

HARRY L. PINKHAM TRIBUTE:
RECIPIENT OF THE 2014 LIFETIME SERVICE AWARD
PRESENTED BY THE BOOTHBAY HARBOR ROTARY CLUB

*Delivered by Robin R. Reed
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Background

Our very first Lifetime Service Award recipient, over 53 years ago, in 1960, was Judge John W. Brackett. In 1960, Harry was 33 years old and had been living in Boothbay Harbor for seven years, after his two-year war service in North Korea, the only two years he was ever away from Boothbay Harbor.

We have generally presented this award every year around Patriot's Day to honor our own community patriot. Patriot's Day harks back to the April 19, 1775 battles of Lexington and Concord, the first battles that launched the American Revolution 239 years ago.

We will relate Harry's remarkable accomplishments during the past, nearly 90, years.

East Side Beginnings

Harry was born December 29, 1926. Yes, this makes Harry 87 years young. Honestly, you look just the same as you did 30 years ago! You never change, and you have always been here for us.

Harry has always lived, from his birth, in his 17 Park Street home, on the East Side of the harbor, except for his two years of service in Korea.

Harry's parents were Herman and Harriet Pinkham, who had no other children than Harry. His father, Herman, worked as a contractor and also at Pierce and Hartung's hardware store and lumber yard that existed for decades on the East Side, where The Boothbay Harbor Inn and the Rocktide Pool are today, near the footbridge. His mother, Harriet, cleaned houses.

Since Harry never had any children, his closest relative is Bob Grover. Bob was the son of Nat Grover, who was Harry's mother's sister. So Harry and Bob Grover were first cousins. That makes Merritt Grover and his sister Kathy first cousins once removed of Harry.

Like all East Side kids, he attended nine years of school from kindergarten through eighth grade at the East Side Grammar School on the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Bay Street, where Fine Interiors is located today. Someday, look up and note the flagpole still there, high in the air. This oversized, two-story, white-clapboard schoolhouse was painted white with bright, apple-red trim and was the third largest building on the East Side, after the Catholic Church and the Freezer. Teachers daily clanged the brass, wooden-handled, don't-you-dare-to-be-late school bell. Sarah Delano, who attended 17 years after Harry, described the no-nonsense teachers, who rode herd over and taught, in that order, the kids inside and on the playground. When Harry attended this East Side Grammar School, he did not know West Siders, such as Bob Barter, until East Siders and West Siders attended together in the Boothbay Harbor High School located on School Street. Only a decade or two later, did West Siders start attending at the East Side School, but East Siders and West Siders were kept separate, meeting mornings and afternoons, even then, until fifth grade.

High School

An average student and athlete, Harry served early in his community as manager of at least the baseball and basketball teams.

During his junior or senior year, around 1945, Harry and Bob Barter, two years younger than Harry, worked for Skip Freeman in the Department of Fingerprinting in Augusta. In those days every fifth grader was required to be fingerprinted. Harry's job was to fingerprint fifth graders in Lincoln County and send the fingerprint cards, with the images of thumbs and index fingers to Augusta for processing. In the hundreds of fingerprints processed by Harry, only two cards were ever returned for reprocessing due to blurred images. Harry did outstanding work at an early age in his fingerprinting career.

During high school and World War II, as an augur of his community service generally and his emergency preparedness particularly, Harry took on the responsibility of erecting signal flags at one of Boothbay Harbor's highest points, atop the Signal Tower erected on Moore's Rock up the hill beyond Fullerton Street. These signal flags were used throughout World War II, but then were never used again, with the advent of better, early-warning technologies.

Harry, in 1946, went through very similar rites of passage when he graduated from his Boothbay Harbor High School on School Street in Boothbay Harbor. Of course, he and his classmates capped it off with the Grand March, marching down the steps of the Opera House.

Family Focus

Harry was very close to his parents. After his father died, his mother would often babysit for the Coady kids, across the street once or twice a month, on evenings when Bernard "Bernie" Coady would be off at Lions and Marlene Coady would go bowling.

When Harry's mother, Harriet, died, she died upstairs in their Park Street home. They had a little poodle, maybe "Peppy", who was part of their household. Police Chief Leighton Davis, a large and imposing man, came lumbering into the house upon the news of her unattended death, when Peppy grabbed Leighton by his behind, embarrassing Harry to no end at the time.

Harry would later, after Bernie Coady died in 1986, dine at Marlene Coady's across the street because her mother was such a great cook. And Harry always loved to eat!

