

## PRAGUE 2009 – IDBF WORLD DRAGON BOAT CHAMPIONSHIPS – AUG 2009

### Jenny's Gold Medal

Prague was an amazing experience. Winning a Gold Medal and singing our National Anthem (well at least the first verse :- ) is something I don't think Joanne or I will ever be able to explain or describe.



**World Champs!! – “Thank You Jenny”**

Anyway, I should try to find some words about our Prague experience .. The thing I will remember most about Prague is ..

*.. We met Mike Haslam (IDBF Executive President) a couple of times and we spoke initially for quite a while at the end of the third day. We thanked him for his [“Tribute to Jenny”](#) and the [wonderful article for Jenny](#) in the July 2009 DBI Newsletter. It became apparent in talking to him that he was truly inspired by Jenny and he spoke quite openly about the positive impact she had had on his own life over the years and in particular since her passing on the 30 June 2009.*

*Just before we parted, I asked him whether we could have a photo together, as this had become a bit of tradition with Jenny, Joanne and Mike over the years. This time instead of capturing the moment, I would be in the photo, taking the place of Jenny. After the photo was taken, we all became quite emotional and I asked Joanne to give Mike a comforting hug. I was happy, we had said "thank you" and I had the photo of Mike and Joanne, and thought that would be it for the Regatta. Well, maybe not ..*



**Geoff, Mike and Joanne - Prague/Racice - Day 3 - 28 Aug 2009**



**Mike and Joanne - Prague/Racice - Day 3 - 28 Aug 2009**

The following day, the Australian Senior Mixed Crew, which Joanne and I were team members, [won a Gold Medal](#) in the Mixed 500m Event. For all of us, particularly Joanne and I, this was an amazing experience and a “Dream come True”. We all gave it everything we had and we got off the Dragon Boat onto the Lane 1 Pontoon, not “Wondering, ‘What If?’”. Jenny was our “[our Guiding Light and Inspiration](#)” and this was just one example of how Joanne and I are trying to live our lives in Jenny’s “[Afterglow](#)”.



Senior Mixed 500m Final - "Don't Wonder 'What If?'" Jenny P



Australian Senior Mixed 500m Team – Prague/Racice - Day 4 - 29 Aug 2009

On the last day of the Regatta during the lunch break, Mike came over to the Australian tent to handout copies of the latest DBI Newsletter (the one with Jenny's story) and he again spoke to Joanne and I at length.

We talked to him about winning Gold and how everyone in the Mixed Crew and Squad felt that we had a 21st paddler in the boat when we raced the final. I told him about the wristbands we were wearing with Jenny's "[Don't wonder 'What If?'](#)" quote inscribed on the inside (we all raced with the wristbands inside out).

Finally, I told him how we all went into Prague the evening of the day we won" Gold", to quietly celebrate a truly amazing experience in our lives - as the German Team told us after the Final - "we made the impossible, possible". Everyone, except Joanne and I, wore their medals out that night (indeed, some are still wearing them :-). When asked on numerous occasions where were our medals? - We said "back at the hotel room with Jenny's photo". I think everyone understood.



Jenny with Joanne and Geoff's Medals – Prague/Hotel Duo - Day 4 - 29 Aug 2009

Just before Mike left the tent, he said to us he felt that we should have a special Gold medal presented to us for Jenny, in her honour, memory and contribution to Dragon Boating. Obviously, we were quite touched by his thoughts and this gesture. As he left he said he would arrange it all, though we were not sure how.

*During the afternoon Mike came over twice to the Australian Team Tent, from the Official's Tower (a good 10 min return trip). Joanne and I were not around both times - either racing or watching races (my only chance the whole Regatta). When I got back to the tent I had numerous people tell me an IDBF official was looking for Joanne and I - little did they know it was the President of the IDBF.*

*Since the Senior Women's Team were racing the 500m Final, I decided not to find Mike until I could "round up" Joanne. Our Women's Team placed a close 4th in the Final and just as they started coming off the water, Mike appeared from behind me (yet another 10 min return trip for him) and said he would wait until Joanne came through. Being a Final, it took some time to get all the Crews off the water and through all the celebrations, back slapping and hand shaking that goes on, particularly for the final race of the Regatta for all the Senior Women's Teams.*

*When Joanne was finally free, I grabbed her and then Mike presented us a "Special" Gold Medal in Jenny's Memory and Honour. As you can see from the photo below, Joanne has used Jenny's paddle since she passed away on the 30 June 2009. We all had a few tears in our eyes, including Mike. An amazing gesture and a memory I will never forget.*



**Geoff, Mike and Joanne - Prague - Day 5 - Sun 30 Aug 2009**

*Later that evening, as the sun was setting at the Regatta's "After Party", which was being held at the Regatta site, Joanne and I scattered some of Jenny's Ashes on the water from the Lane One Pontoon, where we had raced the Final from and [celebrated](#) the Victory. Below, you will see some photos of the serene and peaceful sunset as we reflected back on Jenny's life and the whole Prague experience.*

*Death may have ended Jenny's Life, but our Relationship lives on. Prague has shown us all that.*

Thank you Jenny, you would often [say that you felt Lucky](#) to have experienced life with Cancer. However, I consider it us to be the “Lucky Ones”. We live on in your “[Afterglow](#)”. You have given us the knowledge, strength, hope, guidance and inspiration to continue to live our lives to the full.

[Don't Wonder "What If?" – Jenny P](#)

Geoff Eldridge - Jenny's Husband - 30 October 2009

Postscript: The essence of the above comes from an email I wrote (high in the French Pyrenees just 10km from the famous Col du Tourmalet of Tour De France fame) to Julia Ryall, my Club Dragon Boat Coach at [Pacific Dragon's](#) and a truly Great Friend. I wanted to thank her for all of the effort she has put into me as paddler and as a friend. As I said to her before we left for Prague, she has made me the paddler I am, and indeed has helped make me the person I am. It's not just about the paddle. Since Jenny's passing, she has shouldered much of the responsibility for keeping the Dragon Boat community informed and coordinated. Indeed, it was Julia I asked to inform Mike Haslam about Jenny's passing. She has also provided a “shoulder to cry on” and has helped to keep me “pointing in the right direction”, when it all seems like it has become too much. I am not sure how to really thank her, but maybe her contribution to us as paddlers and people (there were seven PD's on the boat that day), and as a result this Prague story, will go some way to do just that ..

Julia - Thank You.



“Triple J” - Joanne, Julia and Jenny - AusDBF Nationals After Party – Kawana/Qld - Sun 26 April 2009



**Joanne and Geoff scattering Jenny's Ashes - Prague/Racice - Day 5 - Sun 30 Aug 2009**



**Jenny's Gold Medal from Lane 1 Pontoon - Prague/Racice - Day 5 - Sun 30 Aug 2009**

.. just one story from Prague. Geoff