It means so much to all of us to get to meet some of the legends of Yale Women’s Crew. You might be surprised to learn how much we know about all of you—many of you are the main characters in the stories Will tells every day before practice. Every year, we hear about the 2004 crew that had such a high level of concentration, they went two months of practice with no unforced errors—never pausing at the finish when they were supposed to be at bodies over, never taking a stroke off. We’ve all heard about the famous Glandorf twins, who took their team and made them train harder than they’d ever trained before, leading with an almost crazy competitiveness that drove that team to the top. We all know the story of when Maren McCrea met with Will in his office and got so mad at him for pushing her to break 7 on her 2k that she went to the tanks and broke it right then and there, just to show him. And of course, we know all about the women who first fought for their legal rights to equal treatment by stripping in front of the Yale athletic director, back in the 1970s.

Those stories, spanning the 40 years of our history, shape how we train, how we race, and most importantly, who we are. I give a lot of credit to Will for keeping these stories alive year to year, for passing down a living record of our team’s history that has become a part of each one of us. We continue to write that history every day in the hours we train, the battles we fight on the race course, and the friendships we will carry with us for the rest of our lives. Your stories have given us so much—I’d like to give back to you the story of YWC today.

If there’s one thing I can assure you about our team, it is that we live, breathe, and sleep Yale Women’s Crew. Just yesterday, Natalie overheard someone walking into Bass library say to her friend, “Do you know those two girls outside of class? Are they inseparable outside of class too?” And her friend replied, “Well they’re both on the crew team so...yeah.” And it’s true—over the course of this year, this team has become more strongly united than any team I’ve ever been a part of. We really started to come together on the first day of Ivy Off season, at the beginning of November when we aren’t allowed to train with coaches for a certain number of days. In past years, we’ve used that time to give people flexible workout schedules so they can manage their school work and have a convenient schedule. But this year, we decided as a team that we would take advantage of Ivy Offs by scheduling practices together twice a day every day, running test pieces as if our scores were going on the books, and choosing to set our schedules so we could sweat and suffer together every single day. Not only did we come into winter training fitter than we’ve ever been, but we built something underneath the surface that month and a half of Ivy Offs. Every day that we showed up in the tanks to train together, we built an ownership of our mission, and a deep, deep trust in every person on this team. We broke down the barriers of class divisions, and became one single group, united by our mutual respect for the commitment we all demonstrated to each other every single day.

We know a lot of the girls in those other boats we line up against every weekend. And I can tell you confidently that what we have in this boathouse is something special. Where other teams race from a place of anger, hatred, or fear, we race from a place of
trust, and love for each other and for this team. That culture is something 40 years in the making—and it’s something that is truly alive and well today. Thank you all for continuing to give us the opportunity to race for YWC. And stay tuned—our story is not done yet!
Joyce Nett

At a very early anniversary I might have recalled a routine, like how every afternoon after changing I’d make my way to see who was in my boat by consulting “the board”; a simple and elegant, piece of wood painted blue with an arrangement of hooks grouped to boats. The hooks in turn held tags, one for each rower and coxswain, which were beautifully calligraphed by Liz aka “EdeB”.

Or I might have remembered those in my boat at an amazing race like the time we raced Dartmouth my senior year. The conditions were great and the Connecticut River was flatter that I’d ever seen it. The coach advised us that Dartmouth had a fast start and our only hope was to get out fast and try to hang on. We went out fast and pulled away and away and away, instead of our planned sprint we took the stroke down to limit the difference in our finish times.

But now 40 years out (35 years since my graduation) gives me a different perspective and memory that I want to share with you.

I met Lisa our novice year; she was a freshman and I was a sophomore. We shared jokes and complaints and often a seat on the bus to and from practice.

The next year we both earned places on the varsity boat, strengthening our friendship. By the third year we laughed more than we talked, enjoying dumb pranks, sharing immature humor and not taking ourselves too seriously off the water.

