

## Shunning Certain Fame

In 1924, Bill Havens was one of America's best rowers and was destined to win three medals – probably gold – at the Olympic Games in Paris.

But a few months before the Olympics, Havens realized his wife was due to deliver their child during his trip to Paris. In the 1920s, it took two weeks to travel across the Atlantic, so he would be gone a total of six weeks.

Havens decided he would not leave his wife, and he forfeited his spot in the Games to another. He felt bad about deserting his fellow teammates (one of them was Benjamin Spock, who rose to fame as the *Baby Doctor*), and wondered about the medals he might have won.

Bill Havens' brother, Bud Havens, and the rest of the U.S. canoe crew won three gold, one silver and two bronze medals over six events. Four days after the Games, Bill Havens' son Frank came into the world.



Bill Havens never made it to the Olympics; however, his sons Bill Junior and Frank did. After serving in the Army Air Corps during World War II, the second generation of brothers qualified for the 1948 Olympics in London. Junior, generally considered the better paddler of the two, placed fifth in the solo 1,000-meter canoe race. Frank came home with a silver medal in the solo 10,000-meter event.

Buoyed by their Olympic success in 1948, the brothers began training for the 1952 Games, and their father, Bill Havens, was their coach. But Olympic disappointment struck again during the winter of 1951. Junior, a schoolteacher, was helping a colleague move a car buried by snow when he lacerated the tendons in one of his hands. His chance of Olympic glory was gone.

Frank departed for the 1952 Games without his brother. With a time of 57:41, he set the new world record and won the gold medal in the solo 10,000-meter event.



In a telegraph to his father after the Games, Frank said: "Dear Dad, thanks for waiting around for me to get born in 1924. I'm coming home with the gold medal you should have won. Your loving son, Frank."

(more)

Bill Havens' love for his wife and the impending arrival of his son was inspirational in the decision he made to stay by her bedside and lose the glory that almost assuredly awaited him in the Olympics. In a fitting twist of irony, however, he was rewarded by his son's honor and victory. In turn, the son's respect and appreciation for his father was also on display.

Here are a couple of quotes about fatherhood that apply to this story:

- "One of the greatest things a father can do for his children is to love their mother." – Howard W. Hunter
- "The quality of a father can be seen in the goals, dreams and aspirations he sets not only for himself, but for his family." – Reed Markham

And here is what the Bible says:

*The righteous who walks in his integrity – blessed are his children after him!* (Proverbs 20:7 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter