

THE SPORT OF ROWING

To the readers of *www.row2k.com*

With this excerpt from *The Sport of Rowing, Two Centuries of Competition*, we return to *www.row2k.com* after a few weeks off.

These have been very productive weeks for the book. We have recently announced that the publisher of our book is the **River & Rowing Museum** in Henley-on-Thames in England, and we have further announced that the **limited collector edition** will go on sale to the public starting on Wednesday April 6, 2011, just two days from today, exclusively on the **rowing mall of row2k.com**.

There will be just 300 sets printed, and only 250 will ever be sold. Of those, nearly 200 have already been reserved, so I encourage anyone interested in purchasing one of the remaining sets of the collector edition to visit the rowing mall early on April 6. Delivery will be in October, 2011.

Additional information concerning me and my book project are available at:

www.rowingevolution.com

For our excerpts during the spring racing season, we are concentrating on the careers of two of recent American rowing history's most influential figures: **Harry Parker** and **Allen Rosenberg**. These two have been bitter rivals since 1964, and therein lies a tale. We begin with a short excerpt.

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. This excerpt is from the third of the four volumes.

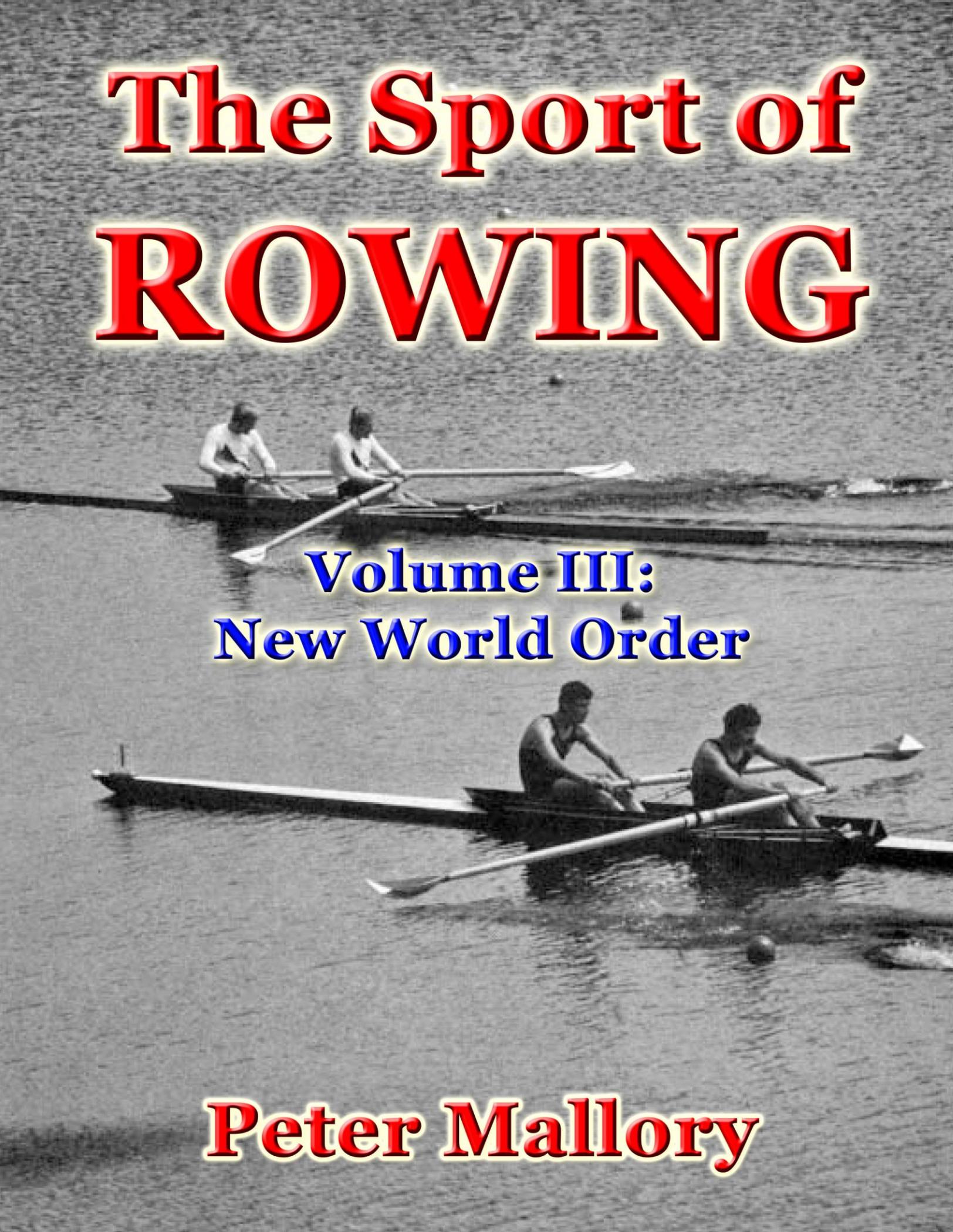
Incidentally, all the excerpts that have appeared on row2k during the last six months have since been revised as we work steadily toward publication. The most recent drafts are now posted in the row2k.com archives.

And you can email me anytime at:

pmallory@rowingevolution.com.

Many thanks.

