

# Dedicated Socred MLA had lengthy career

By DUNCAN THORNE  
Journal Staff Writer

Former premier Ernest Manning has praised the accomplishments of long-serving former Stony Plain MLA Cornelia Wood, who died Thursday at 93.

Manning said Friday that Mrs. Wood, 23 years a Social Credit backbencher, thoroughly researched issues before she spoke.

"She didn't make a lot of speeches but she was well-informed when she spoke," he said. "She was on the whole so dedicated."

Mrs. Wood accepted a status of women Persons Award from then governor general Ed Schreyer in 1981.

Her involvement in women's

issues goes back to at least 1913, when she helped found the Stony Plain Women's Institute. Mrs. Wood was the only woman MLA in her first legislature term, 1940-44.

In 1966, she recalled that as a visitor to the legislature 50 years earlier, she had heard an MLA argue in vain that women should not have the vote as "they do not have the intelligence."

She dismissed the MLA as "the little squirt," but was also critical of women.

She said in 1940 that having won the vote women had not exercised their right by ensuring they were adequately represented in government.

Wood Manor in Edmonton, a

halfway house for former psychiatric patients, is named for her involvement as a past executive of the Canadian Mental Health Association. The library and archives in the Stony Plain multicultural centre are dedicated to her as the town's former MLA and first woman mayor.

Mrs. Wood, a descendant of former United States president Thomas Jefferson, graduated as a teacher at age 16, and found she was younger than some students in her first class.

She was chairman of Stony Plain Consolidated School Board from 1933 to 1939.

She believed so strongly in Social Credit monetarist reform that

when she finally lost the party's nomination in 1967, at age 75, she said: "I believe I'm the only true Social Creditor left. Maybe that's why they wanted to get rid of me."

In the 27 years since her first election she had missed just one term, 1955-59, when she lost her seat during a brief Liberal surge. She failed in her final bid as an independent Socred in 1967.

Former Socred president Orvis Kennedy recalled that Mrs. Wood, who attended a 50th-anniversary Social Credit reunion in August, was a fearless speaker.

"If she felt she should speak out, she did."

He said although Mrs. Wood wasn't in Manning's small cabinet,

Socred caucus members listened to her closely.

Former Socred cabinet member Alf Hooke said Mrs. Wood was a Social Credit pioneer before William (Bible Bill) Aberhart formed the movement's first government in 1935. "She was never afraid to express her views."

Mrs. Wood also held senior posts with the Canadian Association of Consumers and the Community Planning Association of Canada.

She was predeceased by her husband, Russell Edgerton Wood, in 1963. In 1983 Mrs. Wood published an autobiography, *My Memories*.

Funeral service will be Tuesday at Stony Plain United Church.



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Cornelia Wood

... strong women's advocate