

## THE SPORT OF ROWING

# To the readers of *www.row2k.com*

### *The Amateurs*

This is the fourth and final installment on *row2k* of my retelling of our American Iliad, the story of the U.S. men's scullers of 1984, first told by **David Halberstam** in his best-selling book, *The Amateurs*.

This draft chapter sees the saga to its conclusion at the 1984 Olympics from the rowers' perspectives.

The following .pdf is in the format intended for the final printed book. It is from the fourth and final volume.

### **I need you!**

All these chapters are still a work in process. In fact, thanks to the feedback I have been receiving from row2k readers, you can go back to the first three installments and find updated versions with addi-

tional photos and anecdotes.

If you find any typos in this or the other chapters, or if you have any questions, comments, suggestions, corrections, agreements, disagreements, additional sources and illustrations, etc. please email me at the address below. Your input will be an essential contribution to what has always been intended to be a joint project of the rowing community, so please contribute. If you and I end up finally disagreeing on some relevant point or another, I will be thrilled to present both alternatives so the readers can decide for themselves.

All my contact info is at my website. I will also be at the **World Rowing Coaches' Conference** in London in January.

Or you can email me anytime at:

***[pmallory@rowingevolution.com](mailto:pmallory@rowingevolution.com)***.

Many thanks.



# The Sport of Rowing

## A Comprehensive History

by

Peter Mallory

Volume IV

*Plus Ça Change*

draft manuscript    October 2010



# THE SPORT OF ROWING

## 142. 1984 Olympics

### *Olympic Trials – Lake Casitas – Andy Sudduth*

#### The Plot Thickens

**Lewis:** “Harry’s squad returned to Hanover for its final tune-up before the Trials – ten days away – and within a few hours of settling in, the rumor mill began to churn. First off, Tiff and Biggie raced a double against the Love Boat.<sup>6863</sup> Without having practiced and using a slower boat, Tiff and Biggie defeated it by half a length.

“Tiff was overjoyed at the thought of rowing with Biggie. Joe and Biggie, best of friends, had roomed together upon returning from Lucerne, but immediately following that fateful practice, Joe moved into a different room.

“Harry soon stepped into the fray. He entered Biggie’s room and closed the door. When Harry emerged, Biggie was firmly in the single, and Tiff was on his own.”<sup>6864</sup>

That was the way Brad heard it from a distance. It was actually much worse.

The team got home from Lucerne on Monday, June 18, and the Trials were scheduled to begin on Friday, June 29. Biglow quickly suggested to Tiff that they row a double in practice with Tiff stroking, perhaps to give his back a bit of a rest and perhaps because he had been rattled by his relatively poor showing in Europe. Of course, Tiff was all for it, and Harry agreed

to let them race against Altekruise and Bouscaren.

On Wednesday, June 20, the two doubles did fifteen power-20s. Tiff and John, “filled with fury and rage,”<sup>6865</sup> won them all.

The next day, June 21, they rowed four 1,000s. Tiff and John won the first by half a length. Charlie and Joe won the last three, but very narrowly.

At that point, Harry called off the competition. Tiff then asked to seat-race Bouscaren. Harry turned him down.

Tiff and John kept rowing their double. On Sunday, June 24, they put Biglow in the stroke seat, and “the boat seemed to take off.”<sup>6866</sup> Tiff asked John if he wanted to row the double in the Trials the next weekend, and John said that he did.

When this idea got out, all hell broke loose. That was when Joe moved out of John’s room and Charlie moved out of Tiff’s room.

Tiff and Biggie continued to wrestle with the idea for two more days until Tuesday, June 26, when Biglow finally bowed to enormous pressure from Bouscaren, Altekruise and ultimately Parker and backed out.

Of course, that was just about the end of a life-long Olympic dream for Tiff Wood. Unless he could get into a Trials-winning double or quad, the best he could hope for would be to be named sculling spare, an

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<sup>6863</sup> Lewis’ derogatory nickname for Altekruise and Bouscaren, after a cheesy American television situation comedy.

<sup>6864</sup> Lewis, *Assault*, pp. 102-3

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<sup>6865</sup> Halberstam, p. 180

<sup>6866</sup> *Ibid*, p. 181

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agonizing third Olympics for him without rowing a single stroke in competition.

Tiff told Harry he was quitting the Camp immediately and called Brad Lewis. Tiff was finally ready to try their double.

With Brad committed to Paul, Tiff's second call was to Jim Dietz. Dietz agreed.

It was Tuesday night. The Doubles Trials began on Friday morning.

**Dietz:** "Tiff and I had only a few days to get a boat, get it reasonably rigged and get ready for the race. We had to borrow a boat because Harry would not allow us to race in one of the Camp doubles that he controlled.

"Sportsmanship!"<sup>6867</sup>

**Wood:** "Rowing the double with Jim was a desperate act at that point, for both of us, less than a week before the Trials. Harry was pissed at me for leaving the Camp, but I had nothing to lose."<sup>6868</sup>

Really! You *couldn't* make stuff like this up.

### Olympic Doubles Trials

**Altekruse:** "The problem was that we got sent to Europe, and then we came back, and it was sort of a double-jeopardy thing. We didn't have anything to win and everything to lose. Also, I was suffering from bronchitis and on prescription antibiotics. I was on the mend, but I know I was not 100%."<sup>6869</sup>

Seventeen doubles entered the Trials in Princeton. Three heats Friday morning with one to qualify, followed by three repêchages Friday afternoon with one to quality. Finals on Sunday. Lewis / Enquist won their heat. Altekruse / Bouscaren and Wood / Dietz also made it through to the final.

**Enquist:** "Our speed on the first day back together after the Camp had been just a shadow of what it became right before the Trials. We had had time to heal both physically and mentally from the stress of the Camp, and time to learn how to row together.

"The Lewis / Enquist double that showed up at the starting line of the Trials was nothing like the one that had rowed at the Camp."<sup>6870</sup>

The atmosphere was tense as the boats lined up for the final.

**Lewis:** "Charlie Altekruse, in the next lane over, turned to us and said, 'Good luck, guys.'

"Neither Paul nor I responded in any way."<sup>6871</sup>

Their focus was unwavering after weeks of shadow rowing and Mike Livingston's tape.

**Halberstam:** "Brad Lewis had found the perfect role for himself, the outsider spurned by authorities, the challenger versus the favorite who had been given all the advantages. He was absolutely comfortable, absolutely ready."<sup>6872</sup>

Casey Baker and Dan Brisson from New York A.C. led early with Lewis and Enquist a solid second. Brad and Paul made their move at 750 gone, overtook the leaders at the 1,000 and never looked back. Dietz and Wood moved into second with a final sprint, but they were well over a length of open water behind the winners.

1 Lewis/Enquist	6:35.50
2 Wood/Dietz	6:41.13
3 Baker/Brisson	6:43.00
4 Bouscaren/Altekruse	6:43.10
5 Ruane/Van Dusen	6:52.28
6 Spousta/Meyers	7:07.74

<sup>6867</sup> Dietz, personal correspondence, 2009

<sup>6868</sup> Wood, personal conversation, 2009

<sup>6869</sup> Altekruse, personal conversation, 2009

<sup>6870</sup> Enquist, personal correspondence, 2009

<sup>6871</sup> Lewis, op cit, p. 122

<sup>6872</sup> Halberstam, p. 187

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**Dietz:** “The speed that Tiff and I had in the last 500m was great. With a little practice we might have been able to put together a better starting 500m that would have had us in better position at the finish.

“Hindsight!”<sup>6873</sup>

**Wood:** “But we were second. For what we had, I think we did okay.”<sup>6874</sup>

**Altekruse:** “We finished fourth in the Trials. We were just dead. There was no way we were going to win that race, although we went out there to try.”<sup>6875</sup>

### Olympic Quad Trials

Later that same day came the Quad Trials, no heats necessary, just a final.

**Purdy:** “The race in Lucerne had given us confidence that we could move the boat with Jack in bow. Despite this, after our return to Hanover, Harry continued to seat race Tiff, taking no time for tapering and rest before the Trials. I don’t think Harry thought that the Trials would be a challenge for the Camp boats. He underestimated the speed of the challenge boat.

:We went into the Lucerne Regatta tired and never had time to recover before the Trials. I remember feeling exhausted during the warm-ups in Princeton.”<sup>6876</sup>

**Altekruse:** “In a last desperate attempt to make the Olympic Team, Joe, Tiff, Dan Louis and I jumped into a quad to race our own Camp Quad (thereby automatically switching the anti-camp crowd allegiance to us!?!?)”<sup>6877</sup>

**Dietz:** “I did not go out to race in that quad at the 1984 Trials. I had had enough!”<sup>6878</sup>

Not surprisingly, given what must have been the worst end to the worst day of their individual and collective rowing careers, the combo entry finished more than 100 meters into last place.

1 Charles River B	6:03.5
2 Olympic Camp	6:07.0
3 Combo	6:30.8

**Lewis:** “Bloody Sunday.”<sup>6879</sup>

**Purdy:** “We were aware that the double had lost. Our race was flat. The challenge boat moved on us early, and we never were able to move back.

“The row back to the boathouse was the longest of my life.”<sup>6880</sup>

The Charles River Rowing Club quad that won the Trials was made up of Camp cuts and rejects: stroke **Greg Montesi**, singles Trials finalist and U.S. Marine, 3 **Ridgely Johnson**, Princeton University ‘80, 2 **Bruce Beall**, University of Washington ‘84, and bow **Curtis Fleming**, Orange Coast College and UC Irvine, a teammate and training partner of Brad Lewis off and on since high school.

### Aftermath

With all of his boats defeated, **Harry Parker** offered to resign as Olympic Coach. This had to have been one of the toughest days in his long and storied career. Halberstam’s retelling of Harry’s self-reflection is very poignant.

**Mike Totta:** “My recollection was that the Olympic rowing people gave Korzo the eight job right after the 1983 Worlds – the decision happening in late August or early September, and from that moment until December most of us in the sculling group in Boston saw very little of Harry.

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<sup>6873</sup> Dietz, op cit.