The Sport of **ROWING**



**Volume III:
New World Order**

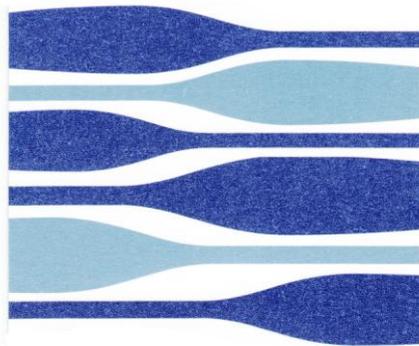
Peter Mallory

The Sport of Rowing

Two Centuries of Competition

In Four Volumes

by
Peter Mallory



River & Rowing Museum
Henley on Thames, England

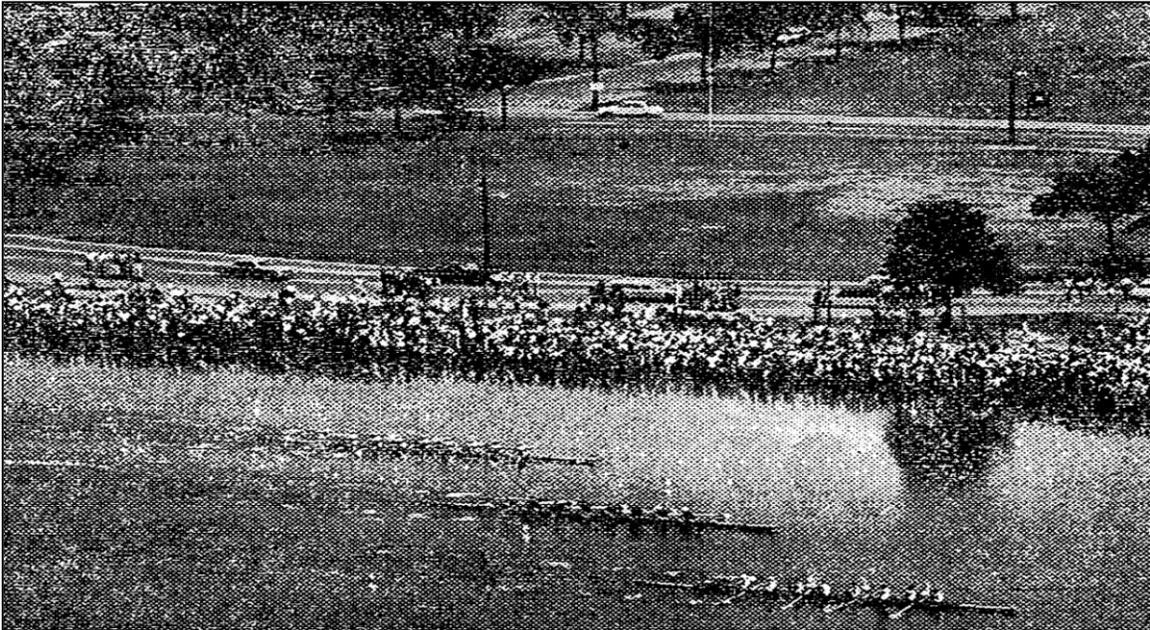
Part XIII

**The Long Eclipse of
American Rowing**

THE SPORT OF ROWING

100. Parker versus Rosenberg

Hunter Island Lagoon 1964 – Henley 1965



The New York Times

1964 Olympic Eights Trials

Hunter Island Lagoon, Bronx, New York

1 **Vesper Boat Club** 6:01.3, 2 **Harvard** 6:05.3, 3 **California** 6:08.3, **Yale** 6:14.4

Harvard: Coxswain **Ted Washburn**,

Stroke **Geoff Picard** 6'3" 192cm 192lb. 87kg, 7 **Bob Whitney** 6'5" 196cm 184lb. 83kg,

6 **Paul Gunderson** 6'3" 191cm 180lb. 82kg, 5 **Jim Tew** 6'2" 189cm 182lb. 83kg,

4 **Tom Pollock** 6'6" 197cm 190lb. 86kg, 3 **Harry Pollock** 6'4" 194cm 190lb. 86kg,

2 **Geoff Gratwick** 6'3" 191cm 178lb. 81kg, Bow **Bob Schwarz** 6'3" 191cm 178lb. 81kg

1964 Olympic Trials

Allison Danzig, *The New York Times*:

“Steered by a 46-year-old Hungarian refugee with Army, Navy and Air Force officers and a former Marine pulling four of the sweeps, the Vesper Boat Club eight-

oared crew of Philadelphia qualified today to represent the United States in the Olympic Games in Tokyo.

“To win the assignment, Coach **Allen Rosenberg**’s powerful, experienced eight, which averages 26 years, 195 pounds [88kg] and 6 feet 2½ inches [189cm], beat three of

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the finest college crews of several seasons in the final of the Olympic Trials.

“Harvard, the Eastern Sprint Champion and unbeaten until it trailed Vesper by almost two lengths in the semi-finals yesterday, rowed a much better race this time.

“Opening at 44, Harvard jumped into the lead. It led by a deck, rowing 43. Vesper, which was up to 48 at the start and then down to 42, fell behind as much as a half-length, with Harvard rowing at 36.

“Not until the 900-meter mark did the power in the Vesper Italian-built [Donoratico] boat, which is some six feet shorter than the standard Pocock shell, assert itself. With the stroke at 38, the Philadelphians caught Harvard. Then they fell to 36½ and moved out a deck. California was a length behind and Yale a bit farther back.

“Harvard hung on grimly and closely to the 1,700-meter mark, going at 36 or lower. Then Vesper drew away. Rowing at 38 and 39 and finally 40, it widened its margin with each smooth, powerful sweep of the oars.

“The time, made in slack water almost devoid of movement and in a negligible tailwind quartering off the port, was fast – 6 minutes 1.3 seconds.

“Harvard, no higher than 36, was helpless to stay with the Philadelphians. It had given its best in a beautiful display of oarsmanship, and it was not quite enough. It was clocked in 6:05.3, a few feet of open water astern of the winner.

“California, the champion of the Intercollegiate Rowing Association, was third all the way.⁴⁵⁰³

“**Harry Parker**, the Harvard Coach, a Vesper man when he was the single sculler in the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome, said before the final here that he feared the club crew more than he did California.

⁴⁵⁰³ For the University of California point-of-view on the race, see Chapter 114.

“Rosenberg could not praise Harvard enough for the race it rowed.

““They are a dead game crew,’ said the little Vesper coach. ‘It took guts to come back after the loss they took in the semi-finals. They never quit at any time.’”⁴⁵⁰⁴

For the very first time in modern history, the country’s best college crew had failed to earn the right to represent the U.S. in the world’s most significant race as far as Americans were concerned.

This had been Harvard’s chance to join California, Navy, Washington and *especially* Yale, their traditional arch-rival for more than a century, in the U.S. Olympic rowing fraternity.

Harry *deeply* felt the loss, as did the crew.

Historian **Eric Sigward**, member of the undefeated 1966 Harvard Varsity: “A few years ago, **Bill Stowe**⁴⁵⁰⁵ asked me to read his book, *All Together*.⁴⁵⁰⁶ He’s a great guy, had great inside opinions and stories, and even let me wear his Gold Medal for a few minutes at a cocktail party.

