BLUES BEFORE SUNRISE:
ROWING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

by

Patrick Okens

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of History
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

The University of Toronto Rowing Club (UTRC) has existed, with several lapses, since 1897. After a failed attempt in 1880, students were able to organize under the auspices of the Argonaut Rowing Club and renowned sculler Ned Hanlan. Following the First World War, coach Tommy Loudon turned out formidable Varsity crews whose successes included an Olympic silver medal and several wins at the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta and the Toronto-McGill boat race. After a twenty-year absence, rowing returned to the University of Toronto in the 1960s, guided once more by the Argonaut Rowing Club. Since the 1970s, students have assumed greater responsibility for the direction of the UTRC. In the past twenty-five years the club has attracted a large number of women and has become one of the University’s largest sports teams.

Over the course of its history the UTRC has shifted from the core to the periphery of public and university policy. Before the Second World War, and even into the 1960s, the rowers benefited from their amateur status, gaining extensive recognition and financial support from administrators, businessmen and politicians. In the past thirty years however, few resources have been allocated to the UTRC, which has been run on a shoestring budget by student-athletes and alumni volunteers. Nevertheless, while the prospects for competitive success have diminished, rowing has remained an important formative experience for generations of students at the University of Toronto.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I: “A False Start”</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II: “Hanlan’s Heroes”</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III: “Blue Wonder”</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV: “Argonaut Proteges”</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V: “Clandestine Champions”</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VI: “Clubs, Jokers and Aces”</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources Consulted</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: UTRC Presidents, Head Coaches and Membership</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

In 1996 a former University of Toronto (U of T) rower wrote me a letter in which he described the closely fought 1928 Olympic Eight trial at Port Dalhousie. Although his crew had lost to the Argonaut Rowing Club by a narrow margin, Mel Kenny recalled that "It was a race I have never forgotten and the members of the crew and their personalities remain clearly in my mind."¹ In subsequent correspondence, Kenny claimed that his time spent rowing at U of T had been "the highlight of my Varsity life. It formed fellowships that have lasted a long time."² His letters also revealed to me that more than seventy years ago, the University of Toronto Rowing Club (UTRC) had had great crews, a formidable coach, and even its own boathouse. I wondered how much more there was to be discovered about Varsity Blues rowing. It occurred to me that what little we rowers know about our sport's past is often limited to oral history of the most rudimentary kind—rowing stories. These tales of racing, exhaustion, wind, waves and characters encountered are told and retold with great relish whenever we are together, and are typically rooted in fact but embellished for effect. For each of us, the history of U of T rowing is the sum of our own memories and of the stories told by our teammates. It rarely extends beyond the spoken word. By combining secondary sources with a wide range of primary materials, I intend to bridge these disconnected accounts.

Secondary sources directly related to this topic are few. Histories of athletics at the University of Toronto, The Blue and White and A Century to Remember offer basic overviews, with some mention of the UTRC. R.S. Hunter's Rowing in Canada since

¹ Mel Kenny to author, 6 September 1996, author's collection.
² Mel Kenny to author, 21 October 1996, author's collection.
1848, Peter King’s chapter in *Rowing* and his own *Art and a Century of Canadian Rowing* are the most detailed histories of the sport’s development in Canada, but only offer a glimpse of the UTRC. Extensive mining of primary sources was needed to add depth to this account. Newspapers, particularly *The Varsity*, and the U of T yearbook *Torontonensis* proved invaluable in piecing together names and events over a century of activity. Furthermore, archival materials—notably the Loudon files at the University—were crucial to understanding the period between 1920 and 1940. Readers of this work will notice that few written sources are credited in its last three chapters and that I have relied extensively on interviews and correspondence with past students and coaches. Because little text relating to the UTRC has been produced or preserved in the past forty years, I consider this a positive feature of the thesis. Thanks to the contribution of dozens of former student-athletes, coaches and officials, oral histories have been captured for future scholars of rowing and of the University experience.

In consulting a broad range of sources, I have learned much about the UTRC. I have come to understand that rowing at the University of Toronto has occurred in several discontinuous stages. This is reflected in the organization of the thesis. Chapter I “A False Start” and chapter II, “Hanlan’s Heroes” describe the short-lived attempts at starting a club in 1880 and 1897-1900. In the former case, student enthusiasm proved unable to overcome the rudimentary state of 19th century collegiate athletics. In the latter, despite the combined efforts of students, administrators and the Argonaut Rowing Club in fostering upper-class amateur sport, the club failed again because of insufficient interest and leadership. Significant space is devoted to chapter III, “Blue Wonder”. From
1920 through to 1940, under the cautious yet dynamic stewardship of their coach Tommy Loudon, the Varsity rowers were at their most successful. The triumphs of remarkable student-veterans in the early 1920s were parlayed into the acquisition of a boathouse and the creation of an intercollegiate rivalry. Despite significant support from powerful men and institutions however, the resources provided to the rowers were gradually eroded by the economic depression. Chapter IV, “Argonaut Proteges” sees the return of University rowing after an extended absence. In the 1960s, the students received precious little support from the University and were instead led and sustained by the Argonaut Rowing Club. In chapter V, “Clandestine Champions”, we see the University of Toronto Rowing Club in a state of flux. The years between 1974 and 1980 are marked by a bewildering mix of administrative and student leadership, conflict with the Argonaut Rowing Club, the introduction of women’s rowing and the creation of a program at the Erindale campus. Finally, chapter VI “Clubs, Jokers and Aces” covers the past twenty years, in which time the basic story has changed little. With limited or no funding from the University, students and interested volunteers have assumed a greater share of responsibility for costs and leadership. While this has meant that competitive and organizational excellence has become scarce, the club has continued to attract a large number of students.

The primary aim of my research is to understand this eventful and disjointed history. In each era of its existence, society and the institutions surrounding the UTRC have differed substantially. This has profoundly affected the rowing club’s place within the University, the nature of its leadership and its prospects for success. I believe these fluctuations have
depended on two variables: the leadership of the club, and the surrounding context. Characterized by strong leadership and by a favourable context, the UTRC of the 1920s was, exceptionally, an almost absolute success. Conversely, the absence of leadership and of a supportive environment led to the collapse of the club in 1880, 1900, 1940 and 1971. The defining experience of rowing at the University of Toronto, since the 1970s, has been the struggle of leaders of varying ability to survive and succeed in the absence of wider support.

I have mentioned three important terms: success, context and leadership. What do I mean by these? I believe success has quantifiable dimensions; membership, money and medals. Of the “3M’s”, membership is the most important. Getting many people into boats, no matter how well they actually row them, is the surest sign that a club is successful. Having access to money is important because it helps ensure the provision of equipment, facilities and coaching, which sustain membership. Medals are earned by hard training and fast racing. Winning may not be everything, but it’s an indication that a club has attracted motivated and talented people. Qualitative dimensions of success are more difficult to capture, but are even more important. If the UTRC’s members have had a good time, have met people and made friends, learned about themselves, developed their physical and mental potential, and acquired social and organizational skills, then their University experience has been enhanced. This too is success. I make no claim that Varsity Blues have consistently shared my definition over the years, but I doubt that many would take issue with it. The surrounding social, cultural, economic and political world has affected the UTRC in a variety of ways. As with most Canadian institutions,
the First and Second World Wars as well as the Depression all had an impact on rowing at the University of Toronto. The growth of the University, the demise of amateurism as the dominant sporting discourse, and increased opportunities for women in the past quarter-century have also shaped the context surrounding the UTRC.

Leadership is the proximate factor that has determined the extent of the UTRC’s success. I consider as leaders all those who assumed direct responsibility for the training of athletes, provision of funds and equipment, recruiting, and club administration. Typically, these are the coaches, club presidents, student-captains and University administrators.

One quality of good leadership is experience. Those who have remained involved for longer periods of time have learned from their mistakes and developed a keener understanding of administration, organization and competition through the UTRC. Another factor is the ability to develop the club’s human resources. Good leaders attract, motivate and teach athletes and coaches such that they leave University much more proficient and knowledgeable in the workings of sport than when they arrived. A third element is external clout. Leaders who can influence the University as well as the rowing community and the public at large to the benefit of the UTRC are more likely to ensure its success.

There have been four sources of leadership at the UTRC; the University itself, the Argonaut Rowing Club, the students, and outside volunteers. The University of Toronto, and its administration governing sport\(^3\), has determined how financial and symbolic

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\(^3\) The Athletic Association (1890?-1977), Women’s Athletic Association (1922-1977), Department of Athletics and Recreation (1978-1998), Faculty of Physical Education and Health (1998-).
resources are distributed to student-athletes and which kinds of activities are prioritized. Variously, the rowers have been beneficiaries of preferential treatment, victims of indifference and recipients of equitable albeit inadequate attention from University administrators. The Argonaut Rowing Club has been another primary link. Providing the facilities, most of the equipment and some of the leadership, Argonaut ambitions, membership, fortunes and misfortunes have impacted the UTRC at times to its benefit, at times to its detriment.

This work will show that the leadership once provided by the University of Toronto and by the Argonaut Rowing Club has largely disappeared in the last quarter-century. With little support, students and a scattering of alumni and interested outsiders now assume tasks that were once the responsibility of those comparatively large institutions. This has substantially altered the dynamics of success at the UTRC. The high turnover and inexperience of student leadership and the strains placed on volunteer coaches have made success on the basis of the 3M's less frequent. While the club has consistently attracted eager students, it has rarely had the money, material and coaching to make medallists out of them. On the other hand, "joining the problem" of U of T rowing and grappling with the pitfalls of leadership and responsibility are experiences that few students have regretted and many have cherished. The qualitative benefits of struggle have more value than material ease as a learning tool, and dealing with the UTRC's relative deprivation has been an education in itself. How generations of student-rowers have shared the camaraderie of cold mornings on Lake Ontario within dramatically varied contexts is the question to which we now turn.
A FALSE START- 1880

The idea of rowing at U of T began with a debate. Throughout February 1880, several articles promoting rowing appeared in *The White and Blue*, the student weekly of Toronto’s University College. The first pointed out that there was good water on which to row, “good material” among the student body, and claimed there was a “strong leaning” towards rowing in Toronto.¹ It also stated that a committee had been struck to secure the support of the University and the College, and then to build a boathouse and fill it with boats. By the end of the month, Committee Secretary George Lindsey outlined the plan more concretely. An estimated $3000 would be needed to start the scheme, and that it was up to “graduates and friends of the college to come forward and lend their liberal support” to the project.² Lindsey claimed that the plan already had widespread backing from the University faculty. However, his article also betrayed concern about the “want of spirit”. Lindsey wrote; “If the subject is not talked up and supported by every university man, but is left to the few- as unfortunately to(sic) many of our undertakings are- it will meet with but poor if any success.”³ Attempting to overcome the apathy he perceived on campus, he expressed his belief in the mental benefits of physical exercise, pointed out the prestige brought to Oxford and Cambridge by the sport, and enjoined his schoolmates to form a competitive club to rival those institutions.

Criticism of the Boat Club plan did not take long to materialize. One week after the prospectus appeared, student Charles McCaul expressed his concern over the ambitions

¹ *The White and Blue* (Toronto), 7 February 1880.
³ *Ibid*. 
of the Committee, of which he himself was a member. McCaul believed that, given the experimental nature of the venture, it was unwise to spend $3000, a considerable sum. His main concern was that in order to sustain itself, the club needed a large and active membership, something difficult to come by during summer, the main rowing season. He proposed a cheaper, less risky alternative. Instead of building its own shellhouse, the club would store its boats in a rented facility on the lakefront. In time, if the club prospered, a clubhouse could be considered. At present, however, McCaul felt such an expense amounted to “throwing our money into the lake”.

Further opposition to the Committee proposal appeared in the following edition of the *White and Blue.* Following McCaul’s lead, three writers, all using a *nom de plume,* outlined similar arguments. “Junius Jr.” believed money would be better spent on a gymnasium on the University grounds, rather than on a facility a half-hour’s walk away. Furthermore, he believed rowing would not attract sufficient members to justify the expense. Last, he suggested cricket as a cheaper and more convenient alternative. Along the same lines, “Ursa Major” wrote:

> When we consider that there are not more than fifteen or twenty undergraduates in the city at leisure during the holidays, it seems a rather preposterous idea to spend $150 per head upon them to form a boat club, which, if it is to be called the University Boat Club, should be representative.

Finally, “H.Toronto” lent weight to McCaul’s proposal by stating that after having spoken to several waterfront proprietors, the alternative of housing boats in a rented facility appeared feasible.

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4 *Ibid.* 6 March 1880. McCaul was the son of the reverend John McCaul, president of University College.

Despite their objections to the venture, all four writers favoured the introduction of rowing at the University. It was the extravagance and potential risk of the committee’s original plan that dampened their enthusiasm. Although by mid-March it was announced that $651 had been raised\textsuperscript{6}, it appears nothing further happened. There is no record of springtime organizational meetings, or of a crew being formed and indeed the failed venture is later mentioned in a \textit{Varsity} article of 1883.\textsuperscript{7} Exuberance had run its course.

What had brought about this enthusiasm in the first place? There had been competitive rowing in Toronto beginning in the 1840s, and the Toronto, Argonaut and Don Rowing clubs established in 1856, 1872 and 1878, respectively, show that the sport was no mere fledgling in the city. However, rowing really took off when champion Toronto sculler Ned Hanlan electrified English Canada with his exciting victories in North America, Britain and Australia. Hanlan’s arrival on the scene in the mid-1870s coincides exactly with Committee Secretary George Lindsey’s statement that rowing had “frequently been a subject of consideration” during the past five years.\textsuperscript{8} In fact, committee member William James Loudon wrote about watching the great oarsman race for the Canadian Championship on Toronto bay in 1877.\textsuperscript{9} He also noted that undergraduates were not immune to the frequent betting on rowing races, highly popular at the time. It is therefore very likely that most of Loudon’s classmates had witnessed, or at least followed, Hanlan’s exploits. By the fall of 1879, when the Committee was being formed, Hanlan had added the American and English Championships to his list of titles. In this heady

\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Ibid.}, 20 March 1880.
\textsuperscript{7} \textit{The Varsity} (Toronto), 17 March 1883. According to T.A. Reed, \textit{The Blue and White}, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944) p. 257, the Committee raised $760.
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{The White and Blue} (Toronto), 28 February 1880.
time, when a Toronto oarsman was on the brink of worldwide fame, a new rowing club seemed like a wonderful idea.

Converting mostly passive interest into active participation proved more difficult. The Committee faced several problems. Size was one. University College numbered only 300 students and as noted earlier, the limited number of potential summer members did not justify the expense of a rowing club. Furthermore, on-campus athletic facilities were still in their infancy. By the fall of 1880, some rooms in the Old Medical Building were set aside and housed gymnastics apparatus, punching bags, dumbbells and a “rowing slide”. Named Moss Hall, this facility was considered inadequate but remained in use until 1888. During the 1880s, much student energy was expended on forming an athletic association and securing a proper athletics building on campus.10 This left little time for the promotion of a distant and expensive undertaking. Given these difficulties, students came to the conclusion that the sport of rowing in Toronto was best practiced within the existing clubs.

The biographies of the 1880 rowing committee members provide insight into the privileged nature of University life.11 Most of the students came from wealthier Toronto families, with fathers in politics, law, academe, civil service or journalism. As such, they were at leisure to spend time in recreation, notably sport. The majority were “generalists” when it came to athletics. While at university, they also involved themselves in cricket,

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10 T.A. Reed, op. cit., 8.
rugby, boxing, football, shooting and riding. When the rowing option did not pan out, they had other activities to pursue. Another factor that might explain the loss of interest in rowing in 1880 is a classic problem in collegiate athletics - turnover. Maclean, Haultain and Loudon graduated that year, and McCaul began law school. Lindsey, the most active committee member in publicizing the club, turned his energies towards editing The Varsity. With the core group having tried, failed and moved on to other challenges, the first attempt at creating a University of Toronto Rowing Club was over. This abortive start shows that despite the enthusiasm generated by the rise of Ned Hanlan, the small size of the University and rowing's high start-up costs proved too high an obstacle even for the young gentlemen of Toronto.

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12 Only one of the nine, Brock, appears to have remained involved in rowing, later becoming a Life Member of the Argonaut Rowing Club.

13 The committee members went on to have remarkable careers. Maclean was an MP for 34 years; Loudon became professor in physics; Haultain became a journalist; Osler and Lindsey ran large companies; Brock served in the Northwest Rebellion and Boer War and was president of the Toronto Board of Trade; Blake, Armour and McCaul were all successful lawyers.
HANLAN'S HEROES- 1897-1900

Early in 1897 the Argonaut Rowing Club, through its Secretary W.H. Bunting, approached the University about starting a club of its own. Possibly, the ARC was worried about its membership base and was looking to the University as an untapped source. This appears plausible, since there was at that time some concern that the rising popularity of cycling would lead to “lean years” for Toronto rowing. Indeed, Toronto newspapers were full of stories on cycling, and writing on that sport dominated the leisure pages. The fears expressed in Athletic Life proved unfounded, however. If anything, the advent of the bicycle made it easier for rowers to reach the waterfront. One daily newspaper noted that “enquiries among the leading clubs result in finding that the membership has not decreased but increased, and the members have either resisted the cycling habit or made it subordinate to their boating pastime.” Furthermore, the Argonaut Rowing Club, numbering upwards of 400 members, was Canada’s largest, and having taken a lion’s share of victories at recent Canadian Henley regattas, its most successful. The addition of two dozen students paying reduced fees made little difference to its viability as an organization. Clearly, the ARC’s offer was not motivated by desperation. It is more probable that the Argonauts had simply recognized a new opportunity to increase their club’s prestige by attracting the sons of wealthy and influential Torontonians. A 9T2 graduate himself, the recently elected Bunting was the right man to approach the University.

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2 World (Toronto), 5 April 1897. In an article entitled “All Toronto Awheel”, it was estimated that several thousand Torontonians rode bicycles.
3 Star (Toronto), 13 May, 1897.
In addition to the active interest of an outside club, the cause of rowing was helped by the growth of the University. In 1881, University College had numbered only 355 students. Together with Trinity and Victoria Colleges, there were no more than 800 post-secondary students in Toronto. By the turn-of-the-century, these colleges had been federated, and University of Toronto enrolment had nearly tripled to 2241 by 1901-02. Increasing demand for adequate recreational facilities led to the construction of a gymnasium in 1892 and the creation of the University of Toronto Athletic Association in 1893. The driving force behind athletics was University President James Loudon, who convinced the University Senate to grant $25 000 for the construction of the gymnasium. Loudon had played cricket and football and had rowed in his youth, and as honourary president of the UTAA he continued to promote sport until his death in 1905. The UTAA consisted of representatives from the existing clubs, rugby, soccer, cricket, tennis, lacrosse, hockey and baseball, as well as students from the colleges and one faculty member. It was charged with managing the gymnasium, a facility boasted to be "the finest and best equipped in America." In 1895 it was recognized as the governing body representing all clubs on University Council. Current and past members of the UTAA would be key players in the leadership of the UTRC.

Despite the rapid growth of the University towards the end of the 19th century, it was still a very small institution. When W.H. Bunting made his proposal at the annual meeting of the Athletic Association, there were only twenty-five students and faculty in attendance.

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6 T.A. Reed, *The Blue and White* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944), 18.
This somewhat informal, chaotic gathering started a half-hour late as President Loudon desperately searched the Gymnasium for quorum and finally recruited the janitor in order to achieve it. Several arrivals and departures and one attendee falling through his chair provided interruptions. After some review of the past year, introduction of the new executive, and election of the outgoing president to a life membership, the meeting turned to the issue of rowing. By way of introduction, Loudon spoke in favour of a University Club that would “teach the American colleges how to row and be a means of adding to our large collection of bric-a-brac by bringing that historical cup from Henley.”

Next, Bunting explained the standing arrangement whereby students paid a reduced fee of $5 and receive full use of the club, its boats, and a trainer. He proposed that the students form a club and then introduced Ned Hanlan. Retired from competition, the former World Champion had become a coach. Armed with oratory skills developed over many years as a popular showman-athlete, Hanlan spoke “at some length” about the honours gained by Canadian and Torontonian oarsmen, and pledged to help coach the new club. In the end, the prospect of racing against the famous British and American schools, plus the promise of support from the Argonauts and training under the guidance of the great Ned Hanlan proved too irresistible an offer to refuse. At the close of the meeting, a student committee including former UTAA presidents James Merrick (95-96) and D.B. MacDonald (94-95) was appointed to mobilize wider student support.

They acted swiftly. Within a week of the UTAA general meeting, a letter to the editor from W.H. Bunting appeared in *The Varsity*. Writing with “the best interest of the University at heart”, Bunting reiterated the ARC’s offer and the merits of its trainers and

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7 *The Varsity* (Toronto), 27 January 1897.
its "well-equipped, commodious and convenient" boathouse, located at the foot of York St. 8 Echoing Loudon, Bunting expressed his belief that in time the University could win a name for itself in international rowing competition. The student newspaper's editors also approved the idea of a rowing club. They considered athletics a healthy counterweight to academic training and "a mighty educative influence which springs from this constant and familiar intercourse with men of one's own age and condition." 9 Having secured favourable publicity in the Varsity, the student committee called a general meeting for the following week.

A "large and enthusiastic meeting" at the Student Union hall on February 10th, 1897, and the endorsement of professors Loudon and Hutton assured the viability of the UTRC. Next, W.H. Bunting addressed the students, reiterating his previous points and suggesting that they try inter-year competition as a means of generating interest. Next to speak was Ned Hanlan:

The great oarsman demonstrated to the meeting the marvelous advantages which were derived from rowing. By being an oarsman he had visited every part of the world where the English language was spoken, and had since the opening of his career won more races than any man ever born. If a club was formed at Varsity he promised that "Hanlan is at your service for any assistance he can give." He expressed faith in Varsity's athletes by saying, "I am ready to stake my life that I can get the material in Varsity to whip any eight-oared crew in the world." 10

Full of bravado and ambition, Hanlan's speech stressed the thrill of victory in competition. The next order of business was the reading and adoption of a constitution, which had been drafted in advance by MacDonald. 11 It opened membership to graduates, undergraduates and faculty of the University and its affiliated colleges for a fee of $5.50.

