



Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame

Box 1192 - Jamestown, NY 14702

October 2017

60 Years Ago in Sports Illustrated

Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame inductee, **Phil Gravink**, was a key member of the top-rated Cornell crew that was featured in a Don Parker article in the July 1, 1957 issue of Sports Illustrated:

Cornell Backs Up Its Notices

Penn got a great start but Stork Sanford's men had the effort it took to win the IRA Regatta



Phil Gravink began to feel sick with a mile to go. Slowly, weakly, his belly began to float to his throat. He tried to swallow, but there was no moisture. He thought frantically, "Not now. Don't get sick. Not now." He was swinging his oar at 29. The beat felt like 40.

Gravink was the stroke on the Cornell varsity crew. The "crew of the generation," the experts called it. So good that the Intercollegiate Rowing Regatta was supposed merely to prove who was second best: Navy, Princeton, Syracuse, Penn or maybe Stanford, Columbia, Wisconsin, MIT and Dartmouth were just there for a cruise. That was the way it figured last Saturday morning, just before the race. The lake was calm then, and the wind had not started to blow.

When the 10 shells lined up at the start of the three-mile course on Onondaga Lake that afternoon, the weather had changed. A 15-mile-an-hour wind blew steadily from the south shore. That made it difficult for the coxswains to line the shells up at the stake boats for the start. It took 15 minutes of tense maneuvering before all coxswains were satisfied with their positions. Referee Tip Goes wasted no time firing the starting cannon, and the suddenness of its boom caught Cornell off guard.

Pennsylvania was ready. Within a quarter mile, the Red and Blue had pulled out two lengths on Cornell. It was the effort of making up distance that was almost sickening Gravink by the two-thirds mark.



Phil Gravink, oarsman closest to camera, in front of coxswain

Finally Carl Schwarz, the Cornell coxswain, screamed through his megaphone: “We’re even, Phil! Raise it to 32.” Schwarz was skinny – almost cadaverous – but his voice boomed at Gravink. Somehow Gravink fought off nausea and raised the stroke. His throat felt as if it would close with the effort, but with mechanical precision he brought it to 32 and the Cornell shell moved, almost imperceptibly, on the Pennsylvania boat. The Big Red gained a seat on Penn.

George Ford, the Cornell No. 7, kept his head down and pulled in perfect rhythm with Gravink. The sweat trickled down his nose, burned his eyes behind the glasses. “Where are we, Carl,” he gasped.

“Three-quarters. Cut the talking – save it for the oar,” barked Schwarz. The coxswain glanced to the right, where the Pennsylvania boat was moving, smoothly, swiftly in lane three, stroke for stroke with the Cornell shell. He had already called on his tiring crew for two power tens – emergency bursts of 10 strokes, all out – to make up the two-length lead Pennsylvania had gained with its magnificent start. Now he needed another if Cornell was to win as predicted.

“Ten for the coach. Give me a power ten for the coach,” he implored. He rapped out the beat on the side of the shell with the wooden chocks he held in each hand. Eight oars sliced the water and with incredible power lifted the bow of the 60-foot cedar craft out of the water. Cornell began to move.

Up in the “engine room” at No. 4, Todd Simpson, the Oklahoman, pulled without expression. He leaned his 6-foot-5-inch frame into the slide and bowed his oar with the force of his drive. The oar handle slammed into his belly viciously as he finished out each stroke. The rough handle soon had his stomach raw, and blood stained his shirt. The others pulled as hard, if not as obviously. For 10 strokes they exerted almost the ultimate of human effort on each sweep. They would win it now – or finish nowhere. They had the form. But the stamina?

For three weeks before the IRA, Cornell had been practicing twice a day on Lake Cayuga. Coach Harrison “Stork” Sanford drove the crews hard, building endurance. Twelve-mile workouts were the rule, not the exception. Some days his oarsmen – already shorn of excess weight – would lose as much as six or seven pounds. He had won the short races – the Carnegie Cup at two miles, and the Eastern Sprints at 2,000 meters, edging Yale’s Olympic championship crew in both. But the three-mile IRA was the true test of a crew in Sanford’s mind. He wanted them to be ready, conditioned. They were.



