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Mar 27 2009

Rich in years and graces, Evelyn Coleman passes



Written by Kathleen Szmit

Held Boston Post Cane as oldest citizen

Evelyn Coleman was known for many things: the welcoming smile she greeted folks with when working at the family's Hyannis convenience store; her sleek, dark wavy hair that remained rich in color well past her 100th birthday; the sunny disposition with which she lived each day of her life.

Coleman was also known as Hyannis' oldest resident and four-time recipient of the prestigious Boston Post Cane award, an achievement she was quite proud of. Last week Coleman passed away peacefully in her sleep. She was 107 years old.

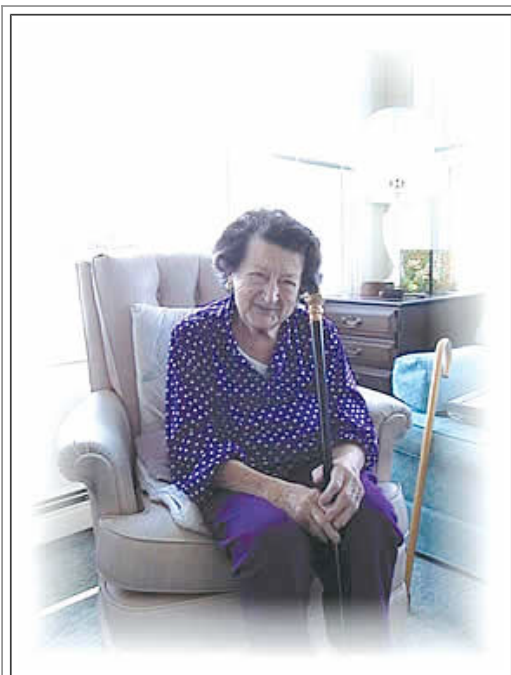
News of her passing brought sadness to those in the community, including Town Clerk Linda Hutchenrider, a longtime friend.

"Evelyn became the second highest age in the Boston Post Cane Award," said Hutchenrider, who recalled another woman who reached the age of 110. "(Evelyn) was bright, she was just the sweetest. She was a wonderful, wonderful lady."

Coleman was born in 1902 and lived for 18 years in a hamlet in Nova Scotia where her family operated a farm.

"Oh, we had pigs and cows and hens and goats," said Coleman during a Patriot interview at the time of her receiving her second Boston Post Cane, given to the town's oldest resident. "We ate the best veggies and the best milk and cream."

Coleman said her father made shoes for local fishermen and woodsmen. "We had good neighbors," she said of Nova Scotia.



Patriot file photo
MODEL FOR LIVING – Evelyn Coleman, Barnstable's oldest resident and four-time recipient of the Boston Post Cane Award, passed away last week at the age of 107.

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What Coleman recalled most fondly were life's simpler pleasures – farm-grown vegetables, boats on the harbor, and homemade ice cream for dessert. When asked the secret of her longevity, Coleman attributed it to honesty, decency, treating others with respect, and eating all kinds of vegetables. "I don't have a favorite," she said, noting that she often threw them into her special Hodgepodge Soup that contained "everything but the kitchen stove." After coming to the Cape where she met her husband, H. Wesley, Coleman came to appreciate life on the peninsula. "I loved everything," she said. "The simplicity. It is a quiet area." Together she and her husband owned and operated a small grocery store in Park Square called, appropriately, Coleman's, which many longtime local residents remember still. "Her family worked so hard at their business at the east end of town," Hutchenrider said. Along with working at the shop, Coleman enjoyed raising her four children, Robert, Elizabeth, Carolyn, and Jean. She also had a large number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Before relocating to Regency in Centerville, Coleman lived for many years on the waterfront overlooking Hyannis Harbor where she took delight in spending long hours on her cozy front porch. "I think the picture that I took of her that will always remain in my mind was when Elyse DeGroot and I went to her house, and she sat there with the light shining on her face from the sun coming through the window overlooking the harbor," said Hutchenrider. "She used to sit for hours and watch the boats go by. She'll be sorely missed." Hutchenrider compared Coleman to another long-lived resident with a harbor view, the late Ruth Rusher, admiring her grace and dignity. "I tend to look at Mrs. Coleman in that capacity," Hutchenrider said. "It's a loss for Hyannis. She was one of the oldest and one of the loveliest here in the village."

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