Harry adopted Walter Reed's clan as his own, and Harry was at Walter and Lorraine's wedding and traveled with Walter and Lorraine to Australia, New Zealand, England, and several other destinations. Walter and Lorraine and their four children and spouses are Wally and Elizabeth Reed, Judy and Henry Hurford, Kim Upham and son Nick Upham, and John and Nora Reed. Harry always pitched in at family outings such as clambakes, family reunions, and weddings. Harry has always been there for the Reed clan.

Work Life

Grovers Hardware

A little-known fact is that Harry was drafted near the end of World War II, and he was one of the first in his class called to service. Harry promptly answered the call, reported for duty with his draft number, but was sent back home because the Army announced they didn't need any more men as the war was winding down.

Right out of high school, Harry went to work for his uncle, Nat Grover, at Grover's Hardware. This was close to what Harry's father had done, working for Pierce & Hartung, where Nat Grover also had worked before he launched Grover's Hardware. Harry worked at Grover's Hardware for roughly five years, from 1945 to 1950, until he was drafted into the Army for the Korean Conflict.

Korean Conflict Service

Harry served in the U.S. Army during this Korean Conflict for two years, from roughly 1951 to 1953. He reported to service in Virginia, when they mustered out two groups, one headed for Germany and the other for Korea, for duty. His commanding officer asked the new draftees if any of them knew how to type. Harry made the mistake of admitting he could pound a typewriter. Harry was immediately pressed into administrative service as an administrative clerk, who processed all the men as they went off to Germany and Korea, and so multitudes of men knew Harry by face and by name. The last person he mustered out, excluding himself, was the commanding officer, and then Harry was the very last man mustered out.

He served as company clerk for Charley Company but rapidly climbed the ladder and ended his stint with the rank of staff sergeant, chief of his section of not just Charley Company, but five companies. Remarkably, Harry's first assignment in Korea involved finding information on the recent death of a Boothbay Harbor soldier in Korea.

Following his 14-month stint in Korea and a 30-day leave, Harry was back at Fort Devens in Massachusetts. He was involved in the creation, coordination, and operation of the Fort's separation center. Harry quipped to a *Register* reporter in 2007, "I ended up discharging all of the people that trained me in Virginia." Many were amazed to see Harry again, almost two

years later, and many veterans asked incredulously, “Harry, “Were you here the whole time?”

Later, Harry joined the Air Force Reserve with Bob Barter, Ray Greenleaf, Ed Hutchinson (Ned Hutch), and Walter Reed. They met in Bath, near the post office, and had many great times.

West Boothbay Harbor Post Office

Harry, upon his return from Korea, earned a job driving the postal truck for the West Boothbay Harbor Post Office, where he worked as a deliveryman for 20-25 years, from 1953 into the 1970s. Rumor has it that, while on the job, Harry collected bottles, and he also read romance novels while seated and savoring soda at certain soda fountains. Also, while working, Harry often walked himself and the mail into many kitchens. Again, Harry always loved to eat!

Harry had started driving the mail delivery truck and soon was later promoted to walking with a bag. This mail-carrier position was a promotion because he made more money as a letter carrier than as a mail driver.

While Harry delivered mail to West Siders, his mail-carrier counterpart on his home turf, the East Side, was Harold Seavey, who rode around on a Cushman motor scooter. On occasion, Harry would be sighted delivering mail on his own East Side as well.

Few of Harry’s co-workers survive, but there is one, Lucille Machon, who is 11 years older than Harry. Fortunately for Harry, she recalls Harry with great admiration and recently remarked, “Harry was very straight.”

Another admirer of Harry and recipient of his mail deliveries on the west side was Pat Wheeler, who had co-owned with her husband, Bob, Wheeler’s Drug Store, on the corner of Union Street and Townsend Avenue. Bob and Pat Wheeler had bought, in 1964, the drug store from Don Mitchell, who had recently acquired the pharmacy from Kitty Seader, whose husband and pharmacist had just died and closed the store. Harry, on and off the job, had been going to the soda fountain at that drug store for years before and after the Wheelers acquired it. Part of Harry’s personal

mail delivery tasks must have been sampling the soda fountain drinks and desserts and perhaps some other food from other kitchens.

When Harry retired from his letter-carrier work in the 1980s, he was only in his late 50s. However, he had 33 years of service and logged 70,000 miles.

Cottage Caretaker

A well-known summer resident, David Knowles, hired Harry to take care of his Spruce Point cottage, at the very end of Grandview Avenue, just past the Spruce Point Inn, on the ocean. David Knowles was quite a character from New Jersey, and every summer he honored local guys with a big clambake. Harry was in charge of this annual summer clambake, which was enjoyed and appreciated by his fellow locals as well.

