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*It's a great art, is rowing
It's the finest art there is.
It's a symphony of motion.
And when you're rowing well
Why it's nearing perfection.
And when you reach perfection
You're touching the divine.
It touches the you of you's
Which is your soul.
-George Pocock*

Charles A. McIntyre

1922-2008



Celebration of Life

November 14, 2008
Seattle Tennis Club

Charles A. McIntyre

Charles Anthony McIntyre was born November 20th, 1922 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His was the first born of five children. The family lived up on Old York Road in The Holy Angels Parish. His father Charles Sr., and his mother Muriel were both born and raised in Philadelphia.

Charles A. McIntyre Sr., or Mac as he was known, was a rough hewn fellow who worked as a heavy equipment operator. He was a union organizer for the Operating Engineers Union, and a bar room brawler who once got in the ring to spar with Jack Dempsey. It was said of Mac that he would hit first then ask questions later. His rough style eventually brought him to odds with his son Charley. Mac spent two years in Russia during the Great Depression, working heavy equipment and training the locals during the era of their cultural expansion.

Charley's mom, Muriel Ellen Leahy McIntyre, was a devout Catholic, and she hoped that her son would one day become Cardinal McIntyre, or perhaps the first American Pope. Little did she know that he would become the Pope of Seattle Rowing. Charley rose early each morning as a young boy to serve as an altar boy at Holy Angels Church, and his dedication made him a favorite of the Clergy. His mother instilled a strong sense of faith into young Charley, and she often said that he was a tremendous help to her through the hard times. Charley was the big brother who always looked out for his younger brothers and sisters, and they affectionately called him Bo-Bo.

Charley became involved in sports as a young man, and developed a particular affinity for football. He played all four years in high school, two at North Catholic and two at Central High, where he was captain in his senior year. He then attended West Chester Teachers College and Villanova University, where he turned out for football. Around this time, Charley moved in with his grandmother after a heated discussion with his father. Charley had said that the family ancestry was Scot-Irish; his father would have no mention of anything straying from pure Irish blood, pounding his fists on the dinner table. Charley was out the door, his brothers tossing his belongings to him out the bedroom window; little did he know how much this event would change his life.

Across the street from his grandmother lived a young man by the name of Emil Henwood. Emil was an up and coming golden gloves boxer, and shared Charley's love of sports. He particularly enjoyed rowing, and one day in January of 1942 he offered to take young Charley down to Boathouse Row in Philadelphia. As they stepped into the Penn Athletic Club boathouse, the legendary coach Frank Muller put out his hand, and with that welcomed Charley into the rowing fraternity.

Once the ice broke up on the Schuylkill River that spring, they put Charley out in a narrow gig, which is a large version of a shell, with two oars, known as sculls. After the initial struggle to prevent the boat from flipping over, Charley found delight in the freedom and exercise that only rowing can provide. He made his way down to the boathouse every day, rowing until his hands were raw. He soon entered his first race, and was overjoyed by winning the novice singles race. He soon brought his brothers down to learn how to row, and before long the three of them were all racing together. His brother Joey was to become the premier rower of the three brothers; but in his first race, he ran his gig into the wall along the river, and promptly dumped into the water. Brushing this public humiliation aside, the McIntyre brothers would soon go on to amass a collection of victories in local regattas.

In 1944, with their reputation well established, the brothers were approached by Jack Kelly Sr., an international rowing legend who was a powerful political figure in Philadelphia. He was re-opening the Vesper Rowing Club, and he wanted the McIntyre boys to form the nucleus of the club, along with his prodigal son Jack Jr., fondly known as Kell. Charley accepted this invitation, seeing the opportunity, and knowing as all did that it would not be wise to turn down an offer from the de facto mayor of Philadelphia. The four boys soon became great friends, inseparable on and off the water. After a day of racing where they ruled the river, they would have great parties in the halls of the Vesper boatclub. At one of these bashes, Kell's kid sister Grace was drinking heartily and making quite a scene. When Old man Kelly arrived unannounced to pick up Grace and her sister, he saw the state she was in, and promptly shut down the party. Many days of floor scrubbing and toilet cleaning followed for young Kell and the McIntyre Boys.