“I was happy to hear his take on Harvard. He thought we were stuck up prigs who showed only a cold shoulder when Vesper defeated us in the 1964 Trials. He thought we should have said, ‘Great row. Thanks for the competition. We’ll be rooting for you in Tokyo.’

“I think he has a great point that is seldom mentioned out loud about Harvard: that we are cold-hearted, bitter and lousy losers. It was refreshing to hear the ‘blue collar’ take on the ‘white shoes.’”⁴⁵⁰⁷

A lifelong and very often bitter rivalry between the two preeminent American

⁴⁵⁰⁴ Allison Danzig, *Vesper Triumphs in Rowing Trials*, *The New York Times*, July 12, 1964

⁴⁵⁰⁵ stroke of the 1964 Vesper Crew

⁴⁵⁰⁶ See Bibliography.

⁴⁵⁰⁷ Sigward, personal correspondence, 2008

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coaches of their era and the teams they led began at the 1964 Olympic Trials on Hunter Island Lagoon.

Harvard's entry contained privileged undergraduates from America's most prestigious university.

Rosenberg's 1964 Vesper eight was a demographic cross-section of the country, small college and club rowers, wizened military veterans and a Hungarian expatriate, gathered together much as Karl Adam had drawn his oarsmen from all over West Germany.⁴⁵⁰⁸

And Vesper rowed with European boats and oars, just like Ratzeburg, *and* they rowed a high rating, though not quite as high as Ratzeburg's.

And Vesper rowed a new technique visually distinct from traditional American Conibear rowing and distinct from that of Ratzeburg.

In another of the watershed events at the watershed 1964 Tokyo Olympics, Rosenberg won his battle with Karl Adam by beating Ratzeburg and recapturing Olympic Gold for the United States.

The 1964 U.S. Coxed-Four

Harry Parker did not sit still after the 1964 Olympic Trials loss. He reformulated half his eight into the U.S. Trials-winning coxed-four that went on to represent the U.S. in the Games.

Rowing News: "In Tokyo in the first heat, they were four seconds behind the eventual Gold Medal-winning German Crew.

Heat 1	
1 GER	6:44.21
2 USA	6:48.19
3 CZE	6:55.69
4 AUS	7:00.16
5 JAP	7:10.77
6 CUB	7:17.11

⁴⁵⁰⁸ See Chapter 92.

"Unfortunately, in the repêchages they were beaten by a crew [whose time] they had beaten in their first heat [and so failed to advance].

Repêchage 1	
1 POL	7:11.74
2 USA	7:12.82
3 NOR	7:18.57
4 UAR	10:44.94

"Our four-with rowed a Pocock boat with Ayling oars."⁴⁵⁰⁹

1965

While at the Olympics, Harry Parker studied carefully the crews he saw.

Returning four Olympians, including Bronze Medalist **Geoff Picard**,⁴⁵¹⁰ and graduating only the coxswain and one rower (Captain **Harry Pollack**) from the 1964 Varsity, Parker had his **1965** Harvard Varsity row a new technique, his personal interpretation of what he had seen in foreign crews at the Olympics.

The New York Times: "This great American crew rows in a Swiss Stämpfli shell that is three and one-half feet shorter than the standard Pocock, pulls English Ayling oars with broad shovel blades, and uses German-style rigging, made popular by the former World Champion Ratzeburg crew, in which the four men in the bow work on opposite sides from what is standard procedure.

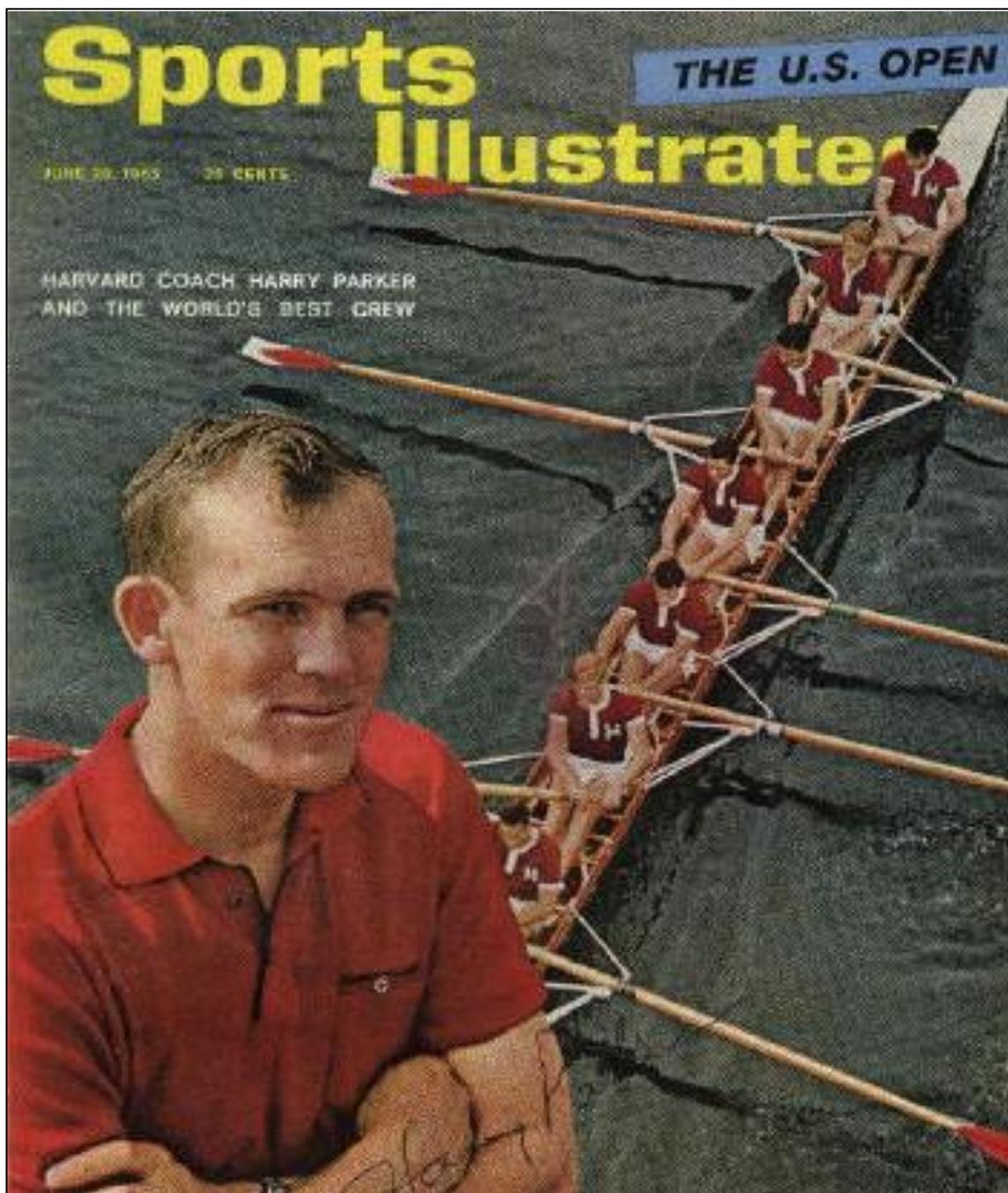
"Coach Parker and his men say the stiffer English oar is a factor in their success, enabling them to take hold of the water more securely and operate their slides in the different manner they do.

