

## THE SPORT OF ROWING

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

As I mentioned at the beginning of this month, this spring the excerpts on [www.row2k.com](http://www.row2k.com) are concentrating on the careers of two of recent American rowing history's most influential figures: **Harry Parker** and **Allen Rosenberg**. Now that we have spent three weeks on Harry, it is time to turn our attention to Allen.

The following .pdf is in the format intended for the final printed book. The color you see will be duplicated in the limited collector edition. All these excerpts are from the third of the four volumes.

Incidentally, all the excerpts that have appeared on row2k during the last six months have since been revised as we work toward publication. The most recent drafts are now posted in the row2k archives.

The **collector edition** sold out in about a week. Thanks so much to all of you who have showed such faith in the book.

The paperback **standard edition** is now on sale at:

[www.row2k.com/rowingmall/](http://www.row2k.com/rowingmall/)

This edition has all the same content as the collector edition, but the illustrations are in black and white, and the price is much more affordable.

Both editions will be published in October.

Remember, you can always email me anytime at:

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

Many thanks.

# THE LONG ECLIPSE OF AMERICAN ROWING

## 107. Allen Rosenberg, Counterrevolutionary

### *Roots – Tibor Machán – Dietrich Rose – 1964 Olympics*

Nearly a decade after Harry Parker had personally evolved beyond his mid-1960s *Kernschlag* pullthroughs that had inaccurately come to be understood as the Ratzeburg Style in the United States, the man who finally led the counterrevolution that drove the Ratzeburg Revolution to virtual extinction in the America was a man on a mission.

As U.S. National Technical Director and National Camp Coach during the mid-1970s, **Allen Rosenberg**, an utterly charming man with an endless stream of anecdotes and non-stop enthusiasm, crisscrossed the country, giving clinics and spreading his Gospel.

As I write this, he's still at it.

### Camp versus Club

After the success of Harry Parker's National Camp crew at the 1972 Olympics, a yearly selection camp was embraced by the hierarchy of U.S. rowing, but nevertheless the concept was resisted by many who were proponents of the club system.

**Allen Rosenberg** was originally among those opposed to the National Camp concept: "The major points of my opposition were:

1. It was not likely that talented oarsmen and staff could leave homes, jobs and schools for the required period of training time.
2. Selection systems were contrary to the usual practices of 'making it' on one's own ability.

3. The subsidized National Team was little more than a super club.

4. A strong club system was better able to keep older, more experienced oarsmen.

"My views and opinions were laid open to question in June, 1973 when I saw the nucleus of the National Team at Princeton doing seat racing. I was overwhelmingly impressed with the desire of the athletes to exert every effort to make that team and, with the quality of those men, I could not envision another eight and four in this country capable of beating them."<sup>4857</sup>

The question of who should be appointed National Coach remained. Given his results in Munich, **Harry Parker** would have been the natural choice, but he made it clear that he already had a full-time job coaching Harvard, and it quickly became evident that asking anyone to repeatedly dedicate his or her entire summer to a prestigious but largely volunteer position was unfair and unworkable.

As of 1973, the National Camp Coach informally became a rotating position, probably with the intention of again offering the job to Harry in 1976, the next Olympic year.

**Steve Gladstone** got the nod to select an eight for the '73 World Championships<sup>4858</sup> in Moscow, and then the position fell to Allen in 1974.

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<sup>4857</sup> Interview: **Allen Rosenberg**, *The Oarsman* Nov/Dec 1974, p. 6

<sup>4858</sup> See Chapter 111.

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That year, decades ahead of his time, **Rosenberg** was already imagining the current system: “I am in favor of keeping some continuity with one coach for a period of time so as to avoid multiple changes from year to year. I believe the coaching staff should be fairly compensated. Finally, I expect to see a National Training Center where coaches, crews and trainers can be in residence for education, competition and training.”<sup>4859</sup>

Allen took full advantage of his opportunity in 1974. His crew that year was magnificent, and through his example and his writings, starting in that year Allen Rosenberg became 20<sup>th</sup> Century’s single most influential person in the entire world rowing community since Steve Fairbairn, easily beating out Hiram Conibear and Karl Adam.

Fairbairn’s influence had been felt worldwide from early in the century, and Conibear and his followers had most of America identifying with his stroke by 1937 when Tom Bolles moved to Harvard. Adam had dominated international rowing in the ‘60s.

By 1975, they were all nearly forgotten. Most of the America *and much of the World* were beginning to row the Rosenberg Style.

And many have kept at it through 2000 and beyond.

Rosenberg’s approach formed the basis for today’s **Modern Orthodox Technique!**

### Rosenberg’s Roots

When Jack Kelly, Sr. left Vesper in the 1920s, the boathouse was virtually abandoned for nearly twenty years. The Penn A.C. became the premier club on the Schuylkill River. Local rowing philosophy was dominated by Frank Muller,<sup>4860</sup> coach

of the 1929-32 Big Eight, who continued to coach there through the 1930s.

Afterward, the members of his Big Eight crew took over up and down Boathouse Row. At the Penn A.C., **Joe Dougherty** was head coach from 1943 to 1950. Then it was **Tom “Bear” Curran** to 1954 and **Jack Bratten** to 1959. These coaches formed the brain trust of the Schuylkill Navy during the 1950s.

Vesper Boat Club was rescued from oblivion when Kelly, Sr. returned from the Penn A.C. in 1942 and rehabilitated the boathouse so that Kelly, Jr. would have a place to row. During the following ten years, Vesper became more and more active, providing a home for the St. Joseph’s Preparatory School team.

In late 1952, Kelly hired **Jim Manning** as Vesper’s head coach. Manning had been Freshman Coach at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis under Buck Walsh, a follower of Richard Glendon, and Manning remained as boatman early in the era of Rusty Callow’s Great Eight.<sup>4861</sup>

### The Philadelphia Dipsy-Doodle

Throughout his career, Frank Muller had taught a pullthrough that began strongly, with power maintained all the way to a strong finish, in other words *Schubschlag*.

But when his rowers from the Big Eight became coaches themselves, the technique they taught to the next generation of Philadelphians was a mutant segmented-effort *Kernschlag* descendant of the Muller Style, and it was characterized by sequential use of the major muscle groups.

This was the latest example of **Rowing History’s Greatest Lesson**. Over time, a technique becomes rigid and inflexible, and force application tends to morph from smooth-force *Schubschlag* through smooth-

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<sup>4859</sup> *The Oarsman*, op cit, p. 7

<sup>4860</sup> See Chapter 56.

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<sup>4861</sup> See Chapter 64.

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force *Kernschlag* to mutant segmented-force *Kernschlag*. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, it had already happened to English Orthodoxy, to Fairbairnism and to the 1<sup>st</sup> Generation Conibear Stroke. It had happened with the followers of George Pocock, and as yet nobody had noticed the emerging pattern.

According to Charlie McIntyre, **George Pocock** used to call what the Muller Style became in the 1950s “the Philadelphia dipsy-doodle, legs and *then* backs.

“George taught us that your legs should go down steadily so they finish together with the back. Otherwise you get a double stroke, and that was very common in Philadelphia, back swing coming *after* the legs were down.”<sup>4862</sup>

**Stan Pocock**: “The ‘Philadelphia dipsy-doodle’ was the term my Dad used to describe the action of swinging into the bow with one’s body *after* the legs had been driven home: the classic double stroke and the enemy of speed.

“The name ‘dipsy-doodle’ came from a popular song from long ago now.”<sup>4863</sup>

“To Dad, it was imperative that the body swing be completed at the same moment as the drive of the legs and then both held firm as the arms and shoulders squeezed in to complete the drive and initiate the beginnings of the release [ferryman’s finish].

“While a crew or sculler doing the dipsy-doodle was rather pretty – almost mesmerizing – to watch, it was a dead giveaway to the fact that the back was not being used to [brace] against the shove of the legs. The inevitable result was that the blade could not be moved through the end of the drive as fast as it otherwise might.”<sup>4864</sup>

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<sup>4862</sup> McIntyre, personal conversation, 2005

<sup>4863</sup> a 1937 hit for Edythe Wright and the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra.

<sup>4864</sup> S. Pocock, personal correspondence, 2005

**Charlie McIntyre**: “As kids, we learned directly from Muller and Paul Costello, but we also heard the dipsy-doodle approach from Bear Curran, Joe Dougherty and Jack Bratten, who *believed* they were carrying on for Muller.

“They came out of the Great Eight that won the European Championship in 1930. They had all been West Catholic kids in the ‘20s, and they were along the Row doing the generous thing by teaching young people to row and passing down Muller’s legacy.

“But it was *different* from the way that Paul Costello and Garret Gilmore and Ken Myers and Bill Miller and even Old Man Kelly rowed.”<sup>4865</sup> You could see them! They were all still rowing on the Schuylkill!

“My experience of what often happens is that second generation guys *mean* well, but they bastardize what they were taught. They forget exactly what it was they were taught, and they think, ‘Well, Muller taught us *that*, but I can do something with *this*.’

“The result was that everybody in Philadelphia seemed to throw their back at it *after* their legs were down, and as George would say, ‘That’s the mortal sin of rowing.’

“I think that what happens is that they don’t have the patience to stick with what actually works.”<sup>4866</sup>

### The Origin of the Philadelphia Dipsy-Doodle?

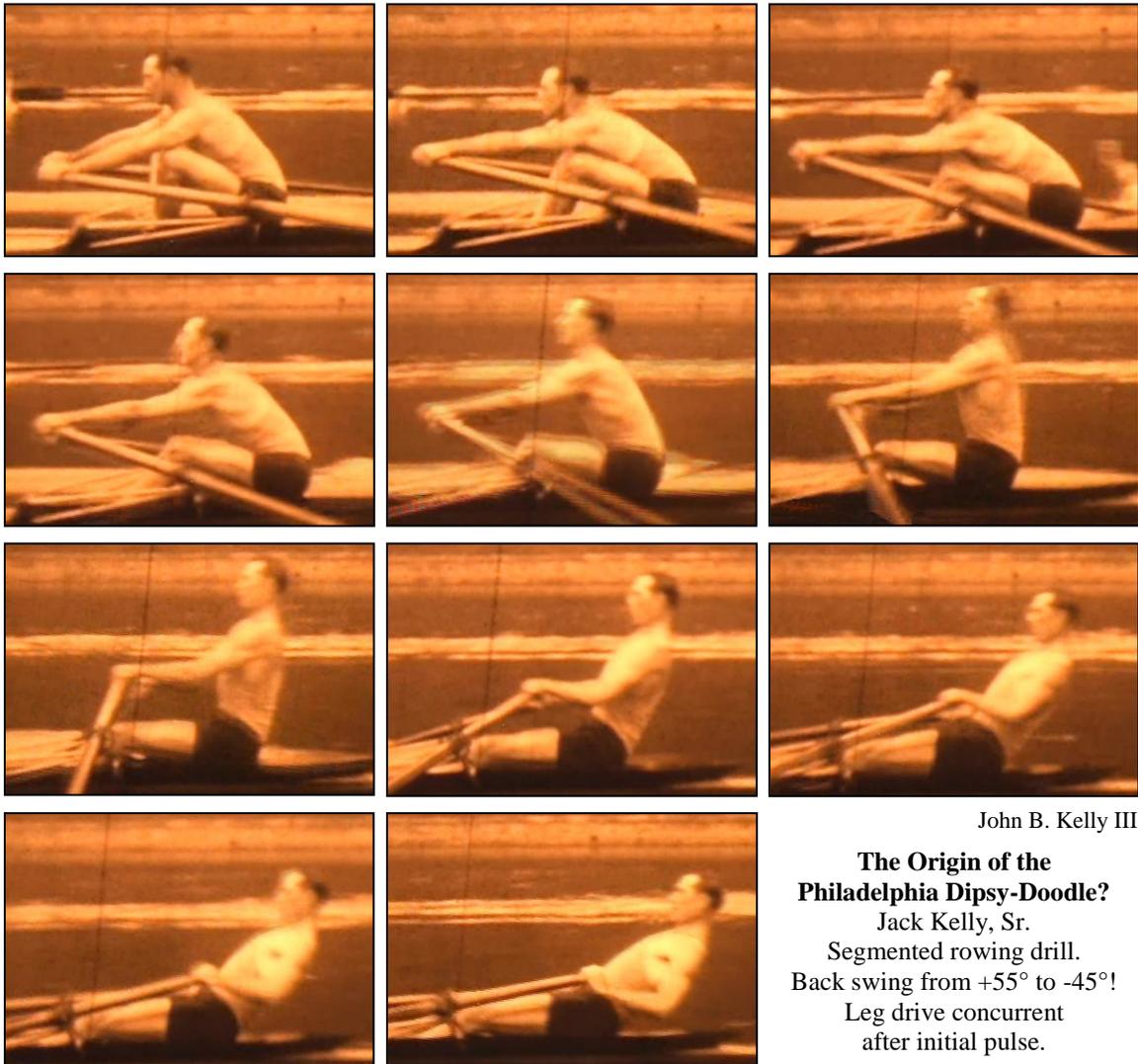
This was not the first time in history, nor will it be the last time, that *Schubschlag* has mutated into segmented-force *Kernschlag*, but there was a definite precedent for “legs first, then backs” sequential rowing in the coaching of Frank Muller. The Kelly family film archive contains footage of Jack Kelly, Sr. performing a **segmented rowing drill**, legs first, then back, for the camera. All the

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<sup>4865</sup> See Chapter 64.

