

Ruth Bean, 100, says secret to longevity is eating well

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RUTH BEAN was awarded the Boston Post Cane in Topsham. JULIETTE LAAKA / THE TIMES RECORD TOPSHAM

100-year-old Ruth Bean's fondest childhood memory is running barefoot in the summer to save her shoes for the school year. "We didn't have much money, so we went barefoot all summer. I liked it," she recalled.

Bean — who was born during WWI, raised during the Great Depression and saw her classmates leave home to fight in WWII — was recently honored as the oldest resident of Topsham. She was presented with the Boston Post Cane at her home, where she lives independently in a house on her daughter, Jane's, property.

"This is all beyond words," she said of the recognition.

The Boston Post Cane presentation began in 1909 when the publisher of the now-defunct Boston Post newspaper sent 700 New England towns gold-headed Ivory canes to be presented to the oldest man in the town. The cane is now presented to the oldest person in each town, regardless of gender.

Selectboard Chairman David Douglass and Town Manager Rich Roedner attended the ceremony, where Bean was also presented with a plaque from the town.

Born in Lynn, Massachusetts in 1917, Bean's family moved to Maine when she was a child. She attended a one-room schoolhouse, and then Gould Academy in Bethel.

After high school, Bean attended the Auburn School of Commerce and later took a job with the state in the Department of Health and Human Services. She retired at age 57 from that position after 25 years, but later worked at Stephens Memorial Hospital.

Bean made a home with her husband of nearly 50 years, Herman. She recalls one of their early dates, where they were invited to a friend's home for dinner. She inquired what the meat was that was served, and Herman replied it was goat meat. With a laugh, she said she had never before had goat meat, and that she wasn't partial to it. "It was tough," she remembered.

Bean said she supposes the secret to her longevity, although she can't quite figure it out, is that she eats well.

Family members of Bean include one granddaughter and a great-great grandson — adding she is very fortunate to have a close family.