During the Spring of 1991, I was a member of the Lute track team and a member of the Mast. I was assigned a photo shoot for the upcoming family weekend, at which the parents usually come to PLU and visit little Jane and Johnnie students. Doug Herland, who had been the Men's team coach had taken a turn for the worse. During the photoshoot, I had the opportunity to meet him. My impressions were one of awe and respect; for here was a man near 40 who had come over physical limitations, to become a bronze medallist as a coxswain in the 2+ in 1984 Olympics, head coach of a program that he himself was a member during the early 1970s, and had literally spent the last five years of his life, giving everything he had to the team. His rowers, as it was related to me, revered him as a local deity. Herland embodied the essence of what it means to row. At the time I did not comprehend the meaning, but I respected him for the simple reason of being a person of integrity.

After a short-lived career running the 800m with the Lutes track team, I became a member of the crew team in the spring of 1992. A couple of close friends of mine, who were lightweights, had approached me with the idea of joining. After a night of enjoying a few beverages, I accepted their offer. Previously, my rowing career had consisted of a Saturday morning up at University of Washington with a coxswain and a lightweight who thought it would be a good idea for me to feel rowing on one of the Norwegian rowing machines (not the ergs but a oar handle attached to a real slide and weights for resistance). We spent the morning going over technique and decided I was a port. My first day on the water had been encouraged by the current head coach, Doug Nelson, then in his second year. That early morning I had the fortune of sitting two-seat in the infamous Marge 4+. The wood-boat was excruciatingly heavy and cumbersome. My thoughts were "What is this?" After a row around the island and back, I was hooked. Later in that same week, Doug asked if I would be willing to pull a 2000m erg test as he put it "for fun." Coach Nelson and a coxswain met me down in the fitness center later that evening and I broke seven minutes my first time sitting on the erg. At the time I thought this was alright for someone who had not rowed before, but little did I know that it did not even scratch the surface of what the other varsity lightweights were pulling.

The rest is a wash of memories. Early mornings. Doubles during spring break. Doug yelling at Broodie Williams '93 for burying his chin into his chest at the release, then thrusting his chin into the air at the catch (AKA "PEZ Dispenser"). The infamous "Tucker Pause drill" -- imagine: stop rowing in the last 250 meters of a race with both arms fully extended and head between your knees, because you are tired. Doug silently watching your every stroke as the sun rises behind Mt Rainier, stopping practice and saying "Gentleman, that is why I do this!"

And I finally understood what it meant to have "rowing in your blood."