"Rival coaches have marveled at the precision of its bladework, the powerful catch with which it takes hold of the water, the immaculate cleanliness of the release

⁴⁵⁰⁹ Joseph Amlong, *Olympic Small Boats*, *Rowing News*, Dec. 1964, p. 8

⁴⁵¹⁰ See Chapter 85.

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Sports Illustrated, June 20, 1965

“HARVARD COACH HARRY PARKER AND THE WORLD’S BEST CREW”

Coxswain **John Unkovic**,

Stroke **Geoff Picard** 6’3” 192cm 192lb. 87kg, 7 **Bobby Whitney** 6’5” 196cm 188lb. 85kg,
6 **Paul Gunderson** 6’4” 193cm 192lb. 87kg, 5 **Brian Clemow** 6’4” 193cm 186lb. 84kg,
4 **Jim Tew** 6’3” 191cm 186lb. 84kg, 3 **Tom Pollack** 6’5” 196cm 193lb. 88kg,
2 **Bob Schwarz** 6’4” 193cm 178lb. 81kg, Bow **Geoff Gratwick** 6’3” 191cm 184lb. 83kg,

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and the remarkable control of the slides in coming up at a uniform rate to the catch.

“Beautifully matched in size, between 6’3” and 6’5”,⁴⁵¹¹ the eight men fit together like peas in a pod, and they work in a unison of symmetrical, cadenced effort behind a stroke oar with rare sense of pace.

“No American crew within memory has provoked such superlatives as has Harvard this season.”⁴⁵¹²

Parker’s mentor, **Joe Burk**, called the 1965 Harvard Varsity the “greatest American crew there has ever been, college or club.”⁴⁵¹³

The New York Times: “In its first race, it broke the record on the Charles River at Cambridge, Massachusetts for 1¾ miles by better than ten seconds. In its next outing it lowered the mark on Princeton’s Carnegie Lake by more than twenty seconds. It continued its invincibility in winning the sprint championships by a record margin and left Yale far behind in their four-mile race at New London.

“College coaches have labeled Harvard the fastest crew in history, superior to the fabulous Cornell eights of Charles (Pop) Courtney, the masterpieces of Ed Leader at Yale and Tom Bolles at Harvard, the wondrous Navy Admirals of Rusty Callow and the creations of Stork Sanford, Al Ulbrickson, Jim Ten Eyck, Jim Rice, the Glendons and Ky Ebright.

“At the age of 29, Harry Parker in his third year as Harvard coach finds himself ranked with the greatest.”⁴⁵¹⁴

⁴⁵¹¹ 191 and 196 cm.

⁴⁵¹² Allison Danzig, Harvard and Vesper to Meet in ‘Boat Race of the Century’ at Henley Regatta, *The New York Times*, June 27, 1965

⁴⁵¹³ Hugh Wall, Never Before – At Harvard or in History, *Sports Illustrated*, June 28, 1965, p. 36

⁴⁵¹⁴ Danzig, op cit.

Harvard Loses

The adulation must have been a heady experience for young Harry and his crew. A few days later, journalist **Robert Lipsyte** called them “the most vaunted set of sweeps-pullers since Cleopatra’s barge slaves.”⁴⁵¹⁵

The **June 20, 1965** *Sports Illustrated* cover story labeled the Harvard crew the world’s best, but when it really counted, they fell short . . . and again it was at the hands of Allen Rosenberg.

That *Sports Illustrated* cover became infamous in rowing circles as a jinx, because before the week was out, the 1965 “world’s best crew” had lost to Vesper Boat Club in the first round of Henley’s Grand Challenge Cup competition. Penn’s St. Anthony Hall⁴⁵¹⁶ coxswain **Arthur Sculley**: “I remember looking at the Vesper boat just before the race and seeing eight copies of the front cover attached in front of each oarsman’s seat!”⁴⁵¹⁷

Just as in the Olympic Trials the year before, Parker had been trumped by Rosenberg.

The New York Times: “Harvard, the winner of every race it had entered since losing to Vesper in the Olympic Trials last year, started down the chute of green water at a throbbing 46 strokes to the minute, two faster than the older, heavier, more experienced club crew. The crowds along the grassy river banks had fallen silent: the *cognoscenti* out of respect for titans, the others out of parochial disinterest.

“Harvard led by two feet at the Remenham Barrier, which is 2,149 feet up the 1 5/16-mile course. Both crews were

⁴⁵¹⁵ Robert Lipsyte, Henley Starts to Separate Flotsam From the Fleet, *The New York Times*, July 1, 1965

⁴⁵¹⁶ See Chapter 94.

⁴⁵¹⁷ Sculley, personal correspondence, 2007

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timed at a record-equaling 1:48 for the distance, but both were exhibiting slight unsteadiness from the turbulence within the booms.

“At the half-mile mark, Harvard was stroking 40 to the minute, but Vesper was coming on, taking a two-foot lead. A few faint voices along the river were shouting, ‘Go Harvard.’ Even at that point, however, **John Unkovic**, the Harvard coxswain, glancing at the stopwatch taped to his thigh, knew ‘we just couldn’t get in the groove.’

“‘Some days,’ he said later, ‘you get that feeling of swing,⁴⁵¹⁸ and you really go.’