Cornell crew 1957 national champions – Phil Gravink on far left

CSHOF Editor’s Notes

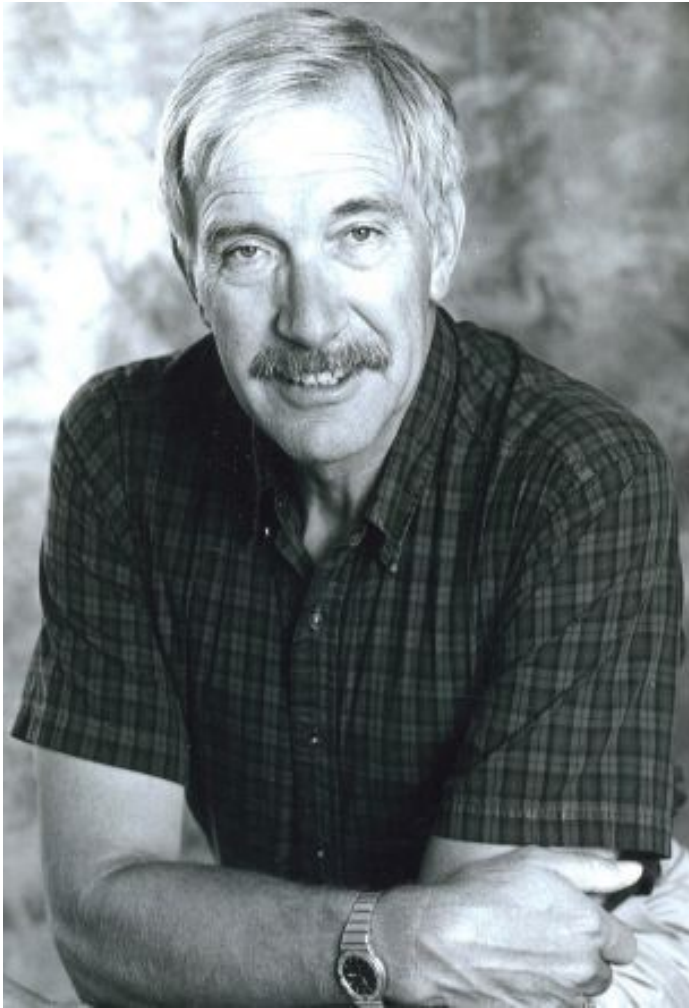
Later, in the summer of 1957, Gravink and his Cornell mates captured the Holy Grail of rowing when they won the Royal Henley Regatta on the Thames River in London England.

Gravink was inducted into the Cornell Athletic Hall of Fame in 1979. Then six years later, the 1957 Cornell varsity crew team was inducted as a group, thus becoming the first Big Red squad in any sport to be inducted altogether. They have also been inducted into the National Rowing Hall of Fame.

Phil Gravink – A Ski Industry Giant

Gravink was born in Clymer, NY in 1936 and was raised on a 125-head, 460-acre dairy farm. He went to Clymer Central School and graduated in 1953. After high school, Gravink attended Cornell University from 1953-1957 where he earned a bachelor of science degree in agriculture. He operated the family farm in Clymer from 1956-1982.

Gravink decided in 1963 that he wanted to enter the ski management business and became the founder and chairman of Peek'n Peak Recreation Inc. in Findley Lake. Gravink was the Chief Executive Officer at Peek'n Peak, a ski and golf resort, from 1963-1976.



He then went to Gore Mountain Ski Center in North Creek, NY as the general manager in 1976-1977 followed by being general manager, president and CEO at Loon Mountain Recreation Corporation in Lincoln, New Hampshire, from 1977-1991. Then he moved on to Cannon and Mount Sunapee in Concord, New Hampshire, as the state of New Hampshire Director of Skiing from 1991-1992. This was followed by seven years (1992-1999) as president and managing director at Attitash Bear Peak Resort in Bartlett, New Hampshire.

Gravink was also a director and past president of Ski New Hampshire, Ski the White Mountains, Ski Areas of New York and the Eastern Ski Area Operators Association. He was a member of the National Ski Area Association from 1964-1999 and served as president

from 1979-1981 and a director from 1970-1987 among holding other positions. Gravink was also an American Ski Federation Director and served as president from 1981-1983 and treasurer from 1979-1981.

In honor of his 36 years of outstanding service and accomplishments in the ski industry, Phil was inducted into the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame in 2011.

Gravink, a 2007 CSHOF inductee, currently resides in Saco, New Hampshire.