

Hudson River Valley Institute
Walkway Over the Hudson Oral Histories
Richard & Keenan Humphrey

Length: Approximately 20 minutes

Interviewer: State your name for the camera please?

R. Humphrey: Richard Humphrey.

K. Humphrey: Keenan Humphrey.

Interviewer: I apologize in advance for doing this to you guys.

[Laughter]

Interviewer: First question, where did you grow up?

R. Humphrey: Keenan was born in Oregon; I actually grew up in the Berkshires and spent twenty-three years in Oregon.

Interviewer: Keenan anything you want to add to that?

K. Humphrey: No that's about it, but since second grade I've been in Rhinebeck, so [cuts off]

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewer 2: So you went to school here?

K. Humphrey: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: How long did you [cuts off], you say you were born in Oregon and you moved?

K. Humphrey: I moved a few different places, to Fishkill for about a year and ultimately moved to Rhinebeck and have been here so [cuts off]

Interviewer 2: So you've always been near the river?

K. Humphrey: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: Did you guys know about the bridge before or did you it's just one of those this you were talking about passively?

R. Humphrey: No I started rowing with Hudson River Rowing Association in, ten years ago.

Interviewer 2: Okay.

R. Humphrey: And so that would be my first introduction to the bridge, really.

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Interviewer 2: You rowed with what organization?

R. Humphrey: Hudson River Row Way Association.

Interviewer 2: Okay.

R. Humphrey: Which is just celebrating its tenth anniversary?

Interviewer 2: Are you still with that?

R. Humphrey: Yes, yes as well as coaching the Rhinebeck High School team.

Interviewer 2: Yeah, what about coaching the rowing, the rowing team?

R. Humphrey: Yes, the crew team.

Interviewer 2 [to K. Humphrey]: Were you part of the crew team?

K. Humphrey: Yeah, I've been on crew since last year.

Interviewer 2: How is that, how is that when you [cuts off]?

K. Humphrey: Having my dad as a coach is different; it gets a little annoying sometimes but [cuts off]

Interviewer 2: But it's fun.

K. Humphrey: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: I guess you have to say its fun because you're his son.

[Interviewer II and Keenan laugh]

Interviewer 2: [to interviewer] - what else did you want to say?

Interviewer: How often are you guys out on the water, I'm assuming the Hudson.

R. Humphrey: Yeah, were running Monday through Thursday after school and then Saturday and Sunday.

Interviewer: Okay.

R. Humphrey: Six days a week.

Interviewer: What do with Fridays off Keenan? I'm curious Keenan.

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K. Humphrey: Well pretty much just sleep and get my energy back up. [Slight laughter]

Interviewer: What time do you guys start, I mean after school Monday and Thursday, what time Sunday what time do you guys hit the water?

R. Humphrey: Early, seven o'clock on the river, today it was a regatta race so it was a little bit earlier, had to be there at six.

Interviewer: And you guys use the community boathouse, right?

R. Humphrey: Yes that's correct.

Interviewer: Okay that's not too bad then, so I mean how often do you guys go by the bridge?

R. Humphrey: Pretty much almost everyday and probably a little bit more in practices, like the turn around point after a race is just before the railroad bridge.

Interviewer: Okay so.

R. Humphrey: But during practices we will often go south under both bridges.

Interviewer: I'm curious what impressions do you usually get go under the bridge, obviously when your guys are racing you're not paying too much attention to it but [cuts off]

R. Humphrey: Right, well curiously I had the a boat drifting toward the first piling on Thursday and I put my launch between the boat and the piling, that's the closest I've every been to the piling and it made me wonder whether it's an iceberg, you know.

[Interviewer Laughs]

R. Humphrey: Or if it goes straight, yeah I was worried about the prop-up on the motor if there's more that comes out underneath the water.

Interviewer: A little concerned about [cut off by Richard]

R. Humphrey: And it really struck me the other day, the immensity of this structure being that close to it, you know I pass by it a lot but never within arms reach.

Interviewer: Yeah.

R. Humphrey: I usually don't like to be that close to it.

Interviewer: I mean, so Keenan does it ever bothered, do you ever get anxious that it might fall over?