<sup>4866</sup> McIntyre, op cit, 2006

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members of the Big Eight trained a large portion of the time in singles and must have been shown this film and/or done this drill many times.

Comparing Kelly doing the drill to Kelly rowing his regular technique on the same day (following page) is fascinating. When rowing normally, the total commitment of his entire body at the entry is obvious: legs straining, back swinging, arms and lats engaged, chin lifting slightly. Equally obvious is emphasis put on back swing, also emphasized in the drill, and the

effort to hang on to the stroke as long as possible and really accelerate the boat all the way to the finish.<sup>4867</sup>

Presumably, by breaking the pull-through into two segments on the drill, Muller wished to accentuate each individual component of force application. Kelly, Sr. would then combine the efforts of the legs, backs and arms into a harmonious but nevertheless aggressive whole. However,

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<sup>4867</sup> Also see Chapter 56.

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John B. Kelly, III

**Jack Kelly, Sr.**  
Same day,  
rowing normally:  
concurrent  
*Schubschlag*

the Big Eight oarsmen chose not to do so when they became coaches.

Kelly, the quintessential Muller rower, rowed concurrent *Schubschlag*, but Muller's disciples, Dougherty, Curren and Bratten, coached sequential segmented-force *Kernschlag*, a mutation, and this is one mutation which many of history's most revered coaches would argue passionately is hurtful.

Yet it is this mutation in Philadelphia which, through Allen Rosenberg, became a fundamental building block for **Modern Orthodox Technique**, beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The Philadelphia Dipsy-Doodle was a misunderstanding without the master's touch, as it were, and with results that were antithetical to Frank Muller's original intent.

This fundamental sequential approach to boat moving that has now survived (and thrived) for more than half a century has also been reinforced by a misinterpretation of the writings of **George Pocock**.<sup>4868</sup>

As Stan Pocock has said of his father's and of Al Ulbrickson's teachings, "Herein arises the cause of some confusion. . . The idea was to have everything trying to move the oar at the same time, while physical reality made it *appear* as though the legs

were driving first, followed by the back, with the arms chiming in last of all."<sup>4869</sup>

It should be noted that misunderstandings and misinterpretations are "mutations" and not necessarily bad. In genetics, mutations provide new material, new alternatives, new life to evolution. Without them, there might be no progress.

### Allen Rosenberg Arrives

By the time Jim Manning arrived on Boathouse Row in 1952, Frank Muller had been dead for four years. The only coaches he saw around him were Muller's disciples. When Rosenberg took over the Vesper coaching duties in 1963, the technique he taught was based on what Manning had seen and taught him in his years on Boathouse Row.

Allen intended his approach to be a reinterpretation of traditional American rowing as he understood it. In his own words, "My own style is one which has evolved from the smooth and efficient sculling of **Ned Ten Eyck**,<sup>4870</sup> perhaps the greatest sculler the world has ever seen."<sup>4871</sup>

<sup>4868</sup> See Chapter 47.

<sup>4869</sup> S. Pocock, op cit.

<sup>4870</sup> See Chapter 13.

<sup>4871</sup> Ferris, p. 94

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“I’ve never seen Ten Eyck’s writings, but my coach, my mentor, Jim Manning, assured me that they are somewhere.

“He was a professional sculling teacher, unsurpassed.”<sup>4872</sup>

Indeed, Ned Ten Eyck coached scullers and sweep rowers at Duluth Rowing Club as well as coaching collegiate crews at Wisconsin, Rutgers and Syracuse, but I, too, have been unable to locate any writings of his. However, it is quite clear from multiple sources that he rowed and taught the Classical Technique he had learned from his father and from his namesake, Ned Hanlan.<sup>4873</sup>

But what Manning told Rosenberg was that Ned Ten Eyck “emphasized the application of strength at the most critical point in the rowing cycle.”<sup>4874</sup>

Manning interpreted “strength” to mean leg drive, and so Manning embraced the Philadelphia dippy-doodle, which he passed on to Allen Rosenberg.

### European Influence

However, Jim Manning and the other contemporaneous Boathouse Row coaches would not be the only influence on the new young Vesper coxswain. You may recall that Allen had been the first American to appreciate the challenge represented by **Karl Adam** to American supremacy in world rowing. It was Rosenberg, a mere Vesper coxswain at the time, who had reported back to American coaches what he had observed at the 1958 European Championships.<sup>4875</sup>



Vesper Boat Club

Vesper Coach **Jim Manning**  
with coxswain **Allen Rosenberg**

It was at that regatta that Allen was exposed to all that was happening in rowing overseas. In his own words, it made a “deep impression on me,”<sup>4876</sup> but he had also already begun a careful personal study of sports literature.

**Rosenberg:** “In 1956, I coached a coxed-pair out of Vesper using interval training. However, we did not fare well in the severe winds at the trials in Syracuse, and at any rate we were behind the field of Far Western teams, whose style was more suited to the water.

“In 1960, I first subscribed to the *Australian Track and Field Journal* and their articles from all over the world on technique and training.”<sup>4877</sup>

### Young Jack Kelly

Allen Rosenberg’s path to immortality as coach of the 1964 Olympic Champion Eight was an improbable and circuitous one. When he graduated from law school in 1960, Allen actually left the sport and left Philadelphia to pursue his new career.

<sup>4872</sup> Rosenberg, personal conversation, 2004

<sup>4873</sup> See Chapter 41.

<sup>4874</sup> Ferris, P. 94

<sup>4875</sup> See Chapter 97.

<sup>4876</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

<sup>4877</sup> Rosenberg, personal correspondence, 2007

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Meanwhile, John B. Kelly, Jr. was running Vesper like his father had run the Penn A.C. and Vesper in the previous generation.<sup>4878</sup> After failing to medal in the double at the 1960 Olympics with his long-time friend and teammate, **Bill Knecht**, Kel retired from rowing in the boats himself and redirected his energies to leading his club to the 1964 Eights Gold Medal.

After what he saw in Rome, Kelly had lost faith that Vesper coach **Jim Manning** could deliver the goods in this new era of change in rowing, and so he quickly replaced him with an expat Hungarian named **Tibor Machán**,<sup>4879</sup> who was working as a swimming coach in Ohio when he got Kelly's call.

### Tibor Machán

*The Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin* (1963): "Tibor MacHan<sup>4880</sup> was born in Budapest 54 years ago, the son of a Scottish father and a Hungarian mother. The elder MacHan, a steeplechase pioneer in Hungary, was killed half a century ago when a horse threw him.

"Young Tibor started his aquatic career as a swimmer, winning the high school 100-meter freestyle championship in Budapest and playing on a top-ranking water polo team for three years. One day, after water polo practice in the icy Danube, laryngitis laid him low.

"A friend said to me, 'Tibor, why be a fool? Why be *in* the water when you can be

*on* it? And I agreed,' he recalls, 'and I switched to rowing.'

"In his first rowing year, MacHan won seven junior races, later added eight Hungarian national championships, from pairs to eights.

"I was coaching the Budapest rowing team half the time,' he said. 'The other half, I was a radio announcer. During the war, I broadcast news from the capital – and when the Russians entered the city, they said I was a war criminal.'

"Tibor and his wife, Anna, like many of their compatriots, escaped to Austria.

"We approached the border at high noon. We carried nothing but a knapsack. The border guards were sleeping or eating, I don't know. We went through – and they saw us and started shooting at us, but we were already on the Austrian side. The Austrian guards captured us but let us go.'

"The next few years were a crazy quilt of jobs for the MacHans.

"After eleven months as a janitor in an Austrian school, MacHan's rowing friends in Denmark got him a coaching post with a club in Copenhagen. One of the club members was King Frederik ('a charming gentleman and a fine oarsman') who permitted the couple to stay in Denmark (they were stateless, without passports) by royal decree.

"They'd been in Denmark five years when one of his former radio colleagues urged them to work for Radio Free Europe in Munich. Both Tibor and his blond wife, a noted actress on the Hungarian stage, went to Germany and used their talents on the anti-Communist station.

"Finally, we had enough money saved to pay a smuggler \$1,000 to get our son, whom we'd left behind with his grandmother, out of Hungary. Finally we were a whole family again.'

"There was also enough money left for the trip to the United States.

<sup>4878</sup> See Chapters 55, 56 and 87.

<sup>4879</sup> The rowing coach was **Tibor G. Machán**, as opposed to **Tibor R. Machán**, his severely estranged son from his first marriage, an American college professor who wrote the memoir, *The Man Without a Hobby*, which describes Machán *père* as angry, abusive and anti-Semitic.

<sup>4880</sup> According to his son, Tibor *père* attempted to anglicize his name by changing the spelling after he got to Philadelphia.

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“They arrived in America in 1956. Once again, MacHan found himself in, rather than on, the water as a swimming coach with Cleveland high school and junior college teams.

“‘But,’ he said, ‘my heart still belonged to rowing. I wanted to coach an American crew . . .’

“After the 1960 Olympics in Rome, he wrote Jack Kelly a letter on the future of rowing in the United States. Kelly, who knew MacHan’s reputation, invited him to succeed retiring Vesper coach Jim Manning.

“‘That was a great thing,’ MacHan said. ‘I’ve always had a fixed idea that American oarsmen can be the best in the world.’”<sup>4881</sup>

*Cleveland Press* (1960): “The U.S. Olympic Committee, concerned about our drooping performances in many sports at Rome, has embarked on an intensive campaign to bolster America’s showing when the 1964 Olympiad rolls around at Tokyo. One of the men who may well make a difference is Tibor G. Machán, an employee of the City Recreation Department since 1956.

“Machán is a 51-year-old Hungarian who has just accepted the post of rowing coach at the famous Vesper Boat Club of Philadelphia. This is the club which includes among its officials Jack Kelly, Jr., veteran of four Olympiads and brother of Princess Grace of Monaco.

“The U.S. showing at rowing events at Rome was disappointing, particularly in our specialty, the eight-oared crew. There we finished fifth.

“‘I think we should be able to do something towards a better showing at Tokyo,’ said Machán. ‘My basic theory is that the (slow) 32-beat is obsolete. Particularly in the shorter events, the beat

should get up to about 38. But the faster beat won’t come about overnight. It requires harder training and dedicated men with the necessary willpower.

“‘I hope to get some good college oarsmen from the eights and convince them they should stay in training, especially for the Olympics, in fours and in pairs rowing,’ he said.

“After the Rome Olympiad, Machán wrote his ideas on rowing techniques to a Spanish sportsman he had met while coaching that country’s 1952 Olympic crew. A copy of the letter he sent to Kelly, whom he has known for many years.

“With retirement this winter of the Vesper Club’s old coach, Jim Manning, a spot for Machán became open. Kelly hired him, and his new duties will begin February 1 [1961].”<sup>4882</sup>

**John Aitken:** “Tibor was the rowing coach at Vesper in 1961 when I rowed out of there in my days at St. Joe’s Prep and as a Vesper club member.

“His rowing style was new at the time, and we struggled with it. Tulip blades, knees apart and hyperextension at the catch. He also had some Italian [Donoratico] boats we called banana boats because of the shape of the hull on the water. Difficult to set up, but they moved well if everyone kept the balance and all eight cylinders fired.”<sup>4883</sup>

**Bob Madden,** St. Joe’s Prep: “Our Eights were rigged as Italian with buckets at 2/3, 4/5 and 6/7. He would often have us row up to Connelly Containers.<sup>4884</sup> Tibor would refer to rowing to ‘*Con nell ee.*’ When we rolled up the blades at the catch they were to be just beyond ‘*per pend dicler.*’ He really could murder the English language, but under Tibor we won the 3<sup>rd</sup>

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<sup>4881</sup> Jack Ritter, *The Boss of Vesper’s Oarsmen*, *The Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin*, April 14, 1963

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<sup>4882</sup> Jack Clowser, *Cleveland Tackles Job of Reviving U.S. Rowing*, *Cleveland Press*, November 1960

<sup>4883</sup> Aitken, personal correspondence, 2009

<sup>4884</sup> 4 mi. 7k above Boathouse Row.