<sup>6874</sup> Wood, op cit.

<sup>6875</sup> Altekruse, op cit.

<sup>6876</sup> Purdy, op cit.

<sup>6877</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6878</sup> Dietz, op cit.

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<sup>6879</sup> Qtd. by Halberstam, p. 189

<sup>6880</sup> Purdy, op cit.

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“At least part of the success in 1983 had been related to months of almost daily double and quad rowing up and down the Basin on the Charles with Harry. I can’t help but think that if we had done more work on technical development in team boats that fall of 1983, that would have helped build on what was achieved in Duisburg.

“Instead, it seemed to be lost, with the final blow being the intense focus on the Singles Trials by the top four or five guys.”<sup>6881</sup>

Now with the perspective of a quarter century, it still seems that a cruel fate had stalked so many of the protagonists of this tragedy, and that each one, even Harry, perhaps *especially* Harry, had been prisoner to a destiny months, years, even a lifetime in the making.

After the Trials were over, the new Olympic Sculling Team got together and picked Tiff as their spare. And these men, all rejected at one time or another by Harry Parker, voted over Brad Lewis’ vociferous objections to retain him as their Olympic Sculling Coach.

Harry was still their god, still the best. Extraordinary.

**Wood:** “It was terrible year for me, and it had to have been a terrible year for Harry.

“But we did have a stronger sculling program that year than probably ever up until then, in great part because of Harry being there.”<sup>6882</sup>

### Alternate Universe

**Altekruse:** “We all had to give our gear bags to the guys that beat us. I actually had to give mine to Paul or Brad. It was the greatest humiliation.”<sup>6883</sup>

“That was a *great* Camp quad, and it absolutely should have gone to Los Angeles and won a medal.

“Bill Purdy was so disappointed after the Trials that he just threw his bag down and left and wasn’t around rowing for ten years or twenty years or something.

“Purdy was a *great* oarsman.”<sup>6884</sup>

**Purdy:** “I sat in the parking lot sobbing, wanting to be left alone. With no disrespect to the challenge boat, I knew we were the faster quad . . . just not on that day. I also knew that Charlie and Joe were much faster than they showed. I was devastated. I felt like all that I had worked for was being taken away again, just like 1980. The selection process was not the primary problem. The timing of selection, followed by racing in Europe and finally the Trials less than two weeks later left no room for preparation for such an important race. The quad line-up was still not solidified a week prior to the Trials.

“I returned to the hotel later that day only to run into Curtis Fleming and his wife in the lobby. I congratulated him with tears in my eyes. I am sure it was bittersweet for him, as he knew how painful it was for me.

“It was almost surreal. I had endured the year of training with Harry in Boston, had been selected for the quad after an intense camp, raced in Lucerne wearing United States Olympic Team uniforms, finishing a respectable third, and after six minutes of misery, I was going home. I wasn’t quite sure what to do.”<sup>6885</sup>

**Mike Totta:** “My 1984 dream had been let down in several steps – Bill Purdy’s crashed down at the Quad Trials in one day – a much more sudden, traumatic, and painful process.”<sup>6886</sup>

**Colgan:** “Purdy is not mentioned in either book, but he was another solid guy

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<sup>6881</sup> Totta, personal correspondence, 2010

<sup>6882</sup> Wood, op cit.

<sup>6883</sup> Altekruse, op cit.

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<sup>6884</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6885</sup> Purdy, op cit.

<sup>6886</sup> Totta, personal correspondence, 2010

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throughout the Camp. I would have Purdy in my quad over ANYBODY else at that Camp, including Biglow. Purdy was that good!”<sup>6887</sup>

**Altekruse:** “It still seems almost too odd an alternate universe to believe.

“All the Camp boats had made the finals in Lucerne. The quad had placed third, which was the best result for an American quad *ever* at an international regatta. Joe and I had placed fourth after only rowing in the double together, I mean since the Camp, for about two weeks.”<sup>6888</sup>

“As for me, all the rowing I did in Switzerland, my disappointment after not making the Singles Finals, my concern about the schedule as laid out by Harry the first day of the sculling camp at Dartmouth, and finally my contracting bronchitis at Dartmouth between Luzern and Princeton . . . The point is, maybe all that training finally caught up with me a bit . . .”<sup>6889</sup>

**Colgan:** “The Trials were too soon after returning from Luzern since ALL THE BOATS THAT RACED AT LUZERN LOST!

“We saw the potential problem in advance, but to a man we voted to race in Luzern against the world’s best. We were almost all 1980 retreats. We wanted to race against the best in the world. We did not want a tarnished medal from L.A., where the best crews would not race. Up until then, almost 70% of the world medals had been won by the East Bloc countries. We took that chance.”<sup>6890</sup>

**Altekruse:** “It was clear. Everybody was just flat. I don’t think there’s any deeper explanation. I don’t think there was anything about technique. We had all been trained together for at least a month, if not

longer, and it came down purely to faulty planning.”<sup>6891</sup>

Of course, that’s easy to say now. Hindsight is always 20-20.

**Enquist:** “In 1983, after five weeks of selection camp and Harry’s second set of selections, Brad and I were named the double. Eight days later, we raced in the Trials and won by 26 seconds. That is why having Trials for the Camp Double in 1984 seemed reasonable, and the added experience of international racing in Lucerne seemed to be a bonus.

“I don’t think anybody could have predicted what happened.”<sup>6892</sup>

A month after the Los Angeles Olympics, Harry looked back on the 1984 strategy in a memorandum to the Men’s Olympic Rowing Committee. In March of 1983, the original plan had called for an unchallengeable camp to choose the double and quad.

**Parker:** “In September, after enduring a spring and summer of grievance proceedings and being forced into challenge races in July of ‘83, I suggested to MORC that both the double and quad be made challenge races or be chosen through trials that national team boats would enter; that was a mistake. I had always maintained in the past that primary camp crews should be unchallenged, and I should have stuck to that position for ‘84!

“The second mistake was to go ahead with the plans to race in Europe even though we now had the challenge races to row shortly after our return. Because we had won the challenge races so convincingly in ‘83, I thought, in September, that this was a reasonable risk. What I failed to allow for was the far shorter time it left us for selection of the double and quad, the significantly greater depth of good scullers,

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<sup>6887</sup> Colgan, personal correspondence, 2009

<sup>6888</sup> Altekruse, op cit.

<sup>6889</sup> Altekruse, personal correspondence, 2009

<sup>6890</sup> Colgan, op cit.

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<sup>6891</sup> Altekruse, personal conversation, 2009

<sup>6892</sup> Enquist, op cit.



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and the problem of recovery from the trip to Europe.

“All of these factors worked against the double and quad that raced in Europe and contributed to their defeat in the trials. The first factor, i.e. the shorter time available for selection also led or contributed to my failure to properly recognize Brad Lewis’ and Paul Enquist’s potential. Had I more time and done a better job in that area, both the double and quad might have been stronger.”<sup>6893</sup>

### More Plot Twists

Within days, Brad and Paul were at an impasse. Brad wanted to train the last month before the Olympics in California. Paul insisted on returning with the rest of the Trials-winners to Dartmouth.

By the time Brad had finally given in and arrived in Hanover, Biglow had approached Paul about the two of them rowing the double again and letting Brad row the single after all.

Paul told him he didn’t care. It was up to Brad.

So John asked him.

Brad was understandably stunned when he heard about Paul’s response, but still he thought about the offer for a day as he and Paul rigged a new boat for the Olympics. Then impulsively he decided to grasp the opportunity to row the single, his goal all year long, but by this time, Biggie had changed his mind once again, of course.

After extracting a promise that their conversation would never be shared with Paul, Brad walked down to Paul’s room and said, “Let’s get to work.”<sup>6894</sup>

Couldn’t make this stuff up. *Seriously!*

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<sup>6893</sup> Parker, Review of ‘83 and ‘84 sculling programs with suggestions for the future, memo to Men’s Olympic Rowing Committee, September 24, 1984

<sup>6894</sup> Lewis, op cit, p. 138

### Olympic Doubles Competition

Fast forward through a month of more training and shadow rowing and inspirational tapes to Lake Casitas.

**Lewis:** “In the **opening heat**, we were all primed, got to the start . . . *Êtes-vous prêt? Partez* . . . we crank, we’re in pretty good shape . . . they ring the bell, false start.

“What the hell? Somebody must have jumped. They have a guy with a red pylon, and he walks the length of the starting platform, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, all the way to Lane 6 and places the pylon in front of us.

“Jim Dietz used to say there’s a fine line between a false start and a *fast* start. Apparently, they had let an obvious false start go in the previous heat, so they were determined to knuckle down and send a message with our race.

“So the next start, we just had to sit there, count to three and make sure everyone is well away, and *now* we’ll go . . . because two false starts and you’re out, and it *does* happen. People get eliminated in the *Olympics!*

“So we spotted everybody a couple of lengths and had to grind, grind, grind and work our way back. We got through the whole field . . . and *almost* caught the Germans, came within a second or two.

1 FRG	6:36.70
2 USA	6:38.21
3 NOR	6:43.01
4 AUT	6:43.10
5 SUI	6:51.48
6 MEX	6:57.01

“So we were sent to the **reps**, and that turned out to be really good because it gave us another chance to race. We got a pretty good draw, but Finland was in our race. We were rowing against Karppinen’s brother!”<sup>6895</sup> The two brothers had been third in the Worlds the previous year.

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<sup>6895</sup> **Reima Juhanna Karppinen**, 6’4” 193 cm  
199 b. 90 kg

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Lucius Biglow

### 1984 Olympic Men's Double Final

1 USA 6:36.87, 2 BEL 6:38.19, 3 YUG 5:48.46:39.59, 4 FRG 6:40.41, 5 ITA 6:44.29, 6 CAN 6:46.68

Paul and Brad celebrate as the Yugoslavs sit stunned and the Italians finish.

“And there were some other pretty good people. Yugoslavia was in there, so it was going to be fun.

