## **Cole Museum milestone: 10,000 walking sticks to veterans**

### **By: Marisa Higgins**

### **August 2, 2016**

Bangor, Maine—The Cole Museum is expecting to present its 10,000th veteran walking stick this summer and is adding a special gift package for the recipient of the milestone walking stick.

Inspired by a presentation to Pearl Harbor survivors, museum founder and World War II veteran, Galen Cole, worked with Peavey Manufacturing Co. in Eddington to produce walking sticks for a one-time gift to the World War II veterans expected to attend the museum’s 1999 Memorial Day commemoration. After an unexpected 1200 World War II veterans attended the ceremony, the museum decided to make the walking sticks a permanent program, and expanded it to include Korean, Vietnam, and Global-War-on-Terror-era veterans in the late 2000s. Today, veterans with their decorated walking sticks are a feature at the area parades, and the program is well known throughout the state.

“I’ve lived in 12 different states and never seen anything like it,” says Jim Neville, museum Director of Operations and veteran, “I’ve been all over Maine and I see these walking stick everywhere.” According to him, the program is a unique and practical way to thank the veterans of Maine for their service, and the museum is now looking forward to presenting the milestone veteran with both their walking stick and a gift containing museum memorabilia and a lifetime pass.

To the veterans, the walking sticks are often symbols of pride and of their neighbors’ appreciation for their service. As a Vietnam-era veteran, Marty Bell says the walking stick was the first thank you he received for his service, and he appreciates the opportunity to speak with and thank other veterans while presenting the walking sticks as a museum volunteer.

“To me the stick is more than a piece of memorabilia,” says TSgt Joshua Gray, Global-War-on-Terror veteran and volunteer whose grandfather donated a restored Chevrolet log Truck. “It is about thanks for my service and it’s about the time given to the museum.”

The program’s success is largely due to the generosity found in the Maine community. From Peavey Manufacturing donating and selling the walking sticks at-cost, to the thousands-of-hours contributed by the museum’s dedicated volunteers, reaching 10,000 veterans is a milestone that all involved can be proud of and will look forward to surpassing.

Maine veterans—current residents and those who entered the service in Maine—who served during World War II or an era recognized by the National Defense Service Medal are eligible for a museum walking stick. The veteran must personally visit the museum with their DD-214 (required for those now living out-of-state) or qualifying military ID, and the museum staff will make accommodations for any physical limitations preventing a veteran from entering the museum but will only present walking sticks to veterans.

### **About**

The Cole Land Transportation Museum preserves and displays a selection of Maine’s land transportation equipment in hopes to inspire today’s generation through their predecessors’ triumphs. The museum also supports a number of programs aimed at lifting the aspirations of Maine's youth—especially the underprivileged—so they may be a credit to themselves, their families, and their communities.

The museum is opened May 1 thru November 11, seven days a week 9 am–5 pm, and children under 19 are always free admission. More information can be found by visiting [www.colemuseum.org](http://www.colemuseum.org) or calling (207) 990-3600 ext. 13.

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# **Contact**

To learn more about the Cole Land Transportation Museum Veteran Walking Stick Program, please contact

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