

# CAPE COD TIMES

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## NEWS

# Cape Cod running: What you can learn from a 91-year-old marathoner. (It includes an IPA.)



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WEYMOUTH – It is the day before Thanksgiving and although Larry Cole slept in for an extra half hour at Fairing Way, where he lives, he is still one of the first ones outdoors getting in his exercise.

"I'm running late this morning," he says as he rounds the bend from Snow Bird Avenue onto Stonehaven Drive and stops inside the clubhouse before heading out again at 9 a.m. The past two days before the holiday have been especially busy.

Seeing the former Harwich resident jog slowly but steadily down the street, few would guess that this is a gentleman who at age 91 competes regularly in road races around the South Shore and on Cape Cod.

He has completed nine marathons, three in Boston and two Marine Corps Marathons. He especially likes running on the grounds of the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station because of the wide roads with bike lanes and miles of sidewalks.

The only indication of his advanced age is perhaps the slight forward lean. He wears a back brace under his clothing when he runs and sometimes carries a cane that he uses for balance when he slows to a walk.

## **At 85, Larry Cole was the oldest finisher in the Boston Marathon**

A half-dozen of his neighbors at the Southfield (Union Point) community have gathered to cheer him on before his next charity race a few days later in Dennis. Cole is a member of the New England 65 Plus Runners Club and the Cape Cod Athletic Club.

In 2019, at age 85, he was the oldest finisher in the Boston Marathon. The year before, he served as co-grand marshal of the event as it honored the 100th anniversary of the WW1-era Boston Marathon of 1918. (The grand marshals were selected for their past military service and Cole served in the Army in the Korean War.)

Cole is well-known in his retirement community, not only for his athletic abilities but also for his friendly, helpful personality, civic responsibilities and as an aficionado of India pale ales. He loves to arrange evenings out at local craft beer establishments, including events known as Suds for Seniors.

I heard about Cole from his running friend John Goldrosen, 74, of Whitman.

"Larry has a real zest for life and a youthful spirit that allows him to be friends with people who are decades younger," Goldrosen said. "He is a joy to be around."

Cole moved to the South Shore during the pandemic in 2020 from the Cape where he had served as a Harwich selectman. His wife Loretta, 77, had died in 2009; their house had become much too large, he wanted to downsize and was impressed with the relative cost and amenities at Fairing Way.

## **'Renaissance man': Larry Cole also gives lectures and updates on what's happening at Union Point**

He quickly found a niche in his new community. He had retired in 1997 from a career in economics, including running the economics and statistics department at GTE Laboratories in Waltham, and serves on Fairing Way's finance committee. He gives

lectures on foreign policy in the monthly Great Decisions classes for residents and is regarded as "very smart" and a "go-to person."

"Larry Cole is a well-rounded Renaissance man," Rosella Cicchese, a fellow resident, said. "Larry sets the bar higher for all of us."

Ellen Walsh, another resident, described Cole as "a real asset to the community. He is very intelligent and goes to meetings for the Southfield Neighborhood Association (aka Union Point) and reports back to the Fairing Way community here."

## **Pacemaker, bursitis, arthritis, cancer, new hip – nothing stops Larry Cole**

Cole also impresses others by how he has handled different medical setbacks.

He kept running through painful bursitis in his right hip, osteoarthritis in his lower back, treatment for an irregular heartbeat, is on his third pacemaker, and in 2015 had six weeks of radiation therapy for prostate cancer. (A few days after that final radiation treatment, he ran a 5-mile race.).

In 2020, he had a hip replacement that left him with a limp when he walks but not when he runs.

"None of it stops him; he is an amazing man," Walsh said.

After he dislocated his shoulder while stretching Nov. 2 and it was reset, he kept running, using a sling for a week. He did make one concession – the 7-mile Falmouth in the Fall road race was the day after he fell, and he walked that one with his cane.

"It took me only slightly longer than if I had run it," he said.

His life story has demonstrated a willingness to try new things. Although he started running in high school at Vermont Academy in 1951, he didn't run his first marathon until he was 73 in 2006 and was asked to help represent the American Stroke Association. (His

wife, Loretta, survived a stroke at age 56 in 1987 and the couple became active in the organization.) He played old timer's ice hockey until he was 81.

## **He enjoys the post-race microbrews**

Joyce Haglund of Quincy, the former business office manager at Fairing Way, admires Cole as "one for whom age is NOT an excuse, though it may slow him down now and again."

"Larry is brilliant, funny and a lot of fun to be around," Haglund said. "And he is a very dedicated runner, though I think he often enjoys the post-race microbrew more than the race itself. He is one in a million, for sure."

Cole's approach to life reinforces the benefits of connecting with people in one's later years.

"I still enjoy the races," he said, "but the post-race parties with my friends have become the most frequent aspect of my social life. I focus on joining races with a post-race party with beer."

Another resident, Joe Bayne, knew Cole on the Cape and moved to Fairway Way with his wife after Cole recommended it.

"He's very smart, he's a wonderful guy and he's very much in the social fabric here," Bayne said.

## **His parents always said, 'Finish what you start'**

His admiring neighbor, Bette Hanian, said the best word to describe Cole is "driven, because he continues to run races into his 90s."

Asked why running means so much to him, Cole thought back to his formative years in Keene, New Hampshire and said he had always loved sports and started running as a kid.

"My parents were both involved in community activities and encouraged me to do things as a child and to finish what I started," he said.

Having run now for 73 years, he clearly is not finished yet. On Saturday, he finished 292nd out of 414 runners at the Andrea Holden Thanksgiving Road Race in Dennis.

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