1 USA	6:38.32
2 YUG	6:39.70
3 MEX	6:42.86
4 FIN	6:44.43
5 AUT	6:44.54

“We won, and that was the first time we’d ever won an individual race at a regular FISA regatta. There’s nothing like crossing the finish line first to really feel like you’re on the right track. First and second qualified, but if you can win . . . and it was *easy* speed, controlled. We didn’t have to flog ourselves to do it.

“We were *so* happy!

“The **finals**? We were out in Lane 6, started a bit slower than we wanted, but we were two *big* guys. We had lots of horsepower but not much finesse, to be honest. My partner was a big, strong guy, great endurance and really good speed, but not the quickness you need to really crash off the line.

“So these other guys went like bats out of hell off the starting line. We did our thing, which was kind of controlled.

“The first stroke was for technique only. What happens is that a lot of times you take a bad first stroke, and the boat gets off, and you have to get it back on track, and then you’re a half a length down and you’re angry. No one ever wins the race on the first stroke, but a lot of people *lose* the race on the first stroke.

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*FISA Centenary*

**U.S. Men's Double**  
Stroke **Paul Enquist**, Bow **Brad Alan Lewis**  
1984 Olympic Champion, Lake Casitas

“So we used to take the first stroke for technique. I mean you’re still full of adrenalin anyway, so you’re going to crank on it, but . . .

“Anyway, the water was a little rough, a little uneven, so we were just patient and worked through. By the 1,000, we were in the pack. The team from Belgium [**Brugse Trimm- en Roeiclub** in Bruges, **Pierre-Marie Deloof**, 6’2” 187 cm 185 lb. 84 kg, **Dirk Crois**, 6’0” 184 cm 192 lb. 87 kg] had gotten out a couple of lengths, but we had

just been training in Ithaca, five minute pieces over and over against a really good lightweight four, and so we had really good second-half endurance.

“It was pretty cool because it was kind of foggy, and you couldn’t really see. Like the fog of war, the fog of racing. You can’t really *tell* what’s going on. You kind of get the sense that you’re up there, so you keep throwing in strokes.

“We had a whole litany of 10s, 10 for West Germany who had this awesome

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sprint, 10 for New Zealand who used to sit up really high and row into their chests, 10 for Norway, 10 for everybody and everything, just a whole series of 10s all the way down until we sprinted like the dickens with like 250 to go.

“We were just starting to go off course. We were going to port, and we were too tired to get it back on course and just hoped we’d get to the finish before we got out of our lane and got disqualified. There was no time for course corrections.

“With about 20 to go, we did three short strokes to jack the rating up from 36 to 37 and then lengthen a little bit but keep the quickness.

“Crossed the finish line.

“It was . . . great . . .”<sup>6896</sup>

**Enquist:** “Our start was 20 strokes, settle to 35-36 and hold steady. I had the StrokeCoach between my feet. In the repêchage we settled at 32 and struggled for the first thousand meters when we wanted to get out ahead early. It was too painful to go that hard in the early part of the race, so decided we couldn’t do that in the final.

“Everything went as planned. We had practiced our race plan three to four times shadow rowing on the ergs and once at just firm pressure on the course Saturday morning.

“Sunday morning we were on cruise control. Everything had been rehearsed. The only thing surprising was that everyone was out of sight ahead of us after 40 strokes.

“I held the rate steady and found we were moving back on the field at around 800m. From the 1,000, I started counting down from 120 (120 strokes to the finish line). At 100 strokes to go we were going to go up, maybe 1 stroke. The key was to sit up a little taller and move the hands away from the body quicker. This moved us from fourth to second in a few strokes. We held this steady until 40 strokes to go.

“I would call out every ten (100, 90, 80, 70 . . . ). At 40 strokes to go, we would go to 38-39. Sit up taller, quicker hands, hear the sound of the bubbles along the hull change. At that point I could forget relaxing my left hand as I knew could make it to the line from there at full pressure, even with a tighter grip.

“We were a length down at 40 strokes and pulled even with around 20 to go. A slight bobble with a lane buoy at 8 strokes to go, but we held the rate steady at 38 and heard the horn at stroke 120.

“It really was that simple.”<sup>6897</sup>

The system had worked. A Gold Medal boat had emerged from a brutal selection process. They played the Star Spangled Banner. Cameras clicking. Parents and friends and teammates gathering. Laughter and tears.

If only the story ended there.

### Olympic Quad Competition

The Olympic Trials-winning quad had every reason for high hopes on Lake Casitas. After all, they had defeated by a length a Camp crew that had been right in the thick of things in Lucerne.

Unfortunately, they were never a factor in their Olympic heat and were outclassed in their repêchage. They won a spirited petite final where the first three boats were separated by less than a second, but three crews that had been beaten by the Camp quad in Lucerne made the Olympic final while the Trials winners did not.

### Olympic Quad Technique

The technique of the U.S. boat showed the lack of uniformity one might naturally expect from a last-minute combination.

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<sup>6896</sup> Lewis, personal conversation, 2009

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<sup>6897</sup> Enquist, op cit, 2010

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Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

### U.S. Men's Quad

Stroke **Bruce Beall**, 6'5" 195 cm 205 lb. 93kg, 3 **Ridgeley Johnson**, 6'9" 205 cm 226 lb. 102 kg,  
 2 **Greg Montesi** 6'1" 185 cm 179 lb. 81 kg., Bow **Curtis Fleming**, 6'1" 185 cm 181 lb. 82kg  
 Olympic 7<sup>th</sup> Place, Lake Casitas  
 1 FRG 5:57.55, 2 AUS 5:57.98, 3 CAN 5:59.07, 4 ITA 6:00.94, 5 FRA 6:01.35, 6 ESP 6:04.99  
 7 USA 6:11.50, 8 NOR 6:12.18, 9 NED 6:12.41, 10 ARG 6:32.52

**Montesi**: -10°, +35° to -30°, 0-6, 0-19, 5-10, Classical Technique, *Kernschlag*  
**Fleming's** sequential use of legs first is out of phase with the rest of the boat.  
 Stern pair used ferryman's finish. Bow pair did not.

**Halberstam**: "The quad, which placed a premium on combined experience and smoothness of group technique, was a difficult boat for Americans. It often went at very high strokes, deftly rather than powerfully executed. The best quad in the world [at the time] was the West German one, and there the same four oarsmen had been rowing together since 1977."<sup>6898</sup>

Indeed, the quad from **Ruderverein Ingelheim/Ulmer Ruder-Club Donau**: **Albert Hedderich**, 6'3" 190 cm 207 lb. 94 kg, **Raimund Hörmann**, 6'4" 194 cm 196 lb. 89 kg, **Dieter Wiedenmann**, 6'4" 192 cm 185 lb. 84 kg, **Michael Dürsch**, 6'2" 187 cm 176 lb. 80 kg, had been 1979 and

1982 World Silver Medalists and 1983 World Champions before they became 1984 Olympic Champions.

The Americans were in a different world, lacking the Germans' homogeneity. For their stern three, force application was *Kernschlag*, but legs and backs were used concurrently, which set them apart from much of the rest of the Camp that had rejected them.

But Curtis Fleming went a different way, using his legs in the manner of John Biglow, Tiff Wood, Sean Colgan, Brad Lewis, Joe Bouscaren and several others: virtually complete sequentiality of motion.

<sup>6898</sup> Halberstam, p. 166

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AP Wirephoto

**John Biglow**, shooting his tail on Lake Casitas

### Olympic Singles Competition

**Biglow:** “When the team went out to California two weeks before the Olympics, I started two-a-day workouts, feeling like I had to do something.

“I really *didn't* have to do something. It was just that everyone around me was doing two-a-days. It was not what I was doing all year long, which was rowing in the double with Paul Enquist, and I think it was bad for me because my back was very sensitive.

“You’ve got a herniated disc. You’ve got a nerve going around that herniated disc, and if you irritate it too much, the disc gets enflamed, and then it compresses the nerve and gets weak.

“And that’s what happened.

“Maybe what I should have been doing was row in the double and race in the single.”<sup>6899</sup>

**Enquist:** “John did team up with Tiff in a double a couple of times to practice against Brad and me. These were incredible intense practices, and the results were very close and split pretty evenly.

“Didn’t seem to be any sign of leg weakness from John.”<sup>6900</sup>

### The Preliminaries

**Biglow:** “The frustration for me was that the racing at the Olympics was so hyped up, and there was so much going on there with a *big* village, and it all ended up feeling like a

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<sup>6899</sup> Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

<sup>6900</sup> Enquist, op cit.

## THE ERA OF POLARIZATION

distraction to me, and I think this is separate from how I did, although I might have liked it better if I had gotten a medal.

“I ended up feeling better about the international competition in the non-Olympic years, and like I said, that may be colored by my doing better in those years, but I felt I was able to focus much more and enjoy the racing and not be distracted by all the peripheral activities of the media and the fanfare, which was kind of wasted on me. I didn’t even go to the opening ceremony at the Olympics.”<sup>6901</sup>

The Olympic singles field on Lake Casitas did not include defending World Champion **Rüdiger Reiche**, who was missing due to the Soviet-led boycott of the Los Angeles Games. However, in Lucerne the previous month Reiche had lost to both the two-time defending Olympic Champion **Pertti Karppinen** of Finland and the three-time World Champion **Peter-Michael Kolbe** of West Germany, both of whom were participating in the Games, so the field was only slightly diluted by his absence.

John Biglow drew *both* Karppinen and Kolbe in his **opening heat**.

**Halberstam**: “[Biglow] went out very quickly, which was unusual for him, but he gradually fell behind. Kolbe had taken the early lead; and then, in the last few hundred meters, Karppinen had made his move.

“Kolbe did not contest. This would be Karppinen’s race without a challenge. Biglow, falling further and further back, was struggling. Known for his powerful finishing sprints, he appeared tired at the end. Karppinen beat him by ten seconds; Kolbe, easing himself in, by three.”<sup>6902</sup>

John was forced to attempt to advance through the **repêchages**.

**Halberstam**: “The rep the next day was relatively easy. All he had to do was be

among the top three finishers to make the semi. He wanted to win it, however, because Harry Parker had charted and projected the semis, and he drew an easier semi if he won.

