And so my my father at one point was just like, I've got a son at Smith and a daughter on the California Crew. And, you know, he couldn't quite. Yeah, it was just the times are changing. And then the other thing is I dug around this morning. I in the fall, I'm going to go backtrack. In the fall, I came back and I laid my sweatshirt. This guy. I remember throwing that on their bed, and said I'm on the team. I made the team and I was just proud as could be. And they were. So it's really cool.

So you have friends that you made beyond me that you're.

Nobody, nobody liked you Jeannie.

How many friends do you still see? You were on the crew. If you think about it, from September to June. That's it.

I know. It's kind of amazing. I'm so lucky. And that is why I stayed. You know, I have sort of remained connected to this program all these years for some reason it just has always resonated with me. And how many? I don't know. There's a group. I don't know. I hate to count it. You know, maybe eight of us. They're concentric. You know, they're these concentric circles. But the inside concentric circle is not one person. It's like eight people that are, you know, true lifelong friends that we have. And then maybe more. Ten. And people come and go over the years. Life pulls you and stuff. And then there are the people that you run into at races or now on email or that you are still fond of, that you still

connect with that, you still enjoy talking to, that is a friend. But that core group is large and you know through children, illness, relationships coming and going, you know, the hard things in life and the things to celebrate weddings and achievements and children and all that stuff. Both physically and psychically, there's this little chorus of friends that we that we hover for each other. You know, we're always like off our shoulders. And that has really been the greatest gift of this whole thing that, you know, now 45 years later or whatever it is, that all remains.

We had some kids over here not long ago that Deirdre was treating some of the younger kids and we're talking about this. And I was saying something like, you know guys, it's weird. You get together with a bunch of rowers and we see each other as we saw each other when we were 22. We see through the effects of age. We recognize each other and see each other as we were then, and we kind of act like it. But we have grown. We have been through stuff. We have. But there is something in the knowing of these people that comes out of the knowing of shared effort and what is revealed in that, you know, it's the same story. Races are hard, training's hard. You do it together. You learn to trust each other. You rely on each other, and you push yourself more because you know, your friends are relying on you and your teammates. And so all of that forms this very, very solid ground, the friendships that might otherwise form, but it's just richer. And then over the years, you sit back, you know, you sitting on a porch somewhere with a bunch of people and it's a time capsule - or it's timeless. It's doesn't take you back in time. It is separate from time. We see the essential in each other, I think that is we wouldn't otherwise have that without this experience.

So you went off to grad school to be a soil scientist. At some point you end up at Vesper. And just briefly tell me about the vision. Why did you know you decided to go out for the national team and you went to the number one place in the country to do it where you run with people like Anita DeFrantz.

Well, it wasn't grad school. I moved back to Fresno and I worked for the Farm Advisors, which is a U.C. extension. And it sounds kind of hokey, but actually it's pretty cool. They support agriculture in the state of California, and they do big time science and other stuff. And it was interesting. It didn't really float my boat. I did it for about a year. My dad got me the job. He knew these people. And it was good. It was fun. I had a truck and I could drive out to the west side, to the cotton fields and do stuff. I did take it seriously. I remember thinking I could pursue this. I remember talking to my brother that I think I can find a way to develop real expertise to become an expert in this area. But then somewhere along the line something switched, and you and me and Kate connected. I went up to Dolphin Springs and you and me and Doug sat down to dinner, and I don't know who else was there, but I hadn't let go of that little run on the fire trail. And I was like, maybe I should try to go there. And I remember talking to Daig about it at some point. He was talking about Vesper. Maybe I asked him, where do you go? He said the best place to go was to John Hooten at Vesper was one of the Olympic coaches. There was a group training there. There's also Boston. But for some reason he kind of steered me to Vesper.

