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YORK WEEKLY

## 'My life has been spent serving the Lord and others': Rev. Gough, 103, receives York's Boston Post Cane



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YORK, Maine — For the second year in a row, the town of York has honored one of the eldest members in the community with the historic Boston Post Cane.

Rev. Wilbert Gough, a longtime pastor who has served many churches in the Seacoast area, will turn 104 on June 13.

“I don't have very much time left to live but I want to honor the Lord and thank you for the gift of the cane and I trust that I will honor the representation of that cane ... I'll do my very best,” Gough said.

The room at York Public Library was filled with town officials, friends and three generations of the Gough family, all there to celebrate.

The room erupted into laughter when Gough's son, Wilbert Gough Jr., shared his father's life motto.

“Is life worth living? Depends on the liver'... and on the liver I just hope his liver hangs on,” Gough Jr. said.

Town Manager Steve Burns said the Boston Post Cane tradition had disappeared in York about 30 or 40 years ago.

“I think it's just important to recognize that people who have lived a long time have a lot to offer our community, a lot of experiences and wisdom, whatever you want to call it. And I think it's really important that we reach out and honor people with this for a life well lived. It's just very important to appreciate everything you've done and congratulate you,” Burns

said.

Gough shared his thanks and a bit of his life story with those assembled in his honor.

He was born in 1918 in the middle of a cotton patch in Davidson County, Oklahoma, and was raised in a Christian household, he said.

“What a wonderful upbringing that we had in the Lord and the word in the Bible ... day by day and breath by breath, we thank God for everyone. God has blessed us all the way,” Gough said.

Gough later went on to graduate high school and college in Texas and studied business. He later went on to work as an accountant. He holds a doctorate of divinity and a doctorate of theology from Temple University in Philadelphia, where his late wife Florence grew up.

“I was coming into the world to be a minister. And I have been ministering in many ways, all of these almost 104 years,” Gough said. “You know what? I'm not quite there ... my life has been spent in serving the Lord and serving others.”

Gough has lived in the Seacoast area for 22 years, the last 14 at Sentry Hill at York Harbor in an independent living apartment. He has led churches in Hampton and Seabrook, New Hampshire, and in Kittery. Gough eventually retired from active ministry at 99, as pastor of First Christian Church in Kittery.

## **History of the Boston Post Cane**

The tradition of awarding canes to the eldest people in town was created by the owner of the Boston Post newspaper in a bid to boost readership. The cane, made of ebony and topped with a 14-karat gold knob engraved with the name of the town, was awarded to men, but eventually women became eligible in 1930, according to York Historical Society Executive Director Joel Lefever.

Town Manager Steve Burns said the cane had been in storage at the York Historical Society for at least the past 20 years.

Deborah Meyers, chair of the York Senior Citizen Advisory Board, said that there were almost no applications to nominate women in the last two years, which she suspects is due to the fact that it was once a male-only award.

Next year, Meyers said she wants to make sure that people are aware women can be nominated too.

The cane will be on permanent display at the York Public Library and the honoree is given a framed picture to commemorate the day they were named the cane's recipient.