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eights at the Stotesbury Regatta,<sup>4885</sup> defeating Washington-Lee coached by legendary coach Charley Butt, Sr.<sup>4886</sup>

**John Lehman**, undergraduate at St. Joseph's College, cousin of the Kellys and future Secretary of the Navy under President Reagan: "I was on the sculling team when Tibor arrived. He introduced a new rigor and focus, interval training and weights. We scullers were not particularly fond of the spread-knee approach, but we adapted and had great success in '63 and '64. I won seven or eight medals under Tibor, so I am a fan."<sup>4887</sup>

**Rob Lea:** "I first met Tibor Machán on the Schuylkill in the spring of '62, during one of my frozen Charles vacations from Harvard. He had all the Vesper crews rowing between their knees on the recovery with hands so low over the feet that their blades skied in a rising/falling rhythm like paddles on a waterwheel<sup>4888</sup> – probably more Homeric in appearance than our modern rowing style.

*Seagoing ships, with crimson  
bows and oars that fledge  
light hulls for dipping flight.*<sup>4889</sup>

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<sup>4885</sup> purportedly the world's oldest and largest high school rowing competition, founded in 1927 and rowed on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia.

<sup>4886</sup> Madden, personal correspondence, 2009

<sup>4887</sup> Lehman, personal correspondence, 2010

<sup>4888</sup> the Moscow Style. See Chapter 79.

<sup>4889</sup> *The Odyssey*, Book XI, line 644-5, Robert Fitzgerald translation



*The Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin*

### **Tibor Machán**

The stroke-seat in the double was John Lehman, future Secretary of the Navy.

"I liked to keep my blades off the water, so I gave it a try. With the knees out to the side, balance in a single *was* much easier, but it wasn't very fast in the Memorial Day Regatta. Sy Cromwell<sup>4890</sup> persuaded me to put my knees back together, but we did massive intervals at Vesper, which no one was doing at the time.

"When I next came down from Cambridge for the Schuylkill Navy Championship, I was rowing 38 strokes a minute for the entire race, and that made quite a difference. Meanwhile, some of the Vesper crews were beginning to grumble about their new Hungarian Style."<sup>4891</sup>

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<sup>4890</sup> See Chapter 87.

<sup>4891</sup> Lea, personal correspondence, 2009

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Rob Lea went on to partner with long-time Vesper member **Bill Knecht** and win the doubles event at the 1963 Pan American Games.

**Rosenberg:** “During this period, I was an attorney for Miles Laboratories in Indiana. I met Tibor a number of times, but none of any substance. He was living with his wife and daughter above the boathouse, so whenever I came back to Philly and stopped at Vesper, I would see him.”<sup>4892</sup>

“Dick and Don Flanigan viewed Tibor as a father figure. He taught them to row the pair superbly.

“The eight could easily row at 40spm, and when they were on, they were fast. It was his eight that placed second at the July 4<sup>th</sup> races in 1962, defeating all comers except the Russians.”<sup>4893,4894</sup>

*The Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin* (1963): “MacHan has been coaching the Vesper team – considered the nation’s top crew – since he was hired by the club’s captain and benefactor, Jack Kelly, two and a half years ago. He is a big man, thickening around the middle, but not much. His hands are not quite as large as oar blades, and his rumbling, amiable basso (he sounds like male Zsa Zsa Gabor, one oarsman insists) all but eliminates the use of megaphones at training sessions on the river. Most of the time, he speaks softly and gently. ‘I believe in kindness,’ he says.

“MacHan (whose salary for teaching about one hundred Vesper members in all is modest compared to that of other sports coaches) laughed when he was asked if his was a fulltime job. ‘Very full-time,’ he said. ‘My boys come in at all hours, seven days a week. I’m always here for them. I like it, but yes, it’s very full-time.’

“The crews row ninety minutes at a stretch. When the river is frozen, they work

out inside the boathouse, which Tibor has converted into a makeshift gym, with weights and medicine balls. When the whole squad of thirty is assembled, they have a basketball scrimmage.

“‘I need boys who will stay with the club,’ he said. ‘It takes at least two, three years – rowing every day – to make a good oarsman.’

“As he watched the big eight shell knifing upstream through the water, his ruddy face broke into a smile.

“The boys are good and will give their best,’ he said. ‘I hope we will bring back the big one from Brazil.’<sup>4895</sup> And some day we may win the World Championship. We have a long way to go, but I am a patient man.”<sup>4896</sup>

**Lea:** “We all got to the Pan American Games in Sao Paulo, Knecht and me in the double, Sy in the single, Tibor and the Vesper eight, Ted Nash in a Lake Washington four.”<sup>4897</sup> The Vesper eight did not do so well, and to make matters worse, all the rest of us won our events.

“That night in our Pan Am Village dorm room, a sad and beaten Tibor slipped a bottle of wine out of his duffel bag for a soporific. Someone gave him a hard time about it and there was a bitter exchange, apparently not the first time that had been an issue.

“The Vesper eight had been an embarrassment, and they weren’t feeling very good about anything. The **Amlong brothers** especially were not ones to sit on their feelings about a poor performance, and the soft-spoken Flanigan twins, also in that Vesper eight, were not much of an antidote for the Amlong bile.

“In fact, feelings ran so hot between the two sets of brothers on that boat, most of the heat coming from the Amlongs, I think it

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<sup>4892</sup> Rosenberg, op cit, 2009

<sup>4893</sup> See Chapter 98.

<sup>4894</sup> Rosenberg, op cit, 2009

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<sup>4895</sup> 1963 Pan American Games in São Paulo.

<sup>4896</sup> Ritter, op cit.

<sup>4897</sup> See Chapter 83 ff.

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fair to say, that they'd have to race off in pairs from time to time, sort of the rowing equivalent of putting the gloves on, and more often than not the slender, mild-mannered Flanigans would win because Tom Amlong was so bull-headed strong he'd pull brother Joe around, even from the stroke position, and they'd go off course."<sup>4898</sup>

Under Tibor, the Flanigans ended up stern-pair in the eight in Sao Paolo with the Amlongs listed as spares.

**Lea:** "Hungarians are famously hardheaded and resilient. One still thinks of the Hungarian Revolution, of course, but the kind of American contempt for authority which the Amlongs represented so well may have been poor Tibor's undoing.

"Tibor was a broken man in Brazil. He had survived the Russians in Budapest 1945 perhaps, but succumbed to the Amlongs in São Paulo 1963."<sup>4899</sup>

**Lehman:** "Tibor had been a major in the Hungarian Army and had a very authoritarian approach. That worked with us younger guys but was oil and water with the more seasoned guys in the eight, and of course, most especially the Amlongs. It was the right and necessary thing to do to replace him, but it was handled in a deplorable fashion."<sup>4900</sup>

**Rosenberg:** "The eight lost at the Pan Ams, but that had more to do with the interpersonal relationships. The Amlongs managed to get in there and fubar everything up. First of all, they openly rebelled against Machán and anybody else who took his side.

"As for young Kelly, he had a terrible reputation for dispatching people, worse than the owner of the New York Yankees! He treated all his 'subordinates' in the same manner.

"Disposable."<sup>4901</sup>

### Machán's Contribution

Today Tibor Machán is almost completely forgotten, but one could argue that it was Tibor who helped lay the foundations for Vesper's success in 1964, just a year after his dismissal.

Tibor implemented the strategy of recruiting top college talent to man Vesper's Olympic Trials entry.

Tibor's preparation of the multitude of crews rowing out of Vesper, including the 1963 Pan Am Eight, closely followed the comprehensive rowing and sculling manual he authored while still in Hungary titled *Az Evezés Művészete*.<sup>4902</sup>

The technique he taught was essentially the **Moscow Style**,<sup>4903</sup> the latest thinking in Europe and a close cousin to the technique that would sweep the U.S. just two years later through the example of Harry Parker.<sup>4904</sup> His windmill catch was the Soviet version of Fairbairn's Jesus Bell-Note, and his book describes in detail Classical concurrent body mechanics.

With possibly the sole exception of rowing through the knees, the principles he taught at Vesper from 1961 to 1963 would be well represented in international rowing from the late 1950s to the 1970s and beyond.

Tibor introduced training in small boats.

Tibor introduced the higher ratings and interval workouts that Allen Rosenberg and so many others in the U.S. would build upon during the following decade.

Tibor ordered the Donoratico eight that Vesper would row to victory in the 1964 Olympic Trials.

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<sup>4898</sup> Lea, op cit.

<sup>4899</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4900</sup> Lehman, op cit.

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<sup>4901</sup> Rosenberg, personal conversation, 2009

<sup>4902</sup> *The Art of Rowing*, 1943

<sup>4903</sup> See Chapter 79.

<sup>4904</sup> See Chapter 101.

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Tibor Machán was a man considerably ahead of his time.

### Rosenberg Returns

After firing Tibor Machán with the Olympic Trials just a year away, young Jack Kelly was seriously running out of options as far as coaching was concerned.

**Boyce Budd:** “Allen Rosenberg, the little Vesper coxswain from 1958 who had a degree in pharmacy and went to law school, wasn’t even Plan B or Plan C. He was Plan D!”<sup>4905</sup>

**Rosenberg:** “I was working in Indiana and fortuitously wrote to Kelly, telling him I wanted to return to Philadelphia.

“When I arrived at Vesper after the Pan American Games in 1963, my contact with Tibor was brief, and I do believe that he was weary of me since I basically replaced him. I moved into what had been Tibor’s quarters next to the trophy room. He certainly was not happy.”<sup>4906</sup>

**Madden:** “I recall a heated argument on the concrete outside the boat bays at Vesper. Tibor was ranting that he was an *athlete*, and the notion of being replaced by a *coxswain* was crazy! It was a long time ago . . . might be a bit fuzzy, but I do recall the yelling.”<sup>4907</sup>

**Rosenberg:** “Actually, **David Wilmerding** substituted for me on the coaching until I arrived.”<sup>4908</sup>

**Lehman:** “Wilmerding kept to Tibor’s approach except for the spread-knee, which we were glad to drop. Dave deserves much credit in making the transition to Al Rosenberg a smooth one.”<sup>4909</sup>

**Rosenberg:** “The Italian boats were in the boathouse, and in particular the *John B. Kelly*, which was the shell in which we would win the Olympic Trials in New York. It was a magnificent hull, and that was to Tibor’s specifications. It was huge, and when rowed properly fairly skimmed the water, albeit with some porpoising. As I remember, it was sectional and deep.”<sup>4910</sup>

### Dietrich Rose

Tibor’s presence at Vesper had encouraged other Europeans to come to Philadelphia, among them **Bob Zimonyi**, a fellow Hungarian and coxswain with Olympic experience who had defected after the 1956 Olympics. New novice coach Allen Rosenberg also had other help in digesting the new European approaches to technique, training and selection. Already at Vesper was **Dietrich Rose**, a German who had grown up in Berlin and moved to Ratzeburg to train under Karl Adam.<sup>4911</sup>

In the summer of 1961, the Ratzeburg crew was at a regatta in Potsdam in the German Democratic Republic.

**Rose:** “We were racing in the final selection to make the European Championship team when we heard tanks rolling during the night on the road outside the barracks where we were housed.

“The next morning, there were East German soldiers with machine guns in the starting stake boats, and they told us – incorrectly, as it turned out – that we would not be able to return home due to the new regulations and the ‘Wall,’ which had been built overnight.

“We lost the race, and for the first time in my life I cried.”<sup>4912</sup>

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<sup>4905</sup> Budd, personal conversation, 2010

<sup>4906</sup> Rosenberg, personal correspondence, 2009

<sup>4907</sup> Madden, op cit.

<sup>4908</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

<sup>4909</sup> Lehman, op cit.

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<sup>4910</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

<sup>4911</sup> See Chapter 92.

<sup>4912</sup> Rose, qtd. by Stowe, p. 36

## THE LONG ECLIPSE OF AMERICAN ROWING

In April, 1963, when Dietrich failed to make the Ratzeburg first eight, he moved to Philadelphia to join Vesper Boat Club at Jack Kelly's invitation.

**Boyce Budd**, who also arrived in 1963: "Dietrich and Allen certainly made an odd couple: the former Hitler Youth and the little Jewish boy."<sup>4913</sup>

Teammate **Bill Stowe**: "[Dietrich] was quickly elected by his peers to be Vesper captain, and he introduced a strenuous off-the-water weightlifting and conditioning program. Also, he reinforced and added to Allen Rosenberg's thoughts on training and rigging."<sup>4914</sup>

**Rose**: "I was impressed at how strong the American oarsmen were, much stronger than their German counterparts. Once Vesper learned the training routine and did the weight lifting, the oarsmen naturally surpassed what was being done in Ratzeburg."<sup>4915</sup>

**Rosenberg**: "In addition to Rose's help in the weight lifting, I relied on a Philadelphia Olympian, Dave Mayor, who worked for York Bar Bell.