“It was Vesper that went, pulling to almost a length lead at the three-quarter mark, rowing at a powerful and steady 40.”⁴⁵¹⁹

Henley Royal Regatta Record: “Vesper started at 44 to Harvard’s 42, and rowed about one stroke a minute faster than Harvard throughout. Harvard led by a canvas at the quarter mile, but Vesper were level by the Barrier and led by half a length at Fawley and three-quarters of a length at the three-quarter mile. Harvard closed up a little at the mile, but Vesper led by three-quarters of a length at the mile and a quarter. The time at the Barrier equaled the record, and the times at Fawley and the finish were new records.

“Vesper won by two-thirds of a length.

“Times: 1:48 3:10 6:18”⁴⁵²⁰

The New York Times: “The winners swept past the Stewards’ Enclosure to a clicking chorus of stopwatches, passed the finish line and slowed only long enough to chuckle and crow. Then they rowed smoothly and neatly to their mooring dock

as if they had just taken a light spin up the river.

“Gasping and heaving, the Harvard boys sat out in the water, hanging over their training sweeps.

“There was none of the rather courteous hip-hip-hooraying that usually follows a race here. The Vesper oarsmen, most of them out of college several years, were grinning when the Crimson dragged into the boat pavilion.

“‘I brought all your clippings over with me. I’ll show them to you,’ said one of the Vesper men to a Harvard man. The Harvard man smiled gamely.”⁴⁵²¹

It was a *very* bitter defeat.

Rosenberg: “Harry has never gotten over his stinging losses in the ’64 Trials in Pelham Bay⁴⁵²² and again at Henley in 1965. Those crews were described as the ‘greatest and fastest American crews in a decade.’”⁴⁵²³

Indeed, even after more than forty years, Parker today still feels intensely the 1960s rivalry between himself and Rosenberg.

Parker: “What people don’t remember any more is that the next week we went to Lucerne, and we won! We beat the Russians, who came back and won the Silver Medal at the European Championships in Duisburg, beating *Vesper!*”⁴⁵²⁴

The Lucerne result was Harvard first in 5:55.34, followed by Bled-Monar-Argo of Yugoslavia, Slavoj Vysherad Praha of Czechoslovakia and Moscow Maratime of the Soviet Union.

Sigward: “Harry Parker noted they had become the first American university eight to win in major international competition

⁴⁵¹⁸ See Chapter 164.

⁴⁵¹⁹ Robert Lipsyte, Vesper Eight Beats Harvard by Two-Thirds of a Length in Henley Regatta, *The New York Times*, July 2, 1965

⁴⁵²⁰ Qtd. by Eric Sigward, The Greatest Match Race in the History of the World, *Blade on the Feather*, Volume IV, No. 1, February, 2004, p. 7

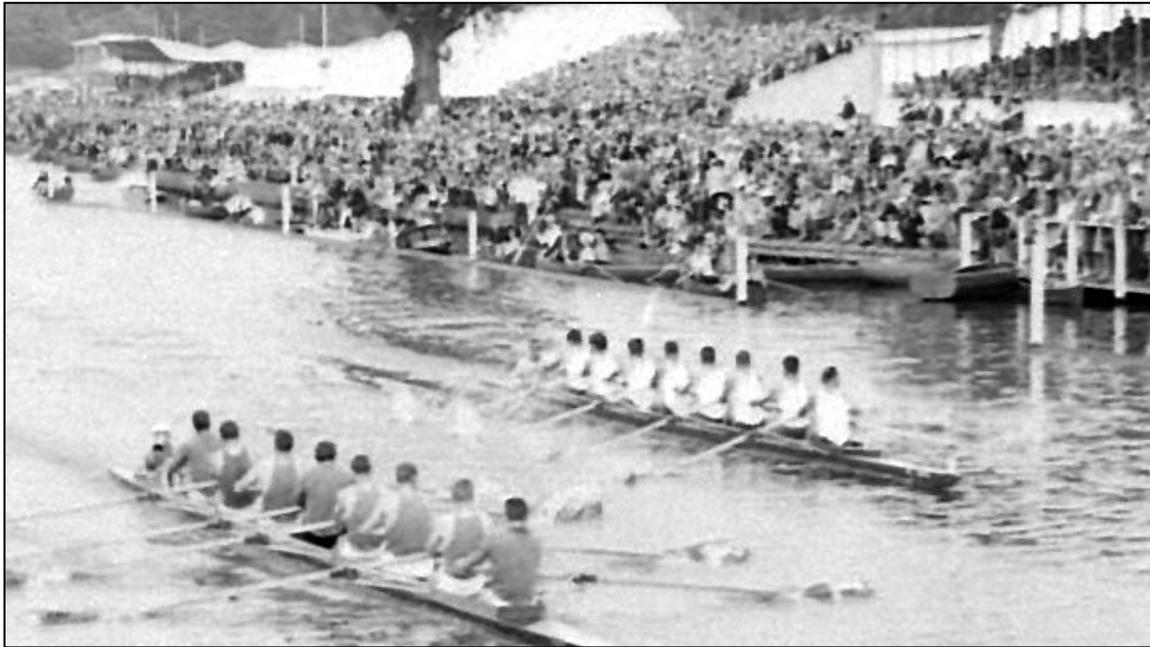
⁴⁵²¹ Lipsyte, op cit.

⁴⁵²² Hunter Island Lagoon. See Chapter 87.

⁴⁵²³ Rosenberg, personal correspondence, 2007

⁴⁵²⁴ Parker, personal conversation, 2004

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British Pathé Newsreel, 1812-01, Royal Regatta

1965 Grand Challenge Cup Final Ratzeburger Ruderclub over Vesper Boat Club

since 1959. He said, ‘That victory did much to confirm our belief in the ability of that crew, and college oarsmen in general, to achieve the level of performance now required for victory in international competition.’⁴⁵²⁵

Zang: ‘His first great team, the one that *Sports Illustrated* immortalized, was, according to Parker, a highly motivated group. From that Varsity eight came four doctors, three lawyers and the beginning of a rowing dynasty.’⁴⁵²⁶

Then Vesper Loses

Allen Rosenberg had only a couple of days to celebrate their defeat of Harvard. Ratzeburg was still smarting over losing to Vesper at the 1964 Olympics. Just as he had suggested a rematch in flat water after losing

to Cornell in headwind conditions in the heats of the 1963 Eastern Sprints,⁴⁵²⁷ **Karl Adam** reportedly had approached Rosenberg after the twilight Olympic loss into a headwind in Tokyo⁴⁵²⁸ and said, ‘We don’t row in the dark or in the wind. Let’s do a one-on-one rematch at Henley in 1965.’⁴⁵²⁹

Now what historian Eric Sigward has called the greatest match race in the history of rowing was coming to pass in the Grand Challenge Cup final.