I wrote a letter. A long, silly letter to John Hooten. You know, my name is Liz Miles. I would like to come row with you. You know, I was in the J.V., you know, and, you know, one race and got third. I was in the J.V. and another race and got first. And I then J.V. and and and I wrote down every single race including nationals. And I think he I think he just laughed his butt off. I think he just thought it was just - you know - because it was like four pages long. But I got a letter back from him, and I don't know if I

should see if I have it. And he said, basically, Yeah, sure. Come. I was thrilled. It was like getting the, you know, an entrance acceptance to college. And I told my parents and my dad was sort of mad because he's like, you know, why are you doing this? And I was like, I want to try out for the Olympics. He's like - No. I put some effort into getting you this job. And I guess they, you know, whatever. I don't know. I've learned now about parental conversations happening out of my hearing. I don't know what they did, but they agreed. I had some money saved up. I moved. I told Graham, my brother and said, basically, I'm coming to your house for I don't know how long. And they were great. They didn't seem to be too troubled by it. But I lived with them for six weeks till I found an apartment. But I arrived.

I remember arriving and it was a little bit of the Mary Tyler Moore Show type thing. You know, I remember arriving at Vesper in the dark in February, and it was a cold, miserable evening. And I was standing there with my suitcases, staring at the door and thinking, kind of, eeew. This is it? Downingtown is 40 minutes by train from Philadelphia and then you have to take a bus or walk to the boathouse, which is a couple of miles or a mile and a half or something from the station. Penn Station? Suburban station. I had to go into Suburban Station, which is the station after the main station which is in West Philadelphia. So I would take the train in the afternoon. Go to the library off of the JFK drive and sit there for a couple hours, walk to the boathouse, workout till whenever. Walk or bus back to Suburban Station and take the train back and get home at 10:00. So it was really wonky schedule and wander around Philadelphia at 9:00 at night in the middle of winter was probably not awesome. I had some adventures but eventually found an apartment, a little townhouse up on 20th or something and went from there. Got a couple of jobs waiting on tables. I worked at a bookstore on Second Street, which was a long way away. But it was fun. I lived a couple of doors down from Bets and Holly. They had a townhouse nearby.

So what was it like racing in Vesper. Because a lot of people now, they won't realize that colleges raced against this preeminent club. But you were in a boat now that had people that had won a medal in that Olympic Games.

Yeah.

And so tell me what you know. How was that a little bit different? And then I want to get into some of your races that you did internationally.

It was pretty cool. Other than standing in the front of the door and kind of walking in the door and I don't have a ton - I didn't know everybody. I didn't know who you know, it didn't take long. Anita was there. Sue Hooton, the Joniks. Pam Behrens.

Margie Cate?

No, she wasn't there yet. And she didn't row at Vesper. She was next door. That was a year or two later. And there are some other people. Ginny Peebles came later. There was a woman who worked at the museum anyway, but those were the Olympians, I think. And Nancy Storrs. And, you know, I kind of got thrown in. John was around and he put together an eight every day, I guess, and we'd go out and row. And he had a megaphone and Buddy the Dog. I think I rowed incredibly poorly and he did what he could with me. And I think it was frustrating because, you know, I was on the receiving end of some pretty colorful, not nurturing, coaching advice and pretty constantly. I remember there were times I'd walk home in that same dark, stormy weather at night and I'd be in tears. And it was hard. I

just didn't know how to fix my technical problems. I had a crummy catch, probably it wasn't matching up and my solution to everything was just to pull harder, hammer away. And I remember - what was it? There was a race that I didn't get to go to, and I was mad. I was really upset about it. I really wanted to go, and I couldn't go. It may have been Head of the Charles. Anyway, I was not making the boat and it was, it was hard. That would have been '78? Also, in parallel with that, I don't remember '78 nationals were in Detroit. Oh, Mary Ann Welsh was there, Bets was there.

78 Nationals were in Seattle.

Oh that's right. Because you and I our across the parking lot running together smash up that everybody. It was interesting because I was so looking forward to seeing everybody. Green Lake, right? I have that picture. I was in that eight. But it had been a long, dark, you know, I didn't really know people. What I remember is getting to Seattle, and for one thing, the sun was shining and there you guys were, and I just it was just, I was so happy to see you all. And I ran over to see you, and it was just fabulous. I was exuberant in my happiness, and none of those people had seen that before, I think. Hooten was just like, What? Because I think I just contained myself. I didn't have anything to be particularly exuberant about. And so, yeah, that Nationals.