"Dietrich Rose's appearance at Vesper was a great help in the rigging and physical conditioning but *not* in the coaching. In fact, at the outset he was merely a rower, usually winding up in the bow of straight-fours, since he could steer superbly, and in the eights as stroke, where his vastly different style was less disruptive to what I was teaching. He rowed the Ratzeburg style, and no one else did."<sup>4916</sup>

**Lehman**: "It is impossible to give Al too much credit for the Olympic Gold. His genius was in providing unobtrusive but firm leadership, mediating the constant disputes, and gradually earning the respect of all of the team. I don't know of another

individual who could have done it. He was a master psychologist.

"Kel, of course, provided the overall authority figure, especially after sacking Tibor, but he operated well above the fray.

"Dietrich Rose's role was also very important in conflict resolution. As important was his constant energy and optimism, and he gained real credibility in teaching what really worked from the Ratzeburg system."<sup>4917</sup>

According to **Harry Parker**, "What Rosenberg taught at Vesper before 1964 was vintage Adam, because Dietrich Rose brought it over from Ratzeburg. He was a Ratzeburg rower, but what Rosenberg did, and this has happened a couple of times, if you take people who row one way that's pretty sound, like he had Boyce Budd and Emory Clark from Yale and Bill Stowe and John Abele [in the 1965 crew] from Cornell, and they had really strong back usage, and then you adapt it a little bit with Ratzeburg, what happens is you get a hybrid, which is the higher cadence and the different rhythm of the Ratzeburg crew, but you've got the sound fundamentals of the stronger back motion that U.S. rowing had."<sup>4918</sup>

Parker is suggesting that by combining the American and German strains, the American eight in Tokyo displayed **hybrid vigor**. **Allen Rosenberg** completely disagrees.

**Rosenberg**: "To listen to Parker, putting together a boat is like making a cake. Take a little here and a little there and *voila*, you have a World Champion. Back usage is not an ingredient. Sound rhythm of Ratzeburg? My foot! My approach is so totally different that it cannot be dusted off with a flick of the pen."<sup>4919</sup>

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<sup>4913</sup> Budd, op cit.

<sup>4914</sup> Stowe, p. 37

<sup>4915</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4916</sup> Rosenberg, op cit, 2007

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<sup>4917</sup> Lehman, op cit.

<sup>4918</sup> Parker, personal conversation, 2004

<sup>4919</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

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“Of course the assertion that my style was a hybrid of Ratzeburg is totally false. I never spoke to Adam or read of his work until after the Tokyo Games. When his crews toured American colleges and the Schuylkill, I was in Indiana.”<sup>4920</sup>

**Dietrich Rose:** “I would like to make a few comments about the way we made this crew to move fast. Harry Parker’s comment reflecting a hybrid style between Ratzeburg and Allen’s American is correct. Since I rowed in the same boat in Ratzeburg, I realized what changes had to be made in order to beat this crew. All that was needed was to change the speed of the slide and use a little bit more layback. And the speed of the start, 53 strokes per minute, and 42 in the following 25, was not a typical American fashion.

“Sitting next to Allen for almost every workout, I was able to contribute my thoughts into his way to coach the crew. In all, the proof is in the pudding. We got Gold, and they the Silver.”<sup>4921</sup>

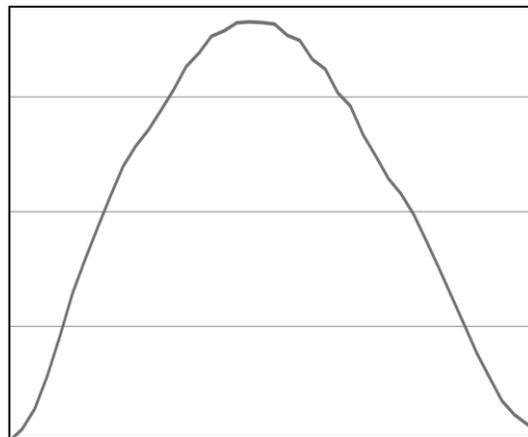
### Budd and Clark

**Rosenberg:** “Did you not know that Budd never rowed in Yale’s Varsity, and Clark’s crews never won a race? I *hardly* call that ‘sound rowing!’”<sup>4922</sup>

Referring to Budd, Rosenberg has said, “He was very disruptive, but he was a dynamo.”<sup>4923</sup>

Disruptive? Boyce Budd had a nearly perfect parabolic *Schubschlag* force curve.

In reality, these two men, Boyce Budd and Emory Clark with their coxswain John Quinn, were good enough to upset defending champion **Findlay, Ferry and**



Author

**Boyce Budd**  
Near perfect parabola

**Mitchell** in the 1964 National Championships, denying them the trip to the European Championships they had been counting on.<sup>4924</sup> That fall, that losing Stanford Pair won the Olympic Gold Medal.

**Budd:** “Actually I was in the Varsity boat my sophomore year and the Jayvee my junior and senior years. I graduated from Yale in 1961 and went to Cambridge where I made the Blue Boat in 1962. I then spent six months in the Marine Corps Reserves before I arrived at Vesper.

“The best thing that ever happened to Emory and me was that I got stuck in the Jayvee and he was captain of one of Yale’s worst crews. We were *seething* inside to prove ourselves when we got out of college!

“I like to say that I learned all my rowing in the Marines, but the first time I ever rowed in a four, the first time I ever rowed in a pair, the first time I ever stroked a boat was at Cambridge. Only when you get into a small boat do you begin to find out how to really row.”<sup>4925</sup>

**Nash:** “**Boyce Budd and Emory Clark** were the nuts and bolts of that Vesper boat

<sup>4920</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

<sup>4921</sup> Rose, personal correspondence, 2011

<sup>4922</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4923</sup> Rosenberg, qtd. by Xavier Macia, [Enter the Hammer](#), *Rowing News*, September, 2004, p. 46

<sup>4924</sup> See Chapter 82.

<sup>4925</sup> Budd, op cit, 2007

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Vesper Boat Club

### Vesper Boat Club Men's Eight

1964 Olympic Champion, Toda Bashi

Coach **Allen Rosenberg**, Coxswain **Bob Zimonyi**, Stroke **Bill Stowe** 6'3" 193cm 196lb. 89kg,  
7 **Bill Knecht** 6'0" 185cm 190lb. 86kg, 6 **Boyce Budd** 6'3" 193cm 205lb. 93kg,  
5 **Emory Clark** 6'4" 196cm 201lb. 91kg, 4 **Tom Amlong** 6'1" 185cm 201lb. 91kg,  
3 **Stan Cwiklinski** 6'2" 191cm 190lb. 86kg, 2 **Hugh Foley** 6'3" 193cm 190lb. 86kg,  
Bow **Joe Amlong** 6'1" 188cm 190lb. 86kg, **Average:** 6'2" 189cm 195lb. 89kg

as far as I was concerned. They could have been an incredible pair-with if they had wanted because they had both rowed for Rathschmidt. They were *really* powerful guys, and they were very honest rowers, and they kept the Vesper boat *honest* all the way."<sup>4926</sup>

**Rosenberg:** "Not one person was the leader at any one time. Stowe was the titular

leader because he was the stroke, but he remained aloof from most of the infighting.

"But Budd and Clark? You talk about a cultural divide. *There* was the cultural divide . . . between the two of them and everybody else."<sup>4927</sup>

<sup>4926</sup> Nash, personal conversation, 2004

<sup>4927</sup> Rosenberg, personal correspondence, 2007

# THE SPORT OF ROWING

## Monty Python

**Clark:** “All the credit should be given to Kelly for putting that boat together. Kel was a lot of things, but the boat was his brain child.”<sup>4928</sup>

**Budd:** “Absolutely agree. He was the master puppeteer, and the credit for recruiting many of the players and mounting an eight from Vesper goes to him.”<sup>4929</sup>

It really was an *extraordinary* group of men: two undergraduates from LaSalle College in Philadelphia, Cwiklinski and Foley, three Ivy League grads, Budd and Clark from Yale and Stowe from Cornell, three club rowers, Knecht and the Amlong brothers, all steered by Zimonyi, a Hungarian refugee. Most were either veterans or active duty military.

**Lehman:** “I lived at Vesper and trained with these guys through the whole period of 1963 and 1964. As a sculler, I was friends with all of them but never competing with them, except *ad hoc* in their daily small-boat workouts.

“It was an unforgettable experience to have a daily ringside seat to what was a kind of Monty Python’s Flying Circus. Every day was some new drama or comedy. It wasn’t until I got to my first Navy squadron that I ever saw anything like those ten ultra-type-A characters. What a fascinating group of individuals, every one very different and each in his own way a supreme egotist.

“Naval aviators were under rigorous command authority, but every one of the Vesper guys felt *they* should be the command authority.”<sup>4930</sup>

## The Amlong Brothers

**Rosenberg:** “Actually, the boat movers were **Tom and Joe Amlong**. In races

between Budd and Clark and these guys in coxed-pairs, the Amlongs would win every time. It was the decision of the Amlongs to forego the coxed-pair that was the most decisive event that made the eight complete.”<sup>4931</sup>

**Clark:** “Al said Budd and I never beat the Amlongs in the pair. Well, I remember racing them twice, both times in the coxed-pair (we never would have beaten them in the pair-without). In the first race, they came from a few lengths down to catch us (maybe) at the finish, although Al pronounced us the winners – to the Amlongs vituperative disgust. In the second, we killed them in the middle 1,000, and they never mounted a sprint, although they had some reason why they hadn’t really ‘lost.’

“Having said that, they were tough, vicious buggers with an oar in their hands and added lengths to our speed when they got in the boat.”<sup>4932</sup>

**Budd:** “I can only add that I stroked that pair, and at no time did the Amlongs get ahead of us. The first race was also our first race in a pair-with, and it was probably very close to a dead tie. In the second race one or two weeks later, we won by a good margin, but as Em says, the Amlongs had an elaborate excuse worked out before we reached the dock.

“And yes, they would have killed us in a straight-pair. Without the Amlongs, there would have been no Olympics for Vesper that year.

“All that small boat training and racing, especially the intrasquad racing, was some of the most passionate rowing I have even done. I can’t remember ever wanting to beat another boat as much as wanting to whup the Amlongs (except maybe Harvard at the Trials<sup>4933</sup>), and it was all the small boat training that made us a much faster eight.

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<sup>4928</sup> Clark, personal correspondence, 2010

<sup>4929</sup> Budd, personal correspondence, 2010

<sup>4930</sup> Lehman, op cit.

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<sup>4931</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

<sup>4932</sup> Clark, op cit.

<sup>4933</sup> See Chapter 100.

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And then, Clark plus the two Amlongs, our cox and me against Stowe, Knecht, Foley and Cwiklinski in a four-without over six 500s!! Now *that* was racing!”<sup>4934</sup>

The Amlong brothers are unique in American rowing history. Almost everybody of that era seems to have their own Amlong story.

**Budd:** “I rowed with Tom and Joe Amlong from the same dock from September ‘63 to September ‘64 when we were fortunate enough to win the Gold in Tokyo. From what I know, they were ‘Army brats,’ born in Europe where their Dad was serving. They learned to row in Liege, Belgium. By the time I met them, Tom was a Captain in the U.S. Army and Joe was a Captain or a Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force. They rowed in the pair-without and could on occasion row with the best in the world.

“They were undoubtedly among the toughest, most contentious, meanest, most profane, trash-talkingest and strongest oarsmen in the U.S. They would mock anyone in their own boat or in a boat competing with them with some of the most awful trash talk I’d ever heard. They practiced intimidation in all its known forms and were very creative in developing new ones. They fought with everyone, including each other.

“They didn’t use a rudder in their pair, and you have undoubtedly heard the story where Tom in the stroke seat out-pulled Joe during a race on the Schuylkill River and pulled their pair right into Peter’s Island. They then proceeded to have a fist fight in the boat. Later, Tom said that Joe had been up too late the night before getting some [\*\*\*\*\*] and just ran out of gas.”<sup>4935</sup>

**Rosenberg:** “There were times when I felt like a wild animal trainer with a chair

and a whip to get the beasts in line and to do what was needed.

“I remember watching the Amlongs in a fistfight in their pair, *in their boat*, at Peter’s Island after a sprint piece. When the punches had lost their sting, Joe in the bow resorted to spitting on Tom’s back.”<sup>4936</sup>

“When Joe Burk had his Light Boat with the strain gauges,<sup>4937</sup> we borrowed it one day, but beforehand, Joe Amlong went in and made Tom’s strain gauge very, very difficult to light up. Midway through the workout, Tom wasn’t going anywhere. He literally broke his footstretchers trying to get the lights to work.

“His brother never told him what he had done.”<sup>4938</sup>

**Bob Madden:** “I ran into Joe Amlong last February [2010] in Melbourne, FL at the Southern Sprints ergometer race. Joe was 72 at the time, I believe. He told us he was a cancer survivor. I noticed during his warm up that he still was able to put in some sub-1:40 strokes.

