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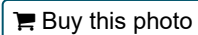
Movie brings memories

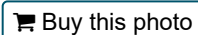


(<https://zeta.creativecirclecdn.com/seward/large/20240206-111433-ellen%20now%20clr.tif.jpg>)

Ellen Jirovsky waits to start rowing at an alumni gathering recently.

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by Stephanie Croston, scroston@sewardindependent.com

“The Boys in the Boat,” currently playing at the Rivoli Theatre in Seward, is the story of overcoming obstacles and climbing to the top of the world.

It’s “a 1930s-set story centered on the University of Washington’s rowing team, from their Depression-era beginnings to winning gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics,” according to [imdb.com](https://www.imdb.com).

Most of us don’t know much about rowing, the terms used in the sport or even what it requires. But Seward’s Ellen Jirovsky does.

Jirovsky, a graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, knows about rowing because she helped start the rowing team at UNL. She shared some of her memories before the movie Feb. 6.

“The similarities of early rowing teams are shown from this movie on to the beginnings of Nebraska Crew,” she said.

In 1973 she and another physical education major recruited 30 other UNL girls to start a team. Workouts included long-distance runs, stairs and trips to Branched Oak for rowing practice. The 30 recruits fell to 20 when they learned how demanding the sport was.

At the time, Jirovsky said, boats were made of wood and weighed 400 pounds. Each rower had to be able to lift 50 pounds over her head. Weights were coffee cans filled with cement and attached to broom handles.

Jirovsky was a physical education major and wanted to stay in shape. Crew seemed to be a good option, especially after passing Title IX.

Jirovsky had a shell named after her in 2005 – a women’s eight, 60-foot long shell called the Ellen Havlovic Jirovsky, or the EJ.

Crew is not a sanctioned sport at UNL, even after 50 years. It still holds club status. The boathouse at 16th and Y is still in use. And alumni are still seeking new crew members.

Their annual banquet draws hundreds of alumni back to Lincoln to share stories and recruit. And that’s why Jirovsky chose to share her story at the Rivoli.