You did the - not national team - but the development team.

Yeah, the development team which was great. I went to the development camp which was a great tour and it was a mix of experienced rowers and new people. And it worked. There were a lot of people that came out of that program. I have to go get the puppies.

One of the questions in that survey was - one of the questions that I wanted to add in the survey - was like, how were you aware of how this was building in terms of Title Nine. This was the very beginning of the benefits of Title Nine and I would posit that we were both aware and unaware of Title Nine. I think that we were - there was something about having an opportunity.

The thing about that sweatshirt - I was thinking about that sweatshirt, the Cal Women's Crew. You got that and then you got it for however long you rowed. You didn't get a new kit every year. Nike had not, you know, hit the scene yet to the extent it has. And you couldn't buy stuff like that. You couldn't get that stuff. And as a woman, you couldn't get that stuff because the opportunities didn't exist. So being able to wear that sweatshirt, as you know, on an athletic team at the University of California is, you know, because of Title Nine - it was thrilling. You know, it was really cool. It's what I aspired to. So there was, I think, maybe not an awareness, but to get back to the larger picture, it's like women had not had those opportunities before. It was a clean slate and we were building. And it's not just Cal Crew. The women in the '76 eight were and are amazing - every single one of those women could stand up and compete today and hold their own. I think especially the you know, Carie Graves. Who is, unsurpassed. Not to diminish other people's accomplishments and the extraordinary athletes that have followed. But I think that athletically she's on par at the top bar, but also that that initial generation as - Joan, too - they didn't build from the bottom up. They had the talent and the abilities to place themselves at the very pinnacle. And that was the standard and it remains the standard, I think. And so I think Cal Women's Crew's portion of that is also true. The women that were in those early years defined a program that athletically and culturally is, you know, remains a pretty high standard. They worked hard. They had success.

Okay. I want to ask you about. So 1978. I want to kind of a rendition of what you did. So 1978, you were on this really cool team that was not a national team, but you got to get a lot of international racing. 1979. Tell me about 1979. What boat were you in?

I went to the camp. I got cut. Kris Korzeniowski was at Princeton and he was then the national team coach. We had several dreary drives up to Princeton for testing. We would do erg tests. And I'll never forget the Peggy McCarthy blew her back out. He had a speed test doing snatches so you know, up with a 45 pound bar, full squat, then up over your head as fast as you can. You know - a really bad idea. And Peggy got hurt. So we'd go up in these and again, it would be in the fall and the winter and Princeton is such a dreary place in that time of year. It's cold and gray and that you'd go through these series of erg, bike erg, weightlifting - and just dreading it. Dreading it. It was like going to the - I don't know what. It was very hard. Everybody came down from Boston. Philadelphia. And at some point there was a camp. Sprat was in there.

Sprat and Brink.

Yeah. And that's when Val showed up because she's like.

I brought you Entenmann cookies.

Oh, that's right. Thank you. I still love them. Val showed up from Henley. Bob was on the scene, too, but Val came from Henley and Kelly was there. You know, that's when the quad was coxed. So it was great. But again, I didn't know how to seat race, I didn't know how to manage my head. I got cut. People went off to Bled, and I was kind of upset about it and went back to Vesper and went to Nationals. That was the Nationals. Marianne. Well, is that the one? No, that was Tennessee.

It was Tennessee. You're taking the Nationals in 1979 was in Detroit.

Detroit? Yeah. And that was fun. That was Vesper national. That was a really great trip.

1980. Tell me about the boycott year.

Oh, God.

Did you train at Vesper?

I trained at Vesper. I don't have a lot of instant. You know, these are just snapshots. I'd have to think about it. It was, oh, there are so many little there are sort of big things and little things. It was a looming cloud over the horizon.

Did you make the team?

No, I was cut and I remember that was hard. That was really hard. Because the first year I kind of, you know, I could chalk up to experience in a way. It's like this is, you know, I'd only been rowing for two years, so I wasn't or whatever it was, and I wasn't too bummed out about it. But I was there to go to Moscow and I got cut and there were machinations in that process some of which I didn't think were particularly fair, that had nothing to do with athletics, but also that's the year I learned that it doesn't matter if it's fair or not. You know, you don't want to be on the bubble. You know, don't be the one that is susceptible to unfair machinations.