“As I approached Joe, our eyes met and he introduced himself to me. He was actually pretty gracious. He told me that he and Tom were mostly kidding around back in the old days and that they were ‘misunderstood.’”<sup>4939</sup>

I recently asked Allen how he approached the Amlongs to join the 1964 Vesper eight.

**Rosenberg:** “Quite frankly, I listened to them before I did anything, and Tom later told me, ‘That was the first time that anybody ever listened to us.’

“They were in a pair-without-cox, and they could beat anything, including a coxed-four, and so they said, ‘Why should we

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<sup>4934</sup> Budd, op cit.

<sup>4935</sup> Budd, op cit.

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<sup>4936</sup> Rosenberg, op cit, 2010

<sup>4937</sup> See Chapter 94.

<sup>4938</sup> Rosenberg, personal conversation, 2009

<sup>4939</sup> Madden, op cit, 2010

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sacrifice our pair for the eight? We don't think the eight is going to win."<sup>4940</sup>

The Amlongs had good reason to be skeptical. During the spring of 1964, there was another serious crew training next door on Boathouse Row under the **College Boat Club** banner. **Joe Burk** had put together an eight including members of his Penn 1962 Eastern Sprints Champion crew and had them stroked by **Lyman Perry**,<sup>4941</sup> stroke of the 1960 Navy Olympic eight. The crew was big, and they were fast. In fact, they kept beating Vesper all that spring and into the summer,

**Rosenberg**: "Budd and Clark eventually told the Amlongs, 'You're either in or you're out,' so they decided that they were in."<sup>4942</sup>

**Budd**: "They were talked into joining the Vesper eight some five weeks before the Olympic Trials in 1964, and the boat instantly became fast. I had rowed for five years at that point, and I remember thinking right away, just as soon as they joined our boat, that that eight was the fastest one I had ever experienced. It was rough as hell. We would soak ourselves because it was a very unstable Italian shell, but it was amazingly fast.

"It was a wild ride, but it was the Amlongs who made the boat as fast as it proved to be. Without the Amlongs, and especially without Tom Amlong, there would have been no Gold Medal for Vesper!"<sup>4943</sup>

**Stan Cwiklinski**: "Tom Amlong would constantly accuse me of not pulling as hard as *he* did, and so periodically he would take me out in a pair to make sure. When I would do okay, we would quiet down for a week or so, and then he would start at it again.

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<sup>4940</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

<sup>4941</sup> See Chapter 90.

<sup>4942</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

<sup>4943</sup> Budd, op cit.

"I think he still wondered about me in Tokyo."<sup>4944</sup>

### The Stern-Pair

**Nash**: "**Bill Stowe** from Cornell was a machine. Once he got in motion, he remained in motion until further orders. He was a smart tactician. He could carry out anything he was asked to do."<sup>4945</sup>

**Emory Clark**: "Bill Stowe was everything Ted said he was and more, but **Bill Knecht** (who rowed the double in Rome with Kelly<sup>4946</sup> and was thirty-four years old in '64) was every bit as important. He had the smoothest (and fastest) hands out of bow and the most seamless stroke of anyone I ever rowed behind (including Rusty Wailes, with whom I rowed in the '58 Yale varsity and who won Gold in '56<sup>4947</sup> and '60<sup>4948</sup>).

"As Boyce has so kindly noted,<sup>4949</sup> I tended to look out, but it was always to starboard, and it was Knecht's blade I was watching."<sup>4950</sup>

Once the Amlongs had come aboard, that Vesper eight became a force of nature in 1960s America. Their coxswain, **Bob Zimonyi**, had grey hair, smoked cigarettes and had defected from the Communists. Emory Clark, Bill Stowe, Stan Cwiklinski and Tom and Joe Amlong would wear their military uniforms to the boathouse, and they looked even more sinister and menacing in their rowing togs. Most of them never spoke, never looked at anyone, just stared straight ahead. Next door the Penn Lightweights, author included, called them

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<sup>4944</sup> Cwiklinski, personal conversation, 2006

<sup>4945</sup> Nash, op cit.

<sup>4946</sup> See Chapter 87.

<sup>4947</sup> See Chapter 69.

<sup>4948</sup> See Chapter 83.

<sup>4949</sup> See later in this chapter.

<sup>4950</sup> Clark, op cit, 2006

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“rowbots,” but never when we might be overheard.

It was only later that I discovered how truly funny they were. **Eric Sigward** tells the following anecdote: “Stowe was stroking for Vesper in Philadelphia, where they had to row on a dog-leg course for lack of straight water on the Schuylkill. Zimonyi was coxing. Before one particular race, Stowe said to Zimi, ‘Cut the turn sharp. I don’t want to row all over the course.’”

“As they came under the bridge where the turn was made, Stowe looked at his oar and saw it coming about six inches from the bridge abutment. When they came out of the turn, Zimonyi said in his Hungarian accent, ‘Vuss that closs enoff for you?’”<sup>4951</sup>

All these men strode the sidewalks of Boathouse Row with a purpose that made everyone else feel like we were invisible to them. And after every practice, they left as quickly as they had come.

### 1963 Tokyo International

In October 1963, Dietrich stroked the Vesper eight at the **Tokyo International Sports Festival**, the shakedown international rowing event for the Toda Bashi Rowing Course, site for the Olympic regatta one year later, and it gave the crew the chance to see Ratzeburg up close.

The various eights also broke down into pairs and coxed-fours. The **Amlong Brothers** won the coxless-pair over the 1959 European Champions from Ratzeburg, and Dietrich, Bill Knecht, Hugh Foley and Dick Flanigan in the four sprinted from two lengths down to lose to Ratzeburg by only half a second.

In the eight, Vesper fell behind early by a length to Adam’s crew and spent the rest of the course slowly closing the gap until it was reduced to 2.5 seconds at the finish.

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<sup>4951</sup> Sigward, personal correspondence, 2008

**Stowe:** “Rowing in Tokyo gave Rosenberg and Rose the opportunity to study the rowing course, which proved invaluable a year later.

“European rowing courses are laid out to take advantage of prevailing tailwinds, and the Ratzeburg Style is short in the water with a high stroking cadence, both advantageous with a tailwind.

“However, the Toda course did not seem to have a prevailing wind, and headwinds were not uncommon. This early knowledge of the anticipated conditions for 1964 helped Vesper to design both a crew and a technique that could present an advantage over the Germans on that knowledge alone.”<sup>4952</sup>

**Rosenberg:** “I never modified my technique for Tokyo 1964 after having been there in 1963.”<sup>4953</sup>

### 1964 Olympic Trials

The 1964 Eights Trials showdown between Harvard and Vesper were described in Chapter 100. One additional anecdote:

**Lehman:** “I happened to be at the starting line, rowing back from just having lost the semis for the double, so I had a close-up view of our eight before the race started. In the dead silence between ‘Ready all’ and ‘Row!’ the derisive Virginia drawl of Tom Amlong was heard. ‘I hope you boys brought your *Sports Illustrateds* with y’all,’ referring, of course, to the recent cover story on Harvard’s certainty to win the Olympics.”<sup>4954</sup>

### 1964 European Championships

Dietrich Rose continued to provide invaluable assistance to Rosenberg leading up to the Olympics. After Vesper had won

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<sup>4952</sup> Stowe, p. 45

<sup>4953</sup> Rosenberg, personal correspondence, 2007

<sup>4954</sup> Lehman, op cit.

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the Olympic Trials over the undefeated Harvard and California varsities, it was Dietrich who suggested that Allen temporarily break up the eight into a coxed-pair, coxless-pair and coxless-four<sup>4955</sup> and enter the European Championships on the Bosbaan in Amsterdam.

**Rosenberg:** “It would never have occurred to me. I would have stayed back and trained.”<sup>4956</sup>

**Clark:** “I don’t know why we all raced in small boats at the Nationals and in Amsterdam, but I do know part of our deal with Kelly when he argued Boyce and me into getting in the eight, was that even if we won the Trials in the eight we would row against Findlay and Ferry in the Nationals.<sup>4957</sup> They had been our focus from the beginning, and we wanted to test ourselves against the best. Kelly kept his word.”<sup>4958</sup>

The trip to Amsterdam took some of the pressure off the eight. They placed fourth in the coxless-pair and won the petite-finals in the other two events.

It also put some pressure back on them because they got to watch Ratzeburg and the Soviets row side-by-side the whole race at 39 strokes per minute, with the Germans finally eking out a four-inch victory.

**Cwiklinski:** “We were able to watch the entire eights final, start-to-finish, from a moving/motorized grandstand down the entire Bosbaan race course – an unforgettable experience.”<sup>4959</sup>

Vesper stroke-seat **Bill Stowe**, “We departed Holland seasoned rowers, but unsure of how we could surpass the performance we had just witnessed.

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<sup>4955</sup> “Stowe, Knecht, Cwiklinski and Foley, stroke-to-bow, Italian rigged.” – Cwiklinski, personal correspondence, 2010

<sup>4956</sup> Rosenberg, qtd. by Stowe, p. 109

<sup>4957</sup> See Chapter

<sup>4958</sup> Clark, op cit, 2010

<sup>4959</sup> Cwiklinski, op cit.

“I was scared to death, terrified of an Olympic match with these truly awesome eights.

“We had two months of hard work ahead of us.”<sup>4960</sup>

### The Olympic Heat



Ted Nash Collection

After their near-dead heat at the European Championships on the Bosbaan, the clear favorites at Toda Bashi had to be Ratzeburg and the Soviets. The Soviets did not disappoint, winning their heat at three-quarter pressure, three-quarters of a length ahead of France in 6:06.15. The Americans lined up against Ratzeburg. Both crews rowed hard, and the U.S. crossed the finish line in 5:54.30, a few feet behind the winning Germans.

**Budd:** “As luck would have it, we drew Ratzeburg and three other countries for our heat. Conditions were perfect – sunny, no breeze. We were an unknown entity to everyone else and to ourselves. I believe that the rowing press had picked us for #7.

“Other than Harvard in the Trials, we had never really raced anyone of significance as an eight. We had beaten

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<sup>4960</sup> Stowe, p. 112

## THE LONG ECLIPSE OF AMERICAN ROWING



Boyce Budd

### After the Olympic Heat

Vesper lined up, bow to stern, at Toda Bashi

them pretty easily, but who knew what we could do against the Germans or the Soviets?

“In any case, we raced the heat and rowed pretty well. We found ourselves almost even with Ratzeburg going into the last 500 metres. The race was determined by whichever boat was on the stroke rather than on the recovery, and we lost by 27/100s of a second – about two feet [0.5m].”<sup>4961</sup>

**Rosenberg:** “There are many better tacticians than I who would do the same thing in order to avoid the risk of a mistake at a crucial time when the crew are not as fresh as when they started and the stress of the moment would likely be a negative

factor in the likelihood of making mistakes.”<sup>4962</sup>

**Budd:** “So we pulled into the dock, carried our oars up to the shed and then returned and carried our boat to the shed. Then we returned to the dock area for our official team ID photo to make certain that we did not substitute oarsmen in subsequent races.

“The facial expressions said it all. We were very angry with our failure to beat Ratzeburg, and I believe that everyone except Emory thought we had another drop of fuel left in the tank, which could have been used to push us in front of them. Speaking for myself, I was amazed and

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<sup>4961</sup> Budd, personal correspondence, 2011

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<sup>4962</sup> Rosenberg, personal correspondence, 2010

## THE SPORT OF ROWING



### Toda Bashi Race Course

Separated from the Arakawa River by a concrete embankment.

pleased at how well we did against the Germans and was feeling pretty certain that we could have pulled out a more aggressive sprint to beat them.

“I was feeling exhilarated and pissed off.

“What makes the photo so fascinating is that if you look carefully at the seated figures between our heads in the photo, you will realize that the Ratzeburg crew is still sitting on the dock where they have remained for some fifteen minutes or more while we put away our oars, put away our boat, and waited for the official photo.

“Were they stunned at Vesper’s challenge? Were they disappointed in their response? Did the race take more out of them than they had planned? Did they suddenly begin to think that their ‘for sure’ gold medal might suddenly be in jeopardy?

“In retrospect, I don’t think that we could have scripted it any better. Our boat was flying and we had just discovered that we were, in fact, rowing competitively with the big boys. With a better race plan, we had a real shot at gold.”<sup>4963</sup>

**Rosenberg:** “Part of me wants to stand up and scream because of the never-ending conflicts of recollection and memory. Be that as it may, in my judgment the biggest

factor was the change in prerace training and race plan because of the water conditions causing an inherent slowing of boat speed, side forces striking the hulls due to being stuck in a concrete bathtub. A few days before our opening heat, we walked over a high embankment to the Arakawa River, walking into the water for a 600-hard-stroke workout to regain the quick catch and the comfort in riding a faster boat.”<sup>4964</sup>

Two days after their heat, the American eight put in a strong performance, easily winning their repêchage by more than two lengths over a game Japanese crew.