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8 The Varsity (Toronto), 3 February 1897.
9 Ibid.
10 The Varsity (Toronto), 17 February 1897.
The executive committee was to consist of four elected members and three undergraduates appointed by those officers. A slate of nominees was named at the meeting and went uncontested. The first executive of the UTRC was as follows; Honorary President, James Loudon; President, D.B. MacDonald; Vice-President George Sellery; and Secretary-Treasurer, James Merrick. Within two weeks, the University of Toronto Rowing Club had evolved into a viable entity with a constitution, executive, coach and membership. The rapidity of organization was due to a combination of factors. Affiliation was an Argonaut initiative, but without a university organization to negotiate on the students’ behalf, the plan would have failed. The presence of the UTAA made the entire student population accessible to the Argonaut Rowing Club. From that core group of students, MacDonald and Merrick emerged as the leaders of the UTRC. With the experience gained through time spent on the Athletic Directorate, they quickly mobilized interest in the club and gave it the legitimacy of faculty support and an organizational structure. All that remained was to row.

The UTRC was staunchly amateur in its approach to the sport of rowing. This is evidenced in the environment of the parent club, its outlook on competition, and in the composition of its membership. The definition of an amateur in Canadian rowing was first set in 1880, when the Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen was founded. Its constitution stated:

An amateur is one who has never assisted in the pursuit of athletic exercises as a means of livelihood, who rows for pleasure or recreation only and during his leisure hours, and does not abandon or neglect his usual business or occupation for the purpose of training more than two weeks during the season.
This distinction effectively separated professional scullers racing for prize money from rowers who competed in club competitions such as the newly instituted Canadian Henley regatta. Since professional rowing demanded high skill in a few individuals and amateur rowing emphasized a broader base of participants with moderate ability, the two branches of the sport attracted different kinds of athletes and supporters. Since they did not compete for the same public, professional and amateur rowing coexisted with little discord compared with other Canadian sports at the turn of the century. Nonetheless, Canadian amateur rowers kept tight control over their sport. In 1898, when Ned Hanlan, now a city alderman, proposed the inclusion of professional races in the program of a Toronto club regatta, the motion was soundly defeated by an organizing committee which included Varsity rowers.

Amateurism was not simply the absence of pay for athletic performance, however. Sport, the amateur philosophy held, contributed to the making of gentlemen by building character and improving health. A contemporary piece in *The Globe* stated that athletics "bring out some of the best qualities in human nature, generous rivalry, self-control, patient endurance and steadfast determination, together with fiery zeal and great courage". Founded in 1872, the Argonaut Rowing Club was representative of this amateur creed. Henry O’Brien, the ARC’s first president, wrote that the club was to be “a rallying point for men who wanted hard and healthful exercise.” O’Brien also viewed

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14 *World* (Toronto), 4 May 1898.
16 *Athletic Life*, Vol. 1, No. 6, June 1895, 260.
his club as a shelter from corruption, “a place where parents might feel that their lads were safe from harm, moral and physical”. The sale of alcohol on the premises was forbidden. The final paragraph of the same text summed up the amateur spirit of the Argonaut Rowing Club:

May it continue to be an exponent of that spirit of fairplay, pluck and endurance which is characteristic the world over of the British amateur sportsman, and may it always be a factor for the promotion of clean living, good health, helpful discipline and innocent pleasure for the young men of this great country.

Amateurism was not without contradictions however. The Argonaut Rowing Club history downplayed the importance of winning, stating that “the true, manly sportsman is the man who can take his licking like a gentleman and who rows for the fun of it and not for cups or kudos.” Extensive training, even for a stakeless contest, detracted from one’s “usual business.” But whereas the amateur advocate in the Globe wrote that the “lessons of sport are to be stout of heart and straightforward, respectful to authority [and] strong in emergency”, he also noted that athletes should be “modest in success and considerate to the beaten.” No mention of being defeated here. Winning was important to the Argonaut Rowing Club. Under the tutelage of Joseph Wright, Sr. at the turn of the century. Argo oarsmen did in fact train extensively- often twice daily in the summer. They also kept in shape by playing football in the off-season. This paid off. Along with the Winnipeg R.C., the Argonauts dominated the Canadian Henley regatta from its inception in 1880 until the First World War. Although competition in Canada was mostly local due to the high cost of transporting shells to distant regattas, the fact that the

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17 ibid., 295.
18 ibid.
20 Globe (Toronto), 8 September 1896 in Peter King, op. cit.
Argonauts regularly defeated eastern American crews at Henley testifies to their ability.  

Despite this intense activity, the participatory nature of amateur rowing at the Argonauts should not be exaggerated. While O’Brien claimed that the ARC stressed participation over the social element of rowing, it is estimated that only about a third of members in Canadian clubs at that time were active oarsmen. The remainder joined because of the prestige the club offered. Judging from the fact that three-quarters of the 1910 club history consists of advertising and business card directories, it is clear that businessmen saw the ARC as an excellent vehicle for making connections and closing deals. The Argonaut dark blue and pale blue colours represented an original connection to Oxford and Cambridge Universities, prime symbols of social cachet. The unwritten component of amateurism in Canadian rowing, as in the American NAAO and in the British ARA, was that members should be of the same social standing. The amateur rowers were almost exclusively white, middle-class, anglophone men. Working class men and immigrants would just not fit into this environment, and the ARC was “careful not to admit those who could not pleasantly associate together”. Oddly enough, despite this open snobbery, it appears that ARC members did not consider themselves part of a moneyled class, certainly not in comparison to Britain. Commenting on the expense of a trip to the Henley Royal Regatta, one rower complained that “we have no large leisured class from which to draw for an annual representation at the Henley gathering.”

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21 Peter King, op. cit. 29.
22 Ibid. 21.
23 Athletic Life, op. cit.
was belied by the fact that three years later the Argonaut Rowing Club would send an eight and a large entourage to the English regatta. The young gentlemen of the University would have fit right into this exclusive stronghold of amateurism and wealth. Of the men for whom biographical information is available, almost all came from well-off families, among which the names Gooderham, Gzowski and Burwash could be counted. Their fathers were Members of Parliament, doctors, lawyers, company presidents and so on. Few of the first members of the UTRC would have felt out of place among the patrons of the Argonaut Rowing Club.

Although in 1897 few of them knew how to row, many of the UTRC were generally inclined towards participating in and administering sport. As we have seen, James Merrick and D.B. MacDonald were prominent in the U of T sports scene in the late 1890s, and were later named life members of the Athletic Association. The advocacy of scholastic athletics and pure amateurism became a feature of their later lives. MacDonald, whose father had been a founding member of the Toronto YMCA, served from 1905 to 1908 as president of the Athletic Association. A Presbyterian minister and headmaster, he became the president of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada in 1920, urging the incorporation of physical culture into one’s daily routine. His slogans were “the game first and victory second” and “fewer people in the stands and more on the fields of play”. Merrick too became a leading figure in Canadian amateur sport. He organized the 1908 Canadian Olympic Team, and was a member of the International Olympic Committee for thirty years. As president of the Canadian Amateur Athletic Union, he brokered the amalgam with the Amateur Athletic Federation of Canada that ended the “athletic war” in
Canada and reaffirmed the idea of staunch amateurism. Upon graduation from law school, Merrick went on to become a director of four mining corporations and to represent the Manufacturers Association of Ontario. As a labour arbitrator, he was considered a “notorious union-buster.” Without a doubt, MacDonald and Merrick were “satisfied alumni” of the UTRC. Exposure to the amateur spirit and conservative business environment of the ARC contributed to the shaping of a strong belief in sport “for themselves and their class.”

Although they were leaders, Macdonald and Merrick were not the only oarsmen who were active in school sport and its administration. Rowing tended to attract rugby players, for whom the summer was the off-season. Gooderham, Douglas, “Thrift” Burnside and A.J. Mackenzie all played Varsity rugby during their university careers. Mackenzie and Douglas were Toronto delegates of the Intercollegiate Rugby Football Union. Burnside, captain of the championship team of '98, served on the Athletics Directorate from 1897 to 1900 and helped develop the rules of Canadian Football. Gooderham was also involved in hockey, golf, tennis and cricket. Perhaps the most well rounded, Velyien Henderson was a successful runner, rugby manager, and later member of the Athletics Directorate between 1900 and 1902. In addition, he was a writer for *The Varsity* and gifted student in biology. The overall impression one gets of the first members of the UTRC is of an extremely enthusiastic group who enjoyed all forms of sport and for whom rowing represented a new physical challenge.

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As we have seen, the UTRC members of ‘97-'99 had the appropriate social standing to be considered amateurs. In their approach to training and competition however, they appear to have been less intense than the “racing” Argonauts. Although the ice in Toronto Harbour was gone by April, the UTRC did not start operations until mid-May, after the conclusion of term. Even though this severely cut into their water time, there was never any question of rowing interfering with school examinations. Most of the club’s members were complete beginners in 1897, and so the ARC coaches preferred to expose their charges to competition gradually. With no plans to send representative crews to regattas in the summer of 1897, the UTRC emphasized participation, not performance. Rather than concentrating its more adept members into elite crews, the better rowers were spread out to help see that the novices learned to row. Six oarsmen were elected as strokes, and four-oared crews were formed around them. Several strategies were used to further broaden the UTRC’s appeal. By 1899, supervision was offered at 7am, 11am and 4pm, increasing the likelihood that at least one time would prove convenient to prospective members. The importance of physique was also downplayed. Wrote The Varsity, “do not hesitate to become a member because you are small; the stroke of the famous Pennsylvania four weighed but 124 pounds.” Within the University of Toronto community, the UTRC was quite generous in offering students the opportunity to try a new sport with little expectation of competitive commitment or prior skill and strength.

27 Ibid.
28 Star (Toronto), 29 May 1897.
29 World (Toronto), 29 June 1897.
30 Ibid., 31 May 1899.
31 The Varsity (Toronto), 20 March 1899. While this suggests that the UTRC was open to all regardless of physique, it also betrays concern for the club’s standing with the ARC. The article also reads: “The Club has to guarantee twenty-five members and everyone should do what he can to help.”
The minority of UTRC rowers who ventured into competitive rowing did so as Argonauts. The most popular competitions were known as “At Homes” which were part athletic event for social equals and part social function for athletic gentlemen and their ladies. A newspaper account of one of these regattas reads:

The large reading room was prettily decorated with the banners and trophies won by the club at previous regattas, including pictures of the crews. A corner of this room was reserved for Gillonna’s orchestra, which supplied music for the fair dancers and their escorts. Refreshments were served in the gymnasium. There were about 200 members and invited guests. The ladies were mostly dressed in dainty gowns of fancy muslins, presenting a pretty sight. One of the handsomest was Miss Bessie Thompson’s, the waist being of old gold and the skirt of royal purple. The ladies watched the races from the balconies and roof of the clubhouse, cheering on with much enthusiasm their respective favourites throughout the afternoon’s sport.32

On the water meanwhile, Toronto’s best rowers slugged it out stroke for stroke. Being a large club, the Argonauts regularly put out a dozen fours for their internal regattas, and the UTRC’s men were scattered throughout the field. In the 1897 “At Home”, G.G. Jordan was a member of the winning crew, and Gooderham and Burnside sat in the third place boat.33 Occasionally, the better UTRC oarsmen competed in regattas sanctioned by the CAAO, but as part of ARC boats. While it continued to be a stated ambition of the UTRC to rival other schools, it appears that once its rowers showed enough ability, they were drafted into Argonaut boats instead.34 Between 1897 and 1899 the UTRC was a recreational organization and farm team for the parent club.

Late in July 1897 however, Ned Hanlan arranged for a Varsity four to compete at the North Western Rowing Association regatta in Detroit. This novice crew was an energetic

32 World (Toronto), 14 June 1897.
33 This was no small feat. The Argonaut Rowing Club swept the titles at the Canadian Henley Regatta that year, and extended its dominance over the following seasons.
34 Torontonensis 1900, 201, reads: “No attempt was made last summer to organize special University crews owing to the absence in England of so many rowing men.” That year the ARC sent an eight and a large entourage to the Henley Royal Regatta. Henry Gooderham was part of that crew and it can be
but inexperienced one, described in the Detroit press as “a beefy, husky lot”. Team captain “Thrift” Burnside sat in bow. A first year student in the School of Practical Sciences, he also played wing on the rugby team. In front of him rowed George Jordan. The eldest at twenty-one, he had one year of study left at the Royal Dental College. W.E. Douglas occupied three seat. According to the 9T9 yearbook, “Billy” was a popular Political Science student and rugby player, and was active in the Literary Society. The stroke was H.F. “Harry” Gooderham, who was going into his second year at University College. He had started rowing that summer after an ankle injury forced him to retire from rugby football. These four, plus coach Hanlan and their young manager R.G. Fitzgibbons boarded a Canadian Pacific Rail train bound for Detroit on July 31.

On August 2nd, 1897, the UTRC entered and won its first ever race. Following Hanlan’s instructions “not to row too fast and take plenty of swing”, the crew showed good form and despite a poor turn at the buoy, came from behind to win decisively. The Star reported that “as it was Hanlan’s first amateur crew, the famous oarsman was so pleased he couldn’t talk.” Runner-up in this race was a ragged Ecorse Rowing Club crew. The Detroit News described them as “frenchmen” and “hustlers” whom after their defeat “hied themselves to Walkerville, where they could drown their sorrow in French home-

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assumed that most key coaches and executives of the UTRC were there too, depriving the remaining members of leadership.
35 Star (Toronto), 5 August 1897.
36 Torontoensis. 1899, 61.
37 It is not known whether the crew brought their own shell. Although rail companies were known to give discounts to oarsmen with boats, the Varsity group may not have been given permission to use an Argonaut craft. Those were needed for the Canadian Henley being held in Brockville that same week. If this was the case, it is probable that Hanlan secured the use of a four at the NWRA regatta.
38 Star (Toronto), 5 August 1897.
made wine.” A disreputable, hard-drinking bunch, and French, no less, the Ecorse crew would not have been considered appropriate opponents by the teetotaling, proudly anglo ARC. The varsity crew was less fussy about its opponents. Although the evidence is sketchy, the comment that “the Canadians pocketed some loose change” suggests it is possible that the Varsity boys also accepted a cash prize for their win, or even wagered on the race’s outcome. This too was clearly improper conduct for an amateur.

The following day, still flush with victory, the UTRC four entered the Senior race. In the windy, choppy conditions, they again ran into trouble at the turnaround marker. Crowded onto the outside by the other crews,

the students began to turn, and one of their oars struck the Wyandotte shell, put a hole through it and sank the craft. Varsity was 40 seconds getting out of the wreck, and still finished only 10 seconds behind Ecorse.

Deliberate foul or accident? The incident might have reflected a calculated, vengeful reaction of a crew that had been robbed of victory. In this case, the amateur ethos of fair play held little meaning to the crew at that moment. However, it is likelier that the clash was simply due to the inept flailing of novice rowers who had “very little practice in turning the buoy.” Whatever the case, the social standing of their opponents plus the suggestion of gambling and foul play indicates that Burnside, Jordan, Douglas and Gooderham were no sticklers for strict amateur ideals.

39 Ibid.
40 World (Toronto), 5 August 1897. With only this phrase to go on, it is difficult to grasp what actually happened. Given that Hanlan was rowing’s ultimate professional, it is possible that he placed a small bet on his crew to win.
41 Ibid.
42 Globe (Toronto), 31 July 1897.
The University of Toronto Rowing Club rested on the laurels of the Junior Four's victory in Detroit for the following two seasons. Then it vanished. There is no documented reason for the demise of the original UTRC. According to the 1900 Torontonensis, which wrote that "a large membership is anticipated this year", the prognosis for the club appeared to be good. Yet club news simply disappeared from the Toronto dailies. The historian of U of T athletics suggested that a lack of interest was the reason. While the spring of 1899 saw a large turnout on the docks, the absence in England of the club's leaders and best athletes may indeed have affected the ability of the remainder to mobilize. Furthermore, 1900 marked the departure of many key leaders of the UTRC. Mackenzie, Burnside and Gooderham graduated, and MacDonald started his thirty-year career as a schoolmaster. Ned Hanlan, so instrumental in stirring up the students, had left to coach Columbia University. Overall, the UTRC had a tendency to lose its best rowers to Canada's dominant club, the Argonauts. With three seasons' experience, this situation would have sunk in by 1900. For the next two decades, U of T students who wanted to row did so for the Argonaut Rowing Club.

Institutional memory about these early years is revealing. What the student yearbooks at the time and T.A. Reed, fifty years later, found most noteworthy about the original club was the exploit of the victorious four at the NWRA regatta. It was their pictures and their names that were prominently displayed and celebrated. All this happened despite the fact that their competitiveness and the possibly dubious circumstances behind their actions

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43 Torontonensis 1900, 201.
44 Reed, op. cit., 259.
represented the exception, not the rule, in the UTRC’s activities. The old amateur philosophy, which emphasized recreation over competition, was being eroded. The goal of subsequent generations of U of T rowers would be the serious pursuit of speed, skill and success.

45 No biographical information was found on what James Merrick was doing in 1900. However by this date, we do know that he had received his law degree and would have been starting to build his business and legal careers.
BLUE WONDER- 1920-1940

The “great man” in the history of the University of Toronto Rowing Club was a small, unassuming engineering professor. Between 1920 and 1937, Thomas Richardson Loudon presided over the development and promotion of rowing at U of T. It was because of his efforts that the UTRC’s crews were so successful and that the club’s material well-being reached unparalleled levels. Loudon’s background and personality were uniquely suited to the task of making the University of Toronto Rowing Club a winning organization.

From an early age, young Tommy was immersed in the world of sport in general and rowing in particular. Born in Toronto in 1883, he grew up playing football and baseball with schoolmates from Harbord Collegiate Institute. When he was thirteen, his father bought him a season’s pass to the Victoria Club rink on Huron Street, where he skated and played hockey all winter. His summers were spent at the Toronto Islands, and it was here that he developed an affinity towards water sport and engineering. He and his friends would build and race sailing craft, constantly seeking to make them faster and more maneuverable. It was also at one of these Island excursions in 1894 that Tommy Loudon was first taught to row by his great uncle and namesake, Thomas Loudon.

T.R. Loudon’s family pedigree and early introduction to the sport could not have better primed him for future involvement with the UTRC. His great uncle had been Canadian Sculling champion until Ned Hanlan defeated him in 1873. His father W.J. Loudon, as we have seen, had been part of the unsuccessful student attempt at starting a rowing club in 1880. Tommy Loudon recalled that his father had seen Hanlan trounce Trickett for the World Sculling championship in London, and had “often described it to me with great
laughter." Indeed both men had often regaled young Tommy with rowing stories and these “tales certainly created a great impression on my young mind.” In the fall of 1903, Loudon joined the Argonaut Rowing Club. Here too he crossed paths with Varsity rowing. His application was provided and approved by James Merrick, the first president of the UTRC. Loudon was assigned a locker right next to Ned Hanlan, the club’s first coach. He remembered Hanlan fondly as “a rather courtly old gentleman (49 then!) and always kind to me.” With rowing cast in such a favourable light by influential figures in his youth, it is not surprising that Loudon developed a strong liking for the sport.

Although he played after-school football for his neighborhood team, the “Madison Giants”, Loudon and his friends did not aspire to emulate the careers of local professional athletes. Moreover, he and his classmates could not afford to attend games. This early ambivalence towards professionalized sport developed itself further as Loudon grew older. His attitudes towards athleticism were shaped by his involvement with the Argonaut Rowing Club and refined by his schooling at the University of Toronto, from which he graduated with a B.A.Sc. in 1906. As a rower, Loudon was exposed to the same informal “At Home” regattas as the members of the 1897 UTRC, where every effort was made to make competition fair. However, while remaining strictly amateur in spirit, the climate around the ARC had become noticeably more competitive by the time Loudon appeared in 1904. Coached by Joe Wright, the Argonaut heavyweights were the fastest crews on the continent up to the First World War. Wright had introduced daily double

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1 *UTA* B76-0003100 (13). Loudon, Thomas R.
2 *UTA* B76-0003100 (10), Loudon, Thomas R. In the race on the Thames, Hanlan had thoroughly embarrassed his opponent by performing crowd-pleasing tricks on his way to a convincing victory.
practices, and with the installation of rowing machines at the club in 1906, winter training became a regular feature.

Though reasonably successful as a novice, Loudon’s small size prevented him from seriously competing as an oarsman\(^6\), and when he was asked to cox the Senior heavyweight eight in 1904, he accepted. In the following ten years spent in the coxswain’s seat that Loudon developed his “rowing eye” and began to apply his scientific training to sport. As he later recalled, he had arrived on the scene at a time when “rowing in Canada was carried on largely by trial and error with little true understanding of the underlying principles.”\(^7\) As his grasp of the fundamentals of rowing strengthened, Loudon became more critical of certain conventional training techniques. In particular, he was opposed to what he called “overtraining”, and to the very lengthy process of introducing novices to racing shells.\(^8\) By the time Loudon took charge of rowing at the UTRC, his coaching methods rejected some of the established training techniques.\(^9\) For instance, although Loudon continued to emphasize a high training volume, he varied the workout intensity to a greater extent. Only in the two weeks before major events would he incorporate short, high-intensity bursts “to ginger them up”. Furthermore, Loudon significantly shortened the time spent training in ponderous workboats before switching to racing shells. He found no difference in the ability of novices to adapt to the tippier craft. In addition to physical preparation, Loudon was also interested in the technological

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\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) UTA B76-0003/001(16). Loudon, Thomas R.
\(^6\) Loudon later successfully lobbied for the introduction of a 140lb category.
\(^7\) UTA B76-0003/001(10). Loudon, Thomas R.
\(^8\) Loudon never defined the term in a physiologically precise fashion. However, it appears to have come out of seeing the sometimes negative effects of heavy workout loads on rowers.
\(^9\) UTA B76-0003/001(10). Loudon, Thomas R.
aspects of rowing. In preparation for the 1928 Olympic trials, he designed an eight for his Varsity crew. At the time, Canadian clubs usually purchased British shells, but built for smooth water rowing, these tended to perform poorly in the swells of Lake Ontario. Shorter in length, his boat was designed to deal with waves more effectively. Although he never repeated the experiment, Loudon’s prototype shell was the equal of any racing craft of the day. In sum, Loudon’s thinking on the training, technique and equipment of rowing was aimed at competitive success. Although his sporting philosophy was staunchly amateur, there was nothing amateurish about his approach towards good, fast rowing.