In 1979, on the heels of the nationals victory we both decided to try out for the 1980 US Olympic team; Lisa took a year off from school and I stayed in New Haven another year past graduation. We decided to live together and took a crazy, dumpy, gross apartment above the Owl Tobacco Shop on College Street.

Almost immediately, things did not go well: boyfriends, jobs, training, money and real life put a crimp in our friendship and I moved out to my own place. Neither of us attended the US team camp than spring and, over time, our communications lessened and we lost touch.

A few years ago, I came to a Yale Women’s Crew event. That Friday night I walked in to meet up at a local bar but saw no familiar faces. I went up to a women at the bar. Of course, it was Lisa! My eyes filled as I remembered how much I loved her company and companionship and I realized how much I had missed her friendship.

The women in this room share with you and me some of the most intense and rewarding experiences. Some were routine, others exciting and all of them required your time and energy. So today I ask you to reflect on the similarities not the differences, meet someone new, reconnect with someone from your past and most importantly stay in touch - they will always be in your boat.
Notes – YWC 40th reunion talk by Megan Leitch (credit Kelly Barrett for some key suggestions).

- As a procrastinator, I was obviously writing these comments on the plane ride here. I thought to myself, “They want me to speak for three minutes about the era I rowed in. 1998-2002. What was it like? What made it unique? How do I somehow distinguish us from these other impressive women who also might be frantically writing their speeches on the plane to New Haven?

- Well, I was able to think of a lot of stuff that made my era the same as other YWC eras:
  o We loved each other, then hated each other, then we realized it didn’t matter because we were sisters
  o Some practices were good, some were abominable, some were transcendent
  o At boat meetings we’d laugh until our faces cramped at our own stupid inside-jokes in our own acronym-laced language that surely annoyed the hell out of everyone around us.
  o We ate EVERYTHING…and then went for some Claire’s Lithuanian Coffee Cake
  o We raced fast, and it felt great

- Ok, but none of this is unique... I continued wracking my brain for something different about ‘98-’02
  o “Do I talk about our increasingly competitive race record? No, we were very proud of that, but some previous and later eras had open water on us in that regard
  o Do I talk about how, from our perspective they built us a beautiful boathouse that was totally, 100%, all for our class because we were so AWESOME?
  o No, no, no
  o What makes us special???
  o Oh.
  o I know.”

- We were the class that was coached by Will Porter ALL FOUR YEARS.
- Think of that, class of ‘03-’17!!
- 33% more Will Porter
  o 33% more terrible jokes about gender stereotypes
  o 33% more discussion about the merits of 70’s music
  o 33% more “Humble can-do,” “Blue collar work ethic” (shout out to Mia – she came up with that one)
  o 33% more “Same as it ever was”
  o 33% more “How you live your days is how you live your life.”
  o 33% more of THAT GUY (point) in your head for the REST of your LIFE.

- Despite all of that, one of the very last things he told us has really been what stuck the most. Senior year, after our last NCAA race, we were all standing in a circle, it was a melancholy/bittersweet moment. Will told us, “You will go to each other’s weddings, you will go to each other’s funerals. This is NOT the end, this is the beginning.”
- And so far, that has been 100% accurate.
- So I guess our “era” was 33% luckier to have him as a coach. Cheers, Will!
I’m Betsy Sullivan, ’74, and I was the first varsity captain of women’s crew at Yale. And there are some folks in the room right now who were key to the successes of that team – Nat Case, first of all, our coach, who took us to the next level by emphasizing physical conditioning and intensive training, and two incredible athletes, Anne Warner and Chris Ernst, whom you all know, who pushed us all to excel. And we heard earlier today about the qualities of leadership of today’s Yale women’s crew captain – leading by example, going the extra distance physically, knowing when to speak out for necessary change – and to me Chris Ernst, who went on to become the third varsity captain with the results we all know about, exemplifies that exceptional leadership.

