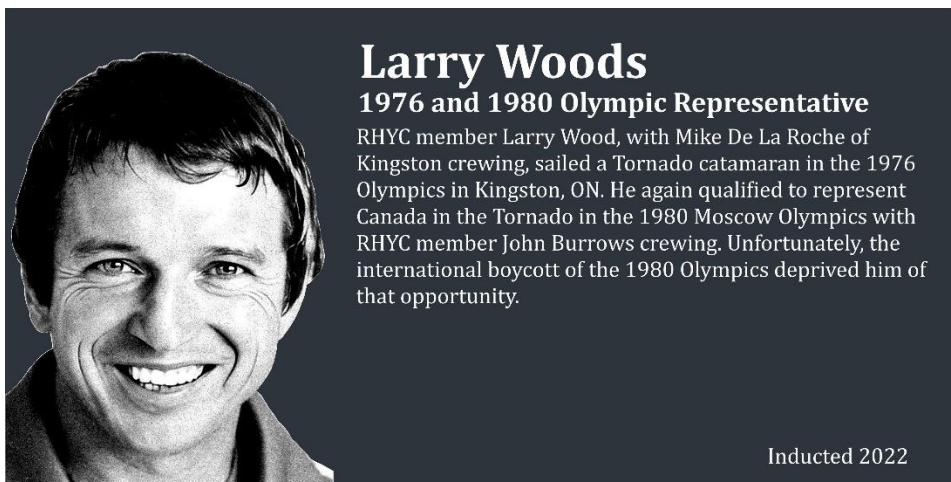


Larry Woods

Inducted by Rolf Essig



The late Larry Woods was inducted by Rolf Essig. Larry's plaque was accepted by his son Larry, Jr., and wife Elizebeth.

- Larry started sailing in a boat built by his father, but soon gravitated to multihulls. He built his own Shearwater catamarans and then, at the age of 34 switched to Tornados; a class he would sail for his entire sailing and Olympic career.

- Larry's passion for multihulls led to his organizing and winning local regattas at Port Dover in 1967. As a Town Councillor he organized and ran the Port Dover Multi Hull regatta from 1967 to 1971. It became a large international event, hosting over 70 boats and attracting thousands of spectators.
- In 1971 Larry started to campaign his Tornado aggressively, competing in the National Capital Regatta, CORK, and even traveling to Germany to compete in Kiel Week.
- In 1973, after again sailing CORK, he finished 4th in the Tornado World Championships in Toronto, and in 1974 won the Labatt's Tornado Regatta in Kingston. All this was in preparation of his goal of representing Canada in the 1976 Olympics in Kingston.
- In 1975, that goal was one step closer when Larry was named to the Canadian National Team after a 5th place at the Olympic training regatta at St Petersburg, a 4th in the Olympic class regatta at Montreal, and finishing as the top Canadian in the North American Tornado championships at Waterdown, NY.
- He competes in CORK, this time with Queen's Med student Michael de la Roche, and races in the Tornado Worlds at Copenhagen, where he finishes 10th in a fleet of 64.
- In 1976 he races in the Tornado Worlds in Australia, where he excels in the heavy air. He then takes part in the Olympic Trial regatta at St Pete, Florida, finishing 5th.
- The Olympic Selection Trials at Kingston will determine the makeup of the 1976 Canadian Olympic team. Larry at this point is 36 years old. He and de la Roche were the lightest combined crew in the fleet.



