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Carol Sanoff

INTERVIEW BY JEAN STRAUSS



Carol Simpson Sanoff (far right) in LBRA National Championship

We're going to dive right in. I know you're you're very humble and kind of quiet about stuff, but I think you're kind of incredible with everything you did. So I want to start off by just asking, where are you from? Tell me a little bit about your background. Where did you grow up? Where did you go to high school? Were you in sports?

Oh, great question. I was born in Chicago, but mostly grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. And when I was about to start the ninth grade, my parents moved to Southern California. So I went to high school in Southern California, which lopped off the necessity to think about Ivy League colleges for me, which was really great. And when it came time to think about colleges, I really loved Berkeley, but my parents really loved Stanford. And the blessing of my life was I only got wait-listed at Stanford. And had that not happened, had I gone to Stanford, because if I'd gotten in, I think I would have had to go, you and I would never have met. Because Stanford had no crew. So I grew up kind of an all purpose tomboy, not particularly feminine, not particularly masculine. Good at some things, not good at some things, great at kickball, you know, kind of a utility player, perhaps.

How tall were you?

Almost five eight.

So you picked Cal.

I picked Cal. Was thrilled to be going there. My parents were horrified. It was right after Mario Savio and free speech, and they just thought I was going into the den of iniquity. So there were a few conditions. I had to join a sorority. And so I did.

What year did you start?

Fall of '65.

Wow. A lot of stuff going on.

Yeah, there was a lot going on. And I tried to join the Cal Band because I'd been a horn player in high school and it was only men at the time. And I didn't know who I was. You know, I'd come to Cal eager to escape my family, but without much identity. To the point I didn't know what I was going to major in. So the day that I saw this small squib in the Daily Cal that said Women's Crew forming. Meet at this gym at this time, I thought, that's interesting. And I thought, tall men - I like tall men. And so I went.

And of course, there were no tall men. And it wasn't casual. It wasn't just a club. It was these two coaches, these two graduate students who coached us. Art Sachs and Karl Drlica, Jr., had both rowed as lightweights and were fiercely competitive. And both loved the idea of women rowing: Art because his girlfriend rowed at Lake Washington and Karl because his dad had been the crew coach at OSU, and women were rowing there a little bit. So they both thought women could row just fine. No holds barred.

So I, you know, didn't know what I was doing, but I started coming and it became unthinkable not to go. And we worked out six days a week. We couldn't get on the water six days a week. So when we couldn't get on the water, we'd run around campus and do bleachers and we had a coffee can filled with cement that we rolled up and down for our wrist strength. And the boats that we used were at Lake Merritt so we had to kind of fit into the Lake Merritt rowing schedule, which already had high school boys and Mills College and I think St Mary's College. I mean, it was hard to fit in and because Art, our main coach, was so determined that we were going to be real rowers, he fought a lot with Ed Lickess, who was the Lake Merritt guy at the time. So I got it started. Yeah.

Ed Lickess taught me how to scull. Put me in a boat. Crusty old guy smoking cigarettes.

Yeah. Really.

Would you guys meet, like, at Hearst Gym or something and get in a van and drive down? How did you get there?

We got there. Both of our coaches had really old ratty cars and we crammed whoever was going. I think there were maybe six or seven for a while, and then it drizzled down to four or five. We got into the cars and we drove down to Lake Merritt. So our coaches were also our transportation, which is why - because we had no funding from Cal and no real recognition, and because they were graduate students and didn't have a lot of money - we would do a few odd things to raise gas money. We would collect scrap paper from waste baskets on campus at night and we saved that. And sold that and make money that way. And then - I didn't ever do this, actually - but there was a mortuary that would pay dollars a head if you came and took a mortuary tour. So we'd get all our friends to come and take mortuary tours.

Wow. How many of you were there on the team? And did you know anybody before you got there who was going to be on the team?

I knew nobody. And I was a little bit late to arrive. I got there, I think in October or November, and there were maybe seven or eight people. Maybe we had two fours at that point. So maybe eight. Let's say eight.

Was this the fall of 1965?

This is the fall of 1965. Yes.

So you started as a freshman? I did not realize that. Wow.