“He finished first handily, but he had not been able to coast through on three-quarter pressure.

“In the **semi** he felt tired. At 500 meters he was sixth. The work was harder than it should have been. For the first time he began to worry about making the final.

“Slowly he passed some of the oarsmen.”<sup>6903</sup>

Pulling his hardest at 33 in the third 500, Biglow moved up on the two leaders, Ibarra and Kolbe, who were cruising, the former at 29 and the latter 27.

**Halberstam**: “In the end he finished third, 2.5 seconds behind Kolbe. Biglow was not pleased with himself, but he had made the final and he had two days of rest.”<sup>6904</sup>

### The Final

Back in 1984, jumping the start was quite commonplace in FISA regattas, and Biglow was often the honest one left at the start floats. On Sunday in Lucerne a month earlier, he found himself open water into sixth place within ten strokes because he was the only sculler not to anticipate the starter’s commands.

He had had only marginally better success in the preliminaries on Lake Casitas, but in the final he timed it perfectly and left the starting area tied for the lead.

It did not last long. In twenty strokes four boats had open water in him. By the 500, John was sixth, three lengths behind the leader, Peter-Michael Kolbe.

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<sup>6901</sup> Biglow, op cit.

<sup>6902</sup> Halberstam, p. 196

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<sup>6903</sup> Halberstam, pp. 196-7

<sup>6904</sup> Halberstam, pp. 196-7

## THE SPORT OF ROWING

**Biglow:** “Nothing obvious happened like a crab. I got off the starting line, and I didn’t feel any different except that I was weaker and slower than normal.”<sup>6905</sup>

**Halberstam:** “Things that he had once done he could no longer do.”<sup>6906</sup>

**Biglow:** “As I passed the first 500, I was feeling frustrated, helpless, like there was nothing I could do. I didn’t feel pain, but I was doing as much as my legs and my muscles could do. I felt as if I wanted to push harder, and I couldn’t.”<sup>6907</sup>

At the half-way point, the margin between Kolbe in first and Biglow in sixth was five lengths. At 1,500 it was a stunning eight lengths!

**Biglow:** “At the 1,000 meters, I can’t exactly remember, but it was something about trying to push harder now, and maybe I could do something, and trying again with 500 to go. I can’t even remember being aware of how far back I was. I was on the order of twelve seconds behind.”<sup>6908</sup>

Unfortunately, by the 1,500 he had fallen so far behind the eventual Bronze Medalist, Canadian **Robert Mills**, that despite making up more than two lengths on him in the last 500, Biglow still finished nearly a length into fourth place.

**Biglow:** “I was not aware that I was making up ground on the Canadian in the last 500.”<sup>6909</sup>

Up front throughout the body of the race, Pertti Karppinen was content to row 30 and let Kolbe, also at 30, lead the race by half a length. With 500 to go, both raised their rating to 31 and then 33. The margin stayed the same.

At the 250, Karppinen jumped to 37 and motored through to win his third consecutive Olympic Gold Medal, tying the record of the

great Soviet sculler, **Vyachislav Ivanov**, between 1956 and ‘64.<sup>6910</sup>

**Ted Nash:** “John had exceptional determination. Injury can hold us from our top end. John showed his top gear always. Had he any less guts, he couldn’t have taken that fourth place in the Games.”<sup>6911</sup>

A healthy John Biglow probably would have had the speed to easily outpace every other competitor in 1984 with the sole exceptions of winner **Pertti Karppinen** and Silver Medalist **Peter-Michael Kolbe**, the dominant scullers of their era.<sup>6912</sup> In fact, Biglow’s time over the last 500 of the final matched Karppinen’s!

John’s major regret?

**Biglow:** “I’m sure that Tiff would have won the Bronze.”<sup>6913</sup>

### Biglow’s Technique at Casitas

John Biglow began our Homeric saga as Paris, the prince of Troy who stole Helen and provoked the Trojan War. He will end it as the other Trojan prince, **Hector**. Noble and serious, he would have been king . . . but he was doomed to fall in battle.

Film from Lake Casitas records the final chapter of a descent into hell for John Biglow. As in Lucerne, John was shooting his tail.

Watching the motion of Biglow’s bow ball was instructive. Most of the singles participants rowed in Swiss **Stämpfli** or West German **Empacher** hulls which tended to maintain an even level as they proceeded through the water in response to *Schubschlag* force application. By contrast, the bow ball on Biglow’s American **Van Dusen** shell tended to rise and fall twice each pullthrough as it responded to his two distinct *Kernschlag* force inputs.

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<sup>6905</sup> Biglow, op cit

<sup>6906</sup> Halberstam. P. 207

<sup>6907</sup> Biglow, op cit.

<sup>6908</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6909</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>6910</sup> See Chapter 86.

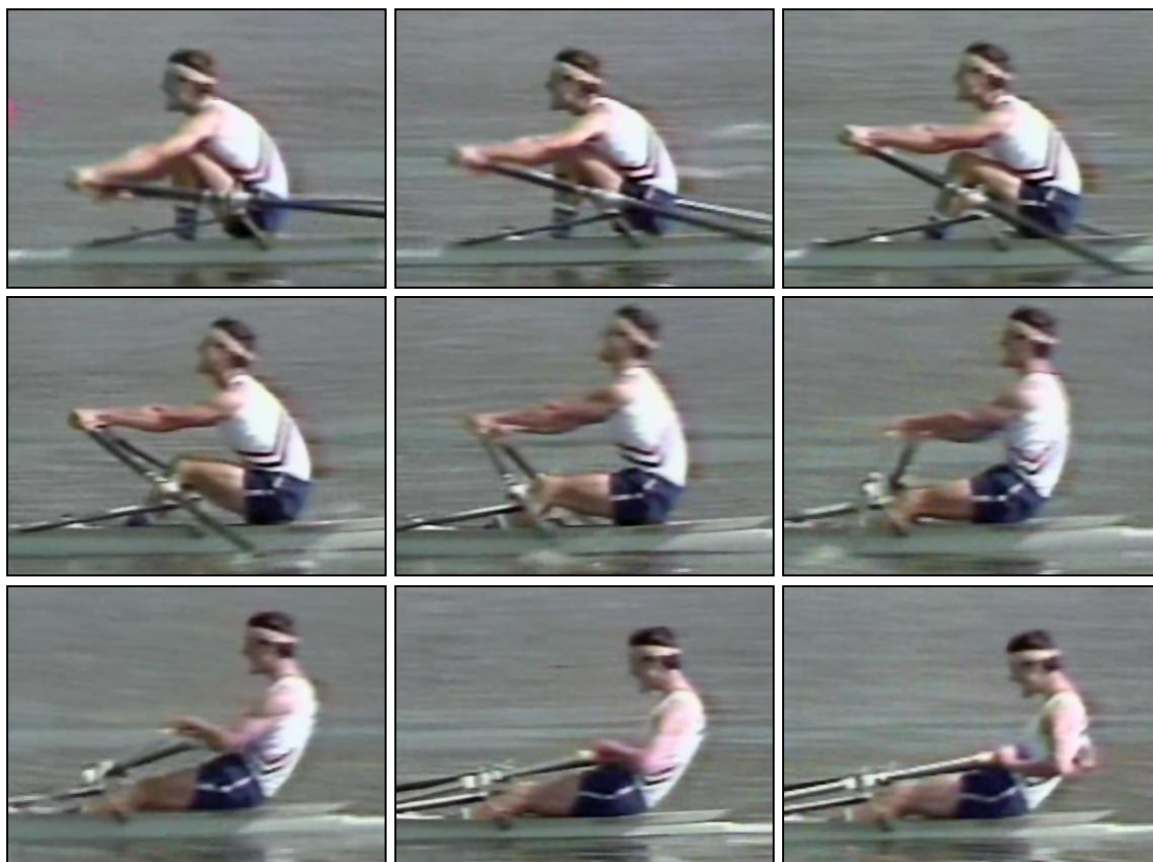
<sup>6911</sup> Nash, personal correspondence, 2009

<sup>6912</sup> See Chapter 125.

<sup>6913</sup> Biglow, op cit.



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Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

### John Biglow

Olympic 4<sup>th</sup> Place, Lake Casitas

0°, +35° to -30°, 0-8, 0-10, 0-10, Stop & Shop, *Kernschlag*

The equivalent of Modern Orthodox hybrid-concurrent with late arm draw.

Unlike 1981, legs and back were disconnected. Despite virtually unchanged stroke mechanics, the result was a two-part pullthrough in 1984.

“Note the disconnectedness of his arms.” – Frank Cunningham, 2008

Having re-adopted by this time Parker’s Stop & Shop recovery rhythm, probably while stroke of the 1983 U.S. Quad,<sup>6914</sup> Biglow accelerated into the stern on his slide, and even though he was not intending to explode with his weak-feeling legs, Biglow’s bow would rise at the rush of weight into the stern followed by the initial shock of his leg motion at the entry. Then it would react a second time to the remainder

of his stroke. This is a classic two-part pullthrough, considered by George Pocock and his followers, including Frank Cunningham, as the cardinal sin in sculling.

After the initial leg pulse (“impact instead of picking up the boat”<sup>6915</sup>), the pullthrough resumed its pattern of strong, effective, near-parabolic surge to the finish<sup>6916</sup> that Biglow had used since 1981.

<sup>6914</sup> See Chapter 140.

<sup>6915</sup> Cunningham, personal correspondence, 2008

<sup>6916</sup> See Chapter 139.

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**Greg Rokosh**, CBC television commentator at Lake Casitas: “You can see Biglow’s rough style, his rough application of pressure on the oar. He’s got to get much smoother if he is going to catch [the medal contenders].”<sup>6917</sup>

**Biglow**: “I didn’t know that I was shooting my tail, but now that I am looking at these pictures, I am actually remembering more of what it felt like in that race. I can’t explain why this would happen, but my legs felt weak, and therefore I didn’t feel like I was anchored in a way that I could pry with my back.

“I was doing what I could in ‘84 after making my back worse with the two-a-days. I was not thinking about style.

“I cannot explain this. I’m looking at the pictures. They are amazing! I *remember* what it felt like, and I can actually picture myself in the boat and doing it again.