Can you be more specific about an unfair machination.

There was some favoritism between, in my mind, in my recollection at the time, and now with the passage of time. In my recollection at the time, there was some favorite relationship between a coach and an athlete that I was in direct competition with that I felt that I got the wrong end of the decision. And then also again, I shouldn't have been in that position. I was kind of down to the last couple of people.

Tell me about 1981.

Let me finish '80 first.

Okay.

80 was. At Vesper during Vesper Hooten, I think quit. He was like, They're not going. I'm not going. I'm done. And Sue and he were to be married, I think. And I think they were kind of done. And so that sort of left us floundering a bit. And Anita DeFrantz had been training with us and she stopped training, but she started her advocacy to fight the boycott. And we're very much aware of what was going on with that, and Anita - I remember her testifying, watching on TV as she testified at a Senate hearing on the boycott. And pretty courageous. She was a second year law student or something. And she fought this thing every way she could. And I'd heard that Jimmy Carter had turned the IRS on her. She was getting audited. And that in this hearing, that some pompous Senator had the temerity to challenge her, brought up - shouldn't we have boycotted the Nazi, you know, the 36 Olympics - and he equated that issue in a way that I don't think she was prepared for and that she didn't have the an answer and then wouldn't have mattered if she had it anyway. She took it on the chin quite a bit for all our behalves and fought for it and I think it formed her and her future endeavors.

Holly hatton had those T-shirts printed, which I have somewhere, that we all wore that camp and proudly that we were all 'Jimmy Carter's Threat to National Security'. Because the whole business was posed that going to Afghanistan was a national security issue. So it was, in terms of my own rowing, it was the point where I kind of remember standing and looking at the Princeton boathouse and a Mary Tyler Moore sort of way, thinking, I can't do this again. I got to figure this out, or else I'm going to have to stop. And you know, I can't be on the bubble. I got to figure out how to seat race. And I kind of did a very cold self-accounting of what I need to do to get this done. And then I went back to Philadelphia. So 1981. Worlds were in Munich. Nationals were in - wherever.

San Diego.

San Diego. Oh, yeah, that's right. And that's when I found out my father was sick. 1981, I think, was the year that Larry Wittig took me under his wing. When I got back from the 1980 camp. And he's like, I gotta teach you how to row. And he spent time with me. And I will always be grateful. He coached me on and he was a good technical coach and he taught me how to row properly. Finally. And then that's when I started training with, I think 81 was when I started training with Margie and Ted, maybe late 80. And I got way fitter. There was sort of a quantum leap in what I was doing. And so I made the team.

What boat? What seat?

I was in the stroke seat for the eight. And I remember being out on Lake Carnegie somewhere during the camp and stroking and we were seat racing or we were rowing and Kris stopped in one of his -you know, it's always more palatable when curse words and verbal onslaughts come to you in an elegant Polish accent somehow - maybe not palatable. But he's like, "I'm telling you. You need to change now. You need to do this now or you're not going." And, you know, I listened and whatever needed to happen, I knew what I had to do. But probably just row better. But I think behind that was sort of the concept of - Oh my God - he's actually going to put me in this boat. You know, it sort of became somehow more the criticism became welcome and more optimistic than I was before that. So. I made the boat and it was a great boat. It was Liz O'Leary and Carie and Val was coxing. Sprat. That was a really, really good boat. And that and we went to Lucerne.

And how did you do at the World's?