I did. I did. And, you know, my whole - because I was in the experimental college, I had a lot of space around my study time, which let me be very interested in rowing and do as much of the running outside of rowing as I wanted to do, which was good. And because rowing protected me from things I

didn't want to have to do, like get drunk on weekends and go to fraternity parties, that protected not only my personal privacy, but my academic life too. So I would often do my studying on weekends and, you know, people would go to football games and I'd go hit the books because I like to study, and I wanted to do that too.

Where did you live?

My first year I lived at Freeman Dorm on Durant, I think. And I had a roommate for about three months and then she got pregnant and dropped out of school. And somehow they never assigned me another roommate for the whole year so I had an unusual single room on the eighth floor facing the Bay at Freeman dorm. So that was very nice too. I kind of slipped through a lot of cracks. It was great.

Did you ever end up rooming with any of your teammates?

No. My sophomore year, I was in the sorority and there was nobody in the sorority rowing. My junior year, I went to England and did not row for Cal, of course, and I tried hooking up with any rowing at Leeds University in England and found a busload of men going off to the rowing course and got on the bus with them. And clearly there was no place for me to be in this men's crew so they put me in a Wherry and were very nice and I went home and never came back because it was silly to be there. Not getting my voice yet, but I'll work on it.

I want to, I want to jump back to where you saw the little squib in the paper about.

In the Daily Cal.

In the Daily Cal, about crew. Did you know what it was? Do you have a memory of when you ever first saw it? Because it wasn't something - crew really was not part of - a larger part of our culture in the way that some sports were, that, you know, people got exposed to it. I never really saw it or paid attention to it till college. How about you?

No, I don't think I'd ever seen a crew race. I don't think I'd ever. The only rowers I knew about were when I had to go through sorority rush. So we'd meet up with these guys and some of them were on the crew team, but I didn't really know what it was about at all. Never seen it. It was sort of a legend, but not a personal legend.

I want to ask you about the first time you got on the water or first memories of being on the water. Well, I mean, I'm intrigued with what drew you to the sport and what kept you in the sport. Was it the people? Was that the experience of being on the water or was it a combination of things?

Well, being on the water is wonderful, and the boathouse at Lake Merritt was pretty rustic, and the area around Lake Merritt was pretty rustic. So you didn't go to Lake Merritt because you enjoyed the ambiance down there. But once you got into a boat and out on the water, it was very lovely and there was nothing to do but sit in that seat and learn how to maneuver the oar. And it was like my first real spiritual practice. It was how to be in one place and do just this and nothing else.

Wow. When you got in that wherry in England, is that the first time you ever sculled?

No, it is not. After- at the end of my freshman year. Well, let me take you sideways and then I'll come back. The first women's nationals were at Green Lake in Seattle in 1966. And we went. We had by then only a four. So we rowed in the four race, the heavyweight four, and came in third out of probably five. And Ilene and I rowed a heavyweight pair and came in second out of maybe three. And after that I was home for the summer in Southern California and I wanted to do a little rowing. So I found that there was a rowing club in Long Beach, and I drove myself down there.

There was an old boathouse at the very end of Marine Stadium. Not the one that you know. And I walked in and there were these tall men, and I said, "Can I take a wherry out?" And they said, "Yes." And somebody showed me how to get it. They had this kind of dolly thing, and you got it down on the dock, and they showed me how to get the oars in. So I went out in a wherry a number of times that summer. That was my first sculling, and I don't think they had time to teach me. They were pretty serious. I mean, that was the three-quarters of the sculling team for the '68 Olympics. That was John Nunn and John Van Blom. I don't know if Tom was there that summer because he'd hurt his back, but I didn't expect them to have time for me. And they, you know, they were kindly, but they weren't interested particularly. Which was fine.

So I'm totally intrigued, though, that, I mean, where did you live to have to get to Long Beach? Where was your parents house?

It was in Rolling Hills Estates, which is...

I know where that is.

It was more middle class than it wasn't. So I mean, I think it's more upper crusty now. My parents had moved from a house in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to this house in Rolling Hills Estates. And what we had was a swimming pool and a view of Los Angeles, and it was pretty amazing. But it was just this little ratty house. And yeah, so that's where I lived.

How did the men act toward you? So, you know, they're down in Ky Ebright Boathouse. You guys are at Lake Merritt. So you probably didn't see each other often?