Community Commitment

Here is just a sampling of some of Harry Pinkham's community commitments: Town Assessor, Boothbay Harbor Water District Commissioner, Boothbay Harbor Fire Department, Lincoln County Fire Chief's Association, Emergency Preparedness, and American Legion.

Boothbay Harbor Civil Preparedness

During the Cold War, each town needed a civil preparedness organization. In 1959, the selectmen appointed Harry as its first civil preparedness chief. He headed our civil defense for almost 50 years, including his service as emergency management agency director in the mid-1990s until his retirement in 2007. If we add his work during his high school years with the signal flags on Moore's Rock and his Korean Conflict service, Harry defended our town for well over half a century.

Boothbay Harbor Town Assessor

Harry served as town assessor for either one term or two terms (three to six years) in the 1960s and 1970s.

Boothbay Harbor Water System Commissioner and Boothbay Region Water District Trustee

Harry has served on the board of the Boothbay Harbor Water System and continues to serve as chairman of the board of the Boothbay Region Water District. Harry's leadership tenure for the stewardship of our peninsular water supply, so far, has been an incredible five decades, since around 1976 to the present time.

Until recent years, the water commissioners would rotate the chairmanship amongst the three of them. Finally, in 2004, Lew Curtis noted that they felt this was ridiculous, and they might as well face reality and keep Harry as chair, since he led them anyway. So Harry Pinkham has chaired the Boothbay Region Water District Trustees since 2004, and he will until at least 2016, when his current term expires -- assuming Harry doesn't expire first! More likely, Harry will continue to effectively lead the water district board, as he has for close to half a century.

Boothbay Harbor Town Warden/Elections

Harry served as deputy moderator and ballot clerk for over 30 years in Boothbay Harbor's elections for town offices, town referenda, and county, state, and federal balloting. Harry would always buy the donuts for the volunteers and staff while manning the elections, but many wondered if these donuts might have been hauled out of his home freezer!

Pat Wheeler, who shifted from drug store clerk to town clerk, credits Harry for her easy transition during her tenure as town clerk, from 1999 to 2009. Harry knew the ropes so well, having been deputy clerk under Bob Barter, who had served as town clerk for decades. Harry continued also as deputy moderator and was no stickler, let go, and helped Pat take charge. Harry quietly set up the voting booths each election, stocked the voting booths, and put up the posters for voting. Harry was very steady and supportive throughout Pat's tenure.

Boothbay Harbor Fire Department

Harry Pinkham has served the Boothbay Harbor Fire Department for over sixty years, starting in 1953 on his return from Korea and was

treasurer, kept the books, and updated payroll. He also served as secretary and keeper of records for the Harbor station.

Warren Page, Boothbay Harbor Fire Chief for many years had Harry as his right-hand man. Later, Fire Chief Glenn Townsend, who worked with Harry for over 30 years, highly respected Harry and told a reporter, "It has always been a pleasure working with Harry."

For the last decade, although "semi-retired" from the fire department and then fully retired in 2007, he could still be seen around the fire department cooking up a storm. Harry continued to be the station's clerk and handled all the Department of Environmental Protection paperwork, as well as chemical inventories of local businesses and payroll, even after 2007. Boothbay Fire Chief, Dick Spofford, quipped in 2007, "We like having Harry around."

Harry remained concerned for fire department recruitment, since training has become much more comprehensive and challenging with new laws and regulations. In the old days, all the training he and others received came after they were hired. He was concerned about young men and women with families, unlike Harry, who would modestly remark, "Me, I never married, so I always had plenty of time."

Harry was at the American Legion Hall, on July 11, 2008, when the call for the huge Washburn & Doughty fire came in. He told a reporter, "I immediately went to the water district to make sure they got the call, so they could boost the pumps, increase the water pressure, and started calling more help." He directed traffic in and around Mt. Pisgah while the fire department trucks were filling up there at the standpipe. Even before his heroics, a year earlier, in 2007, Rotary had bestowed on Harry its Hometown Heroes Award.

Boothbay Harbor Fire Department Traffic Control

In 1983, the year Harry retired from the United States Postal Service, Swing Lewis, Boothbay Fire Chief and another recipient of our Rotary's Lifetime Service Award, asked if Harry would perform fire police duty for Boothbay's fire department as well. Harry helped, of course.