### Loose Riggers

**Rosenberg:** “We actually came to the Olympics with two Donoratico eights. The *John B. Kelly* was made to Manning’s specs in 1962, and we rowed that boat [in the U.S. Olympic Trials] at Pelham Bay. The other was the *Doc Riggall*, named for the savior of Vesper.”<sup>4965</sup> It was smaller and lighter and very stiff.

<sup>4963</sup> Budd, op. cit.

<sup>4964</sup> Rosenberg, op. cit.

<sup>4965</sup> As long-time president of Vesper, Dr. Charles W. Riggall invited Kelly, Sr. to return and rebuild the club in 1942.

## THE LONG ECLIPSE OF AMERICAN ROWING

“In Tokyo, the Aussies asked to borrow an eight for a row as they were considering buying a Donoratico. They got about 600 meters down the course in the *Kelly*, and the rigger at the 5-seat fell off. There was no doubt that whoever loosened those nuts didn’t know that we would race the *Riggall* and not the *Kelly* in the final.”

Dietrich’s most dramatic contribution came on the morning of the Olympic final in Tokyo, when he discovered that overnight someone had again loosened the rigger nuts and tampered with the adjustment on Vesper’s shell. “Dietrich quietly set the riggers right and did not divulge the incident until afterward.”<sup>4966</sup>

### The Final

The afternoon of the finals in Tokyo started blustery with a cross-headwind blowing from Lane 6.

**Rowing News:** “The races were postponed from 1:30 until 3:00 PM.”<sup>4967</sup>

After the first two races ended in echelon finishes with the sheltered Lane 6 winning both, FISA President **Thomi Keller**, under enormous pressure from the participants, Harry Parker among the loudest,<sup>4968</sup> ordered an additional 20 minute delay for the singles race with the athletes already on the water.

Fortunately, the wind then shifted from the northeast, the Lane 6 side of the course, to the east, blowing straight down the course. However, there was by then very little time before sunset to get the final five races run at the scheduled 20 minute intervals, with the eights being the last.

**Rowing News:** “As the day progressed, the wind swung around and became a direct headwind. When the eights came to the line

it was dusk, and flares attached to parachutes were shot into the air to light the course. The wind had dropped to about six miles per hour.”<sup>4969</sup>

As the eights lined up at 5:27PM, two hours late, the direct headwind from the east was clocked at 3.0 mps or 6.7 mph, the lowest all afternoon. As in the previous four races, the lanes appeared to be equally affected with perhaps the slightest wind shadow for Lane 6, along the port wall.

**The Seattle Times:** “It was rowing’s weirdest spectacle when the world’s six swiftest eights lined up at the start by the light of the low-hanging moon. The Germans were favored to retain the Olympic crown they won in Rome in 1960, interrupting a string of American victories dating back to 1920.”<sup>4970</sup>

**Bill Stowe:** “Darkness was almost upon us and while the wind was still blowing, it appeared to be coming straight down the course, and a headwind was pleasing to this former Cornell oarsman, who always won when there was one.”<sup>4971</sup>

The tension was palpable.

**Rosenberg:** “It was a bit of a mess, because the crew had eaten lunch, not anticipating any delay.”<sup>4972</sup>

At the last moment, as night was falling, they called the eights to the start platform.

As a heat winner, Ratzeburg had been assigned to Lane 3 in the middle of the course. The USA, who had lost to Ratzeburg in the heats by perhaps a foot and reached the final only through the repêchages, lined up in Lane 6.

**Clark:** “Our lane had been sheltered most of the afternoon”<sup>4973</sup> (wind coming off

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<sup>4966</sup> Stowe, p. 153

<sup>4967</sup> Norm Sonju, Vesper 8 Comes Back Through Repêchages, *Rowing News* December 1964, p. 4

<sup>4968</sup> See Chapter 82.

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<sup>4969</sup> Sonju, op cit.

<sup>4970</sup> Georg N. Meyers, Vesper, *Seattle Oarsmen Win*, *The Seattle Times*, October 16, 1964

<sup>4971</sup> Stowe, p. 156

<sup>4972</sup> Rosenberg, USRA Clinic, Chula Vista, CA, Sept 11-2, 2004

<sup>4973</sup> Actually it was the first two races only, the coxed-four and the coxless-pair. See Chapter 80.

## THE SPORT OF ROWING



*Official Report XVIII Olympiad*

### 1964 Olympic Eights Final

Toda Bashi

Lanes from left: 1 YUG 2 URS 3 GER 4 ITA 5 CZE 6 USA

the port bow), and that's why Thomi Keller postponed the races and why we went off in the dark. By that time, the headwind was coming straight up the course, at least if the flags were telling the truth.<sup>4974</sup>

The boats took off.

**Boyce Budd**, Vesper 6-seat, recalls: "Our crew was very violent at the start. I guess all crews are, but we'd always seemed to drown ourselves, you know somebody would *belt* a puddle, and we'd be showered with water, and that boat was very, very

tippy, but this was as good a start as we'd ever had."<sup>4975</sup>

**Rosenberg**: "It was very, very tight for the first 500 meters with the Germans asserting an early lead."<sup>4976</sup>

Actually, the Russians led at the 500, but all six crews were within three-quarters of a length.

**Budd**: "I remember beginning to breathe smoothly and not even daring to take a peek out, except for Clark who always looked out, and I remember a point somewhere in the

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<sup>4974</sup> Clark, *op cit*, 2006

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<sup>4975</sup> Budd, *qtd. in A Fine Balance*

<sup>4976</sup> Rosenberg, *op cit*.

## THE LONG ECLIPSE OF AMERICAN ROWING

middle of that race thinking, ‘You know, Bronze would be okay. I’d settle for Bronze.

“I could *handle* a Bronze.”<sup>4977</sup>

At the 1,000, Ratzeburg led by .28 seconds over Vesper with the Soviets sliding half a length back and the rest open water behind.

**Rosenberg:** “I told the crew to take a move at around 1,100. The military sent up overhead flares to light the area, and the automobiles on the far side had turned on their headlights.”<sup>4978</sup>

**Stowe:** “At about 1,200 meters we walked on the Germans. At the end of the power-20 we had open water.”<sup>4979</sup>

**Emory Clark:** “Just about then my blade slapped a wave on the recovery and spun in my hands. I didn’t know how I knew it was backwards, but I did.

“I pulled what the British call an ‘air shot,’ and on my next trip up the slide I could row it in. It was so dark I did not think anybody noticed, but Robby [Zimonyi] said he saw it, and Boyce claims he started to pray.”<sup>4980</sup>

**Rosenberg:** “I am fascinated to compare the horrendous crabs of the Yalies, both in ‘56 (Wailes at the start)<sup>4981</sup> and in ‘64 (Clark at the 1,400), and have them recover to go on to win. Lesser men could not likely do that, I think.”<sup>4982</sup>

**Clark:** “Rosenberg notwithstanding, I did *not* catch a crab in the third 500 of the finals in Tokyo. I simply missed a stroke.”<sup>4983</sup>

**Budd:** “Clark always seemed to favor us with one screwed up stroke, crab or missed stroke in every race, so it is accurate to say that he rowed one less stroke than the

rest of the eight in the Olympic final. How many people can make that claim?”<sup>4984</sup>

**Clark:** “It was nice being mentioned in the same sentence with Rusty Wailes, however. I was privileged to row with him in the ‘58 Yale Varsity, and if I ever had a rowing hero, Rusty was that man.”<sup>4985</sup>

**Budd:** “Then 1,500 meters began to approach, and **Bob Zimonyi**, this coxswain who had raced in three Olympics for Hungary<sup>4986</sup> before defecting in Melbourne as a 45-year-old, and he usually would say stuff like [imitating a Hungarian accent], “I feel *nossing*, boys. I feel *nossing!*”



FISA 1964 Film

**Robert Zimonyi** in Tokyo

“We would be rowing our absolute flat-ass best ever, and, ‘I feel *nossing!* I feel *nossing!* I *vant* to feel ze stroke!’

“But now you could hear the excitement beginning to creep into his voice, and at the same time we were beginning to enter that delirium state.

“You’re beginning to get into oxygen debt, and thinking, “Do I have enough juice left to get this incredible distance down the race course?”

“Of course, it was only 500 more meters, but it seemed like forever.

<sup>4977</sup> Budd, op cit.

<sup>4978</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

<sup>4979</sup> Stowe, pp. 158-9

<sup>4980</sup> Clark, qtd. by Stowe, p. 159

<sup>4981</sup> See Chapter 69.

<sup>4982</sup> Rosenberg, personal correspondence, 2007

<sup>4983</sup> Clark, personal correspondence, 2010

<sup>4984</sup> Budd, personal correspondence, 2010

<sup>4985</sup> Clark, op cit.

<sup>4986</sup> Actually, it was two: 1948 Bronze in the coxed-pair, 1952 eliminated in the reps in the eight.

## THE SPORT OF ROWING



*Official Report XVIII Olympiad*

### **United States Men's Eight**

1964 Olympic Champion, Toda Bashi

**USA** 6:18.23, **GER** 6:23.29, **TCH** 6:25.10, **YUG** 6:27.14, **SOV** 6:30.69, **ITA** 6:42.77

“Like all coxswains, of course Bob lied as to how many strokes we had to go, the way they always do.

“‘Twenty-five strokes to go!’ and then he starts talking, and then it’s twenty-four . . . and then he talks a little bit more, and three more strokes go by . . . and then you finally get to twenty-two.

“Little bastard was lying away, trying to keep us alive and going . . .”<sup>4987</sup>

**Rosenberg:** “I told the crew that while they had taken only second in the opening heat, they would win the final with that same performance. It was controlled at 500 meters to the finish.

“I told Stowe there would be no sprint and to hold at 37-38. He did, and we still moved away with Ratzeburg scrambling at 44. They ended up so spent they had to sit in their boat for a full fifteen minutes before they could paddle to the dock.”<sup>4988</sup>

**Clark:** “I didn’t know, and am not sure I believe that Al told Stowe not to sprint in

the last 500 of the finals in Tokyo. I wish he had told me!”<sup>4989</sup>

**Budd:** “I can’t believe this either. I also can’t believe that we wouldn’t have sprinted if it was a close race. In that boat, the impetus to sprint, if sprinting was called for, would have come from elsewhere in the boat even if the stroke hadn’t started the sprint.

“We had about eight strokes in that boat.”<sup>4990</sup>

**Harry Parker** had been speaking to Karl Adam in the days before the race: “He didn’t like it when I told him, ‘You know, your technique is very, very good, but in the headwind you’re in trouble.’

“And, sure enough, on that day there was a big headwind in Tokyo.”<sup>4991</sup>

**Norm Sonju:** “Vesper was at his peak physically and mentally. On the other hand, the Ratzeburg crew on its visit to the United States two years ago<sup>4992</sup> was defeated in a

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<sup>4987</sup> Budd, qtd. in *A Fine Balance*

<sup>4988</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

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<sup>4989</sup> Clark, op cit.

<sup>4990</sup> Budd, personal correspondence, 2010

<sup>4991</sup> Parker, personal conversation, 2004

<sup>4992</sup> See Chapter 98.

## THE LONG ECLIPSE OF AMERICAN ROWING

preliminary heat by Cornell into a headwind.<sup>4993</sup>

**Ted Nash:** “Vesper’s eight ‘out-Germaned’ the Germans in that they were able to gain power and endurance from the interval work and were flexible enough to lengthen into the lower stroke for the strong headwinds. No one had experience racing in the dark, but all the way down the course, coxswain Zimonyi could be heard yelling for length, and lengthen they did for a splendid five-second victory.”<sup>4994</sup>

**Georg Meyers:** “It was a two-boat race all the way. The Germans clung to a micrometric lead in the first half of the 2,000 meter race. Then the Yanks, dedicated to redeeming the fifth-place humiliation for the Navy eight four years ago,<sup>4995</sup> surged to victory by a length and a quarter in 6 minutes 18.23 seconds.”<sup>4996</sup>

**Conn Findlay**<sup>4997</sup> was watching the eights final with interest. Not only was he rooting for his American teammates, but he also had a friend in the German boat.

**Findlay:** “Stan Pocock and his father have talked about how we had ceased to be dominant in Olympic rowing after 1956, how we went into our dry spell when the U.S. college crews stopped focusing on the three-mile race.

“They thought that the type of training you do for the three-mile race was what made us such good sprinters, and that was confirmed to me by Ratzeburg’s 6-man, **Karl von Groddeck.**”<sup>4998</sup>

“He was second to us in the pair in 1956 down in Australia, and I got to know him. He was a journalist, very likeable guy, and after the races in 1964 I was with him, and he said, ‘You know what Karl forgot to do? He forgot to take the long rows. It wasn’t part of our program.’