Hardly at all.

Was there any recognition that oh, well, this is neat. Women are trying to row. Can we help them? Or was it like.

Well, Art had gotten - I'm trying to think of his name. The head coach. The first year we were at Cal was Jim Lemmon. He'd gotten Jim Lemmon to let us come out in a launch with him for a men's workout. Jim Lemmon was very open. The guys you know, the only way we ran into them was we'd be running around campus and the fraternity guys would hoot and holler at us. And some of those fraternity guys would be the rowers. But I don't think there was animosity. It was just like, "Well, those are some weird girls. Look at them run."

Kind of an oddity.

Yeah, kind of an oddity. That changed in our, in my, sophomore year because Marty McNair became the men's head coach and he was actively hostile to the idea of women participating in the sport that he loved. So he also took us out in the launch and then said at the end of it, "So you'll stop now, right?"

You won't, you won't go out and row because it's much too hard for you and you can't do it well..." and like that.

Well, my college boyfriend turned out to be a rower, and he quit in the second semester of his senior year and marched into Marty's office and said, "I quit. I'm not doing this anymore. And you're a terrible coach. You should quit, too," he said to him.

I want to focus on you. I think so. You're there. Did you row all four years?

I did not row my junior year in in England. I came back as a senior, not knowing if I would. But Ilene was coaching by then and she talked me back into it. So I did. I rowed three out of the four years that I was there.

Did you have more than a four to take to Nationals? Did you go to Nationals?

Well, yes. So '66, the first one we went and '67 second nationals were on Lake Merritt, so we were there for that. '68, the Nationals were back East, I think Philadelphia and I don't think Cal went that year and then '69 back on Green Lake and we did go to that Nationals. I think we had a four. I don't think we had any other entries. And what happened at that Nationals was that a woman I'd known since the first Nationals, Janine Siegel, was now rowing for Lake Washington, who had won the heavyweight eight. And we're aiming to go to Klagenfurt, Austria for the Women's European Championships representing the United States. And they had on their team exactly eight rowers, so they had no spares. And Janine said to me, "Can you come train with us for the summer and be our spare? And you can come to Klagenfurt."

And watch John Van Blom and Tom McKibbin win the double.

I did actually. So I did. I spent that summer in Seattle and it was an interesting year. Horace Davenport was a big money guy in rowing back then, and he had chartered a plane out of Philly to get to Klagenfurt, and he made space for the women to get there. So we flew Seattle to Philly and flew with the men on this plane to this little tiny airport in Klagenfurt that was so small, the pilot wasn't sure he could make the landing, but did it. Yeah, he got a standing ovation.

And Klagenfurt is a sweet little ski town in the winter. Women in drindels, and we stayed in a very nice hotel. What happened that summer was that Bill Erickson, who had been the University of Washington men's coach, offered to coach that eight for the summer and take them to Klagenfurt. So, I mostly rowed in a wherry. It turned out, of all the people they asked to come be spares, I was the only one who came. So I was a spare but hardly ever in the boat. And then a couple of days before a race, I got put in a two. And I still have a drop lurch in my stomach when I think about the woman who got taken out of the boat for me to go in. You know, that must have been a hard choice. I was pretty strong, but still... Anyhow, so I got to be in the boat in that eight. And that year at the Europeans, there were seven eights entered in the heavyweight eight race and we came in seventh in the Heats and they made an extra lane for us in the final so that we rowed also in the final race, which was very dear of them. And we came in seventh in that race too. So, we came in last both times.

But you got experience in two races internationally.

Yes. And, you know, I didn't feel terrible about it. And I think that there had been an incident a couple of years before the Europeans where the American boat had not finished. So, I thought finishing the race in good style was pretty good.

Yeah. There had been some breakage or something, I guess.

Yeah, something.

They made headlines in the United States.

Made headlines.

I only know that because of the film on Joan where I was looking for headlines and it was like the men were looking for a reason why not to be supportive of this mission.

Yes. And that was a reason.

But then you graduated that year, right?

So I was a graduate, I was a college graduate, and I thought, okay, that was fun. Thank you.

What's your fondest memory of that experience of rowing at Cal? What what kind of thing stands out? I mean, I know if you asked me that same question, it'd be like, Oh, you know, it's hard to think of a special or favorite memory out of some.