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K. Humphrey: Yeah, you know it doesn't help, I'm a little scared sometimes cause it's pretty big. [laughs]

Interviewer [to interviewer II]: Anything you would like to ask?

Interviewer 2: Oh.

R. Humphrey: I've seen the falcons diving from the bridge a few times.

Interviewer 2: Did they ever dive at you while were [cuts off]?

[Slight laughter]

R. Humphrey: No they haven't eyed me for bait yet.

K. Humphrey: That would be interesting [laughs].

Interviewer 2: It happened at Fenway Park it could happen here.

Interviewer: I'm curious even before today how much did you guys know about the bridge?

R. Humphrey: Not a lot.

Interviewer: It's really more so just the personal experience?

R. Humphrey: I've been aware of this Walkway project since it started, I think I've snippets in the paper, I always thought it was a really interesting cool idea. I always wanted to be up there.

Interviewer 2: So you would go up there if you could, if could up go up there?

R. Humphrey: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: You wouldn't be scared?

R. Humphrey: No, not really, I mean [cuts off].

Interviewer 2: Apparently it's really high.

R. Humphrey: It is very high, now the bridge at one point was the finish line for what was called the IRA, the Intercollegiate Rowing what is it?

Interviewer 2: Association.

R. Humphrey: IR[cuts off] it's a rowing championship that was held there for many, many years and those were four and six mile races, are pretty incredible distances. They used to have large wooden numbers on the railroad bridge which were the lay markers and when I started

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rowing with Hudson River, we used to row out of Clearwater which is now Quite Cove Park. There used to still be remnants of those number plaquers. I don't see any sign of them now, they must have fallen off [cuts off], taken off.

Interviewer 2: You said the races were four to six miles?

R. Humphrey: There was a four mile course and a six mile course.

Interviewer 2: And the bridge was the ending point?

R. Humphrey: Yeah it was the end, so those numbers marked the lanes that the [coxings] would be in, you know that would be their finish point and [clears throat] they ran those races and they were so popular that the railroad, the freight railroad on the other side used to have flat cars set up with bleachers.

Interviewer: Really?

R. Humphrey: And they would move crowds of people.

Interviewer: That's great.

R. Humphrey: Down the course as the people raced, which is really a great idea for crew races even like this morning, those are just 1,500 meter races and they start up near Quite Cove and finish up right in front of the boathouse, and you know you really don't get to see much, it's hard to even tell which one of your crews, you know their lanes, but it's a huge river, small boats, you can't see much of the race until 300 to 500 meters.

K. Humphrey: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: How do you guys first feel when you first, like how long ago since you've been rowing? At what age did you start? Did you start rowing when you were younger or? [Cuts off]

R. Humphrey: No, no I just picked it up from an ad in the paper for learn to row. I always had an interest in it, it always intrigued me. In Portland I used to see the boats down on the Willamette River, so it always intrigued me.

Interviewer 2: So how was it when you first got in the boat? How does it feel when you're first doing that on the big river? Is it kind of freighting at first?

R. Humphrey: Yeah I think it's pretty freighting at first.

Interviewer 2: And when you go under structures such as the bridge, do you feel safer because you've got something in the middle of all that water, how does that feel?

R. Humphrey: I don't know if I get that sense of security.

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Interviewer 2: Still the iceberg sensation?

R. Humphrey: Yeah you kind of wonder what's under [cuts off]

Interviewer 2: Yeah, Keenan how do you feel when your? [Cuts off]

K. Humphrey: When?

Interviewer 2: When you're in the water?

K. Humphrey: When I got, you know, the first time rowing?, it was a little nerve racking, didn't really know what to do, I just got thrown out there and I was okay let's see what you can do and you know going under the bridge didn't help my sense of safety much but [cuts off]

Interviewer 2: Is it, you know it's a very sturdy bridge, it carried locomotives, how would you feel if it still had locomotives running across it?

R. Humphrey: That would be more unnerving.

K. Humphrey: That would be scary.

[Laughter]

R. Humphrey: Yeah, the noise factor and [cuts off]

Interviewer 2: Is it, when you go under it; is there a sound that sort of, you know like echoes of any kinds?

R. Humphrey: Yeah, there's probably more sound you know with the Mid-Hudson because of the traffic.

Interviewer 2: Right.