Sigward: ‘When the big moment took place, **Princess Grace** was at the prow of the launch. Brother **Jack Kelly**, Vesper’s *eminence grise*, stood behind her.

‘**Al Rosenberg** and **Dietrich Rose**, Vesper’s coaches, were there. **Harry Parker** and ‘The Greatest Crew in the

⁴⁵²⁵ Sigward, op cit.

⁴⁵²⁶ Zang, p. 116

⁴⁵²⁷ See Chapter 98.

⁴⁵²⁸ See Chapter 107.

⁴⁵²⁹ Qtd. Sigward, op cit

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World' were there. **Karl Adam** was there. Like armies moving ineluctably to a place of great decision, the finest coaches and rowers in the world gathered at Henley, [and the future of international rowing was set in motion.]

"At the signal, the Germans erupted at 45½. They managed to maintain this punishing cadence until they had a third of a length. Rowing at 39, not really a settle, they crossed the finish line in 6:16, one second ahead of Vesper.

"The *Henley Royal Regatta Record* reads:

"Ratzeburger started at 45½ and did not drop below 39 throughout. Vesper started at 44 and then rowed 37-38.

"Ratzeburger led by one-eighth length by the quarter mile and three-quarters of a length at the Barrier. Vesper made a good effort just after the three-quarter mile and reduced the lead to half a length at the Mile. Ratzeburger raised their rate to over 40, led by three-quarters of a length and won a magnificent race by half a length. All the times were new records."⁴⁵³⁰

"Afterward, Vesper stroke **Bill Stowe** said that he had been waving to Grace Kelly in the judges' boat and missed the first stroke. That accounted for their losing a deck-length at the start, which ended up the eventual winning margin."⁴⁵³¹

Unfortunately, Vesper lost to them again by a second a week later in Ratzeburg and then twice more the following month in both the heat and final at the European Championships in Duisburg.

Sigward: "The Vesper and Ratzeburger crews met each other six times over two years. While Germany led the series 5-1, the cumulative margin was less than one length, with the U.S. pulling the largest

victory, just over five seconds, in the 1964 Tokyo Olympic final."⁴⁵³²

Indeed, it was the end of an era. It may not have been immediately obvious to Harry Parker, but the time when a crew from a single club or college could win a major rowing championship was fast coming to an end.

Emory Clark: "Al Rosenberg [had given] America a final moment in the international rowing sun before [decades] of rowing in the puddles of faster crews and petite finals.

"Nineteen sixty-five saw the Vesper eight beaten [four] times by a strong Ratzeburg crew avenging its Tokyo loss, but Vesper nonetheless had the third-best eight in the world that year, winning Bronze behind Germany and Russia at the European Championships."⁴⁵³³

By the next Olympics in **1968**, the American pendulum would finally swing from Allen Rosenberg to Harry Parker. Allen had left Vesper and virtually retired. Harvard had not lost a collegiate race in five years, and they were 1967 Pan American Games Champions.

At that year's U.S. Trials, without Rosenberg, Vesper came only third, and the eight which won the right to defend Vesper's Gold Medal was Harvard University. Harry had his crew rowing his new Harvard Technique, which everybody in America identified with Ratzeburg's.

But on the Xochimilco rowing course in Mexico City, the original Ratzeburg beat them handily and won back Olympic Gold.⁴⁵³⁴

At Oberschleißheim in **1972**, a superb U.S. National composite crew containing five Harvard grads, coached by Harry Parker and rowing an evolution of his distinctive

⁴⁵³⁰ Sigward, op cit.

⁴⁵³¹ Sigward, personal correspondence, 2008

⁴⁵³² Sigward, op. cit.

⁴⁵³³ Clark, p. 14

⁴⁵³⁴ See Chapter 102.

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technique, earned Olympic Silver, dropping Ratzeburg off the podium and into oblivion.⁴⁵³⁵

After Munich, the American pendulum swung from Parker back to Rosenberg. In **1974**, Allen was tapped to assemble another national composite eight for the World Championships in Lucerne, “but this only after six or seven years in rowing obscurity and the agony of abstinence by this proud man who insists that the world come to him and usually manages to insult that world when it does.”⁴⁵³⁶

Under Allen, they won the World Championship, presumably rowing the same “new” technique that Rosenberg had used to propel Vesper to Olympic Gold in 1964, and overnight the American love affair with the Ratzeburg Technique was over.

Dead as a dodo.

Extinct in America.

But still Harry and Allen remained inextricably linked. Three members of Rosenberg’s 1974 World Champion Crew were Harvard undergraduates, including stroke-seat **Al Shealy**: “After the championships, with my hat size expanded a couple of notches, I went back to my senior year at Harvard with grand ambitions to bring some of the summer’s added value to our program. Harry listened politely to my disquisition on Rosenberg’s rowing technique, and then promptly and rightly dismissed it all. I could see his clenched jaws powdering his teeth in barely concealed, smoldering rage.

“Only years later did I realize what an idiot I was.

“Harry listen to Allen Rosenberg about coaching points? Yeah, right!! Emeril Lagasse and Wolfgang Puck would have an easier time sharing professional secrets!”⁴⁵³⁷

⁴⁵³⁵ See Chapter 103.

⁴⁵³⁶ Clark, p. 14

⁴⁵³⁷ Shealy, personal correspondence, 2005

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101. The Evolution of Harry Parker

The Mid-1960s

The 1963 Season

Rowing News: “Parker was serving as freshman men’s coach at Harvard University in January, 1963 when Head Coach Harvey Love died unexpectedly of a heart attack. The 27-year-old Parker, then considered the young apprentice, assumed control of the program, thus beginning a new era in American collegiate rowing.”⁴⁵³⁸

Harvard Magazine: “That spring under Parker, the crew recorded a respectable 3-1 record, but at the Eastern Sprints, the spring regatta that brings together the major college crews in the East, Harvard had finished next to last in its heat, failing even to make the final.

“[Looking forward to the end-of-the-season Harvard-Yale Race] Harvard coxswain **Ted Washburn** recalls, ‘Rowing the way we had at the Sprints, I never imagined we’d beat Yale.’

