

In Memoriam – John Garnjost

John T. Garnjost passed away peacefully on Jan. 5, 2021.

Although initially intending to play basketball, Garnjost became a varsity student-athlete at Columbia University as a member of the Columbia Heavyweight Crew from 1954-56. He would eventually become a respected rowing official. Receiving the prestigious Olympic Order from the International Olympic Committee for outstanding merit in the cause of world sport, specifically for his work in Taiwan.



The Olympic Order is "the supreme individual honor accorded. It was created in 1974 and is to be awarded to any person who has illustrated the Olympic Ideal through his/her action, has achieved remarkable merit in the sporting world, or has rendered outstanding services to his/her own personal achievement(s) or his/her contribution to the development of sport." Garnjost, at the time, was just the 53rd American to receive this honor. He was profiled by [Columbia College Today](#) upon receiving this prestigious award.

From 1970-1999, Garnjost served as a FISA-licensed international rowing official who officiated both in the U.S. and internationally. He officiated at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta and in 1999 he finished his FISA Umpiring career by Umpiring the final race of the 1999 St. Catharine's World Championship. In 2000 he received the John Carlin Award from US Rowing. In 2003, Garnjost received the George Shiebler Award from the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference, and in 2013 he received the Dick Alcock Award for 50 years of Service and Dedication to U.S. Rowing.

After graduating from Columbia College in 1956, Garnjost was a U.S Air Force pilot from 1956-59 and served in Japan and Taiwan. Returning to Columbia for Business School after serving in the armed forces, he eventually spent 24 years working at the New York corporate headquarters of the Bristol-Myers Company, before becoming the Bristol-Myers Company's Managing Director, in Malaysia, and President and General Manager in Taiwan.

While in Taiwan and Asia, John worked to promote rowing including helping to found the Chinese Taipei Amateur Rowing Association. Known as the father of rowing in Taiwan. He was also a member of the I-Lan International Regatta and worked to create the Asian Rowing Championship. It was for this work that he was awarded the Olympic Order. Garnjost was the first American to be awarded this honor for work done on "foreign soil".

Garnjost is survived by his wife Janet of 47 years, and by daughters Alison Garnjost of Savannah, Ga. and Valerie Garnjost (Matthew Lacy) of Bluffton, S.C.