So even though we never beat Radcliffe that first varsity year – although we kept getting closer and closer each race, as one of us noted earlier today – I’m convinced that, if Nat had had his way, and we’d been able to move the race distance from 1,000 meters to 1,500 meters that year, we would have cleaned up.

But before I talk more about that year, I want to take us back to the founding of women’s rowing at Yale, because, although we’re marking 40 years today since the first varsity team, the history of women’s rowing at Yale actually goes back 42 years to the spring of 1972.

And there are two women in the room who were responsible for the first women’s eight at Yale. So stand up Janet Klauber and Joyce Majure, class of 1973. These two women set the stage for the first women’s team, conceived when they looked around the primordial sea of intramural rowing at Yale and saw that only men were competing in intramural crew. So in the spring of 1972, Joyce and Janet assembled the first women’s shell at Morse/Styles colleges to compete against men, not winning any races but coming close on occasion. And then, Janet recalls, they were recruited to compete against other women’s college and high school crews in the precursor of what was to become the Eastern Collegiate Rowing competition, where they were outmatched totally. So that’s when Janet, an experienced rower, having rowed during high school at the ZLAC Rowing Club in San Diego – which for those of you who haven’t heard of it, was founded by four women rowers in the 1880s [actually, 1892] and named for the initials of their first names, starting with “Zulette,” and which had included Janet’s grandmother in the second class of rowers in the ought-twos (1902) – decided the women needed a coach and a team.

And it just so happened that one Joe Ristuccia, former Yale rower, was affiliated with Morse, where his wife-to-be, Joan, was a student. And in the way that things come together at Yale, Tony Johnson, the men’s heavyweight coach, stepped in to ask Joe to build a women’s team from the ground up – with a little bit of money from Tony [enough to buy oars] and a borrowed shell that many of us remember was like pulling lead in the water [Joe’s mother later bought the team a used shell].

Janet and Joyce brought Wyn Kelley, ’73, into the mix, and she became our first captain – and would have been here today except she’s preparing to replicate a Melville whaling voyage, long story! Anyway, the women and Joe started recruiting among friends and on Old Campus, where I was waylaid in the fall of 1972 and eagerly signed up. And many of us remember early morning runs out to the Lagoon and Joe’s indefatigable humor and his determination to build that sense of team also from the ground up.
Some of you may have seen an old photo I brought here today of that first crew at Yale pulling away from the dock before a scrimmage race at the Lagoon and we’re all laughing – one of the women told me Joe must have told us one of his trademark jokes. And a surprising number of us still have the pewter mugs he passed out at our first crew banquet.

We were, for a while it seemed, an ever-changing cast of characters and you’d never know how many women would show up for practices. One of my most memorable moments from that first year, which I recall in the program, was when we had to do a dog-over-shell rescue one morning when only 5 women showed up to row and Nat decided to get in the shell as the 6th rower so we could have a practice. His dog Woody panicked and jumped into the water and started paddling after us and got exhausted, so we had to rescue him. Remember that, Nat?

We weren’t exactly a great success on the water ourselves. In the fall of 1972, we entered the first Head of the Charles to include women’s eights and, as I recall, came in 13th of 13 crews. [It was actually 12th of 12, I’m told.] Timi Handelman, who was coxing, and who became the second varsity captain, remembers that my seat popped off and I rowed most of the race sliding up and down the runners. Ouch! (“I remember, too!” Janet says from the audience.) The spring of ’73, we moved to Derby and had some close races but not a lot of victories. One of my crewmates remembers winning only one race. But thanks to Joe and Wyn, we felt like a team.

