



## Rick Shalvoy

During the summer of 1997, Rick completed his first *Row for a Cure* after losing a friend to breast cancer in 1996. An annual fundraising event (1997-2006) that involved rowing 300 miles around the outer shoreline of Long Island, New York in a 19-foot ocean rescue boat, Rick completed the entire course alone each year with the exception of the East River segment. Nobel Laureate Dr. Harold Varmus, former Director of the National Institutes of Health, President of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and Director of the National Cancer Institute, was Rick's rowing partner for the East River segment of the course from Wards Island to South Street Seaport.

In 1994, three years before the first *Row for a Cure* and shortly after his 24<sup>th</sup> summer working for New York State Parks as a part-time ocean lifeguard, Rick nearly lost his life when a ruptured appendix, emergency surgery and peritonitis suddenly taught him more than he ever wanted to learn about what it's like to be a patient in an intensive care unit.

During the long recovery process, Rick started to gain weight as his previously high level of physical activity was reduced to a primarily sedentary routine. What began as a slow weight gain gradually increased over time and eventually triggered an adiposity snowball effect -- insulin resistance, high blood sugar, low energy, food cravings and more weight gain.

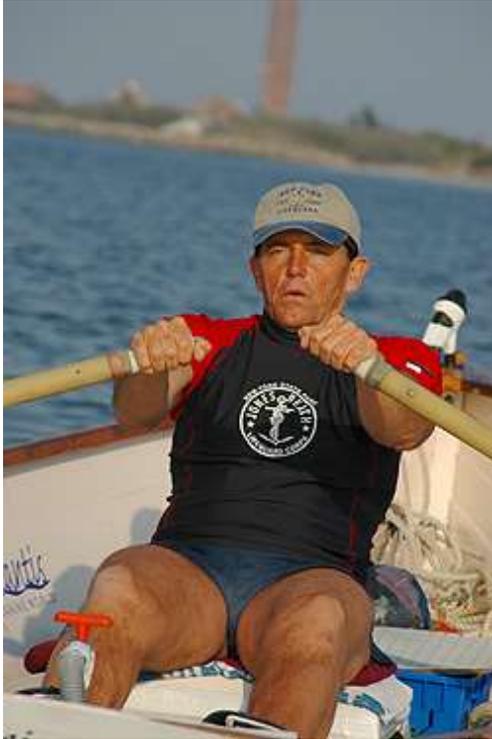
After gaining over 60 pounds and being unable to pass the lifeguard rehire test in 1995, Rick finally started to lose weight and restore his health with the help of an obesity medicine physician, a nutrition counselor and a fitness trainer.

Upon returning to his ocean rescue job and competitive lifeboat rowing in 1996, Rick and his rowing partner enlisted the support of Dowling College administrators and crew coaches to form the first regional rowing program for high school students on the south shore of Long Island.

Rick started his professional career during the early 1970s by utilizing his unique combination of education and skills – veterinary technology and journalism – writing articles of interest to pet owners and breeders while working as an animal health technician and moonlighting as an editor for clients in both the human and animal health sectors. After moving on from veterinary care to veterinary sales in 1982, Rick worked for SmithKline Beckman Animal Health for several years before making the transition to human healthcare when he was recruited for the position of New York Regional Manager for SmithKline Diagnostics, a position from which he was promoted to Director of Patient Education Programs in 1992.

While serving as the Medical Marketing Association's Northeast Chapter President and directing patient education programs for SmithKline Diagnostics, Rick and his colleagues at Astra Merck and Abbott Laboratories worked collaboratively with the American Digestive Health Foundation to sponsor and launch the *Digestive Health Initiative*, a national consumer health education campaign that was overseen by the American Gastroenterological Association.

As Founder and President of Consumer Health Education Programs, Rick is devoted to healthcare consumer advocacy with a special interest in educating consumers about affordable options for screening and diagnostic testing. Recognizing a need for patients who are living with obesity to receive comprehensive, evidence-based testing, treatment and follow-up care, Rick's outreach efforts are currently focused on referring patients to obesity medicine providers who treat patients with dignity, compassion and the highest standards of personalized care.



Rowing in the Atlantic Ocean (June, 2006)



Dr. Harold Varmus and Rick at South Street Seaport (Row for a Cure 2004)

For all of his efforts in the fight against breast cancer, Rick was honored by the American Cancer Society, Estée Lauder Breast Cancer Research Foundation, Carol M. Baldwin Breast Cancer Research Fund, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York City Council, New York State Assembly, New York State Senate, United States House of Representatives, United States Senate, and The White House.



Rick (left) and Dr. Varmus rowing toward South Street Seaport in New York City.  
July 10, 2001 – 63 days before 9/11 – *Newsday* photo by Dan Goodrich