

Anderson Boat Dedication at BHRA 30th Celebration

Paul Rouis – President BHRA 2012-2017, current Director

I have been asked to talk about the contributions of two special people to BHRA. If I were to enumerate that in a list it would be very, very long and as I am the 5th speaker and between you and lunch, rather than do that I will continue the thread of today's talks and share a few stories that illustrate just a few of those contributions and how they helped BHRA and me personally. I hope that it will evoke some memories of your interactions with them and how impacted you.

After seeing the draft program from Harry I smiled when I saw the title of Martha's talk and thought for a moment maybe mine should be "What did Martha Flacke talk me into over that coffee and slice of pie at the Burnt Hills Café!"

However that is not my role in today's program. In the rowing world having a shell named for you is a sign of recognition and respect. I have the privilege to talk a little bit about our Guests of Honor today: Dan Anderson and Donica Anderson.

I'll start with a recollection from my early days around here -2010 or so. I knew who Dan and Donica were but not real well. I did notice however that they were always together. Hollywood in those days had Bennifer and Brangelina and BHRA had Dandonica. We sure ended up with the best of those pairs.

I got to know them both a whole lot better after that slice of pie with Martha. I went from parent volunteer/dock designer to President of the club in just a month or two. To say that Dan and Donica were a big help to my wife Sharon and I as we jumped in with all four feet would be huge understatement.

Part of that was learning as much as we could as rapidly as we could. I recall coming home one of those early days and telling Sharon that we are now members of USRowing and we are going to the national convention. We attended sessions on club administration and coaching education and of course Dan and Donica showed us the ropes and introduced us to tons of people, it seemed they knew almost everybody.

That led to lots of morning meetings over coffee talking all things rowing -planning of rowing seasons, talking about the team and club, regatta results, rowing equipment, the Olympics and one day Dan saying "You've become a rowing geek, welcome to the tribe."

Donica has been a part of BHRA from the very early days. Initially as a rower, and then after rowing collegiately at Binghamton University as one of our coaches for many years. As her career became more demanding she transitioned from daily coaching to a role as the clubs' communications coordinator, and is currently a Master's rower. She literally has seen and done it all around here.

After that US Rowing convention I mentioned I was able to get the National Director of Coaching Education from USRowing to visit our little boathouse on the Mohawk here. This guy was a World Team/Olympic level coach and came to spend a couple days to do training and ride-alongs with our coaches. It was great! He made it point to pull me aside before he left and tell me how talented a coach she was.

It didn't take me long to realize how valuable she was to this place. She was the coach, the organizer, the planner, the communicator. To me she was the soul of this place, the embodiment of what we all wanted it to be.

To her girls I could see she was more than their coach, I would describe her as their "cool aunt" that could have a positive influence and impact on them that a peer or parent just couldn't.

She stayed in contact with them after they graduated and on the rare weekends they had off it was common for Dan and Donica to tell me they went to Philly, Mercer, Worcester, or Boston to see one of them race collegiately and how they did, they were so proud.

Dan was a constant presence around here. Sometimes visible but often behind the scenes on off hours doing things that just needed to be done. Tweaking boat rigging, laboriously sanding down and repainting oar blades so they looked sharp and professional on race day.

Some folks may not know that back 10+ years ago Dan was an active USRowing referee. Talk about selfless dedication to the sport! A ref's day is not usually putting behind the racing crews looking for buoy infractions. There were many days I recall Dan showing up in his wellies, khakis, and blue blazer-sometimes with a bow-tie, at dawn, ready to stand in the mud on some river bank for about 12 hours. He didn't just do this for Section 2 clubs he went out of town and did it for barely gas money and lodging.

That exposure to regattas across the northeast allowed Dan to see behind the scenes the best ways to run a race and he took that knowledge of what to do and what to avoid and shared it with us. Dan, Donica, and Bill Gohl were instrumental in improving the local organizing committee that plans and executes our regatta every year and help make it a top tier quality event that it is today.

Dan did all those things because Dan loves the sport of rowing but more than that he loves his partner and supports her in everything she did and does.

I can say without hesitation that BHRA at 30 would not be what it is without these two fine individuals, our very own dynamic duo. So let's thank them and welcome them up here with a round of applause as we continue with dedication of two rowing shells in their honor.