Larry Woods, upper right, as part of the 1976 Canadian Olympic Sailing Team

- He finished the selection series with seven 1sts and one 2nd; the most impressive performance at the regatta, and clinched an Olympic Team spot. His performance was so impressive in the trials that he was being predicted to take a Silver Medal in the Olympics. But that was not to be.
- In the first race Larry was caught on the wrong side of a wind shift which dropped him from 2nd to 6th. In the second race he suffered upwind boat speed problems, finishing 11th. A rake adjustment corrected the problem in the 3rd race allowing a 4th place finish.
- The start of Race 4 was hampered by a Race Committee flag mix-up, where Larry followed the flags and returned to the start, losing a mile to the fleet who did not return. Larry's redress protest was denied.
- In Race 5 Larry was in 3rd place when the race was abandoned after the windward mark went missing! The race was rerun on a following day with Woods finishing 7th resulting in a 6th place overall finish in their Olympic bid. Larry was disappointed, but there was always the 1980 Olympics to shot for, and that was Larry's goal.
- The campaign for the 1980 Olympics started in 1977 with John Borrowes as crew. They finished 2nd at CORK, and 5th at the Tornado Worlds at Long Beach, California.
- At CORK in 1978 they dominated the competition winning 6 of the first 7 races. They didn't even have to race the last two races, and instead watched from shore. Woods was named top Canadian sailor at CORK. At the World Tornado Championships at Weymouth England, they finished 4th.
- In 1979, because of steering problems, they finished 26th at Kiel, but finished 2nd at CORK that year.
- In 1980 they finish 12th overall at the Tornado Worlds in Auckland, NZ, and won the Canadian Team selection for the 1980 Olympics be held in Tallinn, Estonia. This would be Larry's second Olympics. He is now 40 years old.
- They were in Europe mid-way through a series of training regattas when the Canadian team was informed the Games would be boycotted and their funding would be withdrawn. They stayed on to compete at Kiel Week at their own expense.
- Canada's boycotting of the 1980 Olympics was a bitter blow to Larry, essentially negating the last four years of hard work and preparation. His son, Larry, Jr., says it was the only time he saw his father in tears.
- Despite spirits and attendance being down in the Olympic classes at the 1980 CORK, Larry won that series and the Canadian Championships.
- At this point, Larry briefly left sailing and stopped all training. In 1981 he did not compete in the Canadian Championships in Vancouver to defend his title. But the lure of the water was too strong, as was his love of the Tornado. "You cannot look back; you have to look ahead", he said.

- In 1981 with a young new crew, Roger Walker, he raced in the Olympic Training Regatta in Long Beach, and the Tornado Worlds, in France. The following year he returned to Kiel, and is again the top Tornado at CORK, and finishes 4th at Tornado World Championships at Kingston.
- In 1983 he wins the Tornado North American Championship in Hamilton, Bermuda, and finishes a disappointing 8th at CORK, and 22nd at the Tornado Worlds in England.
- In 1984 Woods dominated the Tornado Worlds qualifier event held at Kingston winning all races sailed, and wins the Tornado Quebec Championships.



Larry sailing his Tornado catamaran with his son Todd on the trapeze

- Larry continues to campaign aggressively finishing 2nd at the 1985 Tornado North American Championships at St. Petes, and 2nd at CORK.
- In 1986 he places 5th at the Mid Winters in Florida, 4th at CORK in 1987, and 2nd at the Midwinters in 1988. But again finishes 2nd at the 1988 Olympic trials, so does not qualify for a third Olympic games. Larry at this point in his sailing career was 48 years old.
- It was becoming obvious to Larry that Olympic sailing was no longer an amateur endeavour. To continue to compete at these high levels you had to be essentially a full-time professional sailor, a far cry from how he had started in the 1960s and 70s.
- But Larry carried on sailing his beloved Tornado, made even more enjoyable with his son Todd crewing, who he confided, was his best crew ever. They finished 1st in the 1992 Nepean Regatta. This is his last trophy found in Larry's massive trophy collection accumulated over a lifetime of sailing.

- With his competitive sailing days over, Larry became more involved in the other passion in his life, flying. Larry built several of his own aircraft. Building and flying aircraft replaced building and sailing catamarans.
- But sailing with his sons was always his greatest joy. At the age of 69 he sailed with his eldest son Larry, Jr. in the multihull division of the 2008 Mackinac Race, finishing 2nd in class and 3rd overall.
- Larry excelled in multihull sailing in Canada and was a member of the Canadian National sailing team for over 20 years. He representing Canada in the 1976 Olympics, where he finished a very credible 6th, and qualified to sail in the 1980 Olympics, but was deprived of that opportunity by the boycott. He twice finished 4th in the Tornado World Championships.
- His 1976 Olympic crew Michael de la Roche summed it up best when he said - "Larry was the consummate competitor. Fierce out on the course, but always ready to help anyone and everyone improve. I remember him helping the newer sailors in the class with rigging and tuning their boats as well as with tactics. He would do this to a greater or lesser extent at pretty much every regatta as he felt strongly that the better the competition, the better everyone sailed. I can't remember a time when he didn't have a massive grin across his face, especially when sailing. When I think of the qualities of an Olympian, Larry comes immediately to mind. He was a sportsman above all else."
- Larry sadly passed away in 2016, but we are pleased to have his son Larry and his wife Elizebeth here to accept this plaque on Larry's behalf.
- It is my honour to induct Larry Woods into the RHYC Hall of Fame.

Rolf Essig

November 26th, 2023