

## TESTING HER METTLE

Sue Hingley, PhD, professor, pathology, microbiology, immunology and forensic medicine, has won more rowing medals than will fit comfortably around her neck. She has medals from the "Nationals" and the "Worlds," from the Head of the Charles and the Head of Schuylkill. Dr. Hingley has competed for, and won, medals around world, but there's one medal Dr. Hingley did not have the opportunity to compete for: the Olympic medal.

Dr. Hingley belongs to an elite group of athletes who qualified to compete in the Olympics, but never got a chance to do so. In 1980, Dr. Hingley qualified for the United

States Olympic Team; but that was the year the United States boycotted the Moscow Olympics in protest over the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. "I had competed four times in the Worlds and won medals twice, so I had competed on that level," she reminisces, even beating a team that went on to win a medal in the 1980 Olympics, "but I missed being part of the opening ceremonies, the pomp and circumstance. I was very disappointed."

While several of her teammates continued to train for the 1984 Olympics, Dr. Hingley chose to put her oar in dry dock, so to speak. "In 1982, I kind of retired. I went to grad school," she explains. "I'd rather quit while I was ahead than get cut from the team." While she did row occasionally for the Vesper Boat Club in Philadelphia, Dr. Hingley focused on earning her PhD, teaching, conducting research and raising a family.

Then, in 2009, she received an e-mail from a woman she knew from her racing days, asking if she would be interested in joining a group of rowers who were racing at Masters Nationals in Camden over the summer. "Since Pat [Pat Coughlin, PhD, professor, anatomy] and I had been erging together in the gym, I decided to go for it." Again Dr. Hingley took up her position as stroke in an eight, and she fell back into rowing.

"It was a lot of fun reconnecting with people I had rowed with on the National team and meeting new people. It was a luxury to row in a good boat without the intense training and commitment that comes with being part of a team." Since then, Dr. Hingley has rowed off and on in a variety of venues. This past August, she rowed in Masters Nationals again, winning three gold medals and a silver. In September, she rowed in the FISA World Masters Regatta in Ontario, Canada, winning two first-place medals.

Dr. Hingley explains the difference between rowing now and rowing when she was younger. For one thing, she is less nervous. "When I was younger, I would have an adrenaline rush while sitting on the line," she says. "I had to control that feeling and harness that energy into the oar handle." The training is different, too. In her rowing heyday, Dr. Hingley would typically row twice a day regardless of the weather. "There were times we would row when the oar shafts were coated in ice and the drops of water splashing on our backs would freeze. In the winter we would run and train with weights twice a day for 12 to 13 workouts a week." Nowadays, Dr. Hingley ergs two or three times a week, depending on whether or not she's training for a race, and adds some elliptical training or biking to the mix.

"Racing gives me the push I need to keep exercising," she says. "I enjoy the competition, the feel of a strong boat when we're all pulling together; it's a nice change from the erg."



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Eight:** A scull with eight rowers.

**Erg:** As a noun, an erg is a rowing machine. As a verb, "to erg" means to train on a rowing machine.

**Head of the Charles:** The world's largest two-day rowing event, which is held in Boston.

**Head of the Schuylkill:** A "head" race in Philadelphia.

**Head Race:** A class of regattas that are generally three miles long in which boats race against each other and the clock.

**Masters:** A classification for adults in sports.

**Nationals:** National Rowing Championships held within the United States.

**Scull:** A boat for rowing.

**Stroke:** The lead seat in a scull. The stroke sets the pace for the boat.

**The line:** The starting line of a race.

**Worlds:** The World Rowing Championships; the international rowing regatta held on non-Olympic years.