Got second place. And the thing about the race - Kris, in the pre-race talk basically was laying out the strategy and I was like nervous as hell. And it basically was, you know go offat like a 46 and settle to a 41. And I don't know - it was really high stroke rates and I was like, okay, okay. And I walked away and I was like - what did he just say?! 41?! Or whatever it was? And, and it's like, okay. And that was the that. And I remember sort of being on the water. And I was so nervous. God, it's an awful feeling. I remember just like, rowing along doing it all and it's like, I hate this. I'm never going to do it again. I want to die. I don't want to be here. This is awful. I just want a helicopter to come down. And if it came down and took me out of here right now, it'd be great. I just wanted out. And we turned and I think Tommy Keller was at the starting line. I think he was calling and, you know, he did things like said hello to people and to Carie. But the race started and it was all over. And I don't remember much of it, but it was a good race and I remember after the race going into the showers in the boathouse at the end of the course and walking into the women's showers and heard men's voices. And I was like, uh-oh, you know. I didn't read the sign right. And I looked again and it was the women's shower. And it was the Russian women's eight. And they sounded like men.

Had they beaten you?

I forget to be honest, either East Germany or Russia. I think the East Germans beat us. I don't know. You know, I don't even remember. But that was what we were racing against. And, you know, had it, we would have had, you know, we were good. But we couldn't you know, I think we were like at 2:57 or something, for a thousand meters. So. That was hard.

So a silver medal. You know, Tell me about what happened when you came home.

Well, I came home to find that my father died. And I had to... I think he died while I was on the plane maybe.

Were you looking forward to showing the medal to him?

Oh, sure. I saw him - so what happened was that when I was in San Diego Nationals, my brother, who was in San Diego for a conference, showed up at the boathouse, to my surprise, and said Daddy had -he was ill, they didn't quite know how or why he was ill. They thought he had this Guillain-Barre syndrome. It turned out that he had had a very deep stroke. But that was you know, that was sort of seismic. And Jamie and I got ourselves back up to Fresno, and I went in to see him at the hospital. So

funny. You know the little things. Back in those days, I wore a dress to the hospital. I remember wearing it and I remembered him always, it was a Navy dress with a white collar, and it was kind of random, I suppose, or maybe serendipitous, but it was kind of one of his favorite types of dresses. So interesting. But I walked into the hospital from the airport and our family was there, my cousins and everybody, walking in the waiting room and all these faces turned to me, and I burst into tears, turned around, walked out. Went into a broom closet and just collapsed. And it's wracking sobs. And then come back out, you know, go back into the waiting room. Wait. And then the next scene sort of in my memory is going in to see him. And it was terrible. Because he was unable to talk. But I told him. I guess I told him I had made the team. No, I must have written that because... Anyway, we had moments and I guess that may have been the last time I saw him. And I remember talking to my mother, you know, it's like, do you want me to stay? What should I do? And I may have talked with him about it, but they were you know, it's like they didn't know what his situation would be and so I kind of got their blessing. And I went off and proceeded with my travels and, you know, I don't remember it now, particularly how it weighed on me over the summer. I remember talking to Carie and Liz O'Leary a little bit. They were asking about it. They're like, you know, what's going on with your dad and stuff? And I remember talking to them about it in Germany a little bit. But, you know, he died on the way home. And so I immediately turned around and flew to Fresno and went from there. And then moved back that fall to Fresno for a short time. And then I was a substitute teacher. That was kind of a waste of time. And then moved to San Diego to continue training.

Were you on the national team in 1982?

Mm hmm. Barely.

Were you in the eight again?

No. Well, yes. I end up being in the eight. The priority boat was the four. Buzz Congram was the coach. Another you know. Most of my rowing development was entirely self-taught I think. It's not to discredit coaches. They're trying to put eights together of people that fit. They're not there at that level to teach me how to row or teach me how to compete. And so and I've never done this in any other endeavor. I have to say. But I had a journal and I would think about it. And I had to figure out how to not psych myself out, which was my great downfall. The camp was out in the Pioneer Valley, at Mount Holyoke - it was a beautiful place to row. Buzz was the coach. Buzz was one of my better coaches. I really appreciate how he coached. And we'd go for miles up the Connecticut River. We seat raced in coxed pairs. And Val used to talk about - Val spent the whole time saying, "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry." It was a brutal, brutal way to seat race. But also kind of like a badge of honor, you know. That's a hard way to do selection - and revealing. And so that was the camp.

How did you guys do in 1982?

We got a silver medal.

So you have two silver medals internationally?