Tommy Loudon’s abilities and interests were unusually widespread. If anything, his contributions to rowing were considered the least of his accomplishments by the Canadian Who’s Who. He became a lecturer at the School of Practical Sciences (S.P.S.) at U of T at the age of 24, and maintained his involvement at the University until 1954, in time becoming head of department for Civil Engineering and Aeronautics. During the First World War he served in the 2nd Field Company of the Canadian Engineers, earning a mention in dispatches for merit and a promotion to Major. Through the 1920s and 1930s Loudon was Lieutenant-Colonel in command of the U of T Canadian Officer Training Corps. During the Second World War, he was a Squadron Leader of the RCAF in charge of Testing and Development. On the business side, Loudon was a partner in a structural engineering firm between 1912 and 1929. In the 1920s, he designed the east bleachers of Varsity Stadium as well as Varsity arena, Toronto’s most prominent sports structures. Even outside the UTRC, his involvement in sport was heavy; Olympic rowing coach for 1924 and 1928; member of the CAAO executive from 1919 to 1949 (president
1925-27); member of the AAU executive from 1925 to 1932 (president 1928-30); president of the Toronto Flying Club 1939; president of the University of Toronto Athletic Directorate from 1944 to 1954; and CIAU president in 1946 and from 1952 to 1954. Over the course of his life, Tommy Loudon’s able management of a wide range of interests earned him respect in the Canadian academic, sporting, political and business communities.

If Loudon’s early introduction to rowing and his professional and academic background contributed to the intensity and quality of his commitment to the UTRC, so too did his character. One of his athletes remembered Loudon as “always polite, dapper and never bombastic.”

"The coach was a rather taciturn, cautious, and scrupulously honest man who endeared himself to the rowers because of his unstinting dedication to them. Loudon disliked public speaking. Mel Kenny recalled; “I never heard him make a speech... He wasn’t a front and center man as a speaker. He was a great man as a doer, though.”

Another remembered;

He was not somebody that you got to know easily. He was pretty private. He drove a Marlin Roadster and this car was powerful for those days. The joke was that he never drove it over thirty miles an hour. We all kidded him about that... well, I don’t think we kidded him. We kidded amongst ourselves.

Loudon himself recognized his own ability to “keep quiet and wait for an answer to appear.” Mel Kenny believed “he was effective because of his firm [but gentle] hand”

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11 Austin C. King to author, 1 August 1998, author’s collection.
12 Some matters he considered too private to write about even in his voluminous memoirs. Most notably, his wife Frances is scarcely mentioned, though they were married for over 50 years.
13 Mel Kenny, interviewed by author, tape recording, Toronto, ON., 15 July 1997, author’s collection.
15 UTA B76-0003/001(12). Loudon, Thomas R.
and because "he wasn't a hard-driving coach". This general calm was one of his main leadership qualities.

Occasionally though, Loudon could break out of his characteristic reserve with stunning effect on strangers and students alike. One morning, a barge had blocked the slipway of the rowing club such that the shells could not pass. Requests to move the barge had been met with a stream of profanity from the captain. Loudon wrote;

I am afraid I reverted to the Army, for in his own language, I told him that I would have him arrested if he didn't move enough to let us through. I always remember the look on his face as he looked down at me and said; “Why the 'ell didn't you say so!”16

On another occasion during the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, he recalled;

We went to the boxing bouts one evening and found ourselves seated in the center of a large section of U.S. supporters. During one bout between a Yank and a Frenchman, the U.S. section “rooted” very vociferously for their candidate. It was so loud that the French supporters could hardly be heard. During a lull between rounds, I shouted out “Knock his block off frenchy. Shew (sic) him who won the war! It was heard everywhere! My voice which was like their own flabbergasted the whole section who looked around to see who it was.17

Finally, the usually gentle coach could also whip up fear and enthusiasm in his rowers when necessary. The Varsity noted:

After a heavy workout last Friday afternoon the oarsmen were subjected to a stinging pep talk on the subject of; “rowing yourself out”…The popular S.P.S. professor explained in a few scorching terms that, in the future, after a course had been rowed, a man who finished anywhere but on the flat of his back would be asked to vacate his berth in favour of another candidate.18

Later on, after that Varsity crew won the McGill race, Loudon was quick to praise them;

“The best race I have ever seen. I cannot understand how those boys made such a time under such conditions… Give the boys all the credit; they have worked day and night to

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16 UTA B76-0003/001(10), Loudon, Thomas R.
17 Ibid.
18 The Varsity (Toronto), 4 October 1933.
prepare themselves." Whether deliberate or spontaneous, Loudon’s rare emotional outbursts achieved the desired effect.

Tommy Loudon’s other leading quality was integrity, and he expected it of himself and of his athletes and associates. On at least one occasion, he received a letter from the University of Toronto’s auditor, praising the immaculate state of the S.P.S. Athletic Association’s accounting books. In 1936, Loudon wrote to the UTAA, stating that although his Varsity Crew had accounted themselves well in the past season, he did not believe they should receive their first Colours because their opponents in the yearly boat race had not all been students at McGill University. One summer, a UTRC rower had caused serious damage to a Yacht in Toronto Harbour and the matter had been brought to the attention of the University President, Reverend Cody. In his correspondence with Cody, Loudon wrote that what disturbed him about the incident was “the manner in which an attempt was made to evade responsibility.” Although unwilling to dismiss the culprit because it would unfairly punish his crewmates, he felt it would “be necessary for [the student] to go over and face the music” with the disgruntled Yacht owner.

The overall picture one gets of Tommy Loudon is of an intensely private, quiet and honest man who was very confident in his rowing and engineering expertise. He clearly appreciated gestures of gratitude from generations of rowers for his dedication to sport, but never sought the limelight if it could at all be avoided. The key to the man’s

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19 The Varsity (Toronto), 11 October 1933.
20 UTA B76-0003/004(01). Loudon, Thomas R.
22 UTA A68-0006/003. Office of the President (Cody). Loudon to Cody, 9 June 1933.
effectiveness on the Toronto sports scene was that the respect he had earned was freely
given. His reputation opened many doors for the University of Toronto Rowing Club.

When Major Tommy Loudon returned to the University of Toronto in the summer of
1919, it had doubled in size since the turn-of-the-century. By 1921, there were over 5000
students, and nearly a third were women.\(^23\) The campus was crawling with veterans
resuming life with dramatically changed outlooks. J. Burgon Bickersteth, who witnessed
the return of the student-veterans, subsequently recalled that they;

> had survived four years of danger and discomfort in the war and they were now determined, and
> very naturally so, to enjoy themselves. Wine, women and song played a considerable part in their
> view of life.\(^24\)

Sport was another of these newly regained pleasures in which veterans indulged. Happily,
the lavish Hart House was completed in 1919 and quickly became the heart of extra-
curricular student activity. In addition to providing space for arts and leisure, the athletic
wing of Hart House featured a pool, an indoor track, several courts and training rooms for
the men.\(^25\) Nevertheless, the University felt that further expansion in physical education
was required to meet the needs of the “returned men”. These included compulsory
medical examination and physical training for all first and second year male students, the
hiring of instructors in gymnastics, swimming, wrestling and boxing, the enlargement of
Varsity stadium and the construction of an ice rink.\(^26\) Intercollegiate sport- rugby football,

\(^23\) University of Toronto. *President’s Report for the year ending 30th of June, 1921*, 3.
\(^24\) Ian Montagnes, *An Uncommon Fellowship: the Story of Hart House* (Toronto: University of Toronto
Press, 1969), 82.
\(^25\) The women continued to use substandard facilities as plans for a women’s building were delayed for the
next forty years. Women were finally admitted to Hart House in 1972. See Ann Rochon Ford, *A Path not
strewn with roses: One Hundred Years of women at the University of Toronto 1884-1984*, (Toronto:
University of Toronto Press, 1985).
\(^26\) T.A. Reed, *The Blue and White*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944), 49-50.
soccer, track, tennis, hockey, basketball, boxing, wrestling, fencing, swimming, and water polo all returned with vigour after wartime interruption. Yet despite the extensive efforts of University administrators, it was up to students to kickstart new programs. In the fall of 1919, Richard Huestis, an artillery lieutenant who before the war had been a star Varsity gymnast and swimmer, returned to the U of T to complete his engineering studies. Huestis and a few other students started a University rowing club and convinced Loudon to assume the coaching duties. These rowing pioneers installed a rowing machine in the southeast corner of the Hart House track and recruited curious runners. In its first season the UTRC had about 20 members.

After the First World War, veterans’ associations arose for the purpose of organizing clubs and events, and rowing proved no exception. Named captain of the Argonaut R.C., Loudon was to oversee the selection of a soldiers’ crew for the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta. The plan was less successful than expected, and this organization, like many others, was unable to reproduce the camaraderie of the trenches.27 Observed Loudon, “We had no sooner chosen our veteran crew that another war broke out. From every side came cries that ‘I was in the war longer than x!’... I have no hesitation in saying that after a war everyone is a little bit ‘queer’ for about two years.”28 There is no evidence that the UTRC was initially designed as a club for returned men, but the majority of its members in the first few years after the war were soldiers. Some had even received wounds in the trenches or had been gassed. One, H. Boyd Little, had won the Military Cross at Ypres in 1917, and another, RAF pilot K.B. Conn, had been awarded the Distinguished Flying

Cross. A notable feature of these veterans who formed the core membership of the UTRC after the war was that they were all new to rowing.\textsuperscript{29}

For these men, sport recaptured a youth lost in years of toil and terror in Belgium and France. Early, cold mornings on the lake, rudimentary facilities, and hard training were trifling discomforts compared to the horrors they had endured in Flanders mud. A particularly restless and carefree camaraderie came to define these formative years for the UTRC. "Their remarks to one another were characterized by the Army sense of humour", Loudon wrote. When training was not going particularly well, one of the rowers would get picked on for some real or imagined flaw. The typical response from the victim would be; "Why should I pull you lazy ____ s along!" Incidents such as the occasion where two rowers, both naked, had chased up Church St. snapping towels at each other were not unheard of. In old age, Loudon reflected that these young men had been a special bunch, the best he had ever coached. Tough, dedicated and carefree, the Varsity veterans appreciated more than anything being alive to enjoy the swing and catch of a powerful crew.

In 1920, the Argonaut Rowing Club was still the premier rowing organization in Canada. Just like their predecessors at the turn of the century, University of Toronto rowers used ARC equipment, wore the Argo double-blue singlets, and trained at the clubhouse at the foot of York St. Here the similarities with the UTRC of 1897-1900 end. Unlike the

\textsuperscript{28} UTA B76-0003/001 (10). Loudon, Thomas R.
\textsuperscript{29} The one exception was Alan F. Coventry. Coventry, a biology professor, had rowed for his college at Oxford. After serving in the C.E.F., he returned to his professorial duties and stroked the first Varsity crew. A longtime resident of Hart House, Coventry's Oxford oar still hangs on a wall in the Warden's quarters.
previous generation, which had paid its own way, these students convinced the UTAA to cover their membership fees. More importantly, they insisted on forming their own crews, separate from the ARC. This was a great source of tension at the club dock all summer, since regular Argonauts believed all who rowed at their club should be part of a common pool of athletes. Loudon observed; "We very soon learned that two clubs cannot exist together in harmony. It was very soon seen that the Varsity crew was going to make a good shewing (sic) and it was only common sense that I could not coach both Argos and Varsity." Loudon, perhaps prompted by memories of his father's dream of starting a University rowing club, resigned his position as Argonaut Club captain to concentrate on coaching the University of Toronto.

The first victory of the newly constituted UTRC was that of the tackweight four at the Dominion Day regatta, held at Center Island. The real focus, however, was the heavy men's eight. Having only one experienced oarsman, professor "Covers" Coventry, the unpolished technique of Loudon's rookie crew "caused much comment from the wise acres on the landing stage." Nevertheless, they won the Junior Eight at the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta in St.-Catharines that summer. The win built momentum, both with students and with the Athletic Association. Novices from the School of Practical Sciences and University and Victoria colleges were recruited and trained for an interfaculty regatta in October. Run from Polson's Ironworks to the Toronto Harbour

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10 *UTA* B76-0003/001 (10), Loudon, Thomas R.
31 The regatta course was in a different location than the present one on Center Island. Between 1911 and 1937 there was a ¼ mile course running along an inlet to Hanlan's Point amusement park. By the end of the 1930s, engineers filled in the course to accommodate the Island airport.
32 *The Varsity* (Toronto), 13 October 1920.
Commission building (then still on the waterfront), the race was won by the Engineers.33 On the administrative front, rowing was officially recognized as a Varsity sport with the awarding of first colours to the Henley winners. Along with the UTRC’s increased legitimization came financial support. In January 1921, Loudon’s request for a $830 loan from the UTAA was granted and the UTRC purchased its first eight, christened “Tommy Loudon” in golden lettering. Through old Oxonian Coventry’s influence, the club also bought two used shells from Oxford’s Magdalene College for “trifling sums”. By the summer of 1921, then, the UTRC had a significant equipment pool with which to expand operations.

Loudon and the club executive had been busily preparing for the coming season. A UTRC advisory committee had begun negotiating a club site lease with the Harbour Commissioners. Club colours (white and blue) had been submitted, as had an application for membership with the CAAO. Despite continued difficulties with the Argonauts, who wanted the U of T graduates to row for them, and who later tried to bar them from competition, the UTRC continued to train at the ARC, having found no suitable alternative location. Controversy does not appear to have affected the rowers. If anything, the Varsity rowers sometimes caused trouble. In their victory celebrations at Henley, they started a bonfire. When the Fire Department came to deal with the blaze, one of the firemen’s hats was stolen. That same night, one oarsman rented a horse but failed to return it. The following year, the St.-Catharines police were waiting for them, threatening arrest for the slightest mischief. On the last night, the ever-cautious Tommy Loudon took

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33 Starting with the 1920 Varsity eight, which included six engineers, SPS students were the backbone of the UTRC between the wars. This was probably the result of Loudon’s prominence on the faculty, and of
his athletes to Niagara-on-the-Lake to avoid problems.34 At the 1921 Henley, U of T eights placed first and second in the senior race, first in the junior race and second in the lightweight event. A week later at the NAAO championship in Buffalo, the Senior Eight placed second in its race and the Junior Eight won its event. In two short seasons, the UTRC had asserted itself as a dominant club in North American rowing. Impressed by these results, the UTAA increased the UTRC’s funding to $1200 for 1922.

Change was coming to the Toronto waterfront. Acting on a Toronto Harbour Commission plan to redevelop the inner harbour, the City of Toronto expropriated all properties along its frontage, including the Argonaut Rowing Club. Large docks were to be constructed to handle major commercial shipping, and by 1922, the vacated Argonaut Clubhouse was landlocked. The rowers would have to go elsewhere. The ARC relocated to its current site by purchasing a property at the foot of Denison St.35 Thinking it wise to sever a difficult relationship with the Argonauts, Loudon and the UTRC sought and found accommodation further west at the Parkdale Canoe Club (now site of the Boulevard Club). In March, Loudon arranged for the UTAA to set aside $500 for 50 membership tickets at the PCC between April and October. The short-term future of the post-Argonaut UTRC was assured.

34 The police arrested the Ottawa Rowing Club executive instead.
35 As a judicial enquiry later uncovered, the lease negotiation for the site was quite suspect. Ex-Mayor Tommy Church in 1922 chaired the Harbour Commission and was also the Argonaut Rowing Club president! In this dual and conflictual capacity, he arranged for the renegotiation of the ARC’s lease (to $1 per year) and a cancellation of arrears. As the presiding judge summed up; “This Argonaut Boat Club transaction has not a pleasant look...[it] is a good illustration of the evil that results from having members on the Board, who of necessity cannot overlook the popular side. By this transaction the Argonaut Club was presented with the equivalent of more than $2500.”

The summer of 1922 was another success, though slightly less resounding. The strong and enthusiastic novices of 1920 were more mature and skilled. The defending champion Senior Eight easily recaptured the Hanlan Memorial Trophy at the Royal Canadian Henley. At the U.S. Nationals in Philadelphia the following week, the Varsity crew had a good showing, but were unable to match the form they had shown in St.-Catharines, placing second. The junior and 140lb crews did not fare as well, placing 5th and 4th, respectively. As construction of the western beaches breakwall had not yet begun, the water at the Parkdale Canoe Club was rather rough. Several mornings the rowers arrived only to find the dock washed away by incoming waves. Despite difficult water conditions, the UTRC managed to prosper in its first season of independence. By December, the UTAA once again increased funding (to $1500) and authorized Loudon to order a new British shell.

1923 was a turbulent, exciting time for the members of the UTRC. It marked the beginning of a search for a new facility and the start of a campaign that would result in the University of Toronto’s best competitive accomplishment ever. Rowing continued to increase in popularity at the University. The start of indoor winter training in the “rowing room” at Hart House saw 90 candidates show up for practice on the rowing machines. Spirits were high. An energetic student executive, headed by medical student and coxswain Ivor Campbell, began to take a greater role in running the club. They organized a highly successful “skating carnival” at Varsity arena, raising upwards of $300. Over the winter, they designed and built their own workboat, complete with riggers. Such
enthusiasm and dedication impressed Loudon, and he believed it was "this spirit which made the club successful". Once the crews were selected in the spring, "the whole club converted itself into a job finding intelligence service. Members of the crew delivered ice, sold books, mixed concrete on construction". Students would do anything to keep their teammates together for the entire season.

A small disaster struck one night at the end of April when the wood clubhouse of the PCC burned down. Also destroyed were the UTRC’s newly built workboat, a single, and a dozen oars. This forced the immediate relocation of the club to a coal yard at the foot of Church street, where the UTRC rented a metal shed from a construction company to store its boats. A 10 x 10-foot building served as dressing room, and a hose through the roof and horse-trough outside provided basic washing facilities. In the words of one who had rowed there, the location was an "odorous spot". His coach concurred: "[A] most unsavoury waterway. I wonder that we survived." Loudon also recalled with amusement hearing the clinking of whisky bottles on passing CPR trains as thirsty passengers left Toronto bound for free and easy Montreal. Polluted water and obstructing barges notwithstanding, it was a good summer all round. The many photos from the summer of 1922 show a group of lean, smiling, intense young men training, playing baseball and having fun. From Loudon’s memoirs one senses that it was his most enjoyable season as a coach. Twice a day through the entire summer the Varsity eights ventured out into Toronto harbour, often headed for the protected water of the ship channel, where they

36 UTA B76-0003/001 (10). Loudon, Thomas R.
37 Ibid.
38 Why the racing shells were spared is unknown.
39 Robert S. Hunter, Rowing in Canada since 1848 (Hamilton, Ont.: Davis-Lisson, 1933), 62.
would race up and down the course. Following behind in his launch “Kiota”, Loudon
would officiate these “wonderful races” which often went down to the wire. This rigorous
training paid off yet again, as the seniors once more won the Hanlan Memorial Trophy.

Rowing in Canada had enough stature in the 1920s to make an international exhibition
regatta held at the CNE in late August 1923 attractive. In terms of competitors, the size of
the event was small, but prestigious. In addition to eights from Argonauts and the
University of Toronto, a Philadelphia Undine and a crack English crew from Leander
Boat Club were entered. The UTRC Senior eight having disbanded for the rest of the
summer, the Varsity boat was made up of a scratch crew of athletes still in Toronto.
Lacking preparation, the University of Toronto was defeated by Leander in the opening
round. In the final, Leander and Undine raced a mile and a quarter along the CNE
grounds, starting at the foot of Bathurst. Photographs of the contest, won by Leander,
show an enormous crowd along the entire stretch and in boats on the water. Loudon
estimated that over 200 000 people witnessed the race. Following the event, Tommy
Loudon invited the Leander contingent up to his cottage on Go Home bay. During this
cordial visit, Leander’s renowned coach “Cherry” Pitman, disappointed at not having
faced the Henley champions, urged Loudon to send a crew to the 1924 Olympics in Paris.

This encouragement, along with the Canadian Olympic Association’s announcement that
an Eight would be sent to Paris if a good crew presented itself, spurred the UTRC into
action. Anxious to give his athletes as much water time as possible, Loudon initiated
morning practices in the fall, even though there were no races for Varsity to enter. The
Blues rowed in Toronto harbour until the end of October, when it grew too cold and dark to train safely. Facilities were another consideration. The Parkdale Canoe Club fire and rough water conditions had made the western beaches a poor choice, and the Church St. location was only a temporary solution. Over the summer, Loudon had begun negotiations with the Toronto Harbour Commission over the lease of a site at the new John St. quay. By October, he was able to report to the UTAA that the THC was considering granting a five-year lease. Seizing the moment, Loudon also became a member of the UTAA directorate. His presence and influence without a doubt contributed to the UTAA’s decision to massively increase the rowing budget to $2400, in preparation for the 1924 campaign. This aim accomplished, Loudon resigned from the directorate in December.