Here's one. Here's one that I love. I forget her last name, but Kathy and I, it was race day on Lake Merritt. And so we're kind of hanging around waiting for a race to start. And Art, our coach comes over and says, "How you feeling?" And so Kathy and I say, "Yeah, we had lots of bacon and eggs for breakfast and we're feeling really full and ready to go." And just teasing our coach mercilessly because he was more nervous than we were probably. But hanging around with friends at the end of workout, running around the lake, kind of the edges of things. I mean, there were times on the water when I thought, "Oh, this is so hard, why are we doing this?" But it never occurred to me not to go or not to be there. It just was like, oh, what a lot of work. I think my other favorite memory is on spring break we did two-a-day workouts, which I loved two-a-day workouts. One in the morning, go home, nap, eat a lot of ice cream, one in the afternoon, have some dinner, go to sleep, one in the morning. You know, it was like it was like boot camp and it was so much fun. There's nothing else to do. It was wonderful.

Wow. Except Great Books. What did you get your degree in, by the way? At Cal.

Comparative literature. When I got back from England, the English department, where I had been had said said to me, Well, you took some Chaucer and you took some Shakespeare, but you're going to have to take that all over again. And I thought - no, I'm not. So I went over to Comp Lit and they said, You're fine. You'll graduate. Your German will do for you. Thank you.

So it's a team sport, ultimately you scull, but it's a team sport. This but the success of the boat depends on each individual making a certain commitment to it. And, in a personal contribution to it, sometimes somebody isn't that strong, but they have beautiful technique. Or what do you feel was your greatest contribution to maybe your favorite boat? Or all the boats when you were in them. Do you think strength, leadership, calmness before a race, you know?

Well, I don't think it was leadership. I'm not a leader, but I was always the stroke. And I think the reason Art made me the stroke was because I had this uncanny sense of pacing. He'd say, okay, we want to row to 34. And I'd say to myself: "I don't know what a 34 is" and I'd start rowing, and he'd say, "Bingo, you're right on it." So, I was steady. I had stamina and I was fairly calm. But none of us were particularly excitable. It wasn't that kind of group. It was a very nice group of understated, not self-centered people. Ilene is a lovely human being and she was a couple of years older than I, so she started as a junior. And, you know, she's just she's great. And she was she was right behind me. I was stroke. She was three or whatever. I guess seven if we had an eight and she was always there.

Did rowing enhance your academic experience? In other words, I mean, I think rowing made me—just as you said, you didn't go to fraternity parties—rowing made me a better student in that it provided an enormous sense of structure. That was, you know, you had to stick with it. And so I don't think I wasted much time when I was a student at Cal.

Uh huh.

I just you know, I think that there might not be an answer you have for that. It might be. I don't know. It's hard to separate out. That was your experience at Cal. You rowed and you and you studied and you.

Yeah, it certainly structured my time. My sophomore year, I had a job serving breakfast at I-House from 6 to 8 in the morning, and then I had classes and then at four I'd always be working out. So, yes, it did take some of the slack out of the system. I'm not sure it made me a better thinker or a better writer or any better student. And I have to say, I sometimes fell asleep in classes in the afternoon occasionally. But I think it did make me appreciate - I mean, Cal was a wonderful place to be, and some of the teachers were so, so good. Some of the professors were just great. And I really did appreciate that. And it may be that because rowing sharpened my sense of being alive, it sharpened that as well.

That's beautiful. Did you graduate in '68 or '69?

'69.

And lots going on in the world. So, you graduated?

Yup.

Somehow or another, you go back to Southern California.

Well, after Klagenfurt, I came back to Southern California because I hadn't made plans for my life. And I took a computer class living at home and went back down to the Long Beach boathouse to row because that, you know, I like because I could do that. And it was still there. And they had a new boathouse by then. It was really lovely and more people. And so I took out a wherry and I'd go down a few times a week and row in a wherry. And then, this is where it gets interesting. One day I'm on the dock and this little kayak with this little redheaded girl pulls up to the dock and she says to me, Very perkily. "Will you teach me how to row?" And that was Melinda.

Oh, that was Melinda Collis.

