



FEATURES

Raising cane at 100

Harry Cederlund honored as town's oldest citizen with Boston Post cane

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Harry Cederlund, Foxboro's oldest resident, has some pretty old-fashioned advice for longevity.

With an unfamiliar twist.

You've already heard the virtue of eating well, and not smoking or drinking.

But even before Cederlund, who turned 100 on Sept. 9, 2008, was old enough to make those decisions, he liked to sleep with his bedroom window open, letting the fresh air blow in.



Harry Cederlund is presented the Boston Post cane at his home last week. (Photo by Frank Mortimer)

"I always had fresh air in my bedroom, winter and summer," he said in an interview last year.

The modest, retired Foxboro Company instrument maker let another kind of bracing air into his life last Thursday: a gust of celebrity.

Cederlund's Foxhill Road home was crowded with admirers that morning as town officials presented him with the sturdy emblem of his sturdy life: the Boston Post Cane.

The cane is placed in the hands of the town's seniormost senior during the ceremony, then returned for safekeeping to a glass case in the selectmen's meeting room at Town Hall.

"We can hardly call you the guest of honor: we are in your house. We will have to call you the Honoree!" town historian Jack Authelet said as he sat next to Cederlund and gave a history of the cane (see page 6).

Selectman Lynda Walsh read a certificate dedicating the cane to Cederlund, and swapped a few yarns with him about The Company.

Carl Kusch, chairman of the Foxborough Historical Commission presented the walking stick itself, the top of which is inscribed with the name of the newspaper that originated the tradition in hundreds of communities as a way of generating unbeat, human-interest stories.

The Post Cane outlasted the Boston Post, which closed in 1956, Authelet noted, suggesting it might even "outlast newspaper as we know them today," a reference to a general decline in the print media market.

"Here you are, Harry, 100 years of age, and this cane is in its 99th year, turning 100 in August," Authelet said. "And you spend nearly half your life (44 years) working for a company over on Neponset Avenue that celebrated 100 Years of Innovation last year."

Authelet noted that the tradition of the Post Cane had been started by the Boston Post in 1909 -- one year

after Cederlund's was born, in Lynn.

He grew up in Mansfield and has lived in Foxboro since 1932, the year he married Mabel Astrid Hansen. Their marriage lasted 75 years, until her death last year at age 98.

Living at home, he has six part-time caretakers -- five who reside in Foxboro, and one former Foxboro resident: Ann Dooley, Jeanne Andrews, Marguerite Lawler, Irene Eastman, Heidi Sallie and Brenda Deslauriers of Mansfield.

"He's so excited," Brenda Deslauriers of Mansfield and formerly of Foxboro, one of his six part-time caregivers, said after the event. "He was never the type to be a flashy person."

He doesn't even want birthday parties, she said.

But he has relished the daily feast offered by the Internet.

He discovered a whole new world last when he was introduced to the Web and got a high-speed link to the Net.

Seated in the corner of his living room, he uses his laptop to look up video clips of vintage boxing matches and all kinds of animal shows.

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