Students got behind the effort as well. Throughout the fall term, the Varsity engaged in an extensive promotional campaign for the rowing team. Complete with photographs, several articles recounted in detail the successes of the UTRC since 1920. In an editorial it was pointed out that the rowers deserved equal standing with other Varsity sports:

Unfortunately, the oarsmen’s season is at its height between academic years, at a time when the students are scattered far and wide and, in consequence, of their achievements, comparatively little is known. When Varsity won the Allan Cup, emblematic of the Dominion Senior Hockey Championship three seasons ago, everyone in the University knew about it, thrilled to think about it, watched keenly the progress of the team. It was the same in football the previous fall, when our gridiron stalwarts ended up the season as Canadian Champions. We were all proud of them. Do you realize that we have won the Senior Canadian Eight-oar Championship for FOUR CONSECUTIVE YEARS? A stupendous attainment!41

The second facet of the publicity pitch was the amateur status of the UTRC and of the price paid for the upholding of this philosophy. “There is a good deal of discussion at the

40 T.R. Loudon, University of Toronto Monthly XXV, October 1924, 22.
41 The Varsity (Toronto), 8 November 1923.
University these days about amateurism” one writer stated, “and it is a noticeable fact that one repeatedly hears the remark, ‘Well, no one can deny that rowing is amateur in the strictest sense of the word.’”42 Another writer concurred;

Professor Loudon’s “Kiota” pays for an occasional sparkplug by acting as a ferry, and anyone who has been down to the boathouse more than once can tell you how the engineers raise the money to buy gasoline and oil. Rowing at Varsity is so amateur that it hurts!43

These various expenses were listed: two dozen oars at $17 each. Replacement riggers costing $200. A shell, $1000; A workboat, $200. The cost of the trip to St. Catharines and accommodation for the Olympic trials would be $4-5 per athlete per day. All told, the UTRC was looking for $1800.44 “If the crew wins, we all win” and “Get behind the Rowing Club”, were the slogans. The Varsity even stated it was the “duty of the undergraduate body” to help the cause. The promotion proved a success. Most impressive was the “Tag day” at the McGill football game at Varsity Stadium in November. Blue and white feather tags sold to the crowd by “tam o’shanter-ed co-eds” raised $450. By December, thanks to donations primarily from students, the UTRC executive was able to announce that nearly $1000 had been raised. This significant fund, plus the increase of the rowing budget by the UTAA, were both made possible by effective lobbying on the basis of competitive success since 1920.

The momentum created by the fundraising and publicity for the Olympic campaign drew in faculty and rowing alumni. The 1924 executive headed by RAF ace Ken Conn was joined in an honourary capacity by Professors C.H.C. Wright and J.R. Cockburn. An engineer, Cockburn had overseen the students’ construction of a workboat in the

43 *The Varsity* (Toronto), 1 November 1923.
basement of the engineering building. Two members of the original '97 crew, Henry Gooderham and William Douglas also attended the meetings. By May 1924, an advisory committee consisting of Loudon, Douglas, J.R. Stirrett and former UTRC leaders James Merrick and D.Bruce MacDonald was formed. The direct contribution of these men in time and money is not known. However, as we have seen, all were prominent and influential members of the amateur athletic, business and education establishments in Toronto. With the UTRC having acquired a boathouse and $3600 of equipment, the endorsement of Merrick and the others reassured the UTAA that the team was being well managed.  

Ongoing negotiations with the Toronto Harbour Commission (THC) starting in June 1923 had borne fruit. The cost of constructing a 70 x 16-foot metal boathouse and a 24 x 10-foot changeroom was projected at $2841.30. The THC approved a five-year lease at a rate of $50 per month, with the UTAA assuming this cost. With construction beginning in May, the UTRC was finally to have a home of its own. While no palace, the John St. facilities provided safe storage for boats and an adequate dressing room. In addition, rough, polluted and obstructed waterways were now concerns of the past.

Through April and May, the UTRC trained in an unusually cold and stormy Toronto Harbour. Given that the trial race was to take place on June 14th, this did not give the

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44 The Varsity (Toronto), 6 November 1923.
45 UTA A79-0019/02. Minutes of the University of Toronto Athletic Association, 20 May 1924.
46 Mitchell to chair and members of the Toronto Harbour Commission, 5 March 1924. Toronto Harbour Commission Archives RG 3/3, box 197, folder 8.
47 Mitchell to T.R. Loudon, 10 March 1924. Toronto Harbour Commission Archives RG 3/3, box 197, folder 8. In the summer of 1923, THC chairman Tommy Church had telegrammed Mitchell his opinion that the rent was far too high and suggested a $25/month arrangement. Church to Mitchell, 28 June 1923.
crew optimal conditions to prepare. Fortunately, Loudon had a large pool of fit and experienced athletes to choose from, as all had been training indoors since January. The ever-careful coach selected the most experienced athletes available. Norm Taylor, in bow, had graduated with a BA in 1923 after his stint in the CEF artillery. A member of the Varsity football team, he had rowed in the junior eight of 1921, and the senior crews of '22 and '23. Ahead of him was thirty-one year old Boyd Little, the army lieutenant who had been awarded the Military Cross. A B.A.Sc. graduate of 1920, he had been a member of each Varsity crew ever since. Like Little, John Smith, who sat at three, was a veteran of the war and of four Henley winning crews. That spring, he had just completed his own engineering degree. The “engine room” of the boat was crewed by its youngest and most powerful members, Warren Snyder and Bob Hunter. Snyder, a second-year medical student, was a star football player at U of T. Hunter, twenty-one, had been rowing for only a year, and was the only crewmember not to have rowed in the 1923 Henley-winning eight. A University College student, he later wrote *Rowing in Canada since 1848*. Little is known of Bill Langford in six seat, other than his having rowed in the crew of 1923. He was introduced to rowing at the interfaculty regatta of 1920. Arthur “Slim” Bell, like Little and Smith, had served overseas and been part of the Varsity Senior eight right from the start. An engineering graduate of 1923, Bell had also competed in Varsity track and water polo. W.L. “Lawrie” Wallace was the stroke. A rower since 1921, when he graduated with his BA, Wallace, like Taylor and Snyder, had played Varsity football. Coxswain Ivor Campbell had emigrated from Scotland with his family in 1911. After service in the CEF, he entered medical school and despite his size, played interfaculty rugby. A member of the past four senior eights and team president in

48 Presumably, the UTRC continued to use the Church St. docks until the John St. boathouse was ready.
1923, his accomplishments earned him a War Memorial Scholarship for scholastic and athletic proficiency in 1925. Some were veterans of the Great War. Some were gifted in many sports. All were proven boat-movers.

With these men Loudon need not have worried about the Olympic eights trial in St. Catharines, which was won going away. After a further week's training, the Varsity crew loaded themselves, their shell, and some rowing machines on the CPR steamer "Minnedosa" for the one-week Atlantic crossing.49 Training daily on the voyage, the crew arrived in Cherbourg on July 3rd, and set up camp at the Paris Boat Club on the Seine at Asnieres. The change of setting was not unproblematic. In his book, Hunter complains about the food, noise and sanitary conditions, stating; “not until then did I learn with amazement the antipathy evinced by the French toward our national custom of bathing.”50 Loudon's one complaint was about water pollution:

The course on which we did most of our training began at the Paris Dog Cemetery, where wealthy Parisians bury their pet dogs, and ended at a free bathing beach. Which of these marks we detested most would be difficult to say, as the water was filthy at both places.51

This emphasis on hygiene had its roots in the squalor all had faced the last time they had been in France. As scholars of the combatants’ experience have noted, in addition to the “minor vices of swearing, drinking and gambling” veterans returned with a “predilection for short hair, regular showers and clean clothes”.52 Hunter suspected that unsanitary conditions proved detrimental to the Canadians' performance. Unlike the Americans, they had been drinking the local water.

49 This account of the Varsity rowers at the Olympic Games is condensed from a feature written by T.R. Loudon. University of Toronto Monthly XXV, October 1924.
50 Hunter, op. cit., 115.
52 Morton and Wright, op. cit., 116.
In spite of this, the Varsity eight gave a very good account of themselves. The amateur ethos was quite apparent in training encounters with English and Australian rivals. Loudon commented:

They made no secret of their times and if one wished to go out and see their crews row, it was only necessary to say the word and a welcome would be extended. This was a pleasant contrast to the spirit so often encountered on this side of the water whenever professional coaches have control.\(^{53}\)

In their first heat, the fast-starting Varsity crew had taken a large lead over the first half of the race, only to be caught and passed by the American eight represented by Yale University. In the repechage to decide the fourth finalist, Canada won decisively, and moved into the final against the United States, Britain and Italy. The final was run on an overcast day into a blustery headwind. Mishearing the commands, the Canadians started poorly. Fighting their way from the back of the field, they passed first the Italians and, by the thousand meter mark, the British eight. The Yale crew was, however, in a class by itself and although the Varsity men extended their lead on the other boats, they were unable to catch up. There was disappointment at the Americans' margin of victory, a stunning 15 seconds; “Second in a field composed of the world’s best was our lot and I suppose we should have been elated at that” wrote Hunter without much conviction.\(^{54}\) Loudon, however, left little doubt at the immense pride he felt for the performance of his athletes: “the writer cannot refrain from expressing his admiration for the small band of Varsity men who composed the Olympic eight oared crew. In every respect, before and after the races, they were most delightful company and a great credit to Canada.”\(^{55}\)


\(^{54}\) Hunter, *op. cit.*, 116.

Since 1924, several Varsity rowers have matched and even bettered the “Paris crew’s” feat.\textsuperscript{56} However, this Olympic performance was unique in that it was entirely a University of Toronto accomplishment. The coach, crew, equipment and facilities were all our own. In just four years the UTRC had grown from nothing to a producer of world-class oarsmen with their own shells, boathouse and university funding. As we have seen, this was achieved by a dynamic group of veteran-students whose energies were harnessed by Tommy Loudon. Their successes on the water made possible the provision of the club’s longer-term needs. In this next section, we will see how the UTRC attempted to extend this advantage in competition, funding and facilities, and how it was gradually lost.

The 1924 Olympic performance made rowing a popular physical activity at the University of Toronto. It had been shown that complete beginners to the sport could be turned into competitive athletes in a relatively short time. When school started again in the fall of 1924, the UTRC sought to capitalize on its newly gained renown by reviving the interfaculty regatta. Recruiting was devolved to enterprising students and resembled the methods of the UTRC of 1897-1900. Rowers from each college or faculty would put together at least one eight with seven novices in the boat, which would also include two veteran rowers. After a few sessions of rudimentary training in the rowing room, each faculty crew would take turns learning to row on the water. In early or mid-October, a regatta would take place. Having whetted the appetite of the recruits, the UTRC would

encourage them and others to train over the winter. This pool of novices would provide the material for future Varsity crews.

The interfaculty regatta held yearly between 1924 and 1930, was a remarkably successful venture which at its peak had seven entries. Often entering two crews, SPS won six of the seven regattas held. Despite the dominance of “skule”, the event made for some lively rivalry. Engineer James Boyd wrote that other faculties were “turning out men who appear to be strong enough in the back and weak enough in the mind to make good oarsmen, which means that School can’t afford to fool.” With a twinkle in his eye, rival Victoria College rower Mel Kenny remembered thinking the “SPSers were dirty, noisy, profane, uninspired, nasty people who’d just as soon cut your throat as not.” The Medical, Dentistry and Forestry faculties, and Victoria, University and Trinity Colleges all tried to break the streak, and University College eventually succeeded in 1930. Initially, the races were run from the old site at the foot of Church St., but by 1929 they started at the Western entrance to the Harbour. In either case they finished at the boathouse, cheered on by a small crowd of students.

The success of the Interfaculty Regatta carried over to winter training. Every day from 5 to 6 p.m. athletes sweated over the rowing machines at Hart House. The *Varsity* estimated that as many as 150 students tried out in 1927. With these new men, the UTRC continued to compete in the summer, though it never again regained its early dominance. Outside of the Eastern Canadian Rowing Championship, captured in 1930, it was the

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57 *Toike Oike*, 16 October 1930.
58 Mel Kenny, interview by author, tape recording, Toronto, ON., 15 July 1997, author’s collection.
Toronto students' lot to be perpetual summer bridesmaids. Second in the Senior Eight finals of 1925, 1930 and 1931, and third in 1932. Second in the Junior Eight in 1927. Second to Argonauts in the 1928 Olympic Trial. These results were nothing to be ashamed of, but Loudon felt the quality of crews decline as the veterans of 1920-24 began to graduate. The coach perceived, somewhat unfairly, a certain lack of spirit. “The automobile became available to all and sundry”, Loudon wrote, “helping make hard physical work for fun something to be avoided.”

The creation of the McGill Rowing Club had been eagerly anticipated at the UTRC for at least five years. Having for so long sought out its competition against the rowing clubs of North America at the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta, the University of Toronto finally had an intercollegiate rival. The first Canadian interuniversity regatta took place on Oct. 16, 1926 on the Lachine canal in Montreal. In a match race, the McGill upstarts beat Varsity over the one-mile course. For the next three years, the boat race was more an adjunct to larger competition than the main event in its own right. The 1927 race, also won by McGill, was held at the CNE in August in conjunction with a Toronto amateur athletic festival. The circumstances of 1928 and 1929 races are less clear. It is known that they took place in St. Catharines over the 2000m course, and that Toronto won both races, but that is all. Whether these were private duels between the Blues and the Redmen, or whether the intercollegiate title was determined within the 1928 Olympic trials and 1929 Henley competition is uncertain.

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59 *UTA B76-0003/001 (10). Loudon, Thomas R.*
60 *The Goblin*, May 1921.
In the 1930s, briefly, the Toronto-McGill boat race hit the big time. The contest returned to a two mile stretch of the Lachine canal passing through a predominantly francophone, working class sector of Montreal. What gave the race its shine was the sponsorship of the Canadian Pacific Rail Company through its president, Sir Edward Beatty. Beatty, also the Chancellor of McGill University, was one of Canada’s most influential men between the wars. A squat, muscular man with a penchant for fine suits, he had graduated from the University of Toronto in 1898. Though an indifferent student, Beatty had considered his college days an idyllic period because of the friendships he had formed, particularly in sport. Young Edward had played rugby football and “Beatty glowed in the close-knit unity it encouraged, the supreme maleness of it, the post-game socializing, the pranks and the willingness to submerge oneself for the side.” Sir Edward in later years remained loyal to his University buddies, and never turned any of them down when approached for the occasional favour.

Beatty’s magnanimity had extended to the fledgling University of Toronto Rowing Club in 1920, when he donated a four-oared shell to the team. Though some evidence is circumstantial, there are several reasons to believe Beatty was also a major factor in the promotion and success of the Varsity-McGill boat race between 1930 and 1935. A varsity football player between 1896 and 1898, Beatty was a teammate of Thrift Burnside, Henry Gooderham and William Douglas, who had all participated in the first incarnation of the UTRC. As we have also seen, Douglas and Gooderham by the mid-1920s had become

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involved with the team executive and it is possible that their connection to Beatty was integral to the Lachine scheme.

Even if these contacts never occurred, the evidence suggests that Beatty would have favoured the boat race plan anyhow. Though he ruled McGill University with an iron hand, Beatty was very much interested in promoting student activities, including amateur sport. Beatty deplored the "playing of the game for the championships and for the benefit of the spectators rather than for the pure sport of it" and looked to Britain as the example to follow:

[In England], it is common for almost every student to indulge in some form of athletic activity, most times involving competition with other students, but competition of a character that does not excite great public interest and is, therefore, carried on without the stimulus of newspaper propaganda and huge lines of spectators. In the United States the reverse is the case.

Ironically, the CPR-sponsored boat races on the Lachine Canal, complete with Paramount Film crews and planes circling overhead, would turn out to be the most watched intercollegiate rowing events in Canadian history.

Interest was high, particularly since the race was held immediately after the Redmen-Blues football game every October. Hundreds of Toronto students made the weekend trip to Montreal, and after the football game scores of buses carried spectators from Molson Stadium to the Lachine Canal to watch the race for the barber's pole. Several members

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63 Ibid., 339-344. Though Beatty's business sense kept McGill University solvent through the Depression, he was best remembered for the sacking of Stephen Leacock and other left-leaning professors over the age of 65. The Chancellor also used strong-arm tactics to help the McGill Rowing Club. When a local businessman out in a motorboat had caused the destruction of a McGill shell and refused to take responsibility for the damage, Beatty "convinced" the man to donate a new craft to the club.

64 Globe (Toronto), 10 January 1923.

65 Tradition held that the winners got to paint the pole in the colours of their University. The pole sported blue and white stripes from 1928 onwards.
of the Montreal political, business and academic elite were in attendance. E.W. Beatty followed the race every year in a launch. Over the years, the governor-general of Canada Lord Willingdon, McGill University president Sir Arthur Currie, and University of Toronto president Reverend Cody accompanied him. Also present were P.D. Ross, the editor of the Ottawa Journal, R.J. Magor and W.B. Converse, prominent Montreal businessmen and Wilfred Bovey, Director of Extra-mural relations at McGill University. As the large attendance figures indicate, however, interest was not limited to the upper classes. Many spectators came from the blue-collar districts bordering the Lachine canal, and the race was as much a source of entertainment for them as for the Westmount crowd. Wrote the Varsity, “After the Blue and White of Varsity had crossed the line in front of the Red of McGill [in 1930], a little frenchman came running up to a group which included Professor Loudon, waved his arms around frantically and shouted, ‘who won- the Liberals or Conservatives?’”

The Canal, flanked by roads on either side, was ideally suited for watching a rowing race from start to finish. This fact was not lost on entrepreneurs, who one year had the canal roads closed to traffic, hired buses and sold seat tickets at one dollar each. Nevertheless, Montrealers were not deterred from appearing in droves to watch the race, lining the banks of the Lachine canal. An excerpt from a Montreal daily illustrates the atmosphere:

As usual, the race was a red letter event for the citizens of Cote St. Paul and thousands lined each bank while supporters of both eights followed the race from cars along the bank or in launches. There were nearly 200 automobiles trailing the crews along the two roads on either bank, and four launches, filled with cheering undergraduates followed the race behind the official launch.

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67 *The Varsity* (Toronto), 6 October 1932.

68 UTA B73-0017 (07).
Something of a Poughkeepsie touch was lent to the affair by a coach full of spectators on a local train which followed part of the race, thanks to the curiosity of the locomotive’s crew.69

One *Varsity* writer concurred:

While indifference is the key note of the attitude of Toronto students towards the race, it is quite a different story down at Montreal. Approximately forty thousand spectators will line the banks of the canal and cheer their favourites. A large flotilla of small craft along the course will add a note of colour to the spectacle.70

Although the Depression hit Montreal hard, especially between 1932 and 1934, it did not really affect turnout for the regatta, which was free anyhow. The McGill Rowing Club, though, was another story, for it fell victim both to competitive and financial woes. After winning the first two boat races, “they had become such consistent losers that a daily reporter described them as a group of nautically-minded young men that rows all summer at lakeside and loses each fall on the Lachine canal to Toronto.”71 The ever-sporting Tommy Loudon may have selected his crews with regards to keeping races from becoming lopsided. In 1931, the Varsity crew had won by six lengths. The following year, lighter on average by twenty pounds, U of T won by a much narrower margin. Despite McGill’s losing streak, James Boyd, a veteran of the 1930 race, remembered that each crew “was dead serious about winning that race.”72 The tension among the competitors was often palpable, as one rower’s account of the start shows:

Once more the nightmare is a reality when varsity seniors race McGill for the intercollegiate title. The McGill boat is out first. Automatically we give the red and white a cheer. Dazedly we launch our own boat, fiddle with our foot-boards and paddle to the starting line. Except for the voice of

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69 *Gazette* (Montreal), 9 October, 1933.
70 *The Varsity* (Toronto), 2 October 1934. Pouring rain washed away the writer’s attendance expectations. Crowd attendance is notoriously hard to estimate and seems to have varied with the weather. Figures from the *Varsity* and *Torontonensis* are as follows; 1930, 15 000; 1931, 25 000; 1932, “thousands”; 1933, 5000; 1934, 20 000; 1935, no figures.
the starter and the barking of the two coxswains there is a deadly silence.\footnote{Torontonensis 1930, 264.} Sometimes, the McGill crews were a match for the Varsity Blues. In 1932 after a tough struggle over the two-mile course, Toronto was ahead by a scant ½ canvas. At the finish, coxswain Sam Hughes recalled asking “somebody in the coach boat, it turned out to be [University of Toronto President] Cody, ‘Who won?’ He was much amused.”\footnote{Sam Hughes, interview by author, tape recording, Toronto, ON., 31 May 1999, author’s collection.} By 1935 however, constant defeat, high student turnover, and the loss of their coach, Urbain Molmанс, who had been killed by a train, sapped the morale of the McGill Rowing Club. Unable to field a complete crew of students, McGill added two Lachine oarsmen to their boat and were defeated by a whopping 18 lengths.\footnote{The Varsity (Toronto), 26 September 1935. When asked by McGill whether they might use Lachine rowers, Loudon is said to have replied; “You can use policemen as long as you get a crew together.”} By 1936, the McGill Rowing Club collapsed, and so did the Varsity-McGill boat race. The “Canadian Rowing Classic”, as it was called, was for a short while Canada’s answer to the Oxford-Cambridge and Harvard-Yale boat races, and provided an arena of direct university competition for Toronto and McGill rowers. In terms of spectators, the race’s popularity in Canada has not been equaled. Originally, the boat race was supposed to alternate between Montreal and Toronto, but the latter never hosted the event.

By October 1929, the five-year lease on the John St. boathouse had expired. In a letter to the Toronto Harbour Commission, UTAA secretary T.A. Reed requested monthly tenancy, stating that “the future of the club is rather uncertain.”\footnote{Supporters of the University of Toronto Rowing Club in 1929 had good reason to hold off on a long-term commitment to the John St. facility. Early in the year, a large coalition of aquatic sports...}
clubs had begun a campaign to build a completely new recreational waterway on the Humber River, and the plan appeared to have broad support from the Toronto City Council and the Harbour Commissioners.

In January 1929, Joe Wright, president of the Argonaut Rowing Club and also a city Alderman moved that estimates on the cost of constructing an aquatic and winter sports course on the Humber river be made. Not surprisingly, all the Toronto rowing, canoeing, sailing and swimming clubs backed him. In order to press home the popularity of the proposal, the clubs organized the Brule Lake regatta on the Humber River on June 1, 1929. The event, named after Etienne Brule, the French explorer who had first come to the river in 1615, left little doubt as to the depth of support for the plan. There were swimming races for men and women, boys and girls, and several canoeing and rowing contests. The featured race of the day was the single’s dash between local sculling hero Joe Wright Jr., Diamond Sculls winner at the Henley Royal Regatta and Ken Myers, U.S. champion. The Brule Lake regatta had several marquee sponsors; Premier Howard Ferguson, Sir Henry Pellatt, Sir Joseph Flavelle, Sir Edward Beatty, local sports entrepreneur Lol Solman, and the Ontario Athletic Commission. Large numbers of Torontonians came to the banks of the Humber to watch the races. Lou Marsh, sports reporter and former rower, wrote favourably of the event:

> When twenty thousand people will turn out to see a combination regatta over a bob-tailed shift course such as that used for Saturday’s ‘Brule Lake’ regatta, how many would turn out if the old Humber were straightened out from the lake to Bloor street viaduct and the paddlers, oarsmen, swimmers and bug jocks had a course a thousand feet wide and a mile and a quarter long?  