Yes. Yes. But the thing is, the four was the priority boat. I wanted to get in the four. The camp proceeded up to Dartmouth. I got into the eight.

I want to get you to the 1984 Olympics. But 1983. Were you on the national team?

No, That was the year I got cut. And that was the thing. I was just trying to remember.

That when you broke your fist.

Yes, I didn't make the priority, boat. taken a group of people over to Craftsbury for what seemed to me to be a week where we seat raised their brains out in fours. And I felt good about it. I felt I had done the right thing and I gotten my head in control. I rowed my best and I didn't make it. And that was shattering. It was like, I know I did my best and I know I was good and I didn't make the four. I never particularly talked to him about why I didn't make the four in detail. You know, maybe it was a fit rather than me personally, but whatever it was, I didn't do it. I was so mad. I slammed my fist into a door and broke my hand. So then I rowed with a broken hand at Worlds. I was so mad about not getting that four. And Val went with me - she was like you idiot. Driving back from Craftsbury in the back of the van with my hand like this. I went to the hospital and the guy set it and he wanted to put a cast on it. And I was like, I can't put a cast on this. Got kicked over to Bob Ernst with the eight and, I must say, I'm grateful to Bob for allowing me to stay in the eight after such an idiotic move. And I rowed on the square for the rest of the camp. Seat raced on the square. Did all the work on the square. Waiting for this thing, which was in a little aluminum brace, to heal. And then off we went to World's and got a silver medal in the eight.

In 83. I went to the camp and I got cut. I think that I was not in shape. I was in business school in San Diego. I don't think I was in particularly good shape. And now I don't remember much of that. But I got cut and I and it was another moment of just like - you've got one more shot and I got to figure out how to do this. And so I had to rebuild myself. It really messed up my confidence. I got two silver medals and I got cut, so I had to, you know, rebuild myself for 84.

And you trained in San Diego again?

Yes.

And so tell me about. What was it like being on the 1984 Olympic team? And I think especially you had two Golden Bears in the boat with you. I know it wasn't a priority boat, but it had to be pretty special.

Oh, it was so special. It was so great. You know, camp was in Princeton. It was brutal. Coming out of that whole debacle of '83 I was really - I finally figured out how to do it. I did this whole thing where I'd walk to the boathouse alone, and I would like program my brain, as I programmed a computer (or as one does). In a way. I was like - this is what's going to happen. This is what you're going to do. This is what's going to happen. This is what you're going to be the race you're going to be behind. This is what you're going to do. You're going to be in the last 20 seconds and you're going to want to die. This is what you're going to do. You're not going to die. You're going to do this.

And I just I spent this time just creating these scripts and just literally programming my brain. And somehow it worked. But it was a long, hard camp and by the end of it, you know, everybody was -they're all like sacks of flour on the floor. When the team was announced, or maybe it was on a piece of paper, and I remember looking and I didn't care. I was so tired. I was just like, Yeah, well, fine. And then, you know, so it took a couple of days to sink in. And it was exciting. It was great. It was just great. You know, getting there. There kind of two Olympics. There's the one you compete in and then the one you get to sort of run around and be happy in. The races were out in Casitas. My best race,

unfortunately, was I guess, the Rep, or whatever. Maybe the heat. But then in the final it was kind of a photo finish between third and fifth. And that was tough. You know, we were all called. We first thought we got third. The Romanians were way ahead. And we were told at first that we got third and then we didn't. And that was very disappointing. Val left, which was too bad. I'm sorry that she did. But she was furious and then the second Olympics was the one where, you know, we got to do all the cool things. You know, we went to track and field. We went to run around the village. I didn't sleep for a week. And then I went home, back to our house. You know, the house on Harvard. Everybody was there. And I had all my Olympic kit, you know, I show everybody everything. And it was big. You know again, it was like the Cal sweatshirt. It represented a lot. And then all I remember is I went upstairs and I think I slept for a week. I don't think I woke up. It was you know, it was great.

What was it like walking into the stadium for Opening Ceremonies?