“After their disastrous elimination at the Sprints, Parker decided to take the Varsity back to fundamentals. He made them row at rates as low as 22 or 24 strokes per minute (racing cadences are generally in the 30s or 40s), and concentrate on solid technique – long strokes through the water, optimal blade coverage.

“Parker starved his crew of race-tempo work. ‘We begged him,’ Washburn says. ‘When are we ever going to row at racing

cadence?’ The Harvard Eight didn’t realize that they were getting faster. They knew only that the boat felt good.

“At the start of the Harvard-Yale Race on the Thames River in New London, Connecticut, Yale shot emphatically away from Harvard. ‘There they go,’ thought Washburn, ‘but we’re going to row our race.’ Yale developed their lead for the first mile, Washburn recalls, until open water separated the crews, but then they stopped moving away. Harvard began grinding down the gap.

“A little before the two-mile mark, Harvard passed Yale and continued rowing away from them, finishing over eight boat lengths in front after four miles. It was not only an upset, but a rout.

“Harvard continued rowing away from Yale for another eighteen years. The Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations would pass, and Ronald Reagan would become president, before Yale won again at New London, in 1981.

“From that moment in 1963, Harvard would not lose a single intercollegiate race until 1969. By then, Harry Parker was a demiurge in the world of rowing.”⁴⁵³⁹

Steve Gladstone,⁴⁵⁴⁰ destined to be the winningest coach in IRA history after Charles Courtney, coached the Harvard Lightweights in the late 1960s. “Looking at

⁴⁵³⁸ Ed Winchester, *Deconstructing Harry*, *Rowing News*, December, 2004, p. 50

⁴⁵³⁹ Craig Lambert, *Upstream Warrior*, *Harvard Magazine*, May/June 1996

⁴⁵⁴⁰ See Chapter 105.

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the Harvard crew prior to the 1964 Olympics, they were traditional. The early boats rowed beautifully, and that was the influence of Bolles.⁴⁵⁴¹

However, all assumptions about rowing technique changed for Harry after he returned from the 1964 Olympics.

Tokyo

After losing the 1964 Olympic Eights Trials, Harry Parker broke his Varsity eight into a coxless- and coxed-four for the next round of Trials. The former came in second, while the latter won, so Harry went to Tokyo as coach of the U.S. coxed-four.

He brought his own unique perspective to the 1964 Olympics. He had rowed 2-seat in the historic 1955 Penn “world’s fastest” eight,⁴⁵⁴² which had rowed very low and very, very hard at the catch.

In his single, he had represented the U.S. in Pan Am and Olympic competition, sculling with *Kernschlag* emphasis on early leg drive.⁴⁵⁴³

Harvey Love had been coaching in the manner of Tom Bolles’ personal interpretation of the 3rd Generation Conibear Stroke, and late in his career Bolles had been using an increasingly hard catch, following the general evolution of American



Dick Krahenhuhl

Harvard Varsity Coxed-Four

1964 Olympic Trials Champion, Hunter Island Lagoon
(shown in Long Beach on the way to Tokyo)

Bow **Paul Gunderson** 6’4” 193cm 190lb. 86kg,

2 **Harry Pollock** 6’5” 196cm 190lb. 86kg,

3 **Jim Tew** 6’2” 189cm 185lb. 84kg,

Stroke **Tom Pollock** 6’5” 196cm 196lb. 89kg,

Coxswain **Ted Washburn**

collegiate crews during the 1950s under the influence of Rusty Callow at Navy.

So had Harry’s own college coach, Joe Burk. Burk’s approach had been passed directly to Harry at Penn, and Bolles’ approach had been passed on to Harry at Harvard through Harvey, and so Harry went to Tokyo predisposed to aggressive stroke beginnings.

The bottom line is that Harry returned from Tokyo energized to implement the

⁴⁵⁴¹ Gladstone, personal conversation, 2005

⁴⁵⁴² See Chapter 65.

⁴⁵⁴³ See Chapter 66.

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innovations he'd seen. That he did not, indeed could not, view the various European crews with complete objectivity was serendipity. And with a man of Parker's intelligence, it was also touched with genius.

Harry Parker: "I'm not sure it is accurate to describe what I was doing at Harvard in the '60s as either a continuation of or a modification of the Ratzeburg Technique. Yes, I did adopt the hesitation or slower movement out of bow with a more dynamic move into the stern before the catch, but I certainly did *not* adopt the higher cadence and shortened body swing that Ratzeburg used, nor did I teach the combined powerful and simultaneous thrust of both legs and back that Ratzeburg used.

"I really did try to duplicate what I saw in the Russian coxed-four (not the eight!) from Tokyo. They rowed with a slight hesitation after the release, then a very dynamic recovery, leading to a strong catch, with emphasis on the legs followed by a very strong acceleration with the back and arms into the finish, with noticeably more layback than Ratzeburg used. They rowed 36 strokes per minute, rather than 39 to 40.

"I preferred this technique because I thought it made better use of the back and would be more effective in a headwind, witness Vesper's victory over Ratzeburg in



FISA 1964 Film

Soviet Union Men's Coxed-Four

1964 Olympic Fifth Place, Toda Bashi

Coxswain **Anatoly Luzgin**

Stroke **Anatoly Tkachuk** 6'3" 191cm 203lb. 92kg,

3 **Vitaly Kurdchenko** 6'3" 190cm 196lb. 89kg,

2 **Vladimir Yevseyev** 5'11" 181 cm 192 lb. 87kg,

Bow **Boris Kuzmin** 6'5" 195cm 203lb. 92kg

0°, +35° to -10°, 0-10, 0-10, 0-10, rate 38, sprint 41

Recovery was slow and then accelerating into the catch.

Very aggressive pullthrough with suspension catch-to-release ending in a hesitation after the finish, then "a very dynamic recovery."

Very effective second half to send at the finish.

the final at Tokyo,⁴⁵⁴⁴ rowed into a very strong headwind, as opposed to their loss in the heat in faster conditions."⁴⁵⁴⁵

⁴⁵⁴⁴ See Chapter 107.

⁴⁵⁴⁵ Parker, personal correspondence, 2005

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The victory of the 1964 American eight from Vesper Boat Club is discussed in detail in Chapter 107.