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76 *Toronto Harbour Commission Archives*, RG 3/3, box 197, folder 8. Reed to Langton, 10 October 1929.
78 *Star* (Toronto), 3 June 1929.
The same weekend, at a general meeting attended by club representatives and by several ministers of the Ontario government and by Mayor Sam McBride, Alderman Wright again expressed his belief that if the project were seen through, “Toronto would have a rowing course second to none on the continent.”

It was an idiosyncratic plan, which leaves Wright’s hyperbole open to doubt. The most remarkable feature of the Brule Lake waterway was that it was slightly “S” shaped. The engineers had found it impossible to build a straight 1¼-mile stretch in the Humber valley and had compromised by designing a course that curved equally in both directions, so no crew would have an unfair advantage at the finish. Another quirk was the width of the raceway. A standard rowing course then as now has six lanes. Although very wide in parts, the new Humber would only fit four boats side-by-side over its entire length. Given these features, the new regatta course, while more than adequate for club events, would clearly not do as a site of major competition nowadays.

These considerations never entered the minds of the regatta course backers in 1929. Despite the presence of an international rowing federation, FISA, there were few global rules standardizing the length, depth width and shape of rowing courses. If there was an example to follow, it was that of Britain. Imperial measurements were used on Canadian courses, and the Henley distance, 1 mile 550 yards, not the Olympic standard 2000 metres, was the norm. Olympic titles are decided over a straight course. The Oxford-Cambridge boat race was run over the winding Thames from Putney to Mortlake. If this was good enough for the grand rowing clubs of Britain, a slightly bending stretch of

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79 Ibid.
water would do quite nicely for the Canadian Rowing Classic. Revealingly, the motto of
the major real estate developer who owned land around the proposed course, was
“Angliae pars Anglia procul”; a bit of England far from England.80

This episode in the history of Toronto, now forgotten, is the great “what might have
been” of water sports in this city. Dimensional problems aside, the planned venue was
excellent. It would have afforded a long stretch of smooth water protected from the wind
and waves of Lake Ontario, and from the wake of large ships thereon. Brule Lake was to
be flanked on both sides by tree-lined parkland and bluffs, a healthier sporting
environment than the crowded industrial harbourfront. In wintertime, the frozen-over
Humber River would be perfect for skating. A boulevard, linking Bloor and Queen
Streets along the eastern side of the river, would afford easy access to the water for
athletes and spectators alike. Best of all, from the rowing and canoe clubs’ point of view,
a large tract of land was to be set aside at the Bloor Street viaduct for their use. Like
Philadelphia, Toronto was to have its very own Boathouse Row.

Brule Lake was a sizeable engineering project and was not going to come cheap. 45 acres
of marshland were to be reclaimed over twelve months of hydraulic dredging, and a road
was to be built. All told, the estimated cost was $566 715.81 However, there was the
political will to carry out the plan. Mayor McBride had reassured a large deputation of
Brule Lake Regatta Course backers, including Tommy Loudon, Alderman Wright, and
his famous son Joe Jr., that he and the powerful Board of Control favoured the

80 Humber Valley Surveys, (Home Smith and Co.: Toronto, 1912) p. 3. Special Collections, Toronto
Reference Library.
proposition unanimously. Unfortunately for Toronto's water sport enthusiasts, and though they did not yet know it, their timing could not have been worse.

The day before Sam McBride had told the Humber River Regatta Course committee that their dream was a sure thing, the stock markets had crashed in New York. By 1930, the effects of economic Depression began to be felt, and this signaled trouble for the publicly funded rowing course. In January, City Council began receiving letters opposing the Brule Lake plan. Seeking to turn the project's cost to advantage in April, Alderman Wright craftily moved that the plan be pushed forward as a make-work project for the many unemployed, but the proposal was referred to the Parks Committee, where it remained stalled. Later that month, the new mayor, Bert Wemp, expressed his opposition to Brule Lake. As the Depression worsened through the summer and into the fall, public opposition increased. Council twice received letters from the Central Council of Ratepayers' Associations demanding that the project be stopped. The British Imperial Association of Canada wrote:

We adhere to our previous resolution as opposed to any action being taken re Brule Lake until this question has been placed before the citizens on Jan. 1, 1931; further we are of the opinion that if this proposal is carried out it would mean work for steam shovels and trucks only and would not relieve the unemployment situation, also further this would not be an opportune time to spend money outside of the City where the benefits would be for a few only.

Some council members also took up the call to stop Brule Lake. Alderman MacGregor, confident that public opinion was with him, demanded the issue be put to a referendum.

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81 Board of Control Report No. 32, 12 December 1929. City of Toronto Archives.
82 Minutes of the Board of Control, 30 October 1929. City of Toronto Archives.
83 Minutes of Toronto City Council, 30 October 1929. City of Toronto Archives.
84 Minutes of the Board of Control, 24 April 1930. City of Toronto Archives.
85 Minutes of Toronto City Council, 16 June, 6 October 1930. City of Toronto Archives.
86 Minutes of the Board of Control, 28 October 1930. City of Toronto Archives.
and his motion was only narrowly defeated by City Council, 16 to 11.\textsuperscript{87} Going into 1931, the regatta course had become a political football. Watching helplessly from the sidelines, students were bitter:

\begin{quote}
The Brule Lake course has been permitted to degenerate into a shuttlecock to be batted between opposing camps of civic political blocs. Meanwhile, a splendid opportunity is being muffed to put the City of Toronto back into the rowing limelight where it belongs.\textsuperscript{88}
\end{quote}

For undisclosed reasons, Tommy Loudon withdrew his support for the Humber River Regatta Course association in September. Perhaps, like many Torontonians, he simply felt it inappropriate to use public funds for recreation projects during an economic crisis. Or maybe the rumoured link of Brule Lake to the ongoing alderman salary investigation had driven him off. In any case, the plan, already badly shaken, was heading for a further beating in the municipal election campaign.

The regatta course was a wedge issue in the 1930 election, and the Toronto dailies played partisan roles. Leading the charge against Brule Lake were the \textit{Telegram} and the \textit{Globe}, which supported mayorlty candidate W.J. Stewart and like-minded aldermen and controllers. Pointing out that tough times lay ahead, the \textit{Globe} editorialized that the regatta course was "a costly and unwise luxury."\textsuperscript{89} Another alderman concurred, pointing out that 20 000 taxpayers were presently unable to pay their taxes.\textsuperscript{90} Some, like Board of Control candidate Andrew Boland, hedged their bets: "I am not saying that, at some time in the future, it might not be desirable and advisable to make these expenditures; I am saying it is unadvisable now."\textsuperscript{91} For the most part, though, the issue was sensationalized.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{87} Minutes of Toronto City Council, 2 December 1930. \textit{City of Toronto Archives}.
\item \textsuperscript{88} \textit{The Varsity} (Toronto), 9 October 1930.
\item \textsuperscript{89} \textit{Globe} (Toronto), 29 December 1930.
\item \textsuperscript{90} \textit{Globe} (Toronto) 27 December 1930.
\item \textsuperscript{91} \textit{Globe} (Toronto) 29 December 1930.
\end{itemize}
The *Globe*, in particular, made a big deal out of Sam McBride's support for the Brule Lake project, which came out at a raucous ratepayer's meeting:

Mr. McBride ducked, dived and dipped; groped, gyrated and gesticulated; blustered, browbeat and banged- used all the tactics he had learned in his boasted 25 years of municipal experience, in order to stave off an answer to his interrogators- but, with the deadly persistency and patience of a small boy stalking some gaudy butterfly for a cyanide jar, they finally pinned him down, down- and the truth came out.92

One reader wrote of Aldermen Wright and Simpson, who supported Brule Lake; "I sincerely hope and trust that the electors will see to it that both of these self-appointed 'philanthropists' will be left at home on Thursday next, and that Brule Lake will never be heard of in the future."93 The regatta course was portrayed as a circus at a time when bread was needed.

Other candidates supported by the *Star* and the *Mail and Empire* defended the project. Alderman Joe Wright promoted it as "good, honest sport for the youth of the city",94 stating "the Humber development would be the greatest improvement the west section of the city ever had".95 Controller James Simpson reassured ratepayers that although it would necessitate a 20-cent tax increase, Toronto could afford the project. He affirmed that the recreational facility would benefit citizens and attract tourism. Anyway, "at present it is a mosquito breeding river. and it will not be many years before it will have to be cleaned up as part of the city." Defiantly, he added, "I am not making an apology for supporting it, whether the Telegram likes it or not."96 Alderman candidate John Laxton mused, "the aldermen and controllers who are coming round and telling you that they're

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92 Ibid.
93 *Telegram* (Toronto), 29 December 1930.
94 *Mail and Empire* (Toronto), 27 December 1930
95 *Mail and Empire* (Toronto), 29 December 1930.
opposed to Brule Lake should tell you that they all voted for it at first." He believed Brule Lake should not be an election issued and that considered action should be taken when the City's report on the project was complete. When asked about unemployment, Laxton responded that Brule Lake would generate $200,000 worth of work.  

Battle lines were drawn when voters went to the polls on Jan. 1, 1931. After a recount, W.J. Stewart won the mayoralty by 300 ballots. Chamberlain, MacGregor and Boland were all returned for their jurisdictions. Of the Brule Lake proponents, only Simpson was elected to Council. Joe Wright, who had been a clear winner the previous year, placed a lowly fifth in his Ward. The tide had completely turned. The Toronto public had already been made wary of the Toronto Harbour Commission, R. Home Smith and the aquatic clubs by the Denton Enquiry's discovery of irregularities, favouritism and incompetence. On top of this, the Depression had made the Toronto electorate nervous about the regatta course and its $556,000 price tag. Through 1931, consideration of the project was halted and other civic concerns came to the fore. With no advocates left on City Council, the Brule Lake dream was left to fade away.

The scrapping of the new regatta course must have been a bitter disappointment to those who had looked forward to rowing on the sheltered Humber River. For Loudon and the UTRC, the John St. boathouse was no longer the godsend it had been in 1924. Despite the Depression, economic changes were making Toronto harbour a much less hospitable

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96 Ibid.
97 Star (Toronto), 30 December 1930.
98 Ibid.
place to row. Dredging of the central waterfront had been completed in 1930. This, along with the opening of the Welland canal the following year, meant that much larger ships trading in coal, cement, oil, and grain could now dock in Toronto, and shipping volume skyrocketed from 250 000 tons in 1921 to 3 100 000 tons in 1934. That same year, Loudon reported to the UTAA that "present accommodation at the Bay front had become unsatisfactory, both on account of the deterioration of the buildings and the conditions of the Bay, together with the general roughness of the water at that point." The endless passage of huge freighters producing boat-breaking swells in front of the John St. quay meant a change of venue was needed.

The years 1932 to 1936 were a frustrating period for the University's rowers, whose repeated efforts at moving to calmer waters ultimately proved futile. In November 1932, the UTRC began inquiring about parkland reserved for sailing and boating clubs east of the CNE at the foot of Bathurst Street. Students appeared before the UTAA with a plan for a new $6000 boathouse. The following spring, UTAA president M.A. Mackenzie and Secretary-Treasurer T.A. Reed approached the University's Board of Governors for a loan, but were rejected. Undeterred, the rowers planned to move to the aquatic reservation, which offered access to the western waterfront, now protected by a breakwall. In the spring of 1934, recognizing the University's unwillingness and inability to contribute, the UTRC produced a new proposal. In negotiation with the Harbour Commission, Loudon had secured a site beside the National Yacht Club at a yearly rental

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100 Ibid., 14-15.
101 UTAA A79-0019/02. Minutes of the UTAA, 8 May 1934.
of $50. Under his supervision, a new boathouse could be built at a cost of $1500. This money would come out of the savings on the $600 rental at John St. and by the UTRC's forgoing its 1934 Henley visit- a further $450. The balance would come out of loans by rowing alumni. 103 In return, the club's mandate would change, becoming not just a racing organization but a recreational one housing the graduates’ private singles. Although this plan appeared workable, only about 30 students had appeared for spring tryouts. At an executive meeting of the club, a frustrated Loudon stated that current interest might not justify the effort and expenditure and under the circumstances the UTRC should consider disbanding. 104

The last best hope of the UTRC came and went over the summer of 1934. No action was taken on the plan, the UTAA having found it “impossible to make satisfactory arrangements with the city authorities as to the type of building to be constructed.” 105 Scattered attempts at approaching the City, Harbour Commission and University throughout 1935 and 1936 proved fruitless. In one final bid in May 1936, Loudon had requested the assurance of $600 (the UTRC’s yearly rental) for five years in order to allow graduates to finance the construction of a small brick boathouse. The UTAA, stating it could not guarantee the actions of future Directorates, declined. 106 Four years of trying had gone nowhere. In April of 1937, Loudon announced that the Toronto Harbour Commission needed the John St. property for more lucrative sailboat slips and that the University of Toronto had to vacate. Time had run out.

102 Ibid., 4 April 1933.
103 Ibid., 8 May 1934.
104 UTA A79-0019/20. Minutes of the UTRC, 19 April 1934.
105 UTA A79-0019/02. Minutes of the UTAA, 2 October 1934.
Seeing the organization he had built crumbling around him, Loudon had had enough. The boathouse was gone, and efforts at relocation to the Humber and to the CNE had both failed. The UTAA's rowing budget, which had peaked at $2500 between 1925 and 1930, had been whittled down to a still generous $1500 by 1937 and seemed destined for further cutbacks. The last Toronto-McGill boat race had been run in 1935 and there appeared no likelihood of revival. The days of champion crews and hotly contested Interfaculty races were long gone, and Loudon did not see the same spirit in the small group of students who now made up the rowing club. The coach had considered retirement in the past. In 1932, he wrote to the President of the Athletic Directorate that it was "quite evident to me that my term of usefulness is over and I think that someone [else] should carry on." Requesting relief from his coaching duties, Loudon cited the strain of twelve years of year-round training of athletes and caring for equipment, saying the effort "seems to tire the present candidate too much." Incredibly, he was convinced to return to preside over the five most difficult years of the UTRC's existence. His heart was not in it, and Loudon took the 1935 summer off coaching and ultimately retired in the fall of 1937.

In September 1937, the boats were removed to the Argonaut Rowing Club, where the UTRC continued to train. Some weak crews competed at the Royal Canadian Henley and the inaugural Loudon regatta was held. Similar in concept to the Interfaculty regattas of

106 Ibid., 12 May 1936.
108 Ibid., Loudon to Athletic Directorate, 14 March 1932.
109 With his free time, Loudon took flying lessons and earned his glider pilot's license.
the 1920s, it was of much smaller scale, with students racing in singles and fours. In a final stab at intercollegiate competition arranged by Director of Athletics Warren Stevens with his American alma mater, the senior eight traveled to Syracuse University to race the Orangemen. Outweighed and outclassed, the Varsity crew was soundly defeated, and talk of a rematch in 1938 remained just that. Surprisingly though, the UTRC held its own in 1938 and its budget was maintained at $1500. Membership arrangements for 30 students were made with the ARC. Two workboats and a new set of oars were purchased and two shells were overhauled at a total cost of $530. A second Loudon regatta was held.

What little shred of viability the club had left was finally lost between 1939 and 1940. The 1939 budget was cut to $1000 and the UTAA took out ten fewer memberships with the Argonauts. The start of war in Europe in the fall of 1939 did not immediately affect University athletics, but by April the rowing budget was again cut in half, with the UTAA demanding an end to summer competition. It was a moot point. With Hitler’s blitzkrieg forcing the capitulation of France, things took a very serious turn for the worse. Meeting in July, Canadian Universities decided to suspend intercollegiate athletics for the duration of the war. The University of Toronto Rowing Club, already moribund, was put out of its misery.

With Tommy Loudon at the helm, the University of Toronto Rowing Club had been a grand and remarkably successful venture through the 1920s and 30s. Highlights included one Olympic silver medal, four Royal Canadian Henley titles, eight consecutive
Intercollegiate boat race championships, extensive funding to a degree unmatched ever since, significant interest from the student population and independent accommodation on the Toronto waterfront. The construction of an ideal waterway on the Humber had been assured, and was lost only through the unluckiest timing possible. All the elements of a viable sporting organization were there: Enthusiastic coaches and athletes and financial support for equipment, facilities and events provided by influential university administrators, businessmen and politicians. However, no matter how high the commitment and extensive the connections, the effects of the Depression and declining student interest proved too debilitating. Brule Lake, the McGill rivalry, and the University rowers' budget all fell victim to these conditions. The motivation and morale of the increasingly embattled coach and his athletes all suffered, and in 1940 the boats were finally shelved for good. Varsity rowing would not return for another twenty years.
ARGONAUT PROTEGES- 1960-1971

Angus "Jack" Russell had a problem. As president and head coach of the Argonaut Rowing Club, he was charged with producing competitive crews, and Argo oarsmen had been trailing in their rivals’ wake throughout the 1950s. In senior heavyweight rowing, the only category that really counted in those days, the Argonaut Rowing Club had won only two Canadian Henley titles since 1945. By 1960 Russell, himself a 1952 Olympian, was aiming to bring the double-blue back to their prewar prominence. Enter the University of Toronto. Or rather not. Through the 1960s, which saw the return of Varsity Blues rowing after a twenty-year absence, the University itself played only a secondary role in developing a rowing program for its students. Instead, the UTRC was an enterprise almost entirely initiated, directed and sustained by the Argonaut Rowing Club. As the Argos went, so too did the Varsity Blues rowers.

In the post-war years, student registration had doubled from some 7100 in 1940 to 15 000 in 1950.¹ The University of Toronto, supported by a vigorous interfaculty league and by the many returning veterans, teemed with athletic life once more.² There were no less than 14 intercollegiate men’s and 3 women’s teams, including everything from football to fencing. But despite the influx of servicemen and the University’s commitment to an extensive athletic program, there was no rowing. Though I have found no evidence, it is plausible that U of T student-veterans were keen to row, just as they had been in 1919. However, after 1945 no faculty member stepped forward to take charge of the UTRC as

¹ University of Toronto. President’s Report for the year ending 30th June 1940, p. 146. University of Toronto. President’s Report for the year ending June 1950, p. 175. This figure does not include the 4500 ex-servicemen who registered.
² Torontoensis 1946, (SAC: Toronto), vol. XLVIII.
Tommy Loudon had done. This was not uncommon. According to Peter King a dearth of leadership was endemic to Canadian rowing in the immediate post-war years:

After the War, the structure of clubs was strained because oarsmen who, by virtue of their age should have been coaching or officia[ting] were continuing to compete. As a result, there was a "bulge" of athletes and a "vacuum" among coaches. In the 1950s the WWII oarsmen and the next generation both graduated so that now there was an even greater vacuum.3

Furthermore, a disastrous fire at the Argonauts hindered the re-start of Toronto rowing in the spring of 1947. The facility had been gutted and 54 shells plus all the trophies except the Grey Cup, won the previous year, had been destroyed.4 Taken together, a lack of direction combined with the crushing loss of equipment were insurmountable obstacles to rebuilding the UTRC in the decade after the war.

Throughout the 1950s, the Argonaut Rowing Club relied on its network of five Toronto high school programs to generate membership. By the time Jack Russell assumed the leadership of the club however, he had concluded that this system did not attract enough heavyweights to make the Argonauts competitive at Olympic trials. The founding of the University of Western Ontario Rowing Club in 1959 by a professor named Phil Fitz-James proved to be the catalyst for change. In 1960, Russell approached an engineering friend in the Alumni Association and through his contacts recruited students, mainly engineers, in order to challenge Western. After six weeks of practice, this inexperienced crew was introduced to competitive rowing at Lake Fanshawe, north of London. Racing in an early November hailstorm, the Blues finished second in a race against two Western boats. It was a start. Throughout the 1960s, the UTRC developed gradually, fuelled by a

3 Peter King to author, 19 April 1999, author's collection.
growing network of intercollegiate competitions. It was the old-boys down at the lake, not the athletic administrators at Hart House, who ensured that Varsity men could row.

University of Toronto oarsmen had been drawn by visions of competitive glory in the past. Recall that in 1897, President James Loudon and coach Ned Hanlan had loudly proclaimed their desire to send a crew to the Henley Royal Regatta to test the Empire’s mettle. In 1920, with the UTRC barely restarted, there had been talk of participating in the trials for the Antwerp Olympiad. As we have seen, the campaign for the Paris games in 1924 had played a decisive role in the promotion of U of T rowing between the wars. Likewise, the 1960s version of the UTRC was spurred by Olympic aspirations. The international appeal of competition attracted students. Ray Seto, a physical education major, joined the rowing program in 1962 after seeing a poster looking for men eager to try out for a ticket to the Tokyo Olympics. He was not the only one. U of T and indeed Ontario University rowing grew apace in the first half of the decade. In the 1960s, Canadian Club and University connections had a notable precedent to follow. Since 1954, Frank Read of the Vancouver Rowing Club had been recruiting University of British Columbia students, working them extremely hard, and making them the best rowers in the world. Up to 1960, these successes included one gold and two silver medals at the Olympics, one British Empire Games championship, and the much-storied defeat of a Soviet crew at the Henley Royal Regatta in 1955.

In spring 1962 the Eastern Canadian Intercollegiate Rowing Association (ECIRA), consisting of the Universities of Toronto, Western Ontario and McMaster, was formed.
Following the UBC-Vancouver RC model, the local community clubs, Argonauts, London and Leander respectively, provided the early leadership and equipment in exchange for the athletes that would improve their chances at the next Olympic trials. Through the ECIRA, the scope of competition broadened. The racing categories grew to include not only a senior eight, but a junior, freshman and by 1964 a lightweight eight as well. In this short period, Waterloo Lutheran, Ryerson and Brock and even Wayne State University from Detroit joined the founding members in competitions at lake Fanshawe, at the Argonaut Rowing Club and in Hamilton Harbour.