“Adam believed you didn’t need a 2,000 meter body of water to train on. You could train if you only had 500.”<sup>4999</sup>

Over the years, Vesper stroke **Bill Stowe** has kept in touch with von Groddeck, and he has heard a similar story.

**Stowe:** “[Ratzeburg] had resumed a vigorous training schedule following its victory in Amsterdam. Adam believed improvement was a necessity for Ratzeburg to stay on top of the rowing world, and he allowed his crew no time off. He hammered away at achieving faster 500-meter times, becoming obsessive, falling into the trap of ‘more is better.’

“Adam and von Groddeck differed on the crew’s rigorous training. ‘You come with a suitcase full of energy in the springtime, and you take it out bit by bit.

“‘But you must leave something for the race – not take everything out too early.

“‘It seemed like crap, what we were doing. We were tired, and it was beginning to show.’”<sup>5000</sup>

**Rosenberg:** “Adam did no distance work, and von Groddeck realized that multiple sprints were not cutting it. When he confronted Adam, they nearly came to blows . . . until von Groddeck remembered Adam’s boxing skills.”<sup>5001,5002</sup>

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<sup>4993</sup> Sonju, op cit.

<sup>4994</sup> Ted Nash, The Olympics, Blades, Rigging, Boats and Measurements, Comments on ‘The Greatest Games,’ NAAO Official Rowing Guide, 1965, p. 49

<sup>4995</sup> See Chapter 90.

<sup>4996</sup> Georg N. Meyers, Vesper, Seattle Oarsmen Win, The Seattle Times, October 16, 1964

<sup>4997</sup> See Chapter 82.

<sup>4998</sup> See Chapter 92.

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<sup>4999</sup> Findlay, personal conversation, 2005

<sup>5000</sup> Stowe, pp. 126-7

<sup>5001</sup> See Chapter 92.

<sup>5002</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

# THE SPORT OF ROWING

## Olympic Letdown

Something else very significant may have been going on here. The Ratzeburg crew was history's first true long-term Olympic effort in the eight. Karl Adam had begun building his program in the mid-'50s, won the 1960 Olympic title and continued on to 1964. We now know that his program would continue to target the Olympic Eight race every four years through Mexico City in 1968 and Munich in 1972.

In the past, a college or a club might have a good group in an Olympic year, win its country's trials, row and then the crew would retire. Occasionally, a winning eight would attempt to reconstitute four years later, such as the 1920 Annapolis crew in 1924 and the 1952 Annapolis crew in 1956, but they never succeeded in qualifying for a second Olympics.

As one progresses through a four-year quadrennial, the Olympic final looms larger and larger. The pressure increases. In 1964, of the two superb crews who had battled to a near-dead heat in Amsterdam, the Russians were never a factor in the final in Tokyo, and the Germans couldn't match the Americans after beating them in the opening heat.

As they poured on more work, more training, more effort into each pullthrough to prepare for the Olympics, the one goal they had worked for during four, long years, they seemed to reach a tipping point and lost their edge.

This is the first example of an **Olympic letdown**, but it will by no means be the last. It will happen again to Karl Adam Ratzeburg in 1972,<sup>5003</sup> and it will become an incredibly frustrating and painful recurring pattern for American and foreign national team programs over the next forty long years.

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<sup>5003</sup> See Chapter 100.

But none of this was obvious as the 1964 Vesper eight approached the car headlights shining across the course at the end of Toda Bashi.

**Budd:** "We went across the finish line, in the dark, and I remember thinking, 'I wish I could be one of those athletes who goes across the line and puts up his arms up and says, 'I won!' but the only thing I wanted was for this pain to stop.'

"It always seemed to me that the pain welled after you stopped. You get this wave of lactic acid all over your body.

"But then two things begin to happen. The pain begins to subside, and then the realization begins. First some guy from behind you reaches forward and whacks you on the head, and then you reach forward and you hit the guy in front of you, and bit by bit, you realize you've won the race.

"Once we had our medals around our necks, they then do the national anthem, and that was a very emotional thing.

"There were a whole lot of big, tough, nasty-ass Vesper oarsmen with tears streaming down their faces because it was such the impossible dream."<sup>5004</sup>

**Emory Clark:** "My first thought after the race was about the Amlongs. I thought, 'I'll never have to see those bastards ever again!'"<sup>5005</sup>

**Meyers:** "Zimonyi pleaded with his towering shellmates to forget the traditional dunking of the coxswain. 'I might have a heart attack.' Zimonyi yelled. 'It's dark.

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<sup>5004</sup> Budd, qtd. in *A Fine Balance*

<sup>5005</sup> Clark, personal conversation, 2005. "This quote about the Amlongs after the finals is close enough. It certainly was one of my first coherent thoughts upon reaching the dock. Of course, it was fun to see them in later years when I didn't have to row with them. We would never have won without them, headwind and darkness notwithstanding." – personal correspondence, 2010

## THE LONG ECLIPSE OF AMERICAN ROWING

You might lose me. Anyway, I don't want to rust my new medal."<sup>5006</sup>

**Eric Sigward:** "Karl Adam approached Vesper after the loss: 'We don't row in the

dark or in the wind. Let's do a one-on-one rematch in Henley in 1965.' Vesper accepted and set the stage for the greatest match race in the history of rowing."<sup>5007,5008</sup>

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<sup>5006</sup> Meyers, op cit.

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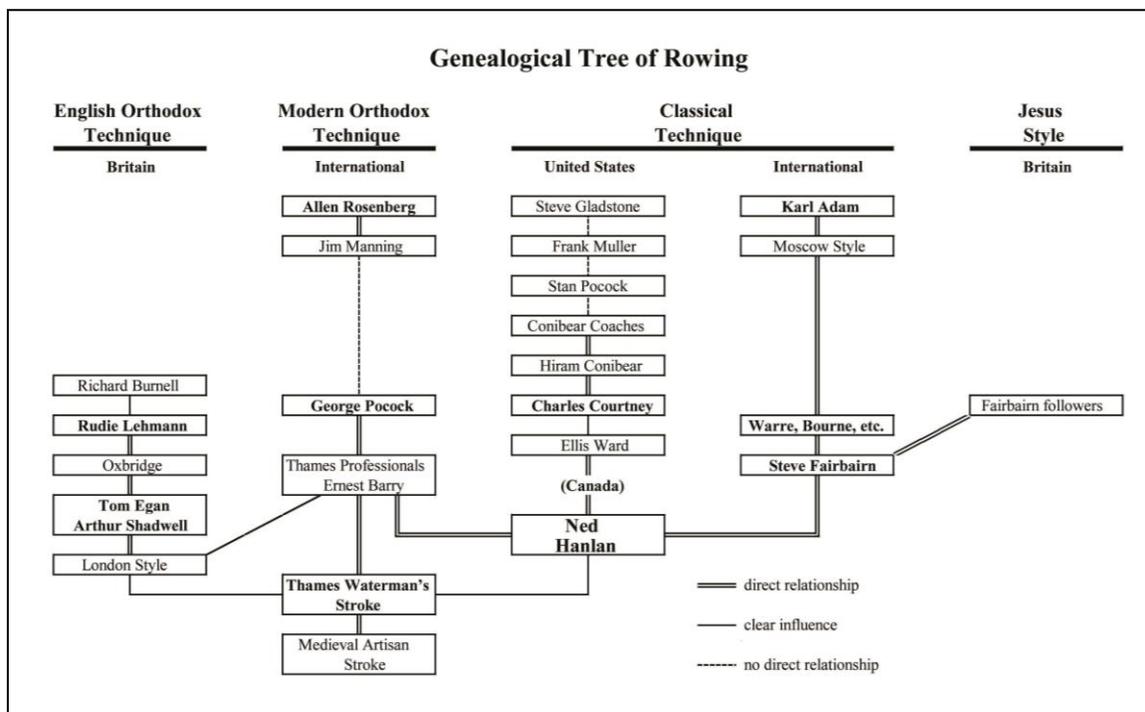
<sup>5007</sup> See Chapter 100.

<sup>5008</sup> Eric Sigward, The Greatest Match Race in the History of the World, *Blade on the Feather*, Volume IV, No. 1, February, 2004, p. 6

# THE SPORT OF ROWING

## 108. Modern Orthodox Technique

### *Rationale – Theory versus Practice*



**John Lehman:**<sup>5009</sup> “After rowing at Vesper through 1964, Boyce Budd, who had the locker next to me, did me a huge favor and talked me into applying to Cambridge University. As Captain of Boats at Caius College, I had the great fun of introducing the ‘Rosenberg Style’ to a rowing community still steeped in long layback, 32spm Fairbairn orthodoxy. We really kicked ass in the Bump Races.”<sup>5010</sup>

<sup>5009</sup> See Chapter 107.

<sup>5010</sup> Lehman, op cit.

Just as the Ned Hanlan Technique became larger than the man who originated it, so has the Rosenberg Style become bigger than Allen Rosenberg. In the half-century since he was coxing at Vesper, his influence has spread so far and so wide that there are innumerable people around the world and even in his home town of Philadelphia who row his style without ever having heard his name.

Accordingly, I have chosen to give what has evolved from Allen Rosenberg’s approach to rowing a more universal name, **Modern Orthodox Technique**.

## THE LONG ECLIPSE OF AMERICAN ROWING

In the genealogical tree of rowing technique, Modern Orthodoxy is an extension of the branch that began with the **Thames Waterman's Stroke**. Rosenberg's mentor, Jim Manning, came from the same professional class that included George Pocock.

However, the closest **spiritual** cousin to Modern Orthodoxy is actually **English Orthodoxy**. They are not linked by direct influence. In fact, the two sides may be deeply offended by my assertion of their confluence of attitude. But they both approach rowing as a series of motions or steps which must be executed in sequence in order to perform a stroke.

Today, the tree of rowing technique has only two active branches, Classical and Modern Orthodox. The rest of this book is the story of the competition between them, both on the water and off.

### What is Modern Orthodoxy?

Allen Rosenberg has stated many times, in articles and clinics, that the fundamental tenet of the Rosenberg Style is to concentrate muscular effort in the portion of the rowing stroke where he believes it will do the most good, namely at the beginning of the pullthrough. This is **Kernschlag** mentality, "solid stroke with a hard beginning" as defined by GDR researchers.

*Kernschlag* is not new. Even in that era, besides local Philadelphia crews and **Jim Manning's** Vesper crews during the 1950s, the **Soviet crews** Rosenberg first saw in 1958 at the European Championships in Poznan were also emphasizing effort at the entry.

Rosenberg continues to teach his crews to initiate their pullthroughs with the strongest and quickest muscle group, namely the legs, but this also was not revolutionary. During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, **George Pocock** had already written that the rower must "drive the legs [at the entry], as

this is the maximum power drive,"<sup>5011</sup> and it is ultimately to Pocock's writings that the origins of Modern Orthodoxy can be traced.

The connection to Pocock should come as no surprise. As has already been discussed, George Pocock had been a friend to the Ten Eycks at Syracuse and a mentor to three generations of Conibear disciples. Rosenberg's coach, Jim Manning, had known Ned Ten Eyck and had been boatman at Annapolis under one of the Conibearites, Rusty Callow, so he must have been well acquainted with Pocock shells and George Pocock the man, as well as his philosophy of rowing and sculling.

In **Rosenberg's** own words: "With the feet planted, the sequence of leg drive, back swing and arm draw unfolds using the strongest, next strongest and least strong muscle groups . . . in that overlapping order."<sup>5012</sup>

"As the legs drive against the stretcher, the upper body, shoulders and back are fixed—that is, they don't consciously move into the bow in a bowside arc."<sup>5013</sup>

These words are the literal description of the *motions* of the George Pocock's **Ernest Barry Stroke**<sup>5014</sup> and are reminiscent of the newsreel frames of **Stork Sanford's** 1957 Cornell crew at Henley in Chapter 70.

Innumerable times Allen has clearly and succinctly described his sequential approach to rowing, but ironically, frame-by-frame analysis of the 1964 and later the 1974 eights reveals a nearly concurrent pullthrough.

This fact is not widely known, not then, not now.

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<sup>5011</sup> [www.pocockrowing.org](http://www.pocockrowing.org), p. 2

<sup>5012</sup> Rosenberg, *ROW Magazine*, Premier Issue, p. 42

<sup>5013</sup> Rosenberg, personal correspondence, 1989

<sup>5014</sup> See Chapter 47.

# THE SPORT OF ROWING

## Easy to Teach

An overlapping-sequential technique also gives the appearance of being easy to explain and easy to understand, which was very important in its evolutionary development. Allen began his career in the sport as a member of and eventually became the coach of **Vesper Boat Club** on Philadelphia's Boathouse Row, and since they gathered the best athletes available from programs around the country, their challenge each year was to quickly form a composite crew from these various sources.

