

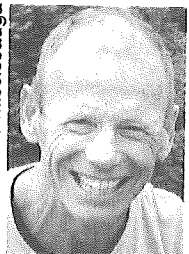
# Nobody worked harder than John Wood

By CHRIS CLAY  
Staff

## Obituary

Not many will forget John Wood's performance at the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal.

Wood, a longtime member of the Mississauga Canoe Club, rose to international prominence that day after winning a silver medal in canoeing. It marked the first time in 24 years, since the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, that Canada had received a medal in canoeing.



**John Wood**

Wood, who just missed out on gold in the C-1 500-metre individual race (finishing 34/100ths of a second behind the Soviet Union's Alexandre Rogov), took his own life last Wednesday, his family said. He was 62.

Dean Oldershaw, a kayaker and coach at the Mississauga Canoe Club, trained with Wood prior to the 1972 and 1976 Olympics. He can't forget just how hard Wood worked to get his body ready for competition against the best in the world.

"He wasn't a natural athlete, but he was the hardest worker I've ever seen," said Oldershaw. "I thought I was a hard worker, but when we would train I'd see his back most of the time when we were running or cross-country skiing.

"He was an inspiration to be around and I

know he made me train harder."

Mac Hickox, Wood's coach from 1973-76, believes his performance at the 1976 Games was an inspiration for paddlers across the country.

"It taught the athletes in canoe and kayak in North America that it was possible to win an Olympic medal against the Soviets and the other Eastern Bloc countries," Hickox said. "It was a breakthrough moment."

Despite his athletic success, Wood wasn't one to let it go to his head. Judy Tutty, a long-time MCC member, said Wood always had time to chat with younger athletes and acted as a mentor to many of them.

Tutty said he was a legend in the sport. Even when his competitive paddling days were over, he gave back in a variety of ways including serving as director of the Burloak Canoe Club as well as investment committee chair for both the Canadian Olympic Foundation and Canadian Olympic Association.

Tutty, who joined the canoe club in 1972, was deeply saddened to hear of Wood's death.

"He was far, far too young," said Tutty. "The whole canoeing community is in shock right now. I was just beside myself when I heard."

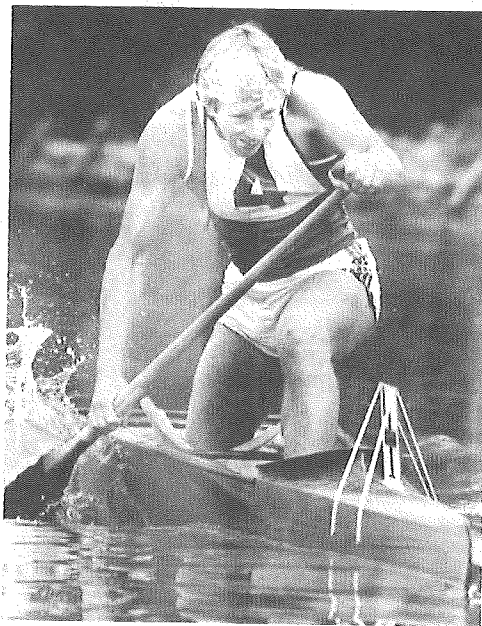
Oldershaw credited Wood with being a role model for other Canadian Olympic paddlers such as Larry Cain and Steve Giles.

Wood also competed in the two-men race at the Montreal Olympics, finishing seventh. He represented Canada two other times at

the Olympics — Mexico City in 1968 and Munich in 1972.

Wood also won a silver medal in the C-2 500m with partner Greg Smith at the 1977 World Championships and retired from canoeing soon after.

However, he wasn't done with sport, winning a bronze medal in sailing at the 1979 Pan American Games in Puerto Rico.

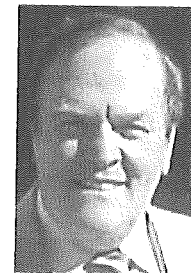


Canadian Olympic paddler John Wood died last Wednesday. He won a silver medal at the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal. *File photo by Fred Loek*

Wood also served as a canoeing commentator for CBC and covered the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

He's a member of both the Mississauga and Oakville sports halls of fame.

"It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of paddler John Wood — three-time Olympian, Montreal 1976 silver medalist and trail-



**Marcel Aubut**

blazer in the sport of canoeing," said Canadian Olympic Committee president Marcel Aubut. "John's passion as a paddler not only fuelled his own success, but also led him to serve as an example to others in his sport, through his work with the media, and in positions of leadership and authority in the wider sport community, including as chair of the Canadian Olympic Foundation. Countless Canadians, on and off the water, have felt John's impact and have been the better for it."

Once his athletic days were over, Wood went on to enjoy a successful career as a stockbroker. He served as president of the 20/20 Group and also was chair and founder of Bellwether Investment Management.

Wood, who was raised in Mississauga and later moved to Oakville, is survived by his wife, Debbie, three sons and a daughter.

"It was my honour to have known him — and not just on race day," said Oldershaw.

A celebration of Wood's life will be held Saturday at the Mississauga Canoe Club from 2-5 p.m.

*- With files from Torstar-*