

Malcolm Pearson.....2008

Not only is he Sutton's oldest male resident, he just might be its most revered. At a recent New England Antiquities Research Association (neara.org) conference held in Northampton, Malcolm Pearson was certainly recognized and heralded. Known by many historians as a treasure trove of historical research on stoneworks, beehive chambers and caves, he was also the photographer for James Mavor's and Byron Dix's historical research book, *Manitou* as well as William Goodwin's *Great Ireland In New England*. Malcolm Pearson lived his childhood at the site of the nation's most exquisite beehive chamber, Upton's ancient chamber. But his footprint in life goes much deeper and continues nearly unabated.

Ninety-seven year old Malcolm Pearson continues to be a man of industry and innovation, but for decades, he was the photographer for the world-known Whitin Mills in Northbridge, MA. In fact, though money was never his motivation, his innovative ideas and photographic technology earned millions for several companies as he urged them to incorporate new methods of developing large photographs and diagrams.

He still resides in the home he built in the winter of 1950, including its stone walls and outdoor fire places. It has a built-in dark room where Malcolm and his late wife, Myra, developed thousands of photographs, including high speed movements, such as a bullet being fired, rarely understood at the time. In fact, the entire home is a product of his ingenuity, with built-in beds, recessed lighting constructed well before its appeal today.

Malcolm lost his beloved wife nine years ago, but his daughter prepares, freezes and delivers his meals every two weeks. Otherwise, Malcolm is extremely self-sufficient though he gave up driving within the past two months. His time is filled with innumerable projects in his woodworking shop, currently building a photo negative light to view past negatives in order to plan their final destination. He recently visited his old friend, now a 100 years old, with whom he used to take on motorcycle rides. He recently enjoyed the University of Vermont graduation party of Southbridge resident, Brennan Gauthier, an occasional writer for *Journeys* who has absorbed much of Malcolm's research, historical interests and more than forty of Malcolm's research books.

Malcolm feels very blessed to have such good health and clarity of mind. He smiles as he recalls his earlier days with plenty of stories to tell, from lifeguard training and a special swimming stroke that added speed to recounting every copper nail he used to build his sturdy home. His adoration of his late parents also runs deep.

Malcolm's research includes some of the most coveted material on subjects such as the Upton chamber, New Hampshire's Mystery Hill (aka America's Stonehenge) and many other ancient or Native American sites scattered throughout and beyond New England. During several hours of interviews at his home as well as to and fro from the NEARA conference, the stories never stopped.

With a sigh of relief, NEARA officials were pleased that Pearson has chosen to donate many of his research findings on stoneworks to their Concord, New Hampshire library. He has significant documentation and photos that are one of a kind, all with memories that speak to a life that was driven by seeking answers that rely on factual evidence, not whims, guesses or hopes.

Still, Malcolm's life has been much broader than his coveted expertise on stoneworks or photography. His photographs in the Whitin Mills newsletter, *The Spindle*, are remaining epitaphs to his highly sophisticated sense of dark and light angles or subject matter in photography. Yet, he has worked to preserve significant buildings or mentor new generations with their interest in studying the past.

Recently, he heard about a cave in the deep woods in Northbridge that had escaped his attention previously.

"When can we go?" he asked, understanding that it would be quite an arduous walk into the woods.

Malcolm is also eager to get his glaucoma under control to get back his driver's license. His car is waiting and ready to go on many more adventures.

His walls are filled with awards and letters of recommendation from General Electric to Harvard University to Riley Stoker, R.I. School of Design, Nashua Mfg, Albany Felt Company, Old Sturbridge Village and even E.I. DuPont De Nemours & Company.

His awards for excellence seem to be never-ending. Sort of like his mind, body and soul.

Photos: (L-R) Partial Interior of huge Upton chamber, Malcolm Pearson (R) with devoted fan, Malcolm and 100 year old childhood friend Agnes Hawes.