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NEWS FEATURE

DEER ISLE

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Deer Isle woman receives Boston Post Cane

by Jessica Brophy

In a short ceremony in late November, the Boston Post Cane was awarded to Deer Isle resident Marvel Torrey, who is 95 years old.

The cane has been awarded to the town's eldest resident since 1909, when the canes were first distributed to selectmen in towns across New England as part of a publicity stunt by the now defunct newspaper the Boston Post. Over the years, some of the original canes have been lost, stolen, or accidentally destroyed. Deer Isle and Stonington still have their canes; Stonington's is currently held by 104-year-old Mary Cousins.

Torrey, born Marvel Snowden, has lived all her life on the island with the exception of an 18-year stint in Cape Cod, according to Torrey's nephew, Leroy Small.

Small, whose mother Carol was twin to Marvel, said the pair was known as "the Snowden Twins."

The two were very close, and so identical that when the pair was old enough to drive, they flipped a coin. "My mother lost, so she took the test, they put the driver's license in the glove box and they both drove on it until Marvel went away to college," said Small. "People didn't know one from the other."

This is not the first time a member of Torrey's family has held the Boston Post cane. Torrey's grandfather, Henry Haskell, also held the cane.

Small thinks, though he can't find proof to confirm, that her great-grandfather Roswell Davis may also have held the cane. "I think he was the oldest living male on the island when he passed," said Small.

Torrey will be 96 in April. "She's still healthy," said Small. "Maybe she'll live to be 100!"

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At a ceremony at her home in Deer Isle in late November, 95-year-old Marvel Torrey was awarded the Boston Post Cane. From left to right, Marvel's son George W. Torrey of Deer Isle, son Vinal Torrey of Deer Isle, nephew Leroy Small of Deer Isle, Marvel Torrey of Deer Isle, and niece Margaret Frazier of Florida.

Photo courtesy of Rich Lord

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