Training was a year-round endeavour using both Argonaut and University facilities. By the end of the first season, a rigorous winter-training schedule was outlined in a student newspaper, explaining: “This type of program is necessary if we are to reach our objective of the 1964 Olympic Games. This requires a great deal of effort and enthusiasm and if you are not prepared to work hard and make some sacrifices, please do not bother to apply.” When not on the lake or on the rowing machines, the rowers alternated between endless weight circuits and running at Hart House. Ingo Schulte-Hostedde recalled that he and his crewmates vastly improved their fitness by trying to keep up to Bruce Kidd and Bill Crothers as they pounded around the Hart House track. As they became stronger and technically more adept, the Varsity rowers started to take their share of the spoils. In 1963, led by medical student Roger Jackson the senior eight capped an undefeated season by winning the ECIRA championship. The following summer, six

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5 Ray Seto, interview by author, Mississauga, ON., 23 March 1999.
6 Toike Oike, 17 November 1960.
7 Ingo Schulte-Hostedde, interview by author, Burlington, ON., 13 March 1999. Kidd was the 1962 Commonwealth Games champion over 3 miles. Crothers was the 1964 Olympic silver medalist at 800m.
members of that crew competed for the Argonauts in the Olympic eights trial. While they finished third to a Vancouver boat, Jack Russell proudly recalled; “the program I had envisioned had borne fruit.”\(^8\) After this initial growth period, there were a few changes in the late 1960s. York University became the seventh member of the ECIRA, the regatta calendar was expanded to include a competition at St. Catharines and, in 1967, rowing was added to the Ontario-Quebec Athletic Association (OQAA). Ironically, the UTRC, formed initially to serve as a source of heavyweight rowers for the Argonauts, proved to be a lightweights powerhouse instead. Largely on the strength of its lightweight crews between 1968 and 1970, Toronto won two ECIRA titles and one OQAA title.\(^9\)

Very little of this had anything to do with University support, which had disappeared since the Loudon era. Back then, rowing had resonated in English Canada. It was a symbol of national confidence as well as of a continued connection to the Empire. Local scullers Joe Wright Jr., Jack Guest Sr. and Bobby Pearce had captured the public imagination by winning the Diamond Sculls at the Henley Royal Regatta.\(^10\) Furthermore, at a time of emerging and disputed professionalization in other sports, the efforts of the rowers symbolized the amateur ideal. Their early morning efforts on the lake were considered worthy of a disproportionate share of the University’s resources allotted to athletics. In the 1920s and 30s, when the ticket sales from Varsity football games

\(^8\) Jack Russell to author, 18 March, 1998, author’s collection. Roger Jackson was not part of the Argonaut crew. Having moved to the Vancouver Rowing Club he had not made the selected eight, but went to Tokyo as an alternate. Along with George Hungerford he became Olympic champion in the pair. Richard Symsyk, another member of the U of T program, was an Olympian in 1968 and 1972.

\(^9\) The ECIRA championship was decided by a points system in the final regatta of the season, until the OQAA assumed this method for itself in 1967. From then until its dissolution the ECIRA continued to award its title based on points accumulated over the entire fall rowing season.

\(^10\) Pearce, an Australian, moved to Hamilton after winning the 1928 Olympic single-scull title. He won again in 1932. Wright and Guest teamed up to win the silver medal in the double at the 1928 Games.
generated as much as two-thirds of the Athletic Association’s revenues, the rowing budget was, after football and hockey, the largest among all teams. This is particularly notable since neither the rowing competitions nor the rowing facility generated income for the University. One can only conclude that between the wars money spent subsidizing these amateur athletes was considered money well spent.

By the 1960s, much was changing. The University saw major physical expansion along the west side of St. George St., and the creation of campuses at Erindale (Mississauga) and Scarborough. This accommodated dramatically increasing enrolment throughout the decade- from 20 000 in 1961 to over 30 000 in 1970. The baby-boomers had reached University age, and this began to affect the UTAA’s income structure. In 1937, a compulsory student fee for athletics had been instituted. In exchange, students received access to the Hart House athletic wing, admission to football and hockey games, and to the skating rink, and other privileges. Into the 1950s it was not the most significant source of UTAA revenues. In 1954-55, for example, receipts from stadium rentals (35%) and football games (32%) were more important than the student levy (12%). By the 1960s though, there had been a major reversal. The student fee now accounted for more than half of the UTAA’s revenues, and intercollegiate games, stadium and arena rental together only accounted for 40 percent of the total. However the UTAA’s budgetary

12 It peaked at $2500 in 1930, which I estimate is the equivalent of $40 000 in 1999.
13 Ibid. UTAA estimates 1929-30. By way of comparison, the football and hockey games and Varsity stadium and arena made the University a net profit of $37 300 in 1929-30.
15 T.A. Reed, The Blue and White, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944), 58-59.
16 Figures from UTA A79-0019/04 UTAA Minutes, 1954-55 estimates.
17 Figures from UTAA A79-0019/05 UTAA Minutes, 1964-65 estimates.
priorities remained extremely stable from the 1930s to the mid-1970s. Intercollegiate sport consistently took one third of the UTAA budget. Football and hockey together took the lion’s share of the funding for intercollegiate sport: 64% in 1929-30, 62% in 1960-61, and 58% in 1974-75.18 What this meant, in effect, was that although student fees were becoming an increasingly significant source of revenue, this was not being reflected in spending priorities. High-performance athletics predominated over broad-based recreation, and big-name sports got a bigger share than the no-names. It would take another funding crisis and two task force reports in the mid-1990s for University administrators to finally respond to these inequities.

In the meantime, it took most of the 1960s for the rowers to gain even symbolic recognition in the form of the First Colour, the chief athletic distinction at the University of Toronto. In the wake of their ECIRA victory in the fall of 1963, the senior eight were awarded their “T” by special recommendation. Only in 1967 was the UTAA’s constitution changed to allow senior heavyweight and lightweight rowers to receive their First Colour automatically, but under strict conditions: the rowers had to win against at least two crews in the championship race.19 Terje “Terry” Skrien, who won three First Colours, recalled somewhat ruefully that the football players only needed to be team members to gain the same award.20 In its distribution of recognition, the message was quite clear: football, hockey and basketball players were important. Everyone else was second-class.

18 Figures from UTA A79-0019/02 UTAA Minutes, 1929-30 estimates, A79-0019/05 UTAA Minutes, 1960-61 estimates, and A79-0019/06 UTAA Minutes, 1974-75 estimates.
Access to funding came just as grudgingly. The rowers found it tough breaking into a long-established athletics budget, especially without an influential insider like Tommy Loudon to represent their interests. In 1957, Argonaut coach Jack Russell approached University of Toronto Athletic Director Warren Stevens about supporting an intramural program, but had received no encouragement.\(^{21}\) In 1961, the UTAA officially recognized the UTRC “on the understanding that no financial assistance can be extended.”\(^{22}\) Early in 1963, the UTAA paid the $25 ECIRA entry fee. By 1964, Director Stevens suggested that $200 be allocated to the rowers to cover their clothing and affiliation fees. In 1965, the UTRC requested a $500 budget, but the minutes indicate that the UTAA felt that $225 plus the interest from a $1000 bequest by a 1930s alumnus was all that could be extended. In 1967, Stevens received a letter from the Argonauts requesting help in financing the rowing team, but reminded them of a past agreement that “no financial demands would be made upon the Athletic Association.”\(^{23}\) Financial estimates indicate that in the wake of the OQAA championship win of 1970, rowing expenditures for the period peaked in 1971-72 at $1469.00, $1000 less than in 1930.\(^{24}\)

A potentially powerful source of funding, the alumni, was directed towards another worthy cause. In 1962, fifty or more former oarsmen raised $1239 to fund an annual

\(^{20}\) Terje Skrien, interview by author, Oakville ON., 27 March, 1999. Since 1974, rowers have gained their First Colour by competing at the OUAA/OWIAA/OUA championship.


\(^{22}\) UTA A79-0019/05. UTAA Minutes, 12 December 1961.

\(^{23}\) UTA A79-0019/06. UTAA Minutes, 14 February 1967.

\(^{24}\) Ibid. 22 February 1972.
award in honour of their old coach, Tommy Loudon, who was its first recipient. A clause in the fund agreement for the T.R. Loudon Award noted that from time to time "preference be given to rowing activities if the Athletic Directorate...decides...that such activities can advantageously be carried out as part of the athletic program of the University." Perhaps this can account for the increase in funding levels in the late 60s, although I have found no connection. Given the awards and financial evidence, it is clear that between 1960 and 1971 the administration was reluctant to take the lead and gave as little as possible to the rowers until "feats of oars" forced an increase in financial support and symbolic recognition. None of the Varsity rowers or coaches I have queried about the period felt that the University had been a significant contributor or that they had had good contact with the Athletic Directorate.

Given the lack of University support, how much of the burden was assumed by students? Paul Raney, team captain in the late 1960s, recalled that his jobs included getting entries in on time, hiring the buses for regattas, and recruiting new athletes by producing posters and articles for The Varsity. In this respect, the rowers in the 1960s held the same basic responsibilities as any other UTRC team leader in the club's history. However, there was a marked difference in the pressure to raise funds. Between the wars, the UTRC charged

26 UTA A79-0019/05. UTAA Minutes, 13 March 1962. The Thomas R. Loudon Award, "Presented annually to the person associated with the University of Toronto, for Outstanding Services in the Advancement of Athletics", has become one of the most prestigious in U of T athletics. Apart from Loudon himself, it has been awarded to two rowers; coach John Houlding in 1994 and treasurer Stewart Melanson in 1998.
27 The one notable exception was the longtime secretary, Phyllis Lea. Many of the student-oarsmen from the 1960s and 70s whom I have interviewed praised her for her support of the team. In recognition of her unfailing assistance to the rowers, the UTRC christened a new boat the Miss Lea in 1976.
no membership fee, but the rowers staged plenty of fundraising events to supplement the budget provided by the University. Half a century later, the rowers paid a token $5 membership fee to the Argonaut Rowing Club, and were not otherwise compelled to raise money for the UTRC. In fact, none of the four student-captains from the 1960s indicated that fundraising was among their concerns. The reason, of course, was that the Argonauts covered nearly all the costs associated with the sport.

The Argos had a powerful new source of income. In the mid 1950s the Argonaut Rowing Club had sold its stake in the Argonaut Football Club for $500 000. Half that amount went into upgrading the second floor of the club and the other half went into a trust fund. As a result, the Argonauts got all the boats they wanted, there was a waiting list for membership and the club’s mortgage was “down to peanuts” according to Russell. The other source of funds was membership revenue, coming mostly from former Argonaut old-boys who paid between $100 and $150 per year. According to George McCauley, longtime secretary of the ARC, these social members outnumbered competitive members by up to 10 to 1.29 This scheme, whereby a large number of non-rowing “active supporters” pay larger fees to aid active rowers, was common practice in Canadian rowing at the time.30 According to Russell, “There was no objection from those people paying the bigger bucks. They had, in Toronto anyway, a fairly prestigious club with an old name to it and very nice social amenities. They could bring their business contacts

29 George McCauley, personal communication, 10 April, 1999. The number of active rowers fluctuated between 50 to 100, so by McCauley’s estimate there could have been up to 1000 members. Jack Russell believes there would have been 300-400 members and this is probably closer to the mark. However, the point remains that there were far more social than competitive members and that the former paid far higher fees.
The club catered to this demand with the newly constructed second floor which included a lavish Ballroom, the Henley room, bedecked in rowing memorabilia, and a kitchen complete with chef. A 1962 pamphlet entitled "The Argonaut Almanac: an oarsman’s handbook", zestily proclaimed; "There is nothing like a good workout, a hot steam bath, and a big 16oz. Sirloin Steak to make you feel good again!!! We got ‘em!!" and listed weekly activities including steam room regulars, dance lessons, bridge club, billiards/squash, club 1872, dance night and family day. The clincher in this social package, undoubtedly, was the liquor license. Originally founded on the premise that the demon drink had no place at a rowing club, the ARC in the 1960s was one of Toronto the Good’s few licensed establishments. Although social amenities were of great importance, the connection to sport was another significant draw. Of the old-boy members, Russell told me that "some of their fondest memories and associations that they had were at that rowing club and here they were able to relive it.... I felt they were getting their money’s worth that way." These former oarsmen would travel with the athletes to their competitions to cheer from the shore, knowing that their money helped pay for the top quality shells in which the younger men raced. In sum, membership at the Argonaut Rowing Club held two attractions for these middle-aged businessmen. It provided a setting for the display of social prestige, and it served as a means of maintaining connection with the glories of youth.

30 Jack Russell, interview by author, tape recording, Toronto, ON., 3 May 1999, author’s collection. He cited St. Catharines and Hamilton Leander as other contemporary examples of clubs using the old-boys model.
31 Ibid.
32 Argonaut archives.
The trouble began when these older former oarsmen began to disappear in the latter part of the 1960s. In an effort to replace them, the Argonaut management began to turn away from rowing towards another form of leisure as means of attracting new social members—squash. This game was rising in popularity, and indeed the ARC already had one court that was regularly used by many. But when club President Charlie Wilson proposed to add a second court this alarmed many rowers including Jack Russell, who had become the financial officer. Russell objected, stating that the club would be entering a market in which it could not compete while shouldering a heavy debt load. Despite this opposition, the Argonaut board went ahead with the addition, and Russell resigned. As he explains it, "they had a strong squash membership for a few years, but they had a big debt to carry with the mortgage, and the money just wasn’t coming in until they started borrowing from the trust fund to pay for expenses and then they simply depleted that." The board began to sympathize less with the rowers, whose activities had been the focus of resource distribution, and this increased tensions at the club. As one Argonaut pamphlet, clearly aimed at the great unwashed down at the dock, indicates:

\[\text{Members may appear in the club at any hour in casual attire. This does not mean old t-shirts, tattered shorts and running shoes, but does instead mean that the members may dispose with the wearing of jackets and ties.}\]

One rower described it as an "upstairs, downstairs" organization with two radically different ideas of the club’s mission; social versus competitive. Feeling less and less welcome by the 1972 Centennial year, "most of the active oarsmen from the previous

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34 Ibid.
decade had retired or, more accurately, had quit.\textsuperscript{37} Reflecting this exodus, the UTRC struggled to assemble a team in 1971, and utterly failed the following two years.

Rowing is expensive. Between 1920 and 1940, the student-athletes of the University of Toronto were sheltered from its costs by a benevolent administration which favoured the pursuit of this amateur endeavour over many others. In the 1960s, as we have seen, the University of Toronto was no longer committed to supporting the rowing team. Fortunately, the Argonaut Rowing Club needed competitive oarsmen and intervened, creating the UTRC as a new source of membership. Once more, U of T rowers were spared the cost of their sport. However, the flaw in the Argonaut arrangement was that by the 1970s the old-boys began to be replaced by members for whom rowing was of secondary importance to squash and social life. This was reflected in the direction of the ARC and it poisoned the atmosphere for the remaining rowers. Completely dependent on the leadership of the Argonaut oarsmen, the UTRC’s fortunes flagged when the rowers lost control of their club and departed. There was no rowing at the University of Toronto in 1972 or 1973.

CLANDESTINE CHAMPIONS- 1974-1980

As a young boy, Robert Boraks spent his summers at a cottage with his family. The Boraks' neighbours were an elderly couple who frequently received visitors. Men would arrive in cars, often asking young Bobby for directions to the couple's cottage. Boraks remembers being made aware that the small, frail old man across the street was a famous professor named Tommy Loudon, and that the visitors were his former students. Through a quirk of fate, Boraks would later on be in part responsible for re-starting the UTRC.¹

When he came to U of T in the fall of 1973 as a geology student, someone had tried to revive the UTRC. The first morning, eight or nine oarsmen turned up at Argos, where it became evident that no coaching or boats had been arranged. The next morning, only Boraks appeared and the 1973 season was over. The following year, it was Boraks' turn to attempt organization. "I wanted to row, bottom line,"² he recalled, and put up some flyers around campus. A student-reporter picked up the story and wrote an article appealing for students to try out. The piece also mentioned that if no team was formed, rowing's three-year absence would force the UTAA to cut the sport from the intercollegiate budget.³ Interest was unexpectedly high and Boraks was left scrambling to find a coach in time for the first meeting at Hart House, but fortunately an Argonaut named Gordon Leighton agreed to help. Initially, a few experienced oarsmen appeared but were repelled by the low level of funding, equipment and organization.⁴ Nevertheless, a core group of eighteen aspiring rowers remained, and they formed the crews for the

¹ Robert Boraks, interview by author, tape recording, Belfountain, ON., 7 May, 1999. Although he started rowing as a high-schooler, Boraks maintains that his interest in the sport was unrelated to his early recollections of Loudon.
² Ibid.

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1974 season. Through the 1970s, and indeed since then, Varsity rowing has been carried out with comparatively less funding and institutional leadership. Nevertheless, between 1974 and 1980 the UTRC moved relatively rapidly from basic issues of survival on minimal resources, through expansion and a search for new sources of funding, and finally to the ambitions of high-performance.

That first year, one experienced oarswoman, Lynellyn Horne, had also wanted to row. Women's rowing was still new to Canada, and had not originally been part of the plan. Nonetheless, Boraks and Leighton readily agreed to accommodate them and Toronto's first-ever women's crew was recruited. The objections of the Argonaut Rowing Club were a major stumbling block. Although Canadian rowing clubs had begun to admit women in 1971, and although Boraks and the younger ARC members favoured the move, the Argonaut board remained stubbornly opposed, citing the absence of locker facilities.

The Varsity rowers ignored the ban and the women practiced surreptitiously in the early mornings that fall season. They got away with it until one week before the Ontario University Championships, when an article appeared in the Globe and Mail. An angry Argonaut board made it clear that the UTRC would be banned if this continued, but in a backhanded manner allowed the women to finish their season. With the women barred from Argo grounds, the male UTRC members had to row the women's shell some 200m out to their waiting teammates. Despite this initial foray, women were excluded from the Argonaut Rowing Club until 1980. We will return to the issue of women's rowing further in this section.

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3 *The Varsity* (Toronto), 16 September, 1974.
In addition to paying a $30 membership fee, the rowers relied entirely on funds provided by the Athletic Directorate, roughly $1200 plus meal money. Most of that went towards the rental of Argonaut equipment, and the rest towards transportation. It wasn’t much. In order to replace an old wooden oar which had snapped during practice, the rowers donated their lunch money.⁶ The University of Toronto crews, male and female, were woeful that first season. The women’s crew, all novice, “finished their race at the McMaster regatta on white-capped Hamilton Bay with only three of their eight oarswomen still rowing, and then suffering the further indignity of being blown sideways through the entire sailboat anchorage, before an amused crowd of spectators.”⁷ The supposedly “varsity” men’s crew contained only 3 rowers with anything more than rudimentary experience. They finished last in every single race they entered, with one exception:

The one race we didn’t come last in was at the Western regatta, rowing in the Varsity race. This American crew came from Duke. They had these huge guys, huge. And we were all these little guys in these decrepit old sweatsuits from the 50s, I think, and crappy old boats. They looked at us warming up and were chuckling at us and we felt even lower than ever...

[At the start of the race] I realized they were as bad as we were and so I start to yell „let’s go!“ And so we start rowing away, side by side, chugging along, just a disaster of a race. There were two races going on. There was everybody, way down the course, and us over 500m behind...The neatest thing was, the race was over and there was this big crowd on the shore, and they saw us coming down. Everybody knew us at this point- the sad-sacks of the circuit- and they saw we were head-to-head with these huge American guys. Everybody started cheering, encouraging us, and we actually beat them.

The crowd went crazy. And we went crazy. We were just so happy! Subsequently I did very well in races, but I don’t think I was ever happier. seriously, than at that race. All of a sudden we felt like a team!⁸

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⁵ Ibid. 23 September, 1974.
⁶ The Varsity (Toronto), 15 September, 1975.
⁷ Ibid. 15 September, 1976.
The UTRC weathered the storm of ineptitude and, minus the women, returned for the 1975 season.

Despite one OUAA win in an exhibition event, they were not much better that year, as the *Varsity* headlines “Rowers Slow: first Blue Regatta in 4 yrs”, and “U of T oarsmiths narrowly avert victory once more” attest. Realizing that the UTRC could not credibly recruit and retain members by proclaiming its competitiveness, Boraks instead focussed on inclusiveness and fun. “No one was made to feel bad- we were all bad”, he recalled. The rowing team attracted all kinds of students - some good athletes, but mostly what Boraks called “Ichabod Crane types”, the scholarly, the gangly, the out-of-shape. Larry Marshall, who was to become a mainstay of Toronto rowing, described himself as someone who “was fat and played the violin” when he first showed up for tryouts at the UTRC. He had wanted to play inner-tube waterpolo but had been outvoted by his friends, who wanted to row. Although they were not fast, the rowers enjoyed themselves.

The almost Monty-Pythonesque spirit of those fledgling years is captured in a black-and-white photograph which hangs in the athletic wing of Hart House - recognizable to anyone who has passed there. Pictured are the twenty-two members of the UTRC, with their backs to Lake Ontario, wearing shorts and dark singlets with a large gothic “T” emblazoned on the front. The scene is an attempted replication of an 1875 daguerrottype. Various the oarsmen are standing, seated or reclining. None are smiling, all are staring off in different directions, some have their arms crossed, others are holding ancient

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9 *The Varsity* (Toronto), October 15 and October 17, 1975.
wooden oars aloft, and one is stroking his beard. I think it looks hilarious. In parodying the staid, traditional image of their sport, the rowers made it quite clear that they intended to have a good time and party hard, no matter how slow they were on the water.

This philosophy also applied to the other rowing club at the University of Toronto. Bob Boraks, who was not competing in 1976, also started a rowing program at his college, Erindale. Based in suburban Mississauga, Erindale was affiliated with the Don Rowing Club, located at the mouth of the Credit River. Since the Don R.C. allowed women to row, there was an Erindale women's crew along with the novice and junior varsity men's eights- 26 athletes in all. Coach Robin Wight earnestly proclaimed that “crews must quit smoking (because good respiration is important), curb drinking habits, do their calisthenics faithfully, and be prepared to give up part of their social life”. However, in proclaiming the redeeming factors of the sport the Erindale campus paper emphasized the social advantages of co-ed teams and claimed that “after every race the beer flows like water over the blades and the oarspersons gather strength for next week’s workouts.”