R. Humphrey: You do hear that echoing and stuff.

Interviewer 2: Yeah but does the railroad bridge makes sound?

R. Humphrey: No that's pretty silent there, that's a pretty silent spot.

K. Humphrey: It's almost more silent than when you're out on the open river, it kind of encloses a lot more.

Interviewer 2: Like a vacuum?

R. Humphrey: Yeah it does feel like a vacuum.

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Interviewer 2: It's kind of creepy.

R. Humphrey: Yeah, we use the railroad bridge as one of the safety markers, whether we can go out on the river as well. In foggy conditions you have to be able to see the bridge.

Interviewer 2: From what point?

R. Humphrey: From the boathouse.

Interviewer 2: Okay, and if you don't see?

R. Humphrey: If you don't see, you don't go out.

Interviewer 2: Okay.

R. Humphrey: You just don't go out.

Interviewer 2: How would feel if you were going under the bridge while there were people you knew, if there was already a walkway, how do you guys think about that?

R. Humphrey: I think it would really be cool and you know and the Hudson River Rowing Association is in conjunction with this what do they call it?, quadra- quadrennial? [cuts off]

Interviewer 2: Quadricentennial.

R. Humphrey: They're hoping to bring back the IRA courses as celebrate, part of that celebration. They will be running that same four to six mile course that was used [cut off by Interviewer II]

Interviewer 2: For September or that?

R. Humphrey: Yeah, yeah just for that part of the celebration. So maybe we will see markers on the bridge again, I don't know. That will be cool and it would be great for spectators.

Interviewer 2: Yeah.

K. Humphrey: I was just going to say that.

R. Humphrey: If people were up there watching you. To have spectators at our race is you know [cut off by interviewer II]

Interviewer 2: Yeah.

R. Humphrey: Inspiring.

Interviewer 2: Would be afraid of anyone throwing stuff at you?

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[Laughter]

R. Humphrey: That's a thought, yeah.

K. Humphrey: I think that it would be almost cool just to have our team up there.

R. Humphrey: Who's planting that seed?

[Laughter and Interviewers mumbling]

R. Humphrey: Traveling how fast at the bottom of 212 feet.

[Laughter among everyone]

R. Humphrey: Can a bagel impale you?

Interviewer 2: How fast can you go in? [cut off by Richard]

R. Humphrey: In a crew shell?

Interviewer 2: Yeah.

R. Humphrey: You know- [cut off by Keenan]

K. Humphrey: Depends.

R. Humphrey: I really don't know the actual knots or miles per hour, they did, they have raised a water skier.

Interviewer 2: Wow.

K. Humphrey: So that's got to be a really good boat to do that.

[Laughter]

Interviewer 2: Have you guys ever worked together, you've rode together or is it? [Cuts off]

R. Humphrey: No I don't think I've ever been.

K. Humphrey: Well, I [coxened] your boat a long time ago, when I was smaller.

R. Humphrey: And my daughter, my daughter was on the crew team also, she coxed my masters team for a full season. That was kind of cool.

Interviewer: Are you in an eight man boat or is it four?

R. Humphrey: I have eights and fours, yeah.

K. Humphrey: Yeah, I'm also in both varsity four and varsity eight.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewer 2: Is it different?

K. Humphrey: Well, you know the four-boat is smaller, so it takes less people to row it.

Interviewer 2: But it's stronger.

R. Humphrey: And it's much less stable.

K. Humphrey: Yeah the four boat it's harder, it moves around more.

Interviewer 2: Oh, so that's scary. So would prefer to do an eight man boat?

K. Humphrey: I actually prefer a four because it's less people and [cut off by Richard].

R. Humphrey: The less things could go wrong.

[Richard and Keenan laugh]

K. Humphrey: It's easier to communicate, it easier to like, if something's going wrong it's easier to see how to fix things.

Interviewer 2: Right, where as an eight man boat your [cuts off].

R. Humphrey: The problems are amplified from front to back.

K. Humphrey: And it almost feels I'm going faster in a four, I've always kind of had that sense.

Interviewer 2: And they're smaller.

K. Humphrey: Yeah and shorter and [cut off by interviewer II].

Interviewer 2: Are they thinner too?

