

# You Don't Always Have to Go With the Flow.

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There is a club with a funny name which in 1992 will celebrate 100 years of rowing. ZLAC Rowing Club is one of the oldest clubs on the West Coast and it all started when three daughters of a Harbor pilot one of their friends borrowed a “bum-boat” from a meat packing company and started to explore the shoals and mudflats of San Diego Bay. Zulette, Lena, Agnes and Caroline would listen to Captain Polhamus explain to them the tides, winds and weather patterns and learn to “read the water.”

During local festivities, Cabrillo Day; commemorating the landing of the Spanish explorer, the young women were afforded the opportunity of borrowing a lighter barge from the already established Men's Rowing Club. It only served to increase the desire of the women to own their own rowing barge. Without consulting the other members Lena ordered an 8 oared barge from a local boat builder. Now to work! The women sold subscriptions, bonds and raised funds by hosting social events. A formal launching was held amidst great festivities and ZLAC Rowing Club was on it's way. Other rowing clubs for women were formed from local high schools and from the Normal school. Some of these clubs would evolve into sororities when the school became San Diego State College.

Increased shipping in the harbor, the need for more docks and warehouses placed more risk upon the rowers. It was time to look for another clubhouse. In 1924 property was purchased on the northern shore of Mission Bay and a member and architect, Lillian Rice, was commissioned to draw plans for the clubhouse and dock.

Social consciousness brought members to volunteer work during both World Wars and relief work during national disasters. Support was given to a Milk Fund for a Tuberculosis camp, endorsement of child labor laws, and a proposal to assist in the establishment of a state training school for girls. The club also sent a resolution to the Mayor and the Common Council to take steps to close Mission Bay to all forms of hunting and shooting, and the body of water be made a bird sanctuary.

In the 1960's crew regattas were being held with the involvement of universities and colleges in Southern California. With foresight and guidance a new era was ushered in under the tutelage of Patti Stose Wyatt. Mrs. Wyatt had rowed with Lena Polhamus Crouse and shared her interests. She focused her efforts to bringing to the younger members of ZLAC the participation in national and international rowing. Barges were used for training with the wherries and shells used in competition. Mrs. Wyatt is recognized as one of the founders of the Crew Classic held every spring on San Diego Bay. In 1984 she was the director of rowing and canoeing for the Olympics, with events held at Lake Casitas. ZLAC Rowing Club is an established San Diego tradition and the continued development of the bay brings out the early prediction of the founding member, Lena. At the turn of the century, as she looked out over the mudflats she was heard to exclaim, "Someday this will all be improved."

## Gold Rush Skisport: Sierra Ladies on Skis

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The recent rush of scholarship on the history of women's sport seems to have passed skiing by. A couple of investigators have looked at women's participation in the Winter Olympics, and an occasional piece of descriptive history may be found. These works have all been concerned with the twentieth century and mostly from the 1930's on. I find hardly a word about women's skiing activities in 19th century America even though winter sports have received a mild glance in which ice yachtswomen rated a few paragraphs but lady skiers one. This lack of knowledge is surprising given the fervor in searching out women's sporting origins. It is one thesis of this paper that skiing in gold rush California as a recreational pursuit was available equally to women as it was to men.

Another thesis of considerable complexity is that the equality enjoyed by women in the skisport, as skiing was called in those days, was possible because Sierra skiing had no *Idraet* tradition behind it. Skiing in the gold camps was able to develop in a catch-as-catch-can way in which fun and frolic were more important than the serious business of moral, outdoor sport that *Idraet* required.

The utilitarian aspect of women's skiing is analyzed and evidence shows that the use of skis in winter was essential for women. Simply moving about, shopping expeditions, paying visits and the like all required women to be able to manage what were called Norwegian snowshoes-skis. Women also enjoyed skis for recreation for an hour or so after work and to go on skiing parties. In the high Sierras skiing was a social activity. When youth and beauty was able to ski gracefully, the combination of a pretty physique with good technique attracted male attention. But youth, beauty and technique were not enough; women had to be sufficiently spirited to