Belmont’s Walter Vorse awarded Boston Post Cane

BETTY MELLO
BETTY.Retirement@gmail.com

BELMONT — In the midst of Belmont’s Old Home Day festivities last Saturday, another special celebration took place when Selectmen Ruth Mooney and Jon Pike presented the Boston Post Cane award to Walter Vorse, who was recently deemed to be the town’s living oldest resident.

The presentation took place before a large crowd at the bandstand, shortly after the parade. Vorse was quite pleased to receive the honor and after accepting the cane he took a moment to introduce himself to his fellow residents.

“If I saw someone get a longevity award, I’d be curious about what led up to that presentation,” he said.

He went on to explain that he grew up in Massachusetts and joined the Navy during World War II, where he soon found himself commanding a ship in the Pacific Ocean.

“That was quite a weight, to be commanding a ship at just 22 years old,” he said.

Vorse spent 25 of his 30 months in the Navy at sea, and oversaw his ship as it took part in landings in Okinawa and other sites in the Pacific. He also led his crew in mine demolition operations in the Sea of Japan.

“And I came back in one piece,” Vorse said to a round of applause. After 30 months in the Navy, he made good use of the GI Bill and headed off to college. Over the years, he received degrees from Fitchburg State College, Boston University and Harvard Graduate School as he moved on to a 40-year career in education, and eventually settled in Belmont.

Mooney explained that Belmont was one of 431 towns that were given the prized canes in 1909 by Boston Post newspaper owner Edward Grozier. Each cane was made of mahogany and topped with a gold knob.

Grozier’s instructions, which many hailed as a clever publicity stunt for the now-defunct paper, were that the canes be handed down over the years to the oldest resident of each town.

Belmont’s original Boston Post Cane is now on display at the town hall but recipients are awarded a replica of the cane to commemorate their status as the town’s oldest resident.

As part of last weekend’s Old Home Day events, Belmont Selectmen Jon Pike and Ruth Mooney presented Walter Vorse with the Boston Post Cane, officially declaring him the oldest living resident in the community.