

## **Recollections of Chip Roach, Harriton Crew Captain 1959/1960**

As a sophomore at Lower Merion High School in 1957, (I had gone to Ardmore Jr. High, which used to be right next door, for 3 years), I was recruited for the crew by Herb Horner, the crew coach, because I was tall. I had grown a foot between my 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade years, so, at 6'2", I looked like I might have some leverage on an oar. He was recruiting for a "fall season" of practice only at that time. Of course, I never rowed anything but a small rowboat before and didn't understand anything about the sport except watching rowers from a car as my parents went into the city on the West River Drive. (There was no Schuylkill Expressway in my childhood – the 50's - and the PA Turnpike started at Valley Forge and only went to Harrisburg, as I recall.)

The training was rudimentary – there was a seat, a slide, shoes and an oarlock screwed down to the side of the floating dock at Bachelor's Barge Club on Boathouse Row, where the Lower Merion crew team had practiced for years. We tried out our skills there until someone thought we were ready for a shell.

As sophomores, we rowed an eight in a junior varsity category in most races against other high schools. We'd lift the eight on top of a school bus and stay overnight at our opponents' locations in their dormitories, as many were prep schools with mostly "boarders". We traveled to the Naval Academy – to row against the plebes, to the Hun School in Princeton, to Nutley HS in north Jersey (a day trip), to Kent School in Connecticut and to Saint Andrews School in Delaware. Those trips were amazing experiences in many ways and more than made up for the lack of attendance or fame compared to other sports teams. (Our mothers were the only cheering section at the Schuylkill races. Even our girlfriends – no women rowers in those days – had better things to do.)

We competed as a four-oared shell for the 1957 City Championships and in the Stotesbury Regatta. Our coach, Herb Horner, must have been impressed by our four, since he invited us to row at the national championships that year (spring of 1958) in Detroit, Michigan. Most of us had never even ridden on a plane, so this was a major life experience for us. We stayed in a real hotel and rowed on the Detroit River (in a cold rain as I recall).

In the fall of 1959, the district was divided into two high schools for the first time and I was in the Harriton territory. Herb Horner became the Athletic Director and crew coach at Harriton. Horner's long time assistant, Bob Miller, who went on to coach there for many years, coached the LM crew. We continued to share the Bachelor's Barge club's poor excuse for a locker room on the Club's third floor, but divided the boats (most were made by the Pocock Boat Company of Seattle, WA at the time) with LM. Many of the boats were really old and made of wood, but were maintained very well by a British guy who was the employee of Bachelor's. (Most of the shells had "checks" in them as a result of someone trying to stand up in the boat. The patching was an arduous process for the Brit.)

As a gigantic fund-raising challenge, the district shared the cost of a new eight-oared shell with the parents, who were a loosely connected group at that time. (The only other joint effort for the parents were new race shirts - white T-shirts with a red "H" - sewn on by a mothers' group...at the bottom of one side of the "H" was a lucky penny sewn in for good luck.)

The new eight was named the "Herb Horner" and we all vied to be able to be in that top boat for our senior season.

It is my recollection that we continued to race many of the same opponents away (as above) with LM accompanying us, so we had head to head matches each time we rowed. We felt like "comrades" because of our close history, but vowed to be the better team in the races that we shared. We were able to achieve some dominance in our senior year. Harriton's top eight broke into two fours again for big matches and we won the City's finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Stotesbury that year and went to the 1960 nationals at Princeton as well.

Teammates Parry Hesselman, Bert Carvalho and I attended the 50<sup>th</sup> reunion of our class of 1960.