

# CARIE GRAVES

1953 – 2021

**“You can achieve anything you put your mind and hard work to.”**

River Valley High School graduate, 1971 \* University of Wisconsin’s only three-time Olympian \* Olympic Bronze Medal, Rowing, 1976 \* Congressional Gold Medalist, 1980 \* Olympic Gold Medal, Rowing 1984 \* Harvard University graduate, 1985 \* University of Wisconsin Athletic Hall of Fame, 1991 \* Head women’s rowing coach, Harvard University, Northeastern University, University of Texas \* National Rowing Hall of Fame, 2016

Just like many of you, I walked through the front doors of River Valley High School hundreds of times while I was a student here. I grew up on a farm three miles outside of town and caught the bus to school every day. I did farm chores early every morning before school, and more chores in the evenings and on weekends.

I wasn’t an athlete in high school. Up until the passage of Title IX in 1972, opportunities for girls to compete in sports were limited. But that year the U.S. Supreme Court declared, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any

educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” From that day on, a whole new world of opportunity was open to me and to girls and women across the country.

I joined the University of Wisconsin’s women’s rowing team in 1973 and fell in love with the sport and being an athlete. Even with Title IX, we still didn’t have equal funding. We held fundraisers to pay our way to races. We didn’t have a locker room, and we wore hand-me-down uniforms from the men’s team. Despite those challenges, in 1975 our team was the first women’s sport at the UW to win a national championship. In 1976 two of my Badger teammates and I made the Olympic team. It was the first time women’s rowing was an Olympic sport and we won a bronze medal for the U.S.

When I went to school here, I’d set my sights on graduating, going to college and traveling the world. I loved to read and was a strong student, but I had no idea what I was going to do with my life or that one day I’d be considered a sports legend. When I discovered rowing, I realized that with commitment, teamwork, and an unbelievable amount of hard work, I could accomplish great things. You can too.