Those early Erindale crews were as hapless as the St. George campus rowers had been when they started. In their second season, at the particularly disastrous Toronto regatta;

the Erindale women had a last-minute rudder mishap which forced them to row the race without steering control, [and] prior to their race, the men’s eight collided head-on with another shell, ripping the bow from the boat and causing it to sink. Rescue boats arrived within a minute and quickly whisked the men to shore and into the sauna. The bowmen sustained injuries when hit by the oars of the other crew.

Although in recent years Erindale has turned out accomplished athletes, those early rowers do not appear to have considered it possible for a small college to challenge

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11 The Medium II (Mississauga, ON), 26 October, 1976.
12 Ibid.
established University rowing programs on the water. Their focus, rather, seems to have been a celebration of futility. The first members of the Erindale Rowing Club also posed for an 1870s-style photograph.  

Although it in no way matched the largesse of the UTAA in the Loudon years or the Argonaut Rowing Club in the 1960s, the University gave a measure of support to its "downtown" oarsmen. In 1975, the budget was nearly doubled to $2300, and a special appropriation of $1100 was set aside for the purchase of oars. In 1976, $5000 was allocated for an eight, christened "Miss Lea" in a ceremony at Hart House. Against all expectations, the Varsity men's eight finished second that year. Leighton wrote to the Director of Athletics; "no doubt a large part of that success is directly attributable to the purchase of 'The Miss Lea' – and I would like to thank you, Dalt, for your assistance in acquiring this sophisticated piece of equipment." Leighton in particular saw constant communication with the Athletic Directorate as essential in gaining financial support. In 1976 alone, he wrote a regatta report, a report on Erindale and a final report. Not satisfied with the purchase of the "Miss Lea", he also made a presentation to Dalt White outlining plans for expansion, stating that the University:

should seriously consider purchasing another [eight] as soon as possible. By sharing equipment with Upper Canada College or the Argonaut Rowing Club, the university could more than double its equipment resource at no cost. To provide a total program, however, the university would need to acquire: Two pairs (convertible to doubles for sculling), Two fours (convertible to quads for sculling) Two singles (racing quality) One single (workboat quality) One eight.

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15 UTA A79-0019/06. UTAA minutes, December 9, 1975.
16 Ibid. January 8, 1976. Shortly after the christening, the Miss Lea was wrecked in a trailering accident. The insurance proceeds went towards another eight named "Miss Lea II". The original shell was rebuilt and named "Ned Hanlan".
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
The 1977 season was a turning point of sorts, owing much to the arrival of Upper Canada College oarsmen. One of them, Nat Findlay, outlined a plan whose goals included winning the Dad Vail regatta and OUAA championship in 1977 as well as participation in the National Team trials, competition at the 1978 World Championships and ultimately at the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. The rowers became sufficiently serious about these objectives to start publishing training programs and ergometer test results in the local sports papers. Not imperceptibly, the team spirit began to change from one based purely on fun to one with competitive ambitions. Even Leighton, in writing to Director White, mused: “should we strive for excellence or be content to remain within the O.U.A.A. framework?”

Experienced oarsmen began to arrive and stay, although their joining the UTRC was mostly incidental. Matthew Lawton, who had rowed at UCC and spent his first year at Waterloo, had transferred to Toronto because it offered nuclear engineering. Tim Turner, also from UCC, had been turned down by the University of British Columbia, and failed to gain admittance to other engineering programs. Only U of T accepted his late application. Turner was a gifted rower who had just represented Canada at the World Championships and whose approach towards racing was extremely competitive.

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20 The Dad Vail regatta is the American small college rowing championship, and takes place in Philadelphia each spring.
21 Toronto Sportsweek, 9 December, 1976.
22 Ibid. 10 March, 1977.
23 UTA A79-0019/040. Leighton to White, ibid.
24 In his first email to me, he expressed the hope that my crews had „kicked the shit out of Western”. When I responded that we had beaten them, he wrote back „Glad that you busted their asses”. Turner competed in the 1984 Olympic Games.
Oarsmen like Lawton and Turner added a winning edge to the club's already well-developed sense of fun, as advocated by Bob Boraks.

The 1977 season proved to be a heady mixture of sophomoric behaviour and speed. All crews - novice, junior varsity, lightweight, and varsity - won their share of races on the University circuit. At one regatta on the Rideau Canal in Ottawa, Lawton and Turner distinguished themselves by winning a pairs race in record time, while Boraks, true to form, had a brief chat with the visiting Queen Elizabeth II.\textsuperscript{25} The rowing team parties gained a certain notoriety, though fondly remembered by many who took part. A cocky and crude account published in one of the less-reputable campus papers illustrates the sort of spirit that normally remains undocumented:

On Oct. 29, the teams leave for St. Catherines to compete in the O.U.A.A. Championship. The U of T crews expect a complete sweep of the events, and Western et al need not bother attending since they might as well save their bus fare for next year.

After winning the O.U.A.A. Championships, the team will celebrate with the Erindale women's crew in the back of the bus. The ladies just love to practise their rowing technique such as quick hands, moving in and out together, and cumming from behind. As all the women say, "U of T oarsmen stroke it longer!"\textsuperscript{26}

The predictions of victory were not unfounded however, and the University of Toronto did indeed capture the overall OUAA title, led by the victorious lightweight eight. At the time, Bob Boraks compared the victory, a scant three years after starting the team, to "the feeling you get when you're the first to yell BINGO at the Runnymede Bingo Palace."\textsuperscript{27} Underdogs within the rowing circuit and within the U of T athletic community, the Varsity Blues oarsmen had beaten the odds.

\textsuperscript{25} The Varsity (Toronto), 21 October, 1977.
In 1978 Tim Turner began to assert his leadership of the rowing team. Whereas Bob Boraks had been concerned with the UTRC’s survival within the University of Toronto and Argonaut systems and with the fostering of camaraderie regardless of sporting competence, Turner chose a more independent and competitive route. He pursued athletic excellence to a greater degree, raised funds ambitiously, established a women’s program and temporarily withdrew the team from the Argonaut Rowing Club. In the spring, a Toronto lightweight crew competed at the Dad Vail regatta and the Montebello Marathon regatta in Ottawa and won both races convincingly. Three U of T oarsmen, Turner, Matt Lawton and Stan Sokol, represented Canada at the World Rowing Championships. Turner was busy on the fundraising front as well. Since he believed “the Argo club had nothing but junk at that time”, he considered new equipment to be essential to winning races. Whereas past endeavours had focused on coaxing more funds out of the University coffers, Tim Turner looked to other means. The club charged a $25 membership fee and $1600 was raised from pledges on a spring row-a-thon. The biggest coup was the negotiation of a $7000 Wintario grant, matching funds raised by an alumni campaign. With the proceeds, the UTRC purchased two more boats and a trailer.

Women’s rowing was another issue where Turner disregarded lack of University support and nonetheless succeeded. After the 1974 caper, the Argonaut Rowing Club made sure that no other female rowers set foot on their docks. Leighton had sought support for

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26 Toike Oike, undated, 1977.
28 For his efforts in 1977-78, Bob Boraks was rewarded with the James M. Biggs Award.
29 Tim Turner, to author, August 1998, author’s collection.
30 The Varsity (Toronto), 13 September and 6 October, 1978. Turner’s father, then president of the “T-holders”- the men’s athletic alumni association- was invaluable in contacting the Loudon-era oarsmen for donations.
women's rowing from Anne Hewett, the director of women's athletics, but to no avail.\(^{31}\) Because several women had rowed at the Don R.C. during the summer of 1975, in the hopes of representing Varsity in the fall, the lost opportunity left Leighton complaining bitterly that "the administration has killed the sport."\(^{32}\) Boraks found it ludicrous that Toronto was "the only University not to have a women's rowing team. Even Trent has one."\(^{33}\) The Toronto rowing scene changed in 1978 when Sam Craig, a vice-president of CARA, founded the Hanlan Boat Club on Cherry beach in the east end of the harbour. Upper Canada College, which had been affiliated with the Argonauts, moved there after that partnership had soured. In the fall of 1978, Turner circulated a flyer to see if U of T women would be interested in rowing: "The response was huge so I agreed to coach with another guy, John Leavitt."\(^{34}\) Having contacts with Hanlan's through UCC, Turner based the women's team at the new location. At first, the women learned the basics in the pool-side trainers at UCC, but then graduated to real rowing. One oarswoman recalled that they would "head out and around into the ship channel where we would row right up against these enormous commercial cargo container ships and the crew would be smoking on the deck and looking way down at us."\(^{35}\) Fifty years after Tommy Loudon's crews had trained on the ship channel, it was the women's turn to ply the same waters.

\(^{31}\) *UTA* 79-0019/040. Anne C. Hewett to Gordon Leighton, July 2, 1975. "With the budgetary restraints that we are presently facing, we could not see our way clear to allocate any funds for any new programs such as rowing."

\(^{32}\) *The Varsity* (Toronto), 17 September, 1975. Finances are the lesser issue. Perhaps the University could have forced the Argonauts to open their doors to women, but I know of no instances where serious attempts were made in this regard.


\(^{34}\) Tim Turner to author, August 1998, author's collection.

\(^{35}\) Elizabeth Stirling to author. 24 May, 1999, author's collection.
The women fared extremely well in their first year, winning the OWIAA novice championship. Success built momentum. In the summer of 1979, varsity oarswomen, joined by others from Queen's and Western, won championships at the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta. This was a very determined group. Liz Stirling recalls that “it was a huge part of my life for those years.”36 Her crewmate Karen Wright, a star varsity hockey player, loved water and early mornings. Of her novice season, she recalled that “we had great chemistry, great coaching and a really dedicated group of athletes...In those early days we had access to good equipment and Tim had a great relationship with UCC and therefore we were treated very well.”37 Wright was to be a mainstay of the team for five seasons. Turner remembers one recruit: “She had transferred from Carleton and probably weighed 180lbs and was incredibly shy...Kay was of course a great source of pleasure although I take only the smallest credit for getting her on the right path. She did the rest.”38 Kay Worthington would go on to win two gold medals at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. The women’s successes at home mirrored Canadian results internationally. Though women’s rowing was still within its first decade in Canada, medal-winning performances at the 1977 and 1978 World Championships, culminating in a victory in the eight at the 1979 World Championships, gave them great credibility. In most Canadian rowing clubs, this confirmed the place of women on the water.39 Yet, despite this evidence and despite the talent and commitment exhibited by the women’s Varsity program, the Argonaut Rowing Club still refused to admit them.

36 Ibid.
37 Karen Wright Pitre to author, 7 June, 1999, author’s collection.
39 Peter King to author, April 19, 1999, author’s collection.
Turner's response was to transfer the Varsity men to the Hanlan Boat Club in 1979. In this he was following his old school, UCC, which had moved the previous year. The move was not simply, or even in great part, a show of solidarity with women's rights. According to Boris Klavora, who coached at both UCC and U of T, push and pull factors were at play.\textsuperscript{40} The carrots drawing the programs to Hanlan were calmer water conditions and the prospect of sharing better equipment. Frequent quarrels with the "very user-unfriendly" Argonaut board were the stick.\textsuperscript{41} For Turner, there was also the inconvenience of the status quo- managing a team from two separate locations since women were not allowed into the Argonaut Rowing Club. As Klavora put it, "the commitment to excellence made it necessary. All I wanted was the atmosphere designed to completely concentrate on the sport."\textsuperscript{42} Turner, who like many elite rowers would come to greatly respect Klavora, concurred. In the event, the 1979 season produced mixed results. The women, in only their second year of competition finished second at the OWIAA championship. The men were only fifth.

1980 was notable for two reasons- one a major turning point, the other a brief flash. Bob Boraks, having returned for further studies, negotiated the return of the UTRC to the Argonaut Rowing Club. The main condition was that the women be allowed to come as well. This transition was enabled by a leadership change within the ARC. As a historian of the Argonauts wrote;

\begin{quote}
The low point in the club's history came in 1979 when just four Argonaut oarsmen raced at the Canadian Henley. For those who had been associated with the club or were then rowing elsewhere it was a sad and miserable spectacle. The abrupt decline in the rowing membership was attributed to dissatisfaction with the club's management. The trust fund that had provided the club with its\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{40} Boris Klavora to author, 3 June, 1999, author's collection.
\textsuperscript{41} Both Turner and Klavora allude to arguments as being push factors.
\textsuperscript{42} Klavora, \textit{ibid}.
financial security and ensured a steady flow of new equipment had been mostly squandered. The resulting financial difficulties that started in that period continue to dog the club to this day.

In the adversity some of the former members took it upon themselves to rally and reorganize. In 1980 Jim Ingram, a long time member, bullied his way into the club captainship and took charge of the rowing program. Recruiting an eager group of coaches the club’s fortunes changed....More significantly and in defiance of the board of directors Ingram pushed for and started a women’s program.43

It was eight years since the Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen had changed its name to the Canadian Amateur Rowing Association, reflecting the inauguration of women’s events at the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta. It was six years since the first U of T women’s crew had been refused entry. It was four years after women’s rowing had been introduced at the Olympic Games. Now, finally, the all-male enclave on Lake Ontario had been breached. Since 1980 both male and female students of the University of Toronto have had equal access to the Argonaut Rowing Club.

It was a good time to be an athlete at U of T. In 1977-78 the men’s and women’s athletic associations had merged into one entity—the Department of Athletics and Recreation. The DAR oversaw the brand-new multi-million dollar Athletic Centre constructed at the corner of Harbord St. and Spadina Rd. in 1980. Dwarfing Hart House, whom it replaced as headquarters for sport at the University, the AC housed an Olympic pool, a 200m indoor track, weight room, courts and laboratories for the department of physical education. 1980 was Varsity rowing’s lucky year because the rowers got their first professional head coach. However, the University did not broker this arrangement. Sam Craig, the CARA vice-president and founder of the Hanlan Boat Club, wanted a coach for UCC and for Hanlan and had offered a paid position to Boris Klavora, a Yugoslav

43 Xavier Macia, „The Argonaut Rowing Club: A History on its 125th Anniversary“, unpublished paper. Varsity rower Larry Marshall was the first coach of the women’s program at the Argonaut Rowing Club.
recently apprenticed to renowned coach Thor Nilsen. To supplement this salary, Craig arranged for CARA, through Sport Canada, to provide a grant to the University of Toronto for rowing. Klavora would coach UCC in the spring, Hanlan in the summer, U of T in the fall and all programs in the winter.

Klavora’s presence, combined with that of Tim Turner, drew more world-class rowers: Turner’s brother Pat, Jim Relle, and Brian Sinclair. This foursome of lightweights had rowed at World Championships the previous year, winning a bronze medal. The impact was immediate. Klavora, who coached both the men’s and women’s crews, noted that:

The four internationals, particularly the two Turner brothers, were “spark plugs” for the other athletes to work hard. Their enthusiasm and hard work was contagious...Both the men’s and women’s programs benefited a great deal from their presence.

Bolstered by these talented oarsmen, the Varsity men’s eight was undefeated that season, and along with a strong showing by the lightweights and novices, Toronto won the OUAA title. The women finished third, but only one point behind first place. Overall, this remains the University of Toronto Rowing Club’s best ever showing at the Ontario University Rowing Championships.

The UTRC was back for good. Making it in the 1970s had been a notable achievement. University support, though markedly improved since the previous decade, had been inconsistent. The Argonaut Rowing Club’s internal difficulties complicated the situation for all rowers, particularly women. Students and volunteers assumed a greater role in ensuring the proper functioning of the team and succeeded, for the most part. Poor early

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44 Pat Turner and Jim Relle were first-year students from UCC. Tim Turner had convinced Sinclair to transfer from the University of British Columbia.
45 Boris Klavora to author, 3 June, 1999, author’s collection.
performances gave way to strong membership, healthy morale, and a fair share of competitive success. The 1977 and 1980 OUAA championships are particularly notable since Toronto men have not captured the title since. 1980 is also significant because it represents the one and only time the UTRC benefited from professional coaching. The Sport Canada grant to the University of Toronto had been a one-time deal. Boris Klavora left Toronto to assume a full-time position overseeing elite rowing in Vancouver, and began his eight-year tenure as a national team coach, which included the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games. What money there was to be spent on rowing in Canada was clearly not in Toronto.
CLUBS, JOKERS AND ACES- 1981-2000

Who are today’s rowers? Membership has been shaped by the changing demographics of the University of Toronto in the 1980s and 1990s. By 2000, attendance has risen to approximately 60,000 students spread over three campuses. Canadian Universities have also undergone a gender shift. According to Statistics Canada, the split among undergraduates in 1980-81 was 54 percent male and 46 percent female. By 1996-97, the proportions were 45 percent male and 55 percent female. Estimating the precise ethnic and racial composition of the student body is a murkier task, but a pattern is evident. Between the wars, less than 2 percent of the U of T student body came from elsewhere outside North America, and very few of these were non-white. Since the 1970s, people of colour have become much more visible on the Toronto campus.

Overall, since the 1980s the gender and ethnic composition of the rowing team has accurately reflected the student body at the University of Toronto. Matching the growth of the University, UTRC membership has often reached 100 persons, making the team one of the school’s largest. Matching the gender shift, the number of women rowing at U of T has been equal or greater than the number of men ever since the 1986 season. This trend has also been true of Canadian rowing. Particularly since the Olympic successes of Silken Laumann and the women's national team, rowing has become increasingly popular with Canadian girls and women. The case for ethnic and racial representation is less clear-cut. In the Loudon era, two non-whites- a Ceylonese coxswain, and “Lofty” Willis, the stroke of the 1931 and 1932 McGill boat race champions, who was black- occupied

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1 Globe and Mail (Toronto), 26 July, 1999.
crucial positions in Varsity boats. Though hardly conclusive, this evidence suggests a certain amount of racial integration even at a very early stage in the history of the UTRC, when there were only a handful of students of colour in Toronto. In the last two decades, judging from pictures, rowing team lists and personal experience, participation by athletes of Asian and East-Indian descent has become commonplace.

One area in which the rowing team has not been typical is in academic performance. The rowers, many of whom are at the graduate level or in the professional faculties such as medicine, law and engineering, have tended to be better than average students. Kate Cochrane and Emma Robinson are prominent examples of athletic and academic versatility. Cochrane, now a doctor, won a Rhodes Scholarship after completing her studies of U of T, during which time she was a member of three Ontario University Championship teams. Robinson, also a medical student, was introduced to rowing and University and is now a three-time World Champion and 1996 Olympic silver-medalist. Both women are but the most celebrated examples of a wider phenomenon within U of T rowing. Since 1990, rowers have reached honours standing 105 times despite the demands of school and sport. This is more than any other Varsity team and equals the total achieved by athletes in the next two highest sports, cross-country running and rugby. Evidently, Blues rowers rank among the best University students in the country.

Although they defy the "dumb jock" stereotype, UTRC members overall might fairly be characterized as smart also-rans. This is particularly true of the 1980s. In the words of

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2 The maximum number of Varsity athletes allowed under OUA rules is 64. However, novice rowers, though technically no longer "varsity", are still counted as team members.
one, it “felt like we were at a party after all the big, cool people had already left.” Part of the problem for the slumping rowing program lay in the OUAA/OWIAA competition structure, unchanged since the 1960s. Until 1989 rowing was only done in eights, in varsity, junior varsity, lightweight and novice categories. Whereas the University of Toronto had benefited from this system throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Varsity coaches saw experienced high school rowers begin to gravitate towards Western and Queen’s. If rowers did come to U of T, they often stayed away from the program, unwilling to pool their abilities with those of less experienced athletes. Because of the OUA competition structure, if you fielded one boat, no matter how inexperienced, that was your varsity crew. Throughout the 1980s, U of T varsity crews typically lacked a full complement of seasoned rowers. Victoria College student Julia Tremain observed that there “did not appear to be any over-all goals or philosophy, and we were really, really bad- we used to have an ongoing battle with McGill for last place.” Ian Spears’ novice season had not been a highlight of his life either: “I remember the next spring I got a phone call from Larry Marshall. He told me that if I had liked the fall, I would love a whole summer rowing. Well I can say I just about hated the fall.” For successive years throughout the 1980s, articles in The Varsity described the UTRC as a rebuilding program.

The rowing team has operated with a limited budget fixed by the University. With the creation of the Department of Athletics and Recreation in 1977 came a re-evaluation of budgetary priorities. The Excellence Committee- consisting of administrators and student-representatives of all Varsity teams- charged an Intercollegiate Sub-Committee

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3 The Varsity, 27 September, 1984.
4 Julia Tremain to author, 29 March 29, 1998, author’s collection.
with determining funding criteria. Reporting in April 1978, the Sub-Committee identified six; the extent of participation in the sport on campus, appropriateness to climate and academic year, access to facilities, availability of good coaching, cost per participant, and tradition. By November, a weighting formula emphasizing the availability of coaching was agreed upon. In February 1979, based on the formula, the Excellence Committee established three levels of support. Basketball, field hockey, football, men's hockey, swimming and track were slotted into category I and received funding for a full-time coach, all travel costs, and equipment. Category II sports, including archery, badminton, fencing, gymnastics, women's hockey, rowing, rugby, squash, soccer, volleyball and waterpolo, received a coach honorarium and travel costs within conference competition. The category III teams, curling, figure skating, golf, skiing, synchronized swimming, tennis and wrestling, although they were pledged administrative assistance, were expected to be self-supporting. With few modifications, this three-tier system remained in effect until 1992.

Joseph Glaab, team captain in 1985-86, believed that funding “seemed to be less than what was needed. However, we knew this was the case from day one and worked with what we had. It would have been nice to have more support from the Intercollegiate Office, however we did have the opportunity to row and that was the main thing.” Tony Miller, who succeeded Glaab as captain, was more critical: “our relationship with the U of T administration was cordial, though we never felt we got the financial support we deserved. Our team was one of the biggest on campus, yet we received a pittance from

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the Athletics Department.\textsuperscript{7} Despite the shortfall however, costs were fairly low. In 1986-1987, students paid a $50 fee, covering the Argonaut Rowing Club membership, CARA and ORA fees, the UTRC singlet and medical insurance.\textsuperscript{8} The rowers also maintained the tradition of signing back the meal money allocated to the team. Fundraising efforts were modest affairs ranging from cleaning Varsity stadium and arena after events to sales at the U of T Sprints regatta, alumni and corporate solicitations and ergathons. Another team captain recalled the amateurishness of their endeavours:

Every year in February we used to set up a rowing display in the centre of Sidney Smith [the main Arts and Science building on campus]. We would sell T-shirts, have people row on an erg for five miles and try to talk everybody into coming out to row. Now it seems ridiculous to have done things that way. U of T did not row in the spring and the fall season was months away...We always had someone sort of famous come and row on the erg for a mile. One year we had the Dean, and the next we had Olympic runner Bruce Kidd (who was faculty).