Lincoln County Fire Chief's Association

Even on the state level, Harry has been recognized for his enormous contributions to firefighting. When the 45th annual Maine State Federation of Firefighters Convention came to this region in 2006, Harry was honored as the person to serve as Grand Marshal of the convention parade here in Boothbay Harbor. The *Register* article of December 20, 2006 reported that nobody could think of anyone more deserving, noted Harry's "familiar, low-key, friendly manner – usually with a smile," and one who "has made serving his community a life-long commitment."

Masons Seaside Lodge 144

Harry has participated as a member of the Masonic Seaside Lodge #144 for 62 years. He was a member of the Scottish Rite, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. He was affiliated with and initiated as an Entered Apprentice at Seaside Lodge #144 in the Opera House on March 17, 1952. A week later, he passed to the degree of a Fellow Craft. Four days later, perhaps due in part to his military service, he was raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason, on March 28, 1952 in the Opera House. He was a member of the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine since August 27, 1955. On April 1, 2002, Brother Harry Pinkham was presented with the 50 year service medal. Harry held the position of treasurer from 1993 to 1994, from 2001 to 2004, and assistant treasurer from 2010 to 2013. He continues to attend and participate in weekly lodge meetings on the first Monday of each month.

Boothbay Region Historical Society

Harry served as trustee of our historical society as well.

Boothbay Harbor Memorial Library

He served as Boothbay Harbor Memorial Library trustee for 15 years. He was treasurer for two of those years, after Wendy Curtis and before Joan Marvin. Harry was always tighter than a drum and so was a tremendous treasurer for this and so many other region organizations. And Harry mowed the library lawn for many years as well.

Oaklawn Cemetery

Harry served as trustee for the Oaklawn Cemetery District, before the Boothbay-Boothbay Harbor Cemetery District was formed.

American Legion

Harry Pinkham served as commander of the American Legion Charles E. Sherman Post 36, in the mid-1960s for two years. He has been finance officer since 1998. As General Lew Curtis quipped, "Harry is a fixture now."

Harry collects money at Legion breakfasts and generally is the coordinator for other organizations, including Rotary, which uses the American Legion Hall for various functions.

He also has, for decades, coordinated the proper disposal of used flags at the American Legion. Many residents, not knowing what to do with flags that need to be destroyed, take them to Harry, who knows how to appropriately retire such old flags.

Most of all, however, Harry loves his community involvement and chores at the American Legion. He relishes going up and helping out with breakfasts. He is always there, and it doesn't matter if it is peeling potatoes or cooking eggs.

Lions Club

The Lions Club had disbanded here during World War II. Lionism was reconstituted in 1953, when they bought their current clubhouse. Harry was a charter member and remains the sole surviving Lion and charter member, 61 years later!

Harry immediately became the first secretary of the new Boothbay Harbor Lions Club. He held this secretary position, which literally runs the club, for 18 years.

He kept the club's history, served on many of the club's committees, and was the most notable Lion in his club.

In 1992, 22 years ago, Harry was the first recipient in the entire Maine district for the highest honor in Lionism. In fact, Harry is one of only two or

three recipients (another being Mel Knox) of the Boothbay Harbor Lions Club to be honored with the Lions' Melvin Jones Award. This is an honor bestowed by the Lions Clubs International and an award named after Melvin Jones, the founder of Lions Clubs International. The Lions Clubs International website describes the importance of this award: "This Fellowship Award is the highest form of recognition and embodies humanitarian ideas consistent with the nature and purpose of Lionism. The recipient of this award becomes a model because of the exemplary service to his club and the community for which it serves." Harry clearly meets the requirements of this award, namely for those who best exemplify and carry out the Lions' motto, "We serve." Harry won this award so many years ago, as can be inferred from the fact that the area Lions awarded this first-ever award to Harry at their annual Ladies Night, an event that is antiquated today with many women who are now Lions.

Conclusion and Presentation of Plaque and Certificate

On this 54th anniversary of our first Lifetime Service Award to Judge John Wilkes Booth Brackett, we can think of no person more deserving of this recognition in 2014. Congratulations, Harry, on receiving our Boothbay Harbor Rotary Club's 2014 Lifetime Service Award. The plaque reads: "Eight Decades of Service: Korean Veteran, Water Leader, Fire Policeman, Town Warden, Legendary Lion, Treasurer Extraordinaire, and Committed Communitarian".

You are in very good company, with the last eleven recipients being Don Wotton, Stan Tupper, Chetley Rittall, Swing Lewis, Loraine Nickerson, Ed Harding, Estelle Appel, Laura Honey, Al Roberts, Curt West, and George McEvoy. Congratulations! Harry, you get the final say.