

Receives Boston Post cane

Former selectman still has strong views

by Dave Matthews

At 91, former Walpole selectman Frank Smith still holds strong opinions about what he thinks is right for Walpole.

Last week he held court among a small circle of family and friends who were helping him celebrate his birthday. During the celebration, when asked what he thought about current issues facing Walpole, he offered opinions similar to the ones which characterized his two terms on the Board of Selectmen in 1960 and from 1963-70.

For example, he agreed emphatically with the January decision of a special session of the Town Meeting to take land by eminent domain to protect the School Meadow Brook aquifer from potential industrial contamination, and he was unconcerned about the as yet to be determined cost of the land taking.

"If we have to get new water, it will cost over \$200 million," he said to underscore his strong feelings on the matter.

Smith, a former builder, mason and teamster, is proud of his roots in Walpole and his years of service to the community. No stranger to environmental issues, Smith fought to help preserve wetlands near Cobb's Pond from encroachment. He was also instrumental in getting trash pick-up

started Walpole. He also helped obtain the town's first ambulance.

Asked if he might try to rejoin the Board of Selectmen after a 15-year layoff, he said, "There would be a hell of a lot of difference if I was on there."

No one who heard him, including the current chairman of the Board of Selectmen, Clement Boragine, differed with him on that point.

Smith supports the presence of a woman on the board. "I think a woman has a right to be on the Board of Selectman."

Smith, who lives on North Street, was born in Plimptonville on the banks of the Neponset River Feb. 4, 1894. He remembers a far simpler lifestyle in Walpole.

He said he once traded a couple of cords of firewood to a local merchant for two tailor-made suits, one of which he got married in.

In the era of 1912-14 he recalled a Walpole center that included a blacksmith shop, a livery stable, a wheelwright's shop and a genuine Chinese laundry.

A locally renowned teamster, Smith plowed snow from East Walpole sidewalks with a horse-drawn plow for many years. Though not a farmer by trade, he once won a plowing contest at the Norfolk Agricultural School behind a team of horses.

In 1913 he remembers working at the

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