

Mary Catherine Mazzio
Attorney, Olympic Rower,
Filmmaker
Class of 1979



A woman of myriad talents, interests, and abilities, Mary Mazzio exudes confidence and energy, attributes that have already impelled her to accomplish many of her life goals. She acknowledges, however, that she feels "blessed with people who have contributed to and celebrated [her] achievements and successes." To name only two: cello teacher Virginia Bacon, who inspired in her the musicianship that qualified her for a violoncello seat in the Greater Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra; and the late Lee Allen, her Needham High School English teacher, who encouraged students to think freely but analyze in depth. Mazzio traces her communication skills, so necessary in her work as an attorney, to her involvement in NHS extracurricular activities, where she interacted with people from different cultures and socioeconomic circumstances.

Although she was endowed with great muscular strength, faulty eye-hand coordination limited Mazzio's aptitude for ball sports in high school. Thus, she became a cheerleader. At the time, cheerleading symbolized popularity, confidence, and self-esteem, but Mazzio's inherent feminism made her subconsciously rebel against the system. "I always seemed to forget to bake brownies for the boys," she remembers, thus racking up almost enough demerits to be thrown off the squad. The fact that she was the only cheerleader who could hold two others in a standing shoulder mount kept her from being discharged from her cheerleading duties.

It was at Mount Holyoke College that, looking back, Mazzio realized why she was always forgetting to bake brownies for the boys: as a cheerleader, she was on the sidelines rooting for men's achievements. At Mount Holyoke, a women's college, she was encouraged to develop her strengths and talents and to celebrate her own achievements. Majoring in philosophy and politics, she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree, and the college honored her with two awards: the Scholar-Athlete Award, for excellence in academics, athletics, and leadership; and the Helen Warren Smith Award, for outstanding leadership and service.

Mazzio went on to Georgetown University Law Center, where she edited a law review journal and graduated in 1987 as a Doctor of Jurisprudence. A Rotary Foundation Graduate Fellowship sponsored her postgraduate study at the law school of the University of Bordeaux, and a Henry Luce Foundation Scholarship took her to Korea, where she practiced with an international corporate law firm and taught a graduate seminar on American constitutional law at the Korea University School of Law.

During these years of education Mazzio worked toward a lifelong goal: to be on an Olympic team. She developed the power and quickness that had served her well as an NHS cheerleader and won the title of Weightlifting Medalist in the Aquitaine Region Championships in France in 1985. And, after training rigorously for several years with the U.S. World Championship Rowing Team, in 1992 she realized her dream: she became an oarswoman on the United States Olympic Rowing Team.

When Mary Mazzio urges students today to "have the courage to dream," she knows whereof she speaks. With that courage and a lot of hard work, she realized her dreams . . . and she dreams on. As she continues her law career as partner and chair of the Commercial Leasing Group at Brown, Rudnick, Freed, and Gesmer, in Boston, and raises her small son with her husband, James L. Manson, she is also pursuing a Master of Science degree in film production at Boston University. Most films scripts, she says, are written by men. Not surprisingly, she wants to depict the human condition from the perspective of women.