R. Humphrey: Yeah, they are [cut off by Keenan].

K. Humphrey: Slightly.

R. Humphrey: Yeah, they are.

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[Background noise, both interviewers talking to others present in the room]

Interviewer: I don't know if there is an answer to that question.

Jason Schaaf: Have you ridden on any other waters? Could you compare other waters to the Hudson River, in terms of rowing?

R. Humphrey: No the Hudson is really challenging because of the tides, the tides and the wind and as far as the beauty factor, I, you know think, that bridges add a lot to that, you know seeing the bridges rise from the banks of fog, it's really pretty majestic and looking from, coming from the south with the bridges silhouetted against the Catskills is really quite a sight as well.

Interviewer 2: What else have you rode what are some? [Cuts off]

K. Humphrey: There have been a few places.

R. Humphrey: Housatonic is a beautiful river down in the Derby area where the Yale boathouse is.

K. Humphrey: We've rown on a few lakes which is a lot easier.

Interviewer 2: It's a lot more tranquil?

K. Humphrey: Yeah, less wind.

R. Humphrey: The Charles River event up in Boston is all bridges, you go under I think seven different bridges during that course.

K. Humphrey: Yeah, I remember that.

Interviewer 2: Do the bridge or water effect your, I know your on two different kinds of rivers. One has a lot of bridges and one doesn't really. If you're on a stretch of water that doesn't have any bridges, is that different to row on that one, than the one with a lot of bridges, does it affect the waters as much?

R. Humphrey: It's not the effect of the water; so much is the obstacle, yeah. You know bridges are obstacles, especially at the Charles the bridges are all these small arches, which barely fits, these arches barely fits, two boats abreast and these races are going off.

Interviewer 2: Right.

R. Humphrey: A boat every ten seconds and there's passing going on, a lot of collisions, people hit the bridges, people hit us, other boats. There was this Chinese team that crashed with another team, the boat sunk; they flew all the way from China. [cut off by Interviewer II]

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Interviewer 2: Basically lost.

R. Humphrey: The boat sunk and it was a pretty funny Youtube video, they all abandoned ship and started swimming for shore and they're boats racing, having to avoid bobbing the heads as well.

Interviewer 2: If you crashed, God forbid this ever happened, if you crashed maybe into a bridge on the Hudson, how would that effect, if you crashed into another would you think the tides would be difficult for you to master, that's dangerous?

R. Humphrey: Well that's the purpose of always having a launch.

Interviewer 2: Yeah.

R. Humphrey: Next to whatever boat you have out there with life preservers, and that bridge would be pretty unforgiving.

[Keenan chuckles]

R. Humphrey: Crew shells are very light and made a minimal of material. It doesn't take much to go right through them.

Keenan: Yeah.

Interviewer 2: So don't crash.

K. Humphrey: Yeah. [with laughter]

Schaaf: Will the completed bridge benefit racing, competitive racing in general, attract it more to the Hudson Valley perhaps?

R. Humphrey: I think if they were able to revive this race and continue it on a yearly basis I think the walkway would be a tremendous draw to sponsors; I mean I could see banners hanging.

K. Humphrey: Lot's of people watching.

R. Humphrey: Eat a Pete's Famous you know.

[Slight laughter]

R. Humphrey: Whatever, yeah I think this could be a tremendous draw, to our club membership, to the racing community, getting clubs from other states to perhaps start coming, the boathouse is a tremendous addition to the Hudson River as well.

K. Humphrey: Yeah, that was a big thing, when it opened up.

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R. Humphrey: And that has drawn a lot of high school participants but we're still not seeing much in the way of additional participation in our regattas, our own regattas. I think the walkway really would put us on the map a little bit more because you know, that would be so unique.

K. Humphrey: Almost like a landmark.

Schaaf: Would either of you go up on the bridge when it is completed.

R. Humphrey: I am sorry? [Looks for clarification of the question]

Schaaf: Would either of you go up on the bridge?

K. Humphrey: Absolutely, absolutely.

R. Humphrey: Yeah that would be cool.

Background Voice: Thank you.

R. Humphrey: You're welcome.

[End of Interview 20:00]

Transcribed by Paul Contarino