

Gardener, football player, citizen

Camden honors Herb Inman with Boston Post Cane

By Lynda Clancy | Jan 22, 2011



(Photo by: Lynda Clancy)

Herb Inman, longtime Camden resident, high school football captain, accomplished gardener and outdoorsman, takes the Boston Post Cane for a walk.

Herbert Inman, a longtime resident of Knowlton Street in Camden, is keeping the family tradition intact: Like his mother in 1986, he has received the town's high recognition of its elders, the Boston Post Cane.

On Jan. 8, Inman, who is staying for the time being at Quarry Hill in Camden, was honored by Camden Select Board Chairwoman Karen Grove, who presented him with the cane and a plaque commemorating his distinction and longevity in the town of Camden. Inman, 98, has lived for 82 years in Camden.

He was born June 21, 1912, and was premature, so premature that the doctor stopped by the next day, wanting to know at what time Herb passed away.

His mother said he was in the oven.

In those days, preemies were tucked into the oven to maintain body temperature, and Herb survived; 98-plus years later he has proved the doctor wrong.

"That's why I am half-baked," he said on Jan. 8, stretching his tall frame up out of the chair and testing the cane.

Camden's Boston Post Cane, engraved with the inscription, "Presented by the Boston Post to the oldest citizen of Camden Me — To Be Transmitted," is handed to the oldest citizen who has lived in the community for 75 years or more. The cane is ceremonial, and resides most of the time in a case at the Camden Town Office. Bestowing the cane is a tradition in many New England towns, and perpetuates a custom established in 1909 when Edwin Grozier, then publisher of the Boston Post, presented 700 of the larger New

England towns with the canes.

Since then the cane has come to represent a New England custom that most towns incorporate in their historical legacies. Topped with a gold, enscripted head, the cane, made from ebony shipped in seven-foot lengths from the Congo and then cut and polished in New York City, has come to represent the distinct honor a community bestows on its oldest citizen.

It was 24 years ago that Herb's mother, Mary, received the town's Boston Post Cane at an afternoon party. Mary turned 100 in 1986. Willard Scott, of the NBC-TV "Today Show," wished her a happy birthday. At her birthday party that day were her sons Herbert and Malcolm. Mary had worked at the Camden Community Hospital until age 83.

Now it is Herbert's time to celebrate his longtime citizenship in Camden, and at the Jan. 8 ceremony, he stood with his good friends Randy Stearns and Joe Carr, as well as staff and town citizens, who came to congratulate him.

Just as his birthday falls regularly on the summer solstice, one can count on his prolific and well-tended garden to be thriving by June 21 every year. Inman has cultivated the garden plot for decades on the corner of Knowlton Street and Lion's Lane, and it is one of the most successful gardens in town. Inman is known throughout the community for his green thumb.

"It is always the first one in come spring, and the first cleaned up in the fall," said Stearns, who has known Inman for years, seeing him regularly at McDuck's, where Inman would frequent each morning for coffee and conversation.

Inman is also known for his dedication to being a citizen. In 2008, he was up at 4 a.m. — as normal schedule dictates, but this time it was Election Day, and he was the first voter to cast a ballot at the Camden Public Safety Building. He was given the honorary first voting privilege because of his seniority in voting in Camden. Inman has voted in every election since 1931, and his first presidential contest was the one in 1932 between Republican President Herbert Hoover and Democratic challenger Franklin Delano Roosevelt.



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Inman is a tall man with a commanding presence, and at one time he was captain of the Camden High School football team; in fact, he was the team's last football captain in 1931, before the high school discontinued the program. Every morning before going to school as a freshman, he would milk 10 cows at a dairy farm, earning money.

At Camden High School, he was regarded as an accomplished athlete, running track, and competing with the javelin, discus and shot put. The year he was captain of the football team, his team won all its games but one, and that was a tie.

He also took a shining to buses, and began driving to earn money. One year, while a student and in the band, he drove the high school band out of state for a music competition. Herb at the wheel, his classmates safe in their seats. He continued driving buses after graduating, hauled logs to build minesweepers in World War II, and then became a contractor until 1972, building throughout the region.

More recently, he has been an active fisherman, visiting Moosehead and Eagle lakes in the summer, and closer to home, Megunticook.

Inman is recuperating at Quarry Hill these days, and impressing his nurses with his swift recovery from a recent ailment. The cane and the plaque that includes all Boston Post Cane recipients since 1909 is on display at the town office. Now, another

Inman has joined the town's historical legacy.

Cane recipients since 1909 include: Josiah H. Boardman, age 90, 1909; James C. Storey, 89, 1912; George W. Glover, 87, 1914; Elisha Richards, 89, 1917; Freeman W. Payson, 91, 1923; James B. Alexander, 91, 1934; Sara F. Pendleton, 97, 1939; Nicholas Berry, 94, 1940; Roscoe Metcalf, 93, 1941; John D. Knowlton Sr., 95, 1946; Mary Hart, 94, 1956; Fred Hansen, 93, 1959; Amy Rose, 100, 1970; Ann Longworth, 100, 1985; Zulu Hill, 100-plus, 1986; Mary L. Inman, 100-plus, 1987; Eva G. Stone, 100, 1989; Eva Hansen, 103, 1995; Lena Dunbar Richardson, 101, 1995; Roy C. Carle, 95, 1999; Jasper G. Chapin, 98, 2003; Flora Wright, 95, 2004; Carrie S. Knight, 101, 2009; Herbert Inman, 98, 2010.

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