Another fundraiser that I, fortunately, had nothing to do with involved putting names on blades and seats. Scott Garner, our infamous fundraiser organized that. He called up all of these people, told them they could buy an oar or a seat for so many dollars. Some cheques came in but the names never went on. Finally the University administration called us (Scott) in and told him to write apologies to all those who had contributed money. The club was also told they were never allowed to raise funds again. It was a disaster and, obviously, very embarrassing.\textsuperscript{9}

Student-raised funds went from hand to mouth, never allowing for shell purchases. Only once in the 1980s was the UTRC able to buy boats, with funds from a University grant.

By 1993, extensive provincial government cutbacks in education led the University of Toronto to remove $1.2 million in funding for the Department of Athletics and Recreation. In dealing with the shortfall, the DAR opted for "a major restructuring of our present intercollegiate program into a more focused high performance intercollegiate program and a new club structure".\textsuperscript{10} Replacing the three tiers was a system whereby basketball, cross country, field hockey, ice hockey, soccer, swimming, track and

\textsuperscript{7} Tony Miller to author, 30 April, 1998, author's collection.
\textsuperscript{8} Joseph Glaab, University of Toronto Rowing Club: Coach's Handbook, 1986-87, p. 11.
volleyball would receive all funds available to intercollegiate sport and the remaining 26 clubs would have to support themselves.\textsuperscript{11} This scheme caused great disparities, engendered bitterness among students, staff and alumni, and ultimately proved to be unworkable.\textsuperscript{12} But until intercollegiate athletics at the University of Toronto underwent significant reform in 1997, the rowers and all the other clubs were largely on their own.

No U of T sports teams—now called clubs—dropped out because of the cut, presumably because they had not received much money from the University in the first place. For the rowers, fundraising efforts remained simple—proceeds from the U of T Sprints, bake sales, “stadium and arena jobs”. Under these conditions, equipment could only be obtained through a good stroke of bad luck. Environmental science and Geography major Malcolm “Cal” Finley was driving boats to the Western regatta in 1992 when

The trailer rolled in a windstorm… I’ll never forget sitting on the hood of the truck with my head bandaged looking at debris scattered over a few hundred metres when [National team coach] Al Morrow showed up. He thought I was in shock at the loss of equipment and gave me a hug… Nice try Al but I was actually thinking of the new equipment we were going to get out of this accident and of the great Halloween costumes we could make!\textsuperscript{13}

Sure enough, at the following U of T Sprints Regatta at Centre Island, University President Robert Pritchard was on hand to christen the new insurance-funded eight, the Kay Worthington. “Real” funding was not forthcoming, however. Wryly, Finley noted that Pritchard had “promised us a new set of carbon fibre oars that day; we’re still waiting.”\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{flushright}
\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{9}] Ian Spears to author, spring 1999, author’s collection.
\item [\textsuperscript{10}] Department of Athletics and Recreation, \textit{Operating Plan 1993/94}, p. 4.
\item [\textsuperscript{11}] The football team’s budget was halved. An alumni organization, the “Friends of Football” stepped in to cover the difference.
\item [\textsuperscript{12}] \textit{Final Report of the Task Force on Intercollegiate Athletics}, p. 8.
\item [\textsuperscript{13}] Cal Finley to author, 16 February, 1999, author’s collection.
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
One person who made a major impact on the UTRC’s financial situation in the 1990s was far from typical. Stewart Melanson, an older student who had rowed as a novice in 1993, became team treasurer in 1995 - a post he held for three years. Rather than relying on the traditional fundraising mechanisms of past student-leaders, he sought out what he called “strategic alliances” with the Metro Toronto YMCA and groups in the Toronto gay community in order to yield greater revenues. His schemes involved outsiders in equipment sharing and fundraising, and his convoluted accounting engendered apprehensions among many on the team. Nonetheless, he was able to maintain sufficient confidence among captains, coaches and University administrators to fundraise more effectively than anyone else ever had. By the fall of 1996, two new eights christened Peter Cookson and Phoenix were added to the Varsity fleet. Needing an example of successful adaptation to the funding cuts of 1993, the Department of Athletics and Recreation praised Melanson’s efforts as a model of club self-sufficiency. He was rewarded with the Thomas R. Loudon Award in 1998.

The demands placed on student leadership at the UTRC, particularly since 1993, have been unique and unprecedented. The rowing teams of past generations have been much smaller, better funded, and led by experienced coaches and administrators, as we have seen. Moreover, the complexities of team size, equipment and travel make managing a sport such as rowing more difficult than most at the University of Toronto. It is therefore not surprising that students do not normally seek out UTRC leadership, but are instead nominated by their peers. Selections, which can take place during parties, are sometimes ill-considered. Commerce student Len Diplock remembered that “as the year progressed

a number of the excessively large elected executive showed their lack of commitment to
the position. Within a few months there were only two or three people managing the
team, not all of whom were actually from the elected executive.\textsuperscript{15} However, junior
executive committee members with a strong sense of commitment to the club usually fill
the gaps left by graduating students. Physiotherapy student Fiona Milne’s experience was
typical of many team leaders: “I was on the executive in ’92 and got elected captain in
’93 so I couldn’t decline. I felt it was a worthwhile cause to put time and effort
towards.”\textsuperscript{16}

Student leaders have had plenty to do. Skip Phoenix, who was charged with coordinating
the unfunded clubs for the Department of Athletics and Recreation between 1993 and
1997, observed that „their independence and their belief that they were on their own was
huge.”\textsuperscript{17} Not including training time, Cal Finley estimates that he spent from 12 to 19
hours per week organizing during the season and from 2 to 7 hours per week in the off-
season.\textsuperscript{18} Most of the work was thankless. One captain recalled that

\begin{quote}
We were always the last ones to leave the regatta picking up all the junk left behind, retying the
boats on the trailer, organising clothing sales, and liaising with the Department of Athletics and
Recreation... I wrote some pretty big cheques from my personal bank account to cover many of the
club’s expenses—OUAA/OWIAA entry fees, singlets, banquet awards, gas, gas, and more gas.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Fiona Milne listed at some length the range of tasks involved in running a large rowing
program on a volunteer basis, which included; regatta entries, allocating and maintaining
equipment, coach boats, gas, trailer; chasing students for fees and waivers; passing
regatta information to coaches; fundraising events; U of T Sprints regatta; orientation,

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{15} Leonard Diplock to author, 3 June, 1998, author’s collection.
\bibitem{16} Fiona Milne to author, 8 May, 1998, author’s collection.
\bibitem{17} Skip Phoenix, interview by author, Toronto, ON, 25 June, 1999.
\bibitem{18} Cal Finley to author, 16 February, 1999, author’s collection.
\end{thebibliography}
recruiting, and initiation during frosh week; coordinating winter group training; organizing and chairing team meetings; social events including the banquet; answering endless phone calls; liaison with the DAR; publicity with the Varsity; Branksome Hall and Argonaut Rowing Club relations; and the Florida training camp. Those who have been UTRC team leaders in the past twenty years will be familiar with most of these tasks. During their tenure, some captains learned the value of delegating responsibility:

I recall arriving back in Toronto just before the school year began and there were so many messages on my answering machine I did not think I could ever deal with them. It was a little overwhelming...Learning to delegate involved finding people who were keen to work. Somewhat to my surprise there were hard working people who were willing to assist in any way they could. While at first I had tried to manage everything myself, I soon found that not only did these people exist but they were usually better equipped to accomplish a task than I was...That was the only way I survived.19

Those who have tackled the rowing captain’s job have downplayed its detrimental effects. Some reported sleeping through classes, but none indicated that their grades suffered. “I would never say that rowing interfered with school or work or life” said one student leader. “I was just tired a lot.” If anything, observed clubs coordinator Skip Phoenix, the funding cut provided- in a backhanded way- incredible opportunities for personal growth.

One important leadership task, relations with the Argonaut Rowing Club, had been simplified in the 80s by the presence of U of T head coaches Xavier Macia and Larry Marshall, long standing Argonaut members. However, a worsening financial situation at Argonauts, combined with personality clashes and disputes over fees and equipment strained relations in the 1990s. An equipment-sharing agreement between the UTRC, the Argonauts and Branksome Hall- a girls’ high school- has proven to be workable but

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19 Jeany Ellis to author, 17 April, 1998, author’s collection.
problematic. The biggest controversy arose over insurance claims and ownership of new boats after a trailer crash in 1992. This dispute fuelled further acrimony. Cal Finley, who was team captain through 1993 “never understood their attitude towards U of T and our team; I felt they tried to hinder our development and success at every opportunity.”21 The precariousness of the Argonaut financial position, combined with the transitory nature of student leadership discourages the forging of strong ties with the UTRC. U of T — Argonaut relations continue to be a proving ground where the diplomatic negotiation and communication skills of all parties involved are tested each fall.

Whereas students have assumed a greater share of the administrative and on-land responsibilities, coaches remain crucial to team success. These volunteers have held some common characteristics. Most have been men. Unlike student leadership, which has been shared by both genders, few women have emerged as coaches. Most have been young—forty years of age or less. All have had prior competitive rowing experience, and the majority of them are alumni of the UTRC. John Bullen, who rowed at U of T from 1982 to 1986 and coached from 1987 to 1993 identified three main reasons why he became a coach:

1) I am a firm believer in trying to give something back. I benefited greatly from the people who gave their time when I was rowing and I thought I could help the present student-athletes.
2) I thought that by analyzing other people’s rowing, it would help me become a better athlete.
3) I was asked by someone whom I respected, Larry Marshall. 22

Varsity coaches have been the motivating force behind many a young student. John Houlding, a charismatic two-time Olympian, frightened and inspired my teammates and I into excellent results in my first competitive season. He became the first member of the

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20 Ian Spears to author, spring 1999, author’s collection.
21 Cal Finley to author, 16 February, 1999, author’s collection.
rowing team to be given the Tommy Loudon Award by the Department of Athletics and Recreation in 1995. Another recalled his first encounter with his coach very clearly:

He said, "Hello Ian Spears. My name is Peter Cookson. I hope you are coming out to row this fall because we are going to win the heavy men's eight."…After we walked away from Peter on that summer evening, I had caught some of his infectious confidence and was excited by the possibilities.

That fall, in 1989, Cookson's crew became the first U of T men's boat to win an OUAA title since 1980. Whether successful or not, the time-consuming nature and expense of coaching a rowing team often leads to burnout. Unlike Tommy Loudon, who was at the helm of the UTRC for seventeen years, volunteer coaches nowadays only last for a couple of years before career and family demands draw them away.

The University of Western Ontario continues to dominate the Ontario circuit, as it has since the 1970s. Since 1989 it has been home to one of Canada's high performance centres and national team coaches, and attracts a large proportion of national team hopefuls. The expansion of the OUA championship program has made it somewhat easier for the other teams to compete, because they don't have to assemble an entire eight. Racing is now done in lightweight and heavyweight categories only, but in several boat classes— singles, doubles, fours and eights. In the 1990s, Toronto women have won three overall championships, and some men's crews have also been fast. Nonetheless, in the past two decades an underdog spirit has remained characteristic of the UTRC. All-too occasional victories bring immense satisfaction when they occur. In 1996, one coach observed:

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23 Ian Spears to author, spring 1999, author's collection.
24 Novices continue to row in eights, but their results are no longer included in championship points calculations.
After a typical season of ups and downs, financial crisis, emotional blow ups and battles with the Argonaut Rowing Club I found myself standing in the compound of Henley Island after the OUAA’s. The UTRC had stolen the women’s title and almost took the men’s title away from the many Universities within Ontario that are better funded, equipped and coached than we are. As I watched our coaching staff and some of our athletes celebrating by having a few beverages, whooping it up and wrestling in the mud, I couldn’t help but think what the other coaches were doing at that time. Was Al Morrow [Western] making mud angels? Was Joe Dowd [Brock] sitting in a puddle without pants, drinking Scotch? Was John Armitage [Queen’s] doing donuts in the parking lot with his wife’s van? Nope. They had been beaten again by an underfunded, poorly equipped, badly coached team and they just didn’t get it.

Ian Spears’ recollections on beating the odds are the most poignant I have found:

The story is still so Cinderella... After all the years of crap- of mediocre coaching, of pathetic performances, of not being taken seriously by either the administration or other rowing schools- we had finally achieved something for real. It was the fact that things had been so bad for so many years that this victory was so sweet. We had actually, for once, outperformed everybody else. We had become contenders. It would not have been the same if we had come in second. I think somebody upstairs must have known that.

While studies are clearly a priority, the pursuit of a sporting and social life do not rank far behind for students, and the rowing club caters to these needs. Because no experience is required to join, rowing continues to be a haven for students looking for a new sport where they might excel. Explaining her motivation for joining the rowing team, one oarswoman said, “I had played lots of sports in high school, but I knew I’d never make a varsity team in any of those”. Said another rower, “before rowing, I played golf until I realised I hated it and hockey until I realised I wasn’t any good.” In addition to the pursuit of athletic accomplishment, the rowing club provides a sense of community that is often hard to capture at the University of Toronto. It certainly made the large downtown campus less imposing for me. In my years at University, I felt I could run into rowers anywhere among thousands of students. Because of the intensity of commitment required by the sport, the oarsmen and women queried for this study overwhelmingly counted

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25 Gary Stinson to author, 23 April, 1998, author’s collection.
26 Ian Spears to author, spring 1999, author’s collection.
their teammates among their closest friends at University. Summing up the feeling of many Varsity rowers I have encountered, Cal Finley wrote:

The experience as a whole was one of the greatest I've had! In the days of rising tuition and costs, a student needs and deserves to get more out of the university experience than purely academics. Rowing kept me focused on school, fitness, and gave me the opportunity to meet and make the friends that I will keep for life.²⁷

²⁷ Cal Finley to author, 16 February, 1999, author's collection.
CONCLUSION

Until the Second World War, rowing held a privileged position at the University of Toronto. As the consummate amateur sport, University administrators gave it pride of place and keenly supported it. At the turn of the century, University President James Loudon was actively involved in starting the UTRC and was its honorary president. Some thirty years later, one of Loudon’s successors, Reverend H.J. Cody attended Toronto-McGill boat races and had his photograph taken with Varsity crews at the boathouse. At the same time, Tommy Loudon, an influential and dynamic faculty member, directed the team. Prominent alumni of the UTRC such as James Merrick, D.B. Macdonald, William Douglas and Henry Gooderham all lent their names and experience in sport to the club long after they had rowed there. In the heady years after Olympic success in 1924 there were annual reunion dinners. The sense of allegiance was so strong that in 1959, one oarsman compiled a list of over one hundred alumni who pledged money to raise funds for the Tommy Loudon award. As we have seen, support for rowing was not limited to University officials, but extended to civic and corporate leaders as well. As a result, the UTRC of the 1920s and 30s received funding and was competitively successful in ways unmatched ever since then.

Little evidence of past clout and victories remain. Brule Lake, the project of the Toronto establishment to create “one of the finest rowing courses in the world.”¹, would indeed have been a wonderful place to row. Today, all that is left is a dusty blueprint hidden away in the bowels of the City Archives. Along the lush riverbank under the Bloor St.

¹ Toronto Harbour Commission Archives SC11, box 3, folder 26. Brule Lake Regatta programme, June 1, 1929.
Bridge where the boathouses were to be built, the Humber is just as muddy, twisted and narrow as it was in 1929. The one constant in the history of Toronto rowing, the Argonaut club house, exudes little of its predecessors' elegance. Inside the dowdy red brick building, the few surviving mementos of past glory are displayed in upstairs rooms where athletes rarely venture. A century ago, students were enticed to join the Argonaut Rowing Club by the appeal of a "well-equipped, commodious and convenient" boathouse. Today, these adjectives do not apply. The change rooms, training facilities and the boat bays are cramped and dilapidated. Evidence of rowing past is also scarce on the University of Toronto campus. On a wall in the athletic wing of Hart House an arrow is marked "Rowing room" in black lettering. Leading nowhere now, it is a rare remnant of Tommy Loudon's era as coach between the wars. Tucked away in the upstairs rooms of the same building, where few ever see it, is the oar of Professor Alan Coventry who stroked one of Loudon's eights in the 1920s. At the Athletic Centre, locked in a glass display cabinet with other ancient relics of U of T sport, is a banner won at a regatta in 1921. These three artifacts, along with the photograph of the 1975 UTRC at Hart House, are the only visible markers of the rowing club's history.

The University of Toronto Rowing Club has moved from a central position in a small institution to the margins of an immense one. In the late twentieth century, contact with University administrators has become scarce as intervening layers of bureaucracy have distanced students from officials. Comparative outsiders from the Argonaut Rowing Club, alumni volunteers, and students themselves have assumed leadership roles once held by the likes of Loudon and Merrick, who had easy access to policy makers. In some

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2 *The Varsity* (Toronto), 3 February 1897.
very real ways, this has left the UTRC an impoverished organization. The infusion of money and material has been sporadic, and the constant turnover of leaders-in-training has limited the team’s long-term development. These shortages have been apparent in the performances of Toronto crews since the 1970s. With a few exceptions, Varsity rowers rarely win.

However, while the lack of triumph and tradition is regrettable, neither quality appears to be essential to the survival of the UTRC. In the face of often irregular funding, leadership and competitive success over the past century, rowing at the University of Toronto has been a remarkably resilient activity. For one thing, the University of Toronto Rowing Club lives in the present. As one recent graduate stated in a speech at a team banquet:

YOU are the club now, not the people that have moved on... If you want to be a part of the success of this club- however it is that you define that success- then take ownership of your performance here. Fix your own boats, deal with the waves... set your own goals and use the people around you to achieve them, as a team.3

As for winning, recall from the introduction that Mel Kenny’s most cherished memory of racing in the 1920s was of a contest that his crew lost. Despite a lack of regular victories, it is highly significant that the rowing club has continued to be popular with students.

Young men and women are drawn to the lake for other reasons. Sam Hughes, who coxed two Varsity eights in the 1930s, recalled rowing on the machines all winter and the grim early spring weather, saying, “I was fascinated by it. It was so much fun.” He was not the only one to take pleasure in the challenge of hardship. Rowing fifty years later Tony Miller gleefully noted:

Probably the funniest memory I have is from novice crew, 1984. We were horrid. A couple of us had unrealized promise. Most just hadn’t realized they had no promise.

...we were at the Head of the Trent and were getting smoked by a boat of Western behemoths. The ‘swain called for a hard 10 about half way through the race and we promptly plowed into the shore before the narrows. Five minutes later, we were dislodged. I think the winning crew was already off the water, pinting heavily in the beer tent by the time we finished the race.

It was cold, dark and awful.

And I was hooked.⁴

Observing students at a University athletic banquet, Tommy Loudon noted: “They don’t realize it now but these team mates will be their great friends in [later] life.”⁵ Many U of T rowers have shown similar sentiments. “Rowing was the best thing to ever happen to me”, wrote one. “I often wonder where I’d be if I hadn’t done it”.⁶ For all its varied forms over the past hundred years, the UTRC has remained as valuable to students as textbooks and lectures. Expressing the feelings of many, one alumnus summarized, “U of T rowing provided friends, fitness and fun. It was the focus of my university experience and made the large campus of U of T an enjoyable and personal place to be.”⁷

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⁴ Tony Miller to author, 30 April 1998, author’s collection.
⁵ UTA B76-0003/001 (14). Loudon, Thomas R.
⁶ Julia Tremain to author, 29 March 1998, author’s collection.
⁷ John Wilkinson to author, 1 June 1998, author’s collection.
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## APPENDIX A. UTRC Presidents/Captains, Head Coaches, and Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>President/Captain</th>
<th>Head Coach</th>
<th>Membership</th>
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<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>James Merrick</td>
<td>Ned Hanlan</td>
<td>unav.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>unav.</td>
<td>unav.</td>
<td>unav.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>unav.</td>
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<td>1900-1919</td>
<td>No rowing</td>
<td>T.R. Loudon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>R. Huestis</td>
<td>T.R. Loudon</td>
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<td>unav.</td>
<td>T.R. Loudon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>A.A. Bell</td>
<td>T.R. Loudon</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Ivor Campbell</td>
<td>T.R. Loudon</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>K.B. Conn</td>
<td>T.R. Loudon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>W.L. Thompson</td>
<td>T.R. Loudon</td>
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<td>F.A. Sievert</td>
<td>T.R. Loudon</td>
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<td>R.C. Laird</td>
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<td>J.M. Keith</td>
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<td>O. Halldorson</td>
<td>T.R. Loudon</td>
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<td>1930</td>
<td>R.N. Starr</td>
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<td>E.J. Jackson</td>
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<td>J.H. Gibson</td>
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<td>D.M. Woods</td>
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<td>E.H. Noakes</td>
<td>David Soper</td>
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<td>1939</td>
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<td>1940</td>
<td>G. Eagle</td>
<td>Herb Miller</td>
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<td>1941-1959</td>
<td>No rowing</td>
<td>A.J. Russell</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>P. Ottensmeyer</td>
<td>A.J. Russell</td>
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<td>J. Gibbins</td>
<td>J. Lyttle</td>
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<td>P. Raney</td>
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<td>W. Allison</td>
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<td>R. Boraks</td>
<td>G. Leighton</td>
<td>28 men 9 women</td>
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<td>R. Boraks</td>
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<td>L. Marshall</td>
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<td>30 men</td>
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<td>R. Haag</td>
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<td>45 men</td>
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<td>31 men 18 women</td>
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<td>T. Turner</td>
<td>B.Klavora</td>
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<td>J. Wilkinson/ K. Worthington</td>
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<td>J. Glaab</td>
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<td>A. Miller</td>
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<td>I. Spears</td>
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<td>Team</td>
<td>Coach/Coach(es)</td>
<td>Men</td>
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<td>------</td>
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123