

Sex doctor found dead from apparent suicide

Solicited sex from University students

By Pat Milton
Associated Press

SOUTHAMPTON, (AP) — A Long Island physician convicted of soliciting Oregon college students to have sex with his wife in a phony research project was found dead Thursday in an apparent suicide, police said.

Southampton village police Sgt. Lars King said police were called to the home of Dr. Rodney Thorp Wood, 60, about 1 p.m. King said Wood was found dead in an apparent suicide.

A police source who declined to be identified said Wood apparently shot himself in the head.

Wood and his wife, Nancy Steffen Wood, 44, were arrested in September in Eugene after offering to pay male students at the University to have

sex with her.

Both pleaded guilty Oct. 23 to prostitution, and each was fined \$2,500. Under terms of a plea agreement, neither was sentenced to time in prison, community service or probation.

Wood was suspended as director of anesthesiology at Southampton Hospital on Long Island, N.Y., after the incident became public. The socially prominent couple were listed in the Blue Book of The Hamptons, lived in a mansion and owned a yacht. Wood was a member of the exclusive Meadow Club.

Their lives changed when they were cited Sept. 16 at a Eugene hotel.

Four students testified before a grand jury that they were asked to have sex with Nancy Wood. Police said at least one student had sex with her and

that the doctor photographed and tape-recorded the encounter, for which the student was paid \$30.

In soliciting students, the couple said they were conducting research into the "sexual potential of the mature female," police said.

A source close to the family who spoke on condition of anonymity said Wood and his wife returned from a Florida vacation Wednesday night. Nancy Wood left for an out-of-state meeting Thursday morning, the family source said, and was scheduled to return Thursday evening.

A friend went to the house when Wood was unable to reach her husband by phone, and the friend called the authorities, according to a police source.

A family spokesman, Ethan Geto, said he had been in con-

tact with Wood earlier this week. He said Wood "was very distressed throughout this whole episode, but I didn't detect that he was any more distraught than he had been in the past."

"When your name and reputation are dragged through the media and your character and conduct are called into question and your life's work is threatened, then clearly this is distressing," Geto added.

Their attorney, Richard Urrutia, maintained that the Woods were engaged in legitimate research, but said they pleaded guilty because they wanted to get on with their lives.

"All their actions were undertaken innocently and in good faith, and it is a tragedy that they now come under a cloud of suspicion and have been subject to sensational reporting in the press," Urrutia said after the sentencing.

Police said they had evidence the couple intended to carry on their "research" at other West Coast campuses.

Investigators charged that the couple were not doing sex research for an Oxford University project, as they claimed, but undertook the activities for their own gratification.

"They could not articulate the research they were supposed to be conducting," said Assistant District Attorney Sean Hoar when they pleaded guilty.

Nancy Wood distributed "letters of introduction" explaining the supposed research project to young men on campus, Eugene police Sgt. Rick Gilliam said.

Police found a list of schools including Oregon State University, the University of Washington, the University of Victoria, British Columbia; and the University of California at Berkeley, Gilliam said.



Rodney Wood, who was convicted in October along with his wife Nancy for soliciting sex from a University student, apparently committed suicide in his Southampton home Thursday.

Access Continued from Page 1


Hansen said there are several restaurants in Eugene that he cannot get into without help because there are no ramps for wheelchairs.

"Stuff like this goes on all the time," he said. New buildings are required to be accessible; however, many get exemptions and never bother with ac-

cessibility, Hansen said.

"We need to look at access beyond just wheelchairs," Phelps said. "Sometimes when the city puts in a ramp or a curb cut, it creates problems for people who are blind. We need to find a solution that works for everyone," she said.

"Cats ask for it by name."
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