“I don’t know why it happened like that. My legs were weak, and yet I shot my tail. Why wouldn’t I just pry with my back and hold my legs stable?

“I wasn’t conscious or aware. It just happened. When I look back on the ‘82 pictures, I remember the feeling of the stronger legs allowing me to pry my back against my legs.

“I can remember the frustration of feeling so weak in the ‘84 Olympics . . .

“Reliving this is actually much more painful than I thought it would be . . .”<sup>6918</sup>

### Flaw in the System

In summary, it is hard to avoid surmising that while Biglow’s technique was clearly affected adversely by his back injury, starting in 1982 it had also tended to devolve toward mutant segmented-effort *Kernschlag* under the influence of the group

of scullers working under Harry Parker in Cambridge, just as Frank Cunningham has surmised.

It seems more than coincidence that John’s technique improved so much in Seattle during the winter of 1983-84 when he was rowing behind Paul Enquist, a fine Classical Technique role model, and receiving feedback from Cunningham.

But when he was struggling, there were so many technical similarities to the leg-back sequentiality of Tiff Wood during the 1984 Sculling Camp and to Altekruise, Bouscaren and Colgan in Lucerne and to Fleming on Lake Casitas.

It should be stated that this change was not intended by Parker himself, who relied on his athletes to subconsciously arrive at their own conclusions as to how to move boats without micromanagement from a coach.<sup>6919</sup>

The potential flaw in that approach is that intramural competition within teams or at selection camps, especially when seat racing is involved, tends to reward conformity to the group norm, whatever that may be. If you can blend with your teammates, then you succeed. Majority rules.

So if the majority is pounding the legs at the catch, then *that* is what you must do in order to succeed. Anything else, including Classical concurrent *Schubschlag*, the historic hallmark of champion sculling boats for more than a century, is selected out.

But it’s more than that. As Sean Colgan stated in Chapter 141, explosive legs seem to have a particular advantage in a seat racing environment. The noticeable pulse upon entry is readily apparent to all and can quickly galvanize the members of a coxed-four or a quad. You pound the catch together, get an early lead and demoralize the other boats. The pieces are shorter than

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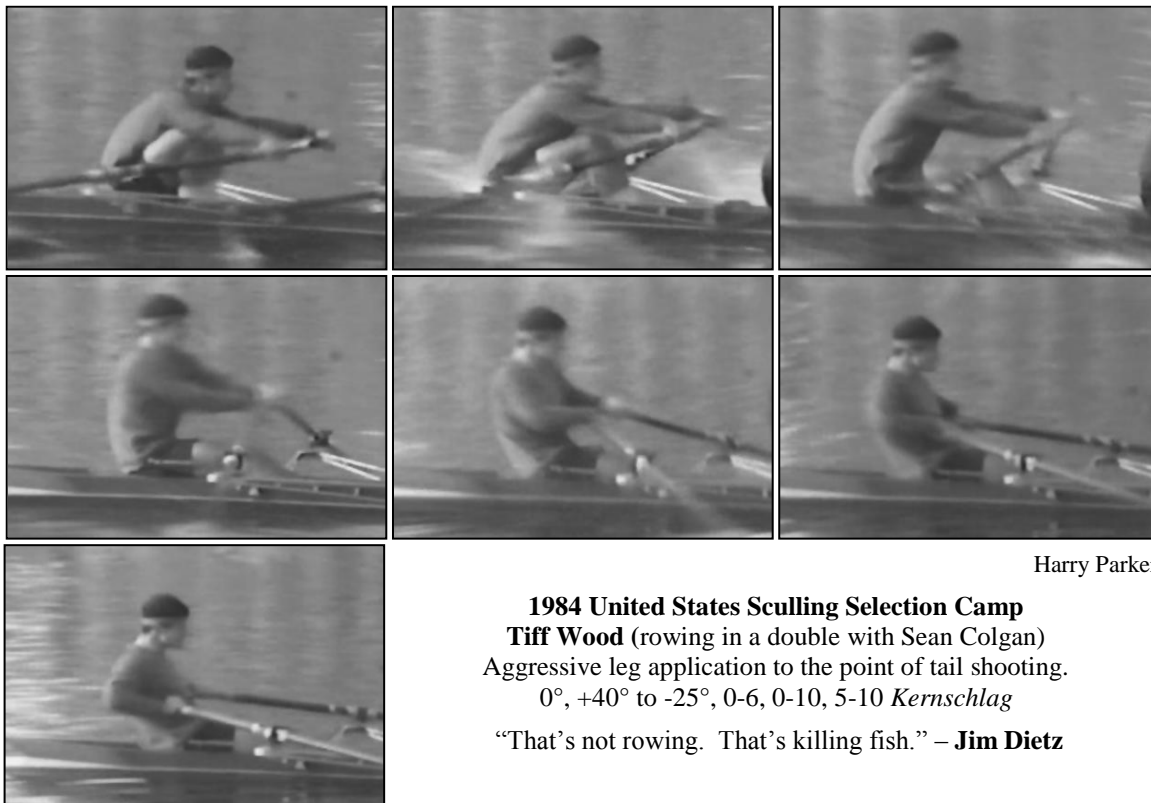
<sup>6917</sup> Rokosh, commentary during the 1984 Olympic semi-final.

<sup>6918</sup> Biglow, op cit.

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<sup>6919</sup> See Chapter 102.

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Harry Parker

**1984 United States Sculling Selection Camp**  
**Tiff Wood** (rowing in a double with Sean Colgan)  
Aggressive leg application to the point of tail shooting.  
0°, +40° to -25°, 0-6, 0-10, 5-10 *Kernschlag*  
“That’s not rowing. That’s killing fish.” – **Jim Dietz**

2,000 meters, so the advantage shifts to the aggressive early leader.<sup>6920</sup>

For John Biglow, his personal devolution in technique perhaps involved not just his subconscious effort to compensate for a serious back injury but also his subconscious adaptation to the group-think of the Camp.

### The Decline and Fall of Tiff Wood

In 1983 when Tiff placed third in the World Championships rowing in the sliding-rigger boat with mild *Kernschlag* force

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<sup>6920</sup> Sean wrote an instructive article in Andy Anderson’s DoctorRowing column in the February, 2009 issue of *Rowing News* describing How to Win a Seat Race.

application, it had been the summit of his rowing career.

But the next year, when he returned to his regular segmented-force *Kernschlag* approach, it all came apart. First he narrowly missed out in the Singles Trials he had won the previous year. Then – despite the Camp Coach being Harry Parker, for whom he had rowed with such distinction at Harvard – Tiff also failed to make the top Camp Double.

Next he couldn’t make the Camp Quad.

Then came the loss at the Doubles Trials. In frustration, his desperation double partner, **Jim Dietz**, had accused him of “killing fish”<sup>6921</sup> with his oars.

As a final humiliation, he suffered a horizon job in the Quad Trials.

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<sup>6921</sup> Dietz, qtd. by Halberstam, p. 185

## THE SPORT OF ROWING



Lucius Biglow



Harry Parker

### **The Best of Times . . . The Worst of Times** **Tiff Wood** in 1983 and 1984



*The Oarsman*

### **Wood and Dietz** at the end of the Doubles Trials

**Halberstam:** “The more anxious he became, the more he sought to push through solely on power, and the rougher he rowed.”<sup>6922</sup>

Odysseus tied to the mast.

Tiff’s technique is recorded in extensive films of training that previous winter in Tampa and that spring in Cambridge. As is shown on this page, leg drive had become so explosive that he shot his tail out from under him. A second, magnificent effort completed the pullthrough, but there was no organic integrity to the stroke, no unified surging acceleration from catch to release.

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<sup>6922</sup> Halberstam, p. 164

As a result, his crew boats didn’t swing, and he had to achieve all that he did at the Singles Trials on pure talent and guts.

**Mike Totta:** “When I went to Boston in 1983 to join the training group, one of my first workouts was in a double with Tiff Wood. I’ll never forget the violence (and boat check!) associated with the catch with him in the bow and my less than technically-slick self in the stroke seat. I’d never felt anything like it before. It sounds stupid, but it really DID feel like a ‘hammer’ was hitting the footboard on every catch. The feel of a double with Tiff was different than the feeling with anyone else sculling at that

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time. It never surprised me that he had challenges blending into team boats. We all knew it.

“However, you can’t fake speed in a single, and few were better than Tiff in 1983-84.”<sup>6923</sup>

### Historical Perspective

Stunningly, the Olympic Gold Medal of Lewis and Enquist was the only one won by any American men, rowing or sculling, in any event in the forty years between Bill Stowe’s **1964** Vesper eight and Bryan Volpenhein’s **2004** National eight.<sup>6924</sup>

And yet, like the 1972 Vesper four,<sup>6925</sup> Lewis and Enquist’s Classical Technique had little long-term influence in their own country. Author **David Halberstam** and the American rowing community focused on the human story of our heroic and tragic 1984 sculling heroes but never asked if there was a possible reason why our best Modern Orthodox *Kernschlag* scullers had been beaten.

A lost opportunity.

**Lewis**: “As a country, we used to be good in the double,<sup>6926</sup> but only one other American crew has even made the *finals* at the Olympics since 1968, and that was 2004. They came in sixth, so it’s not an easy event for Americans.

“Paul was 29 years old. I was 29, and we both had been in it for a *long* time.

“Sculling is a tough sport to get good at. Sweeps is so much easier. I once talked to **Florijn and Rienks**, the Dutch guys who won the double in ‘88 and then stroked the eight that won in ‘96.<sup>6927</sup> They had won at

the highest level of both sweeps and sculls. I asked them which was harder for them, and they said that physically sweeps is harder because there’s no strategy. You just crank it from the first stroke to the end. Sculling? It’s heavy. The surface area of the two sculling blades is so much greater than the one sweep blade, so it’s *heavy!* You can’t row as hard. You have to strategize, pick your moves, and that’s what makes sculling better suited for some people.

