

Olympic Athletes

William “Bill” Griffith

Olympian, Sports Entrepreneur and Musician



In 1972 Cobourg was once again represented at the Olympics. W.R. (Bill) Griffith competed at Munich, Germany in the XXth Olympiad, **One-Person Canoe (C1) Whitewater Slalom**.

Bill's love for the sport began when he was paddling with his Dad and Scout troop in Algonquin Park.

Bill Griffith tells his own story.

I remember an elderly paddler in Algonquin Park saying that if I ever tried whitewater paddling I would be hooked.

A few years later, in 1969, I transferred from the University of Waterloo to the University of Washington in Seattle, Wa., **to study Aero and Astro Engineering**. Once there I went looking for local paddlers and met one from Hungary: Al Zob. Al introduced me to whitewater canoeing and, as predicted, I was hooked immediately, paddling initially in C-2 with Al and later C-1. That same year I **founded the University of Washington Canoe and Kayak Club**.

After competing throughout Europe in 1970 and 1971, I **qualified for the Canadian Olympic Team in Whitewater Slalom** to compete in the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Germany. The event was held at the famed “Ice Canal” in the City of Augsburg, a half hour train ride from the Olympic Village and Stadium. At this event, early in my paddling career, **I finished 16th in C-1 Slalom**.

Competing at the Summer Olympics was a very bittersweet experience. **The excitement of the games turned suddenly to horror** as terrorists took hostages and killed eleven Israeli athletes. It is an event still difficult to process.

Cobourg boy competes at Munich Olympics

For the first time in many long years, there is a Cobourg area resident representing Canada in an event at the Olympic Games. Bill Griffith, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lew Griffith, is competing in the white water canoeing event as part of the Canadian team. It is the first time the water event has been included in the Olympic Games and the Canadian team faces stiff competition from countries from around the world. Our Canadian team is made up of “volunteers”, who must take time out from their studies or businesses to train and compete. Other teams from other countries are sponsored year-round to do nothing but train. However, Mrs. Lew Griffith says the Canadians have been doing well in international European meets being held prior to the Games and the team may well place. “I’m so excited I can hardly stand to wait until we leave,” said Mrs. Griffith on Wednesday afternoon. She and her husband will be leaving Sunday en route for Europe to see Bill compete. Cobourg is sending a letter with the Griffiths to give to Bill, who is now at the athlete’s village in Munich, Germany, the site of the Games. And that’s not all. Many neighbors, friends and organizations throughout the area are sending tokens of their moral support to Bill. One point of bafflement to the Griffiths, is the lack of national publicity given to our Olympic athletes. It seems they have to win on their own before support is shown. But that’s not the case here in Cobourg. We’ll all be waiting and watching Munich, Germany, as Bill, and our other Canadian athletes, compete. Hamilton Township has sent a letter of encouragement. The town of

Cobourg Star