That's what everybody talks about. You know. All that every once in a while, somebody would talk about it in Vesper about to talk about '76. But the really cool thing was that so the Opening Ceremonies were in the L.A. Coliseum. The L.A. Forum is kind of across the street. The Forum is like the old basketball arena, I think. It holds like 10,000 people. And that's was where they held all the athletes before Opening Ceremonies. And I remember sitting in the stands and we came down from Santa Barbara, so we came they totally forgot the feed us. I remember at the time I was exhausted. But they went in and I remember sitting around and just looking in wonder at this arena that had every single Olympic athlete that year. All in one place. And nobody else. Essentially, it was all the athletes, I guess, coaches. And that was really cool. So I had my flag that my brother gave me and I got everybody to sign it. I just ran around and I had everybody, whoever I could run into to sign the flag. And then it was finally time to go. And we were there for hours. And then finally time to go in the Arena. And it got very exciting and my hero at that time that I was so excited to meet was Joan Benoit because she was running the first women's marathon. And she's a Bowdoin graduate where my brother went. And so I went up and said, my brother went to Bowdoin and I want to walk into the Opening Ceremonies with you. And so and so we did. And I walked in sort of in the line where all the short people were. And she was nice.

And you come in and there really is, you know, there are 100,000 people and it's kind of what you think about, what you think would be like. The roar comes up and it's just dazzling. I hopped all the way around. I remember just hopping. I didn't march. I hopped. It was just fantastic. And it was a wonderful ceremony. They had the pianos at the far end with them playing Gershwin and the Rhapsody in Blue. It was spectacular.

I'm going to spin this all back to Cal because it's where it all started. And how do you think your time at Cal - did it do anything to help prepare you for what would then be really the next eight years, seven, eight years of your life leading up to that Olympic experience? Or did it just kind of launch you? Is there anything you got from being a member of the Cal Women's Crew that helped you be an Olympian?

Oh, yeah. Both intentionally by Cal Women's Crew, and sort of unintentionally. The opportunity was there - where it wasn't before. It does come down to Title Nine and another version of the Title Nine. It's like it wouldn't have happened. So in that sense, organizationally, that was one thing. It was an opportunity that was there, that that program was framed and organized in such a way that it was an open horizon. You could take it as far as you wanted. And then the culture, I think, was sort of a

culture again with an open horizon of achievement and with the ethic. You know, where the work ethic was you never give up and the work is hard. And it's always hard. It's never not hard. And then you're around people who believe in that and share it. And you're around people who are good people. You know, I think there's something there. It's not unimportant that the people that participate in Cal Crew, and generally in rowing, you know, they're about the work. There are no prima donnas and all that stuff, but there's something about it that allows for this. The culture is so important.

Rowing is a team event, but success is made by individual contributions of each person in a boat. What do you feel was your greatest contribution, either at Cal or internationally in terms of what? What do you think you brought to boats that you were in and on?

Internationally. I don't think I was particularly extraordinary. I think I was kind of a certainly, you know, I'm blessed with, you know, a athletic sort of genes. And at Cal. When I was at Cal I think it was all about having fun. I'm a good in on a good rower. I don't think I particularly stand out and it's a contradiction in terms in some ways, but it's also not. I'm kind of a journeyman Olympian. I contributed to the boats as much as everybody else contributed to the boats. As a team member, I think I'm easy to get along I've got a decent sense of humor. And so I'm not a source of conflict. I don't think if I am completely unaware of it and which made be a problem. And at Cal, when I was at Cal, I think it was just all about having all that fun, in a way. But fun in a substantial way, not in a frivolous manner. I think my contribution to Cal has been, you know, I value it so much, I have benefited so much from it that it is I and because of that, I think it's important because I benefited from it. I think it's important. So I want to see it continue to thrive and I want other people to benefit from it. As I have and I want and I want other people to understand. And I've in one form or another, had these conversations with some of the more recent Olympians, but early on. It's just like the horizon is wide open. You can go as far as you want to go, and if you think you want to go that far, go. Try it. You've got nothing to lose. And I think that has been a true sort of construct for Cal Women's Crew then. And it is now. It is a place where somebody can sort of set themselves up to to go to that or horizon.