That was Melinda Collis. And I said, "Well, sure, let's take a double out." And so, we took a double out. And of course, she'd been on the water in small boats forever. And she got she took right to it. So the two of us rowed a double a lot of that spring. This is the spring of 1970. And as it's coming toward June and I'm finishing up my computer thing and I've got a job waiting for me in San Francisco, I say to Melinda, we should go to the Nationals. You know, anybody can go to the Nationals. You just send in your application and you can go. So we went in a lightweight double to the Nationals, which that year were on Lake Merritt again, and we came in second and we felt pretty good about it. And Karen McCloskey Keene had started as well. So she came with us and she rowed a wherry that year. So Long Beach scullers were at the 1970 Nationals.

And took a silver in the double. Did you race in the single that year?

No, I wasn't a single sculler. I was never a single sculler.

Except that you were the national champion single sculler. So, sorry.

Well. That was a mistake.

So then I really quit rowing and I went up to San Francisco and I had a job and I had an apartment. And in the year or so that I was gone, Joan Lind found her way to the boathouse and Melinda Colliss taught Joan Lind how to row, and Joan Lind and Karen McCloskey got coached by Tom McKibbon and went to the Nationals, I think in Old Lyme, Connecticut in 1971—in a very poor boat—and came in a very close second. So they were contenders right away. And that December at Melinda's wedding, the three of them are kind of schmoozing around and they say to me, "Well, let's see, we've got the double. And you and Melinda. If you and Melinda rowed with us, we could row a quad at the Nationals next year. You could quit your job and come row with us." And I said to myself, "Wait a minute, these are college students. I'm trying to earn a living. This is nuts." On Monday morning, I walk around and look at my job. I think "I'm not staying here. I'm going to row."

So I packed up and I moved to Long Beach and we trained. This is '72, so it's an Olympic year. So the men are very busy, but they do find time to help us out. And we mostly row in wherries and singles. I think Karen and Joan get into a double, but we really hardly ever get into a quad at all. The four of us, we just figure we'll wing it. You know, the main thing is that Karen and Joan win their race finally, because they deserved to win it the year before and we wanted them to win this year. And we find ourselves a coxswain, Nancy, this little girl, a little 12 year old in a rowboat on Marine Stadium, is out there at six in the morning. And we look at her and we think, "Well, she's not afraid of the water. She's light." So we row up to the dock that she comes out of and we knocked on her parents door and we say, we would like to borrow your daughter and take her to Seattle with us to row in the Nationals. And they said, yes!

That's a great story. So you're downplaying the single here. How did you get in the single? Did you enjoy sculling?

Yes. I loved it. I love sculling.

And did Tom teach you? How did you become such a good sculler? And then you win.

Well, we were all rowing singles, and whenever we raced together, Joan always won. But Joan was only 19, and I don't think she really knew how good she was, and she really wanted to win that double. So, when we entered for the Nationals in 1972, which were on Green Lake, we entered a novice wherry for Jane Loomis and a double for Karen and Joan, and the quad for the four of us. And we entered the single, but we didn't know who would row it. I thought Joan would. And at the last minute she didn't want to. She stepped back. So, I said, "Okay, I'll row it." And it was a race on a rough day. And it was the same day as the quad race. So, I wasn't exactly focused. And I realized at some point that there were four boats behind me as I was rowing. I thought, well, that means there's only one ahead of me. I looked around and it was Gail Pierson, and she was in my lane. Oh, that made me mad. So I rowed around her and we crossed the finish line. And I went over to the judges and I said, "I want to protest. She was in my lane." And they said "It was a photo finish. Could you wait till we get the results?" And then they said, "Well, you won that race. Do you still want to protest?" And I said, "Well, I guess not." So, I did win that race. But it was you know...

You do know that Joan credits you with inspiring her to go in the single, and she thought you were so brave. And she really found it quite daunting at 19. I think, though, that once she began to realize that she could win it, it became what all she wanted to do was be.

Yes. Yeah, it didn't take long either. I think, you know, we took that quad.

And Gail was in that quad, wasn't she?

Gail replaced Melinda in the bow, and we took that quad to the European Championships in East Germany, and we came in second in the small final. So we didn't come in last, but we weren't in the big final. And I think, Joan, I think at that point, Joan had already decided who she was going to be as a rower. She was looking around at the Europeans, and I think she could see that she could stand toe-to-toe with them. So I think that, you know, she was pretty quiet that summer, but I could feel something forming in her about her ambition and destiny and purpose in the sport. And. I think that, you know, not coming in first maybe was the last time she ever didn't come in first.

