



## Falmouth resident raises cane at 108

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Maude Thomas holds a Harvard University degree, plays the piano and walks a mile a day, even in winter.

It's an impressive life for anybody, but especially Thomas, who was feted Wednesday for becoming, at age 108, Falmouth's oldest resident.

About 40 residents and employees of the Atria Woodbriar assisted living facility, where Thomas has lived for the past 15 years, gathered as Town Clerk Michael Palmer and Selectman Ahmed Mustafa presented her with Falmouth's Boston Post Cane to recognize her as the town's oldest living resident. Thomas turned 108 in June.

In 1909, the canes were given to every New England town by the now-defunct paper, but only a few of the original canes remain in public hands, Palmer said.

In the 1960s, the Falmouth cane was lost for nearly 20 years after a recipient stored it in an attic, Palmer said, so now recipients are given a replica cane to keep.

"She has had an amazing life," said Richard Kendall, Thomas' nephew and son of Rita Kendall, who ran the Falmouth Nursing Association for nearly 30 years. Rita Kendall died in 2001 at 95.

Dressed in a colorful scarf and maroon-and-gold corsage, Thomas greeted everyone with a big smile and held the cane proudly in the air.

"Hooray for me!" she jokingly told the crowd. "Although I can't believe you were just talking about me. It's all news to me by now."

"She has really been the Energizer Bunny," said Joan Houlihan, executive director at Atria Woodbriar.

Thomas attends every activity the assisted living facility offers, and she even did her own taxes and checkbook balancing until last year, she said.

It's no surprise to Kendall, who said Thomas worked as an office manager at an architectural firm in Boston well into her 80s, taking the subway to work every day. Thomas moved to the United States from England when she was 9, he said.

In her 70s, Thomas enrolled at Harvard — while holding down the architectural firm job — and graduated at age 75, attending her graduation the same day Kendall's brother Bob attended his 25th reunion at the university.

"She just feels that life is worth living, and she lives it to the fullest," Kendall said.

Thomas brings panache and a sense of humor to the assisted living facility, and has been known to slip handwritten jokes under the doors of other residents, Houlihan said.

And, she added, Thomas never, ever lets her age get in the way of what she wants.

"She still sends the staff to Macy's for wrinkle cream," Houlihan said.