These were great times for Charley. He had found his true calling in Life---Rowing Competition---Particularly Sculling. Young Kelly and the McIntyre Bros. were the toast of Boathouse Row, winning local regattas and capturing national titles for Vesper in single sculls and double sculls. The brothers social network began to spread far beyond the realm that the McIntyre family had ever known, as Mr. Kelly's affiliations opened many doors for them. And while a world war waged overseas, the boys were fortunate to be safe at home. Charley had reported for duty in the military, but between his flat feet and his coke-rimmed glasses, the only action he would be seeing would be working at the local shipyards. To make some extra money, the brothers would play semi-pro football with the Philadelphia Shamrocks. Since the boys were also involved in high school and collegiate athletics, they played under alias-as the Kelly Brothers!

In 1949, Charley followed his brother Dick out to Seattle, Washington. Dick ended up playing football at Washington, and eventually Joe came out West to play football at USC, and later row crew at Washington. The brothers met George Pocock, famed waterman and boatbuilder, when they were out rowing one day. Charley was amazed at how easily Mr. Pocock moved the boat through the water, and how graceful his stroke appeared. It was love at first sight. Charley was enthralled with the intelligence and wisdom of Mr. Pocock, and soon became a willing disciple of one of the most influential figures in American rowing. Charley would later say that he learned how to row hard and fast in Philadelphia, but it was George Pocock who taught him how to row elegantly.

One night at a banquet for Mr. Pocock at the Olympic Hotel in 1950, Charley was carrying a rowing shell into the hotel lobby. He noticed a famed local sportswriter, Royal Brougham entering the banquet; with boat in hand, he approached him and began to chat him up. Charley complained that other than the University of Washington, there were no organized rowing programs in Seattle. With all of the great water there was to row on, there was the potential for much more rowing. Mr. Brougham wrote his article the next day, and managed to pique the interest of Victor Denny from the Seattle Tennis Club. Soon Charley was pitching ideas to Mr. Denny, and before long the McIntyre brothers started competing for the Club. They would go on to win American and Canadian Rowing Championships for the Seattle Tennis Club, and the first competitive sculling program was founded in Seattle.

Over the years, Charley rowed in hundreds of Pacific Coast Regattas, rowing as a master long before there was organized masters rowing. Charley has likely rowed more miles around Lake Washington than any person since the native indians paddled their dugout cedar canoes along its shores. Charley has instructed more rowers than can be remembered; dozens of world class athletes, hundreds of masters rowers, and thousands of people who just wanted to go out on the lake for a paddle. He's still out there, on his lake, rowing in the mist, gliding effortlessly in his shell...waiting for us to join him.

Charley made friends from all walks of life; he was introduced to skiing by his good friend Father Ryan in the 1950s, and after he learned how to ski, he learned how to teach skiing. He loved the mountains, and made sure that his children learned how to ski. He was a member of the first ski school at Alpental in 1968, and brought his kids up there every weekend in their old blue Plymouth station wagon through blizzards, white outs, and finger numbing chain installations.

Charley enjoyed practicing the art of conversation and story telling. Over the years he added more flair to his tales, in the vein of an Irish sage, and he was an incessant joke teller. His lips were made long before the days of censorship and political correctness. The man didn't have a bad bone in his body. But you would be wise not to push your luck with him, as he carried his old Philadelphia roots like a left jab in his pocket.

If there was a person you were looking to find, Charley would know a friend, who had a brother, that was married to the son of somebody somewhere. Amazingly he kept this knowledge in his head, and like a walking encyclopedia, he could spew it out on command.

Charley leaves behind many good friends and many old acquaintances...he will be missed by all. His passing will be deeply mourned by his family...

Bo-Bo, we love you with all of our hearts, and we thank you for all of your blessings.