The next year, Joe headed off to Boston where he’d been accepted into graduate school and Nat Case took over coaching duties. And we had some phenomenal athletes show up to row, including Page Knudsen, who became our stroke, Anne Lovett, Anne Warner and Chris Ernst of course, and also Amy Richlin, a graduate student who’d rowed at Princeton, Ann Simko and Ann Graham, another graduate student, who was a great athlete, too, and would have liked to have been here today but couldn’t make it. I went from the #7 seat to bow and Mollie McNickle, Pam Kohlberg, Timi and I were among the few on the team who’d rowed the prior year. Most times, we had enough rowers for a four as well. But as many in this room know, Nat decreed a more significant change for the team – pushing us to test our mettle physically. It was the most intense physical training experience of my life.

Syd Shera joined the team in the spring, rounding out the eight that went on to come in 2nd at the Sprints, and win two regional championships, although we never beat Radcliffe – but we put up a better record than the men’s teams that year, which is why we were, quite unusually, awarded varsity status retroactively for the whole season.

Joyce Majure here told me she feels like a grandmother of women’s crew at Yale. I see it differently. I see us all standing on the shoulders of the women who came before us. We did that when I rowed and you all are continuing to do that now. Go Yale and go Yale Women’s Crew!
Wow, it is so gratifying to look out and see what a large, amazing community Yale Women’s Crew has grown to be! I am overwhelmed and overjoyed to be a part of this extremely special family.

I’m Rena Hedeman, class of ’87. Winnie asked me to share a few stories and special memories from the 1980’s. While we certainly had many amazing times, looking back on those 4 years is mostly a big blur of strong emotions and intense feelings: desire, persistence, determination, commitment, overcoming adversity, pushing yourself to the absolute limit and then realizing you have even more inside you, ecstatic joy, crushing disappointment, and the list goes on. But perhaps what comes to mind most immediately and vividly are the friendships. Rowing for Yale does not create ordinary friendships – these are bonds that are extremely deep, unwavering, and last forever. Many of my teammates were my absolute best friends at Yale and continue to be to this day, 31 years later. I think probably all of us in the YWC family share that feeling and experience.

In addition to the teamwork and friendship and personal growth, a few specific memories definitely jump out. Once when we were in Tampa for training during spring break, we were out practicing during a very windy day - the currents were strong and there were many gigantic swells. Well, one of the eights happened to row right over two huge waves that were perpendicular to the boat, and since there was basically no water between the two waves to support the boat for a second, it broke right in half! Right between Susan Prince’s seat and her feet! Everyone fell in immediately of course, including the coxwain who couldn’t really swim. They were all fine – I don’t know what ever happened to the boat. Hey Nat, what happened to that boat? (Nat Case replies: It was put back together and sold to the New Haven Rowing Club!)

Another memory that bears sharing with this crowd here today, simply because from what I understand things are pretty different now, is our trips to Tampa for spring training. We got there by bus – a 24 hour trip. And since we didn’t stop until we arrived the next day, we slept anywhere we could possibly get more comfortable than sitting upright in a chair. Some of us – myself included – used to climb up and squeeze onto the luggage rack above the seats – a space so tight that once you were up there on your back or your stomach, you couldn’t turn over without getting all the way out and getting back in again. There wasn’t enough room! But at least you got to stretch out. Others would bring hammocks and hang them down the aisle of the bus. And then others would just flop against the window or each other – anything to try to get a decent night’s sleep. It was character building and fun!

I look back on those years and realize that Yale Women’s Crew is what gave me the grit and the resilience I have today. I look out at you younger women who are rowing now, and I can assure you that what you are gaining and learning now from these experiences will come back to support you and buoy you up for the rest of your lives.

I hope this isn’t too much information – if it is I apologize – but I’ve endured natural childbirth four times. No medication, no painkiller. I have to admit that wasn’t because I’m brave – it wasn’t my choice.
I won’t go into detail, but for medical reasons I wasn’t allowed to have an epidural or anything. And the doctors and my friends at home asked me before each labor, “Are you going to be ok? Have you mentally prepared yourself for this?” And I said “Yes, of course. I rowed for Yale Women’s crew – I can do ANYTHING!” And I honestly felt that way! And I still feel that today. I think we ALL do. We can do absolutely ANYTHING we put our minds to! And that feeling alone is more valuable, perhaps, than anything else we learned at Yale. That feeling, that inner strength, is truly a gift, and it is priceless.