Or wanted to control sort of her own destiny, I think. So now I want to invite any Cal alumni to understand, I think, the extraordinary history that you bring to the sport. You were there in the Olympic Village with Tom McKibbin, John Van Blom, and Joan Lind when the IOC announces that women will be in the 1976 Olympic Games. To me as a rower, it's a historic moment. And did you guys understand what that meant? And I wanted to know what that moment meant to you as a woman, that all of a sudden this sport that you were a pioneer in was being given international recognition?

Yes. Actually sometime in the early or part of 1972, we had heard rumors that there might be a demonstration race of women rowers at Munich. That turned out not to be the case, but at the Women's European Championships in East Germany, which was effectively the World Championships for women that year, there was this party afterwards, and the son of the president of FISA said to me, "You know, ten years ago when women were rowing, we did not want them to be in the Olympics because they all looked terrible. They were either rough or they weren't pretty women. But look at all you women here. You're pretty." This guy was French and he said "We're ready. You get to be there now." And so we knew it was sort of coming. And the timing of the announcement didn't have a great impact because I knew at that point that that was going to be 'it' for me. I could see the women

coming along and they were Joan's size and bigger, and I was not going to be able to be competitive. I did know that. So, I was happy for the sport. I've never identified particularly as being a women's rights person, but I was happy for women in a general way. Did you know that women's basketball was also at the Montreal Olympics for the first time?

I don't know if I remember that.

Women's basketball hadn't been there before either. So that's, you know.

Women's distance running. I mean, I could tell you stories about the Olympics, but I want to focus on you know. Now I want to just sort of look at the comprehensive impact of rowing. So, you know, you and I both benefited from—

Boy, did we ever.

Becoming athletes in college in a sport that can be a part of your life, it has a big impact maybe at that time or maybe it has some long term impacts. And so, you're a bit of a philosopher. Talk to me a bit about the the way in which athleticism and having an opportunity to be competitive and have teammates. How has this impacted your life then, and has there been any follow through? Does it still impact you? Friendships and...

Friendships. Yeah, not many, but very good, very deep friendships. I think the sense that one could rely on oneself to do just about anything is one of the fundamental things I got from rowing. You know, later, if I were going on a hike somewhere, I'd say to myself, "Well, I can do this." It was kind of a sense "I can do this" because I did those extra ten laps after the coach said we could go home or, you know. It prepared me physically for just about anything. And that bleeds into your sense of yourself, not that you are perfect or capable of anything, but that if you apply, you can you can get further than you thought you could. And I think that's an important, tremendously important thing to learn. And I think it's a great time of life to be doing it. The sort of the end of your childhood and that gap between becoming an adult, and you put some stakes in the ground about who you are and some of those stakes stay there. And one was that - I'm capable.

Do you still see yourself as a rower?

I don't. I didn't do it very long, actually, because I stopped in '72. I got into a few boats after that. But I never trained after that. I think of myself as "I was a rower." I will always be "was a rower," but I don't think of myself still as a rower.

Talk a little bit about your friendships as a rower, because I know that when Joan got sick, those of you from that early group really rallied around her. Had you all stayed in touch over the years or was her illness something that brought you back together again for a moment of time?

It's both of those things. Melinda and Karen were close and they stayed more in touch with the Long Beach boathouse. They continued to row and they were down in the area and they were in touch with Joan. I didn't know Joan was sick until Tom told me. You know, I was sort of always the outlier. I lived in Northern California, and I. So I'd been a little bit in touch and gone to a couple of regattas over the years, but I was not close with them. When Joan got sick. Oh, gosh, I cried for three days. I couldn't believe it. Of all the people that could get an early illness that would take them out, it shouldn't have

been Joan. It was terrible. And what happened was Joan 'kiss the joy' Joan called us all together. She said, "Come down and spend the weekend with me. All of you early people." And so we all did. We found a weekend that we could all make it. And Jane came too - Jane, the novice sculler that started the Long Beach State College program. And we had a wonderful time. By then my knees are bad enough I couldn't get into a boat, but they went on a row around the Island and we had lunch and we took walks and we had dinner together and we talked. And it was really lovely. And Joan had full capabilities. She hadn't gotten 'sick' sick yet, she'd just had a diagnosis. She was still fully active. It was such a generous thing for her to do. And I think that brought us, not only brought us back together for that weekend, but it reignited our appreciation for one another.