Interpretation in Rowing Technique

Over the last forty-eight years, Harry Parker has become the most respected *and most copied* college rowing coach in America, and so understanding the original inspirations of Harry's technique and how they morphed in Harry's mind into the 1960s Harvard Technique is especially informative.

Watching a crew with the naked eye from a distance at a regatta and then attempting to accurately deduce what they are doing, how they are doing it and *why* they are doing it, in other words **reverse-engineering** their rowing technique, is a matter of speculation and interpretation, even for the most experienced eye.

You inevitably bring your own point-of-view and experience. Your background, your preferences and biases influence what your eye is drawn to and what it unconsciously skips over.

Individual misinterpretations are not mistakes. They are **mutations**, newly created ideas, and these ideas represent possibility.

When the impression inspired by a crew is combined with another coach's own predispositions, a hybrid rowing technique is formed. And it is the unique qualities of personal perspective which injects new life into the original rowing technique and drives its continuing evolution.

Leg Drive

Here is **Harry's** take on the leg drive of the 1964 Soviet four: "It was more

sequential, it was more legs, then strong back opening."⁴⁵⁴⁶

The film frames on the previous page show the dynamic effort at the entry, but the backs and legs were actually moving concurrently, quite similar to those in the Soviet eight.⁴⁵⁴⁷

As has already been discussed with the Moscow Style of the 1960s, leg and back effort was strong enough to keep the arms straight until almost mid-stroke, and leg *motion* indeed often dominated the first half of their *Kernschlag* pullthroughs.

To Harry's mind, the Soviets were using their legs assertively, while Ratzeburg had a different approach. "Their legs weren't quick the way Rosenberg's were. They weren't quick legs, but they were *powerful* legs.

"Russia used leg drive with very little back application at all at the catch. Ratzeburg was more really hard with the legs and prying with the back so the legs couldn't *go* fast, but they went *hard!*"⁴⁵⁴⁸

However, frame-by-frame analysis of both the Ratzeburg eight and the Soviet four discloses concurrent leg and back motion.

Further review of films show the Soviet four accelerating their boat *Kernschlag*-style to a send at the release while the Ratzeburgers employed a *Schubschlag* rhythm intended to maintain a steadier hull speed through the cycle, and Karl Adam's own words support that interpretation.

Back Motion

On the subject of back usage in the Ratzeburg crew, Harry says, "They had the backs engaged, but the backs were not *swinging*. With Vesper you got the sound

⁴⁵⁴⁶ Parker, personal conversation, 2004

⁴⁵⁴⁷ See Chapter 79.

⁴⁵⁴⁸ Parker, personal conversation, 2004

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fundamentals of the more assertive back motion that U.S. rowing had.”⁴⁵⁴⁹

Analysis of films of both these crews at speed indicates that the only real difference in back usage between Vesper and Ratzeburg was the number of degrees of arc through which their backs swung, and the amount of difference was less than one might expect.

Films show the Vesper eight swinging through a **45°** arc, from +30 to -15°, and the Soviet four also swinging through a **45°** arc, from +35 to -10°. Ratzeburg swung through **35°**, from +25° to -10°,⁴⁵⁵⁰ a net reduction of less than one quarter of Vesper’s or the Soviets’ arc.

The back swing of the 1964 Soviet four was very strong with a high arc that united the *Kernschlag* pullthrough. It was much more prominent than that of Ratzeburg and more vertical than that of Vesper.

By way of comparison, the 1955 Penn eight with Harry in the 2-seat swung through **50°**, from +30 to -20°, and the 1957 Cornell eight swung through **35°**, from +30 to -5°.

Arm Usage

On the subject of arm usage, Harry observed that Vesper did “nothing with the arms until the legs were down.”

In truth, though their arms did not bend a great deal early, the entire Vesper crew was clearly using their arms at the entry. Note the film frames in Chapter 109.

Rosenberg has described his arm usage as ‘alive,’ “not relaxed, not actively attempting to bend either. They’re straight but not stiff, as opposed to many other

techniques, where the arms remain rigid.”⁴⁵⁵¹

In Tokyo, **Parker** observed that Ratzeburg, too, “rowed with straight arms. They used the arms mostly after the legs were down, after they had really powered with the legs. It was a very quick . . . They didn’t start bending them at the catch. That’s for sure.”⁴⁵⁵²

Film analysis shows that Harry is correctly describing the Ratzeburg arm *motion* in 1964: significant bending only occurred later in the stroke, even though *effort* to bend the arms actually began at the entry.

Again, the hybrid-concurrent enigma!

Adam’s writings confirm this interpretation. “The power should come on with the arms, legs and back at the same time, and a slight bending of the arms at the catch is permissible. As the power comes on in the middle of the stroke, the arms will straighten out.

“The loss by expending the arms is not measurable and insignificant because the pressure is constant. Arms take over automatically, lifting toward the edge of the rib cage.”⁴⁵⁵³

In his analysis, Adam was closely following **Fairbairn**’s teachings.

Harry’s model Soviet coxed-four also used their arms from the entry. The arms fully participated in their “very strong acceleration” to the finish.

After Tokyo, Parker came home to Harvard and joined Adam, Rosenberg and

⁴⁵⁴⁹ Parker, personal conversation, 2004

⁴⁵⁵⁰ Von Grodek in the 6-seat in 1964 layed back only -5°, but as the largest member of the crew, he was the exception. In other years without the prevailing headwind of Tokyo, Ratzeburg layback occasionally approached 0°.

⁴⁵⁵¹ Rosenberg seminar, 1975. I believe the word “rigid,” suggesting muscular effort to keep the arms locked straight, is misleading. Rosenberg intended to convey the fact that other techniques included no effort at all to pull with the arms until late in the pullthrough.

⁴⁵⁵² Parker, personal conversation, 2004

⁴⁵⁵³ Ratzeburg Clinic, p. 4

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the Soviets in teaching arm effort from the entry.

Harry has written that the purpose of early arm usage is “to connect the elbow to the lower back (through the lattissimus dorsi muscle) so that as the seat moves, the oar comes with it.”

Here he could be quoting Adam or even Fairbairn.

Parker has written that arm effort from the entry also allows the entry to be accomplished “without having a great deal of motion in any body segment.”⁴⁵⁵⁴ This is also identical to Adam’s writings.

⁴⁵⁵⁴ Ferris, p. 35