Winnie spoke to us earlier about the importance of giving to YWC – of continuing and strengthening and building upon this amazing community. So I want to just remind us all that yes, we CAN reach this big fundraising goal by June 30\textsuperscript{th}. WE CAN DO ANYTHING! Yale Women’s Crew has given each of us so much. Now is the time to step up and keep it going for generations to come. Thank you.
It's an honor to be here, among so many YWC superstars.

While some memories may fade and may differ over the years, there are certain YWC moments we all know well.

- The feeling of ripping a palm blister off the oar handle halfway through a three-mile piece.
- The stink wafting from the pile of clothes at the bottom of your locker as you pull out socks for practice.
- That constant urge to pee before launching.
- The spread of butterflies at the start line. (I’m sure other alumnae felt them again, as I did, on the water today.)
- The sticky sweat-covered mat that clings to you during V-ups.
- The lactic acid searing through your quads on the 4th 1500, knowing you've got another one to go.

And then, of course, there are the Will-isms that "helped get us through it." For example:

- “It's not flying and dying if you don't die.”
- “How you live your days is how you live your lives.”
- “Take life one stroke at a time.”
- And of course: “YWC gets on their knees for no one!”
- And the helpful hint that “nothing good happens after midnight.”

But most importantly, Will once said something along the lines of:

“It might be hard to imagine now, but in the future you won't remember which races you won or which you lost. The seasons will blur together. What you take from here isn't medals or trophies; it's friendships, life-long bonds.”

We endured all of the brutal blister-ripping practices for our teammates. If it was up to any one of us we’d have realized the workouts are fricken nuts and quit long ago. Our teammates kept us honest, loyal, hardworking, sober, and most importantly very, very fast.

In fact, teammates make rowing not only bearable but also fun.

- I'll never forget the late night Spring Break skit prep. For some reason we thought it'd be a good idea to wear bikinis in snow-covered March.
- The marathon Commons brunches, taking over 3 full tables and lasting for at least six courses.
- The full team talent shows decked out completely in spandex for absolutely no reason.
- And of course becoming internet sensations with the advent of free video editing software and social media.

Unfortunately, it turns out that being a rowing internet sensation won’t get you a job (though the film editing skills can’t hurt). However, the lessons learned in tanks, on the water, in the weight room, and in the locker room definitely will.

Now more than ever women are thriving in the workplace. We are thriving thanks to the legacy of YWC rowers past. Forty years of strong, resilient women.

This YWC environment allows us to be fiercely competitive, aggressive and powerful. But most importantly it allows us to fail, learn and come back stronger. There are few places in the world that allow us to hone that essential life skill. I know from experience that my ability to fail, or even falter, and come back stronger makes me a better colleague, leader, and person.

Thanks to a couple brutal late-season and unexpected losses, I came to understand that failing is crucial for reaching my maximum potential. That’s what makes me so immensely proud of the three Varsity 8+ NCAA titles, the Second Varsity 8+ national title, and the many Eastern Sprints and Head of the Charles titles. These titles demonstrate that YWC, our team, is realizing its potential, every workout, every race, every championship.

YWC’s tremendous success is thanks to the hard work of 40 years. Hard work that will continue for the next 40!

However, all of the medals and trophies won by the many assiduous athletes that make up this tremendous program aren’t what matter most. (I admit that it’s easier to say this because the program is so strong and we win so often these days.) Rather, it’s the life lessons and friendships that all of the speakers have talked about today. They are real, they will last and they will get you through anything.

That’s why I couldn’t make be prouder or feel more honored to be part of the YWC family.

Thank you for making this incredible celebration possible. I’m already looking forward to the next one.

- Alice Henly, Class of 2010