“You know, the greatest sweep oarsman of our time, **Steve Redgrave**, started out in sculling. Crashed and burned<sup>6928</sup> . . . but, of course, he did well enough to beat me in the finals of the Diamonds in ‘85, my last season.

“About that time I was envying my partner. Paul quit rowing, never took another stroke after ‘84.”<sup>6929</sup>

### Andy Sudduth

David Halberstam ended *The Amateurs* with the events of 1984, but the remarkable impact Harry Parker had on the perceived status of sculling in the eyes of American sweep oarsmen paid another dividend the very next year when Harvard rower **Andy Sudduth** made the international jump from the 2-seat in Kris Korzeniewski’s 1984 Olympic Silver Medal Eight<sup>6930</sup> to the 1985 U.S. Singles Trials winner with Harry coaching.

At the time of his switch, Andy was already one of America’s most accomplished sweep rowers ever:

1979 New England Champion – Exeter  
1981 Thames Cup – U.S. Under-23 Eight  
1981 Silver – U.S. Under-23 Eight  
1981 Silver – U.S. Worlds Coxed-Four  
1982 Bronze – U.S. Worlds Coxed-Four

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<sup>6923</sup> Totta, op cit.

<sup>6924</sup> See the Preface.

<sup>6925</sup> See Chapter 122

<sup>6926</sup> The U.S. won in 1920, ‘24, ‘28 and ‘32. See Chapter 56.

<sup>6927</sup> See Chapter 135.

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<sup>6928</sup> See Chapter 130.

<sup>6929</sup> Lewis, op cit.

<sup>6930</sup> See Chapter 124.

## THE SPORT OF ROWING



*The Oarsman*

### **1981 U.S. Coxed-Four**

World Silver Medal, Oberschleißheim

Coach **Harry Parker**,

Stroke **Fred Borchelt** 6'5" 195 cm 196 lb. 89 kg, 3 **John Everett** 6'4" 193 cm 205 lb. 93 kg,  
2 Tom **Woodman** 6'5" 194 cm 200 lb 90 kg, Bow **Andy Sudduth** 6'3" 191 cm 201 lb. 91 kg,  
Coxswain **Bob Jaugstetter**

Sudduth was just 19 when he was recruited from the Pre-Elite Eight after Lucerne.

1983 U.S. College Champion – Harvard  
1984 Silver – U.S. Olympic Eight  
1984 Gold – Head of the Charles Single  
1985 Gold – CRASH-B Ergometer Worlds  
1985 U.S. College Champion – Harvard  
1985 Grand Challenge Cup – Harvard

Gregg Stone has mentioned that John Biglow had been a much more talented athlete than he. Andy Sudduth was also brimming with what seemed like superhuman athletic capacity and potential.

It is interesting to note that Tiff Wood had won the Championship Single at the **Head of the Charles** three times from 1979

to 1981. Andy would win it five times in a row beginning in 1984.

The **CRASH-B World Indoor Rowing Championship** had been won in 1983 and 1984 by the 6'7" Olympic Quad Trials-winner **Ridgely Johnson**. Tiff and Biggie were good, but never quite the best. Andy Sudduth won it in 1985 and repeated in 1987 and 1988.

**Wood:** "Andy was a mild mannered, sweet guy. He loved to race. I remember actually being pretty happy that he was not going to switch to single sculling until after

## THE ERA OF POLARIZATION

'84. It was already evident that he was a prodigy."<sup>6931</sup>

**Biglow:** "I have fond memories of rowing on the Charles with Harry coaching Andy, Tiff, and me, before Andy found his top speed.

"He was very stubborn. I could get ahead, but he never gave up, never caved in. Very strong.

"I never did overlap with him after he became the U.S. sculler."<sup>6932</sup>

Andy was plucked from the U.S. Under-23 Eight at the age of 19 to row on his first senior team in 1981. They won a Silver Medal.

Was he the best oarsman Harry Parker had ever coached at Harvard?

**Parker:** "There's no way to compare different people from one era to another. But he's certainly one of the very best that we've ever had."<sup>6933</sup>

### 1985 World Championships

By the time Andy lined up for the final of the men's single at the World Championships in Hazewinkel, Belgium, in just the previous twelve months he had already won the Championship Single at the Head of the Charles, won the CRASH-Bs, and stroked the Harvard Varsity to wins at the Eastern Sprints, the Harvard-Yale Race (the first Harvard win in five years), the U.S. College Championship in Cincinnati and the Grand Challenge Cup at Henley.

**Devon Mahoney Zimmerman**, 1985 Harvard coxswain: "At Henley the night we won the Grand, the entire boat decided that tradition must be upheld and proceeded to

strip and jump off the bridge right beside the Leander Club boathouse. Andy Hawley still remembers watching Suds, buck naked, climbing up the railing of the pub by the river to the deep amusement of those drinking on the porch, then racing off down the street, white skin glowing, cackling away, with two English bobbies in hot pursuit."<sup>6934</sup>

Surely it must have seemed that no one rower could possibly achieve any more in a single year than Andy already had in 1985, but it might not have happened at all if his 1984 U.S. Olympic Eight had not come in a heart-breaking second on Lake Casitas.<sup>6935</sup>

**Sudduth:** "I came half a second from retiring. If we'd done as we expected and won the Gold Medal, it would have been easy to decide that rowing wasn't all that important in the next four years, but there's a fairly strong feeling of having missed out on something.



<sup>6931</sup> Wood, op cit.

<sup>6932</sup> Biglow, personal correspondence, 2009

<sup>6933</sup> Qtd. by Malcolm Moran, *Olympic Rower Sets Sights on '88*, *The New York Times*, May 11, 1985

<sup>6934</sup> Zimmerman, tribute to Andy at the Head of the Charles, 2006

<sup>6935</sup> See Chapter 124.

## THE SPORT OF ROWING



Lucius Biglow

The margin was two-thirds of a length as Andy hit the 250.

“It wasn’t that we didn’t win. We didn’t show up with our best performance that day.”<sup>6936</sup>

### 1985 Singles Final

A year later, Andy looked around him and saw one of the strongest fields ever assembled for a World Championship, with three Olympic Gold Medals, three Olympic Silver Medals, five World Gold Medals and four World Silver Medals *just in the single sculls event* already spread among the other finalists.

All six scullers rowed the first 100 meters between 39 and 42. West Germany’s **Peter Michael Kolbe**, **Vasily Yakusha** of the Soviet Union and **Uwe Mund** of GDR quickly established an early lead of nearly a length over **Andy Sudduth** of the U.S., **Pat Walter** of Canada and **Pertti Karppinen** of Finland in that order.

At 300 meters, Kolbe took a 10 and moved another half length into the lead, but Mund and Yakusha closed the gap by 500 meters after Kolbe dropped his rating to 31.

By 750, Sudduth at 35 was closing quickly on the GDR and Soviet scullers as Kolbe again pushed half a length past them into the lead. Further back, Karppinen was also on the move.

By the 1,000, Sudduth had swept up first a thoroughly beaten Mund and then Yakusha. His split time for the second 500 was at least 1.00 seconds faster than anyone else.

Yakusha collapsed after he had been passed. He would lose a full two and one-half lengths in the next 500. Kolbe also folded, surrendering two lengths and the race lead to the American. Only Karppinen at 30 carried on, maintaining a consistent pace throughout the middle 1,000 while Sudduth continued to inch away from him at 34. There was a full length between them with 500 to go.

It would be a two-boat race the rest of the way.

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<sup>6936</sup> Qtd. by Moran, op cit.



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*Rowing U.S.A.*: “Sudduth’s move into the lead brought the regatta crowd to their feet, but Karppinen was only 2.01 seconds back.”<sup>6937</sup>

With 350 to go, Karppinen raised his rate to 34 and immediately began to move. Sudduth was looking over at him almost every stroke and could see the danger. He responded by going to 35, but the margin had shrunk to just two-thirds of a length with 250 to go.

Five strokes later, Sudduth caught a small crab in the increasingly choppy water. Karppinen pounced and was by him before he could get going again. The Finn put in 10 more at 38 just to nail the lid on the coffin, but the race was already won. The final margin was 2.88 seconds, but that was misleading. Neither was going flat out in the last 100 meters.

**Bill Belden**.<sup>6938</sup> “I remember watching Andy’s race with Karppinen. It looked to me like his Van Dusen shell<sup>6939</sup> was a little unstable at the end. I think the overall instability of Van Dusen singles required additional small motor activity that drained energy, adding to fatigues and instability at the end of races. Perhaps a different boat might have yielded a better result?”<sup>6940</sup>

*The Times* of London: “The men’s single sculls produced the expected classic when Finnish Olympic Champion Pertti Karppinen sculled through the American, Andrew Sudduth, in the last 250 metres. Sudduth a newcomer in this event, who stroked<sup>6941</sup> the United States 1984 Silver Medal eight and Harvard in this year’s Grand at Henley, dictated the race until Karppinen relentlessly turned on the pressure in the closing stages.

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<sup>6937</sup> Michael Hughes, *All Together Now: The World Rowing Championships, Rowing U.S.A.*, October/November 1985, p. 22

<sup>6938</sup> See Chapter 139.

<sup>6939</sup> See Chapter 140.

<sup>6940</sup> Belden, personal correspondence, 2010

<sup>6941</sup> He was actually in the 2-seat.

“The pace was such that the Finn was under 6min 50sec with a length to spare over the American with four-times World Champion Peter Michael Kolbe of West Germany almost four lengths adrift in third place.”<sup>6942</sup>

1 FIN Karppinen	6:48.08
2 USA Sudduth	6:50.96
3 FRG Kolbe	6:59.75
4 URS Yakusha	7:01.90
5 GDR Mund	7:03.58
6 CAN Walter	7:06.70

Throughout rowing history, there have been quite a few of extraordinary individuals who have amassed extraordinary accomplishments during their careers, but I think it is safe to say that no one has ever had a year to match Andy’s in breadth of accomplishment, starting at the Head of the Charles on October 20, 1984 and ending at Wassersportzentrum Hazewinkel on September 1, 1985.