I was very impressed by, I thought, just how the bonds that are born in the rowing experience where you love each other enough and you know that you've all done this together. That kind of never goes away. And you can come back together again after a couple of decades or more and still feel that something special exists there.

You know, if we look back now, just on specifically your experience as a collegiate rower at Cal, at a time when you guys kind of defined what it was going to be. How much was you guys and how much was the coaches, by the way?

I have to really credit the coaches because none of the women had ever done anything like this before. None of us had been elite athletes in any sport. And we we coalesced and Art and Karl said, "You're going to work. You're not going to cry. You're not going to miss any. You'll be on time, you'll be there, you'll work hard." And that just, you know, was the right thing to do. They took us seriously. They had seen enough women rowing that they knew that we weren't frail and fragile, that we could actually do the work. And so they expected us to do the work and pushed us past where we wanted to be pushed. But that's why we love rowing, is that it gets us past where we want to be. And, of course, some women didn't stay. Some women came and tried it and said, "I don't want to do that. That's too hard." But those of us that stayed had must have had some kind of innate appetite for self-challenge and for hard work and for, I mean, I'm an isolate. I like to be alone and, you know, rowing stroke in a boat. That's a pretty nice place to be, actually. You have a coxswain there, but you don't have to look at them. You're just doing it.

So if you took rowing out of your Cal experience. If you had not done it.

Oh my God.

What would college have been for you, do you think?

Meh. It would have been... I would have had that interesting experimental college thing, but I was not a great student at Cal and it would have been very forgettable. And in a way it is very forgettable.

What was the sorority that you were in?

Delta Gamma. What about you?

I wasn't in a sorority. I was married.

Oh, my God, Jean...For God's sake. I want to say about - because this isn't my experience, but it is a Cal story. The guy who was my boyfriend was a freshman the same year I was, and he, he rowed three and three-quarters years. And he still is fast friends with the guys in his boat. And for him and for them, it was the rides to and from the boathouse on the bus where they sang songs and talked dirty and sweated together. That really made the friendships that are marvelous friendships. And there's a group of them going up to Alaska this summer to go fishing together. They're 75, and some of them have a hard time walking, but they're still, they love each other. And I think that happens a little more readily when the soil is deeper. You know, there were so few of us. But when you have an established group, I think it's easier in a way to stay in touch with it anyhow. This guy, Bob Ellsberg, he's a good gatherer of people and they're still gathered. And, you know, it's that kind of thing can happen. It didn't happen for me in the same way with the Cal group, but it was a small group, and I don't know anybody anymore except Karl and Ilene. I mean, they're probably out there, but I don't know where they are.

I think, you know, it's just kind of lightning in a bottle, too.

What does that mean?

I just mean that, you know, something special happens, but you can't expect it to happen every time.

Oh, yes.

So I think yes, I think there have been years when women have rowed at Cal and a much more, you know, bigger program. Everything's kind of set up and stuff but they...

The magic doesn't happen.

Yeah. They don't necessarily connect up in the same ways and, you know, there's just a lot of luck of being in different places.

We've all been lucky in those times in our lives when we've had the lightning in the bottle. And you had that your two years at Cal. That's fabulous. I, I've been envious of you being so close with all those people. It's just. It's a lovely thing to think about.

I'm so pleased that the pre 1972 group is being included in Oliver's project. That's really great. I think this committee is not exclusive, I think it's a very nicely. Appreciative.

It's very lovely.

I remember the other thing I want to say and that is this: That, even though we who were first get that kind of, you know, that birthday candle. The people that came after and kept it going are so important. It hasn't stopped and it hasn't stopped because so many generations now of women have kept rowing and stayed with it and contributed back to it. And I admire that so much because I haven't. You know, like the way Melinda has stayed with it. It's just it's lovely. And so I want to say that the people that are now rowing have my admiration and appreciation because it's because it's alive still. It didn't stop. They kept it alive.