This is almost building on that. But I'm going to ask this question in two different ways. Did rowing have an impact on where you are in your life right now? And if you hadn't rowed, who would you be?

I don't know. I've thought about that. You know, I don't know who or what I would be. I'd probably be, you know, living in Fresno, retired from the farm advisors for all I know. I wouldn't know the people in, you know, except for family, but the people that are most important to me in my life with, you know, with like two exceptions, are rowers. All my friendships, 95% of my friendships. If I didn't have rowing I'd have other friends. But would they be as deep? Would they involve as much common shared experience? Would they involve as much satisfaction of an endeavor. Would I get out of soil science as much as I got out of rowing. No. It has completely formed and framed my life up to and including my marriage and children. You know, it's far richer in rewards. 40 years hence or 40 years now - then all the rewards that I got when I was competing, which were immense. But it has just continued. So I'm so fortunate.

Now I want to make a comment that doesn't necessarily have to be a part of this, but I think it's very key to me is I think that you may singularly be the shortest term member of Cal Women's Crew and the number one alum for the Cal program. I think that through the years, many of us because we've moved

or whatever, but, almost religiously, you have been a part of Cal Women's Crew in some way or another. Yes, you worked at Cal, but there was just an enormous passion and interest in the athletes. The teams were changing, and I know sometimes you're closer than others, but you've been for me as kind of outsider, you've been the touchstone of what's come after. And so I think it's important that newer alums and future alums know that you don't have to be a huge part of the program. You don't have to be somebody that won the Crew Classic or won the Nationals to be somebody. When I interviewed Carole Simpson and she said this thing, she said, Yeah, you know, we all get to be because we were out there rowing before the team became validated by the athletic department. So we get the fist birthday candle. But she said what impressed her most was how many years and years and years people protected that flame. How important it is to you now. And you were one of the people that really protected that flame and continue to live. So, yeah.

And well, thank you. And that's very nice of you to say. I think I don't know if I would go quite into the superlative, but yeah, but I do it because, you know, I benefit from it. I mean, I do love it. You know, there is a larger picture, but, you know, I have benefited from it enormously. But it is worth protecting and it is worth making sure that this program, not only continues, but retains its identity. I don't know that there are other programs that have this particular culture and longevity. I don't get a sense. I could be wrong. But there you know, and in a way, it doesn't matter. What does matter is that Cal Women's Crew, the culture and identity be cherished and cultivated and taken care of for the next generation because it does lead. It's a first rate, nationally ranked athletic program of high achievement. It also is full of first rate, lovely, wonderful people who buy into or sort of support or are a part of this ethic. And it's not a bowling league. No offense to bowling leagues, but it's non-trivial. And I think that you're right. Our age, our group, our generation has our little cohort. But I think others have, too. I think it has continued. And I think people do care about it and they do stay in touch. I hope they do. But, you know, it is sort of this bonus surprise of - oh, I thought rowing at Cal would be great and I'd get a sweatshirt and life would go on. Instead of life being enhanced and expanded and improved. And just getting so much out of it because of the people and and the and there's a tangible thing where, you know, we go to the Crew Classic every year and we connect and we see each other and and it's gone for that.

I'm going to ask you one more question, which is I'm going to go back to. Our dads went to Cal about the same time and and your dad was quite an athlete. My dad was quite a football player in high school. And then spent one day on the field with the Cal football team and they were so big he decided not to do that. But I've often wondered if they knew each other because my dad was '35. Your dad was class of '33. But here's your dad, and I just wish I could have a discussion with him about what it meant to him to have one of his five kids take sport, take athletics to the level that you did. And what was it like to actually not be able to share your first to me, great international achievement. I mean, a silver medal is beyond my, you know, ken. I don't know what that would feel like to be number two in the world in something. Number two in the world in something against people that were doping, ostensibly number one in the world. And what was it like to kind of come home and not have him there or was he not that much of an inspiration to you?

He was totally the inspiration in a way. And again, very deep sort of one little thread in a tapestry. But I was very much aware he tried out for the Olympics in '32. He threw the javelin and didn't make it. But he was close, probably fourth place, like me. And he never talked about it. Not out of bitterness,