Andy’s career didn’t end there. There were two more CRASH-B titles, including a dramatic come-from-behind victory over **Steve Redgrave**<sup>6943</sup> in 1987, and three more Head of the Charles wins to come. In 1986, he stroked the U.S. eight to Gold at the Goodwill Games in Moscow and Bronze at the World Championships in Nottingham, England. Returning to the international single, he placed seventh at the Worlds in Copenhagen and sixth at the Olympics in Seoul, Korea.

**Gregg Stone**: “Andy’s inability to replicate or top his Silver in the single is a story we have heard in various versions before with Cromwell, Dietz and Biglow. A decade later, it also happened to **Jamie Koven**.”<sup>6944</sup>

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<sup>6942</sup> Jim Railton, *British pair stretch Russians to the limit*, *The Times* of London, September 2, 1985

<sup>6943</sup> See Chapter 130 ff.

<sup>6944</sup> See Chapter 149.

## THE SPORT OF ROWING



USRA

### 1979 U.S. Junior Rowing Team

I came this close to meeting Andy Sudduth when I was a U.S. National Junior Coach.  
(Andy's future wife Ruth was seated two places to his left.)

“Single sculling is not an American sport.”<sup>6945</sup>

Unlike the rest of the fine American scullers of the 1970s and '80s, today we already speak of Andy in the past tense.

**Andrew Hancock Sudduth** (1961-2006) died of pancreatic cancer several years ago at the age of 45. He has left a loving wife, two daughters and a host of grieving teammates and friends.

Andy spent his adult professional life as a computer software engineer, following a passion he first embraced in junior high school. As he went from the Harvard computer lab to the DHCP and DNS servers and on to Cisco Systems in the first heady days of the burgeoning world-wide web, he

was one of its architects, contributing to the development of many of the programs that became the basis of the modern internet and discovering the internet's first well-known virus.

But he is remembered by rowers as an inveterate prankster, a faithful friend and *the* consummate rower. He was the kind of guy that people, myself included, *wish* they had met even if they never did.

### Technique

Andy's widow, **Ruth Kennedy Sudduth**: “What I noticed the most about Andy's rowing was its *sheer simplicity and economy of motion*. [my emphasis]

“I remember glimpsing him row off the dock sometime in the '80's and thinking how he made something which I knew to be

<sup>6945</sup> Stone, personal correspondence, 2009

## THE ERA OF POLARIZATION



*Belgian Television*

### **Andy Sudduth**

1985 World Championship Silver Medal, Hazewinkel  
+5°, +35° to -35°, 0-8, 0-9, 0-10 Classical Technique  
Concurrent *Schubschlag*, ferryman's finish.

extremely nuanced appear so effortless and obvious.”<sup>6946</sup>

It is interesting to contrast the above description of Andy's technique with previously mentioned descriptions of John Biglow's "awkward" technique by various television commentators.

However, when Biglow was rowing at his best and not hampered by injury, there were more similarities than differences. Biglow rowed with more erect posture. The natural C-shape of Sudduth's back allowed him to compress his legs more going into the entry. Biglow dramatically lifted his chin.

Sudduth kept his chin level. But these are stylistic differences, no more.

The real difference, what Sudduth could do perhaps better than anybody in the world, was make his sculling look *easy*. When first Mund and then Yakusha and finally Kolbe fell by the wayside in 1985, they looked labored compared to Andy. When Karppinen went by, he had to work *hard!*

**Stone:** "I suspect that every oarsman who ever rowed with Andy would list him as their favorite partner. He was a sailor first, and he combined excellent water skills with huge VO<sup>2</sup> and massive legs. He was just extraordinarily gifted, and extraordinarily humble as well.

"Whatever boat he was in felt better and performed better due to his presence, from the 1984 Silver Medal eight to unfit Harvard

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<sup>6946</sup> Ruth Sudduth, personal correspondence, 2009

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alumni boats. He even made you go faster if you were just sculling along with him. I remember going out with him in the mid-'80s. We just loped along in what turned out to be a 5.5k piece I did (and do) often. There was no effort to it, and yet when we finished I realized I had broken 24 minutes easily, something I hadn't done for many years. For Andy, it was nothing, but he laughed at my pleasure.<sup>6947</sup>

Sudduth rowed mainstream Classical Technique concurrent *Schubschlag* with a Fairbairnesque endless-chain rhythm. His was an approach that Guy Nickalls or Charles Courtney or George Pocock or Frank Cunningham could identify with and celebrate.

Of course, he didn't just win beauty contests. He was also the ergometer World Champion! He had it all. He was truly a once-in-a-generation athlete.

**Harry Parker** in 1985: "It's not just that he's strong. There are a lot of strong people rowing. I'm sure there are several as strong as he is. He utilizes his strength very well. He's has a great natural sense of what it is to make a boat go."<sup>6948</sup>

**Bruce Ibbetson**, 1984 teammate: "Andy was an extraordinarily tough individual. He also had a serious lack of fear, as exhibited by his crash while mountain biking across Costa Rica with us several years ago.

"He could easily have killed himself coming down a steep slope out of a



Robert Visser, *Rowing U.S.A.*

### Andy Sudduth

1985 World Championships, Hazewinkel

mountain pass, doing about 30mph while the rest of us were picking our way through a boulder-strewn trail at about 10mph. Andy launched himself horizontally for about fifty feet, landing in a crumpled hump. He stood up slowly, bloody and dirty and said, "That didn't go too well."

"That was Andy."<sup>6949</sup>

**Ruth**: "Andy commented to me once as we prepared for a workout and I asked him how hard we were going to go. 'Why, you just go as hard as you can for the time allotted.'

"When he was well into chemotherapy, gaunt and pale, my mother saw him on his road bike on rollers with a lake of sweat growing under his bike. She said she'd

<sup>6947</sup> Stone, personal correspondence, 2009

<sup>6948</sup> Moran, op cit.

<sup>6949</sup> Ibbetson, personal correspondence, 2009

## THE ERA OF POLARIZATION

never seen anyone work out so hard. It was just another day on the bike for him.

“He was amazing. If not impervious to pain, then with an incredible threshold. It took a serious change of approach as he was dying to treat pain differently. He had always used pain as information on how his body was performing. It became time to manage the pain and to keep it under control so he could function and be present for the people he loved.”<sup>6950</sup>

Rest in peace, Andy Sudduth.

### Perspective

The international success of Jimmy Dietz and Bill Belden in the 1970s, Scott Roop in 1981, John Biglow in 1981 and 1982, Tiff Wood in 1983, the double in 1984 and Andy Sudduth in 1985 represented flickers of light in the midst of the Dark Age of American sculling . . . and rowing, too.

The technique of Sudduth and the healthy Biglow was the reincarnation of Ned Hanlan and John B. Kelly, Sr. Unfortunately, rowers have short memories, and nobody in the ensuing years remembered.

Placed in proper historical perspective, Andy Sudduth, Lewis and Enquist, John Biglow, Belden and Roop, Jimmy Dietz, Hough and Johnson, Van Blom and McKibbon, the 1974 U.S. Eight and the 1964 Vesper Eight were the last echoes of the American bell first rung by Ellis Ward at Penn and Charles Courtney at Cornell three-quarters of a century earlier.

Cornell-grad **Bill Stowe** was the last of the great American international strokes produced by the Courtney/Conibear tradition. In the forty years since, there certainly have been other strokes as gifted.

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<sup>6950</sup> Ruth Sudduth, op cit.

Al Shealy,<sup>6951</sup> Cal Coffey<sup>6952</sup> and Andy Sudduth immediately spring to mind, but not until the basic truths about boat moving which Stowe embodied in 1964 could reemerge in U.S. rowing would an American eight win another Olympic Gold.

Ironically, during the American Dark Age, the rest of the world was experiencing an **Age of Enlightenment**. There was a free exchange of ideas such as had never been seen before in the history of the sport.

Other countries took turns sharing the forefront of world rowing, the German Federal and Democratic Republics, Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Canada, Spain, Italy, Norway, Danish lightweights, Romanian women.

Not the United States.

### Afterward

The year 1984 was an epic tragedy, the reason why at least two books<sup>6953</sup> and one commercial film<sup>6954</sup> have been made about the American men scullers of that fateful year.

**Brad Lewis** and **John Biglow** tried a double in 1985. It did not go well.

Since then, Brad has written several books, been an America's Cup grinder and done some coaching.

**Lewis**: “Today [2009] **Paul Enquist** is a member of the Port of Seattle longshoremens, the last great union in this country. He's 6'6”. He's married to a really tall woman, and they have two boys who are even taller. One is rowing freshman at U-Dub this year.

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<sup>6951</sup> See Chapter 104 ff.

<sup>6952</sup> See Chapters 116 and 129.

<sup>6953</sup> the Halberstam and Lewis books. See Bibliography.

<sup>6954</sup> *Rowing Through*, 1996, loosely based on the Halberstam book.

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Inge Stekl

**1980 Rowing Club  
2010 Head of the Charles Champion  
Senior-Master Fours Men (50+)**

Stroke **Mike Totta**, 3 **Bill Purdy**, 2 **Otto Stekl**, Bow **Dan Sayner**, Coxswain **Gary Goldring**

The other is a basketball player who is 6'10".<sup>6955</sup>

After 1984, **Charlie Altekruise** kept with the sport and finally rowed in an Olympic quad.

**Altekruise**: "I stuck around to '88, but the problem was that when we got over to the Olympics, we ran up against these frustrated East Germans who hadn't got to go to Los Angeles, and it was much harder to win a medal.

"In the quad competition in Seoul, I think we had something like four previous World Champion quads in that race. The

Norwegians, the Canadians, the Italians and the East Germans had all won the quad within a certain number of years [an exaggeration, but not by much].

"That was the boycott washing its way through the system, and I got to experience all three phases of that cycle. I made the team and missed competing in '80, didn't make the team in '84 and then made the team and ran into massive international competition in '88."<sup>6956</sup>

In the intervening years, Charlie has done some coaching and some masters' rowing. He is now an independent

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<sup>6955</sup> Lewis, op cit.

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<sup>6956</sup> Altekruise, op cit.

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community development  
consultant in Berkeley,  
California.