**Dietrich Rose:** "Rosenberg and I were involved with trying to teach people who had rowed the different styles from all these colleges, crazy styles. Schoch coached different. Burk coached different. You name it. Everybody. Jablonic at Wisconsin. They were all different, and they all insisted they were right."<sup>5015</sup>

**Rosenberg:** "A diversity of technique would come into the club, and the challenge of hammering them into shape was immense, so we had to come up with a technique which could be taught and learned easily and effectively.

"We had about six or seven weeks at the most. Guys would come in after the IRA, and we had to get to speed very, very quickly before the Canadian Henley and U.S. Championships, which were in August in those days.

"There had to be homogeneity, and that was the biggest problem we faced, and then to do it very, very quickly because the season was very short."<sup>5016</sup>

The Rosenberg approach also had the enormous advantage of making intuitive sense. It is reasonable and sensible, and it *sounds* reasonable and sensible, which helps

when a coach must convince skeptical athletes to adopt it.

**Rosenberg:** "I had the same problem in 1963 and '64, the pre-Olympic and Olympic teams. I had two big guys from Yale, Budd and Clark, and when I told them what I wanted by way of technique, they wanted to know how I had come up with it.

"After all, they had rowed for **Jim Rathschmidt**, who was truly a legend at Yale since he had taken the Yalies to the Olympic Gold Medal in 1956, so I was always being asked to *justify* what I was doing."<sup>5017</sup>

Quickly establishing the credibility of his approach to technique was no less challenging for Allen ten years later when he took the reins of the 1974 National Selection Camp for the men's heavyweight eight, inheriting five members of the previous year's crew, including several members of rival coach Harry Parker's Harvard program.

Modern Orthodox Technique is straight-forward, direct and has become enormously influential throughout North America, Western Europe and the British Commonwealth. During the '60s, it was the perceived alternative to the **Ratzburg Style**, and when that technique faltered, it then became the American alternative to the approach of the rising **German Democratic Republic**.<sup>5018</sup>

But word descriptions of rowing technique are inherently tricky, and miscommunication had already played a role in the mutation and devolution of English Orthodoxy, Fairbairnism and George Pocock's and Frank Muller's approaches to boat moving. In the same way, however straight-forward and simple it might appear to be, history has recorded that Modern Orthodox Technique could also be

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<sup>5015</sup> Rose, personal conversation, 2010

<sup>5016</sup> Rosenberg, USRA Clinic, Chula Vista, CA, Sept 11-2, 2004

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<sup>5017</sup> Rosenberg, op cit.

<sup>5018</sup> See Chapter 119.

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extremely misleading in its apparent reasonableness and simplicity, which reminds me of the following anecdote:

**Rosenberg:** “Efforts to dissect my stroke style are best exemplified by an encounter at Henley in 1996 with Dick Grossman of Dartmouth. He called me over to watch his crew row by and said, ‘They row just like your crews.’ In all innocence, I asked him which crew was his, for I could see nothing that resembled anything like my preferred style.

“This to me is so typical of mere observers in emulating someone’s style. What they do is what they hope will lead to what they want to copy. It ain’t always so. Key parts of the stroke invariably differ, and they build on that difference so that in the end they have a giraffe instead of a camel.”<sup>5019</sup>

Imagine how crestfallen Grossman must have been.

Under the guiding hand of Allen Rosenberg himself, his technique won the 1964 Olympic Gold Medal and the 1974 World Championship, but not every coach who has attempted to follow the Rosenberg lead has accurately reflected Rosenberg’s original intent, and as the years passed, even Allen Rosenberg himself could not find success every time he attempted to apply it.

### Explosive Contradiction

Our analysis must begin with the fact that a literal reading of Rosenberg’s writings does *not* match the force application technique of Rosenberg’s two great championship eights.

**John Van Blom**, Long Beach Rowing Association<sup>5020</sup>: “What Rosenberg *said* didn’t jibe with what they *did*.”<sup>5021</sup>

Innumerable times Allen has clearly and succinctly described his *Kernschlag*-sounding approach to rowing, but as was the case with **Ted Nash** at Lake Washington Rowing Club,<sup>5022</sup> frame-by-frame analysis of the 1964 and 1974 eights reveals a *Schubschlag* pullthrough.

This fact is not widely known, not then, not now.

**Peter Klavora** has written of the Rosenberg Style: “The *hammer-blow*-like leg drive initiated at the beginning takes the slides away from the front stop, leaving the body trailing the slide throughout the stroke. [my emphasis]”<sup>5023</sup>

In describing their personal interpretations of Allen Rosenberg’s approach, many coaches have indeed referred to “**explosive**” leg drive as part of the Rosenberg Style, and yet Allen Rosenberg has emphatically stated to me more than once that he has never, *ever* used the word “explosive” to describe his technique.

In later years, the Rosenberg-coached USA eights of 1975 and 1976 did indeed devolve toward more and more emphasis on segmented-force catches, enough so that in the 1977 edition of the GDR manual, *Rudern*, **Ernst Herberger** categorized the Rosenberg Style as he observed it as *Kernschlag*.<sup>5024</sup>

*But it had not been true of the 1964 or of the 1974 Gold Medal boats!*

### Sequential or Concurrent

Allen’s writings are very clear that the legs must begin the propulsive phase of the stroke by themselves. If they do not, if the

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<sup>5019</sup> Rosenberg, personal correspondence, 2010

<sup>5020</sup> See Chapter 88.

<sup>5021</sup> Van Blom, personal conversation, 2007

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<sup>5022</sup> See Chapter 84.

<sup>5023</sup> Klavora, *International*, p. 25

<sup>5024</sup> Herberger, p. 74

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back “participates” at the entry, “less speed is achieved throughout the entire rowing cycle.”<sup>5025</sup>

You may recall, however, that according to Professor **Andrew Carter**, no matter what coaches may say or think, all crews must use their legs and backs concurrently at the entry regardless of the motion that results.<sup>5026</sup>

The first American crews to display sufficient emphasis on leg drive to exclude all back motion at the entry, as Rosenberg desires, were the mid-1950s Cornell crews rowing **Stork Sanford**’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation Conibear Stroke, but they were always aware that their sequential *motion* was brought about by concurrent *effort*, what I have referred to as **hybrid-concurrency**.

**George Pocock** also coached hybrid-concurrency, and though he had no trouble actually coaching the technique he sought, the concurrent effort-sequential motion enigma was too subtle a concept to be succinctly described by George Pocock in print, so it was left to **Stan Pocock** to straighten out the resulting near-universal misconceptions that resulted and continue to this day.<sup>5027</sup>

These very same misconceptions arose again concerning Vesper Boat Club in the years after 1964.

Rosenberg has also written, “One must keep in mind that the legs and back comprise the largest and strongest muscle groups in the body, consequently the oarsman must depend on them to accelerate the boat from its lowest speed back to its maximum.”<sup>5028</sup>

But Allen has been equally concerned with the continuity and integrity of the stroke as a whole.

### ***Kernschlag* and Force Discontinuity**

History documents that most coaches have agreed that moving a boat efficiently requires a smooth, continuous pullthrough from entry to release. This was already well understood in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, but as in the **1957 Yale** and **1964 Soviet** crews, when too much emphasis is placed on the initial hit, the athlete’s effort at the catch tends to become literally explosive.

Since the very definition of “explosive” is that it is a singularity, over almost as soon as it has begun, the rest of the stroke becomes an adjunct requiring a separate, segmented second effort.

Such a stroke is less effective by definition *and* by near-universal consensus.<sup>5029</sup>

British 20<sup>th</sup> Century rowing historian **Paul Wilson**: “By experiments in a sculling boat, it is possible to establish that a violent leg kick gives a higher specific power impulse than progressive opening of back and leg angles, but it does not last long enough to accelerate the boat very much, and leaves the rest of the drive to the arms and back, which are relatively weak.”<sup>5030</sup>

On the subject of the pullthrough, as mentioned before, **George Pocock** has written, “When the slide starts moving, it keeps going all the way back until the legs are flat, but those legs must go down slowly. Don’t *whang* them down.”<sup>5031</sup>

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<sup>5025</sup> Qtd. by Ferris, p. 9

<sup>5026</sup> See Chapter 48.

<sup>5027</sup> See Chapter 47.

<sup>5028</sup> Qtd. by Ferris, p. 9

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<sup>5029</sup> See the Introduction for a discussion of the evolution of the 2004 U.S. Olympic Champion eight.

<sup>5030</sup> Wilson, p. 21. This conclusion also applies to rowing in pairs. See Introduction.

<sup>5031</sup> Qtd. by Newell, pp. 160-1

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Allen Rosenberg has always been acutely aware of the potential disadvantage of truly explosive catches, and accordingly, contrary to the conventional wisdom about his technique, Allen Rosenberg most emphatically does *not* recommend explosive leg drive at the entry. He is a *Schubschlag* coach.

### Head Levels in the Rosenberg Style

The Vesper crew made a tremendous impression on world rowing. **Zenon Babraj** is very clear on Allen's place in history:

"I want you to realize how revolutionary his technique was at the time that Allen started teaching it. A lot of teams in Europe were rowing with a vertical arc of the heads, so when the 1964 American eight came and start rowing *horizontally*, it had enormous influence, and the Europeans changed their focus.

"They didn't undermine what Allen established. They added some stuff, a variation of the angles of the body, but the emphasis from the vertical back arc was taken away."<sup>5032</sup>

From a European perspective, Allen's crew rowed "horizontally." By that, Zenon meant that if you watched the level of the heads of the Vesper oarsmen, they had very little up-and-down arc during the pullthrough.

They had not adopted Ratzeburg's ultra-long slides, and so retained a more natural posture at the entry and "a relaxed but firm and flawless carriage of the body."<sup>5033</sup>

**Rosenberg:** "When Zenon describes my influence on the Soviets throwing their

bodies into the stern, I remember seeing the Soviet crews do that, and I didn't know where or when they began to change, but I never thought that I had an impact even on them."<sup>5034</sup>

In the area of horizontal rowing, had Rosenberg evolved beyond his own coach, Jim Manning?

Yes.

Allen changed to "less *lift* at the catch."<sup>5035</sup> The intent was to have the athlete carry good posture into the entry and then focus on moving *back*, and not *up*, at the beginning at the pullthrough.

At the finish, they were coached to maintain the posture in their lower backs and limit layback to approximately -15°.<sup>5036</sup>

Laying back any further meant "dropping your body down, only to have to lift it back up.

"The usual fault in long layback is the little extra jerk. The chin comes out, the shoulders go up and then down, and the bow gets buried."<sup>5037</sup>

Historian **Peter Klavora** has analyzed in detail the major rowing styles of the 1960s and 1970s. He was especially drawn to Allen's comfortably erect posture and his steady recovery with no acceleration, no deceleration, and no hesitations.

He considered the Rosenberg Style unique in its time and placed it in historical perspective. "Allen has been a student of Ned Ten Eyck, whose technique must have evolved from the prolific and controversial English rowing coach, Steve Fairbairn, at the turn of the century."<sup>5038</sup>

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<sup>5034</sup> Rosenberg, personal conversation, 2004

<sup>5035</sup> Rosenberg, USRA Clinic, Chula Vista, CA, Sept 11-2, 2004

<sup>5036</sup> Ibid. The 1964 Vesper crew actually laid back to an angle of -20°.

<sup>5037</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5038</sup> Actually, Ned Hanlan Ten Eyck won the Diamond Sculls years before Fairbairn began coaching. Through his father, Jim Ten Eyck,

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<sup>5032</sup> Babraj, USRA Clinic, Chula Vista, CA, Sept 11-2, 2004

<sup>5033</sup> Ferris, p. 95

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“Fairbairn had his men work ‘in a natural manner,’ and the essence of the technique is identical to Allen’s, specifically: ‘Making no apparent effort on the forward swing [the recovery] is really the hallmark of a good oarsman, and the crew with the all-round easiest and laziest-looking forward swing is a sure winner.’

“An oarsman should, according to Fairbairn, hold himself freely erect, but not stiffly and consciously flat. When completing the stroke, the body weight is transferred from the blade onto the seat, and all the muscles come to a complete rest. The oarsman should take plenty of time over the finish.”<sup>5039</sup>

At the 1964 Olympics, horizontal rowing was not unique to Vesper. It was also a concern of the Ratzeburg crews. But the Vesper eight had much more influence on the Soviets, GDR and others because with their normal-length slides and relatively mainstream back-swing, they were perceived as more relevant than the radical long-slide Ratzeburgers.

The result was a global shift. Today, those crews who still row through a back arc with a perceptible vertical component are considered unconventional to practitioners of **Modern Orthodoxy**, which is what the Rosenberg Style has now become.

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Ned’s technique was actually an outgrowth of the Classical Technique of his namesake, Ned Hanlan. See Chapters 11, 12 and especially 13.

<sup>5039</sup> Klavora, *International*, p. 24