In 1996, **Joe Bouscaren** briefly tried to make the Olympic Team as a lightweight. He still competes in masters' cross country skiing. He's a doctor now.

**Purdy:** "Mike Totta convinced me to finish out the summer of 1984 racing with him in a double. We won races in Boston, Providence, at the Canadian Henley and the Canadian Championships in Montreal. I remember hearing an announcement near the start before our race in Montreal that the Canadian men's eight had just won the Gold. I didn't want to hear anything about the Olympics. I was not interested.

"I returned to dental school that fall. My last race would be the championship single at the Head of the Charles, where I medaled.

"I rowed my single for a couple of years to keep from getting totally out of shape, but hung up the oars shortly after that."<sup>6957</sup>

Since 1990, Bill Purdy has been practicing oral and maxillofacial surgery in the Burlington, Vermont area.

**Mike Totta:** "After establishing my medical career and starting my family, I came back to rowing in 1998, and it has never been so much fun for me. Sean Colgan had it very right in at least one way – rowing for me is most enjoyable in the context of a balanced life. For the past five years I've trained and raced with my teenage



The author and **John Biglow** in 2008

daughter – she won the Youth Medal at the Head of the Charles this year.

"Since 2000 I have been rowing again with Bill Purdy. He sits at 3-seat in our Head of the Charles coxed-four. In 2010, we won the Senior Master's event for the fourth year in a row."<sup>6958</sup>

**Purdy:** "I owe it to Mike for getting me motivated to return to rowing, which had been an all-encompassing part of my life for so long. The return to the sport has brought me lifetime friendships with some incredible people. I am fortunate to have such a great friend as Mike Totta."<sup>6959</sup>

Today **John Biglow** is a physician and loving father in Woodstock, Vermont. He looks much the same as he did a quarter century ago and still wonders about the perfect storm that was 1984. After more than two decades on the sidelines, he is

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<sup>6957</sup> Purdy, op cit.

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<sup>6958</sup> Totta, personal correspondence, 2010

<sup>6959</sup> Purdy, op cit.

## THE SPORT OF ROWING



**Jim Dietz and Tiff Wood**  
with the author in 2009

Susan Parkman

considering re-entering the rowing world as a coach.

As the Athletes' Advisory Council Representative to the Men's Olympic Rowing Committee, **Jim Dietz** has worked tirelessly on behalf of reforms to ensure that what happened in 1984 would never be repeated.

Since his retirement as an athlete, Jim has made quite a name for himself as coach, first at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. His predecessor had been 1964 Vesper Olympic Champion stroke Bill Stowe, a *Schubschlag* rower who became a *Kernschlag* coach. Under Stowe, Coast Guard had dominated U.S. small-college rowing, but they were rough as cobs.

When Dietz took over the program, the technique he taught was also *Kernschlag*, another example in rowing history of the tendency of *Schubschlag* to mutate over generations.

In recent years Dietz has evolved back into a *Schubschlag* coach of the ten-time

Atlantic 10 Conference Champion University of Massachusetts women.

**Dietz:** "Today, my crews have what is considered a sculler's catch, quick but not hard. I teach a very relaxed style, mostly influenced by countless hours in a launch with **Kris Korzeniowski.**"<sup>6960,6961</sup>

**Ted Nash:** "Today Jim is coaching his son, Jim Jr., who reflects his dad's personality in so many ways and is getting stronger and better daily. Another Dietz will soon gain an elite podium."<sup>6962</sup>

**Tiff Wood** has moved to the West Coast and also turned to masters' rowing. Just like Gregg Stone, he has a son rowing for Harry at Harvard.

**Gregg Stone:** "Reading about 1984 has sure made me wish I hadn't quit and missed all that fun!

"On the other hand, as Tiff, Bill Purdy, Mike Totta, Dietz and I are the only ones still rowing, maybe it was better to not burn out.

"Tiff and I row the double each fall in the Head, but being bi-coastal and with very different physiologies, it can be painful. Some rows are better than others. We switch positions and try different approaches, but there is no substitute for being well matched."<sup>6963</sup>

Today, the life journey of Tiff Wood, the *Odysseus* of *The Amateurs*, continues, and his legend continues to grow.

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<sup>6960</sup> See Chapter 124.

<sup>6961</sup> Dietz, personal correspondence, 2006

<sup>6962</sup> Nash, personal correspondence, 2009

<sup>6963</sup> Stone, personal correspondence, 2008



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Tiff Wood

**Cambridge Boat Club Senior-Master Double (50+)**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place, 2006 Head of the Charles  
Stroke **Tiff Wood**, Bow **Gregg Stone**

**Wood:** “It’s always great to meet some guy in a bar at a rowing convention and have him tell me, ‘I read the book. You’re my hero.’ And I recognize it was all about having the right scribe.

“My fame is sort of representative, not really individual. There are probably a thousand other stories just as compelling if the right person had been there to tell it. I recognize that. How can you not like being a hero to people?

“But in some ways, it has made it harder to get past 1984 because it’s *always* there in everybody’s perception of me and in *my* memory. It took me a long time to actually read the Halberstam book because that was a summer I did *not* want to relive. [Laughs heartily.] I’d kind of read it in pieces. I

would open it at random, read a bit and slam it shut.

““Okay, I can take that.””<sup>6964</sup>

### **David Halberstam (1934-2007)**

**Dietz:** “I’ve never been one to dwell on the past too much, and after a few days and a few beers, usually I’m happy to forgive those who may have wronged me.

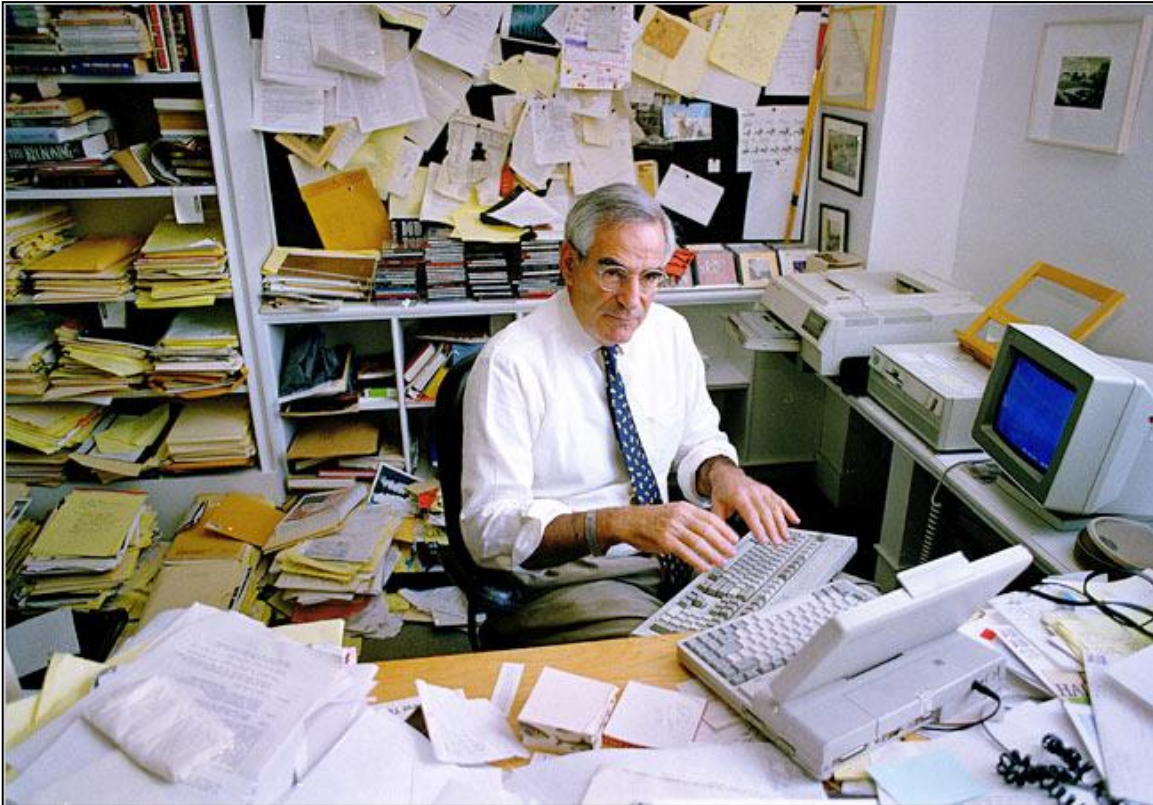
“I did read *The Amateurs* but do not own a copy. In my eyes, *Assault on Lake Casitas* is a more accurate assessment of the truth.”<sup>6965</sup>

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<sup>6964</sup> Wood, op cit.

<sup>6965</sup> Dietz, op cit, 2009

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AP Photo/Mark Lennihan

### David Halberstam

**Wood:** “It was a great pleasure just to get to know David Halberstam, such a professional about his craft, and he *really* did his research. He was the most careful in that aspect of his writing. Every time I told him a story about *my* perception of a certain thing, I would find out later on that he had called every single person that I had mentioned.

“I realize that what an author chooses to include and what he omits shapes the story he tells, but however some of the other people may complain, I think there are remarkably few inaccuracies in *The Amateurs*.”<sup>6966</sup>

**Colgan:** “In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante wrote:

*Nessun maggior dolore  
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice  
Nella miseria.*

No greater pain  
Than to remember a happy time  
While in misery.

“For all of the ‘84 scullers today looking back after twenty-five years, he could also have written:

*Nessun maggior dolore  
Che ricordarsi del tempo miserabile  
Nella felicità.*

No greater pain  
Than to remember a miserable time  
While happy.

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<sup>6966</sup> Wood, op cit.

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“No one really wants to talk about 1984. It was an unhappy year, no matter who you were.”<sup>6967</sup>

**David Halberstam** was tragically killed in an auto accident in 2007 while riding as a passenger to an interview for his projected twenty-fourth book.

Until his death, he had stayed in touch with several of the men whose story he had told in *The Amateurs*.



Author

Eerily, **John Biglow** still strains at his oars in his parents' living room.

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<sup>6967</sup> Colgan, op cit.