

Raymond Thacher Was The 'Heart Of The Cape Cod Cranberry'

Beloved Farmer, Community Volunteer, Dies At 86

by William F. Galvin

HARWICH — Another cog in the wheel that keeps the community rolling along was lost last week with the passing of Raymond "Link" Thacher.

Mr. Thacher, 86, was a central figure in countless areas of Harwich town life. He passed away on Wednesday, April 21, at the Rosewood Manor in Harwich Center.

Many people will remember Mr. Thacher as the man who spent much of each fall knee-deep in cranberries. He was steward of the family farming business for 70 years and was a grower/owner for Ocean Spray for 60 years. He was known to many as "the heart of the Cape Cod Cranberry."

Mr. Thacher was a tireless supporter of conservation, a talented musician and well known for his business acumen. He served the community as tree warden for 40 years, was a longtime member of the town forest committee, a member of the conservation commission for 15 years, a member of the Herring River committee and was associated with the fire department from 1958 to 1989.

"Another iconic part of Harwich is no longer with us," Selectman Donald Howell write in a social media post. "He leaves a legacy of cranberries, trees and his larger-than-life gregarious personality."

Mr. Thacher was well known for reaching out to people within the community and was always there to lend a helping hand.

"He touched a lot of people's lives," fellow cranberry farmer Leo Cakounes said. "As we go through life we are influenced by others in ways that we could never imagine. I have had a few people who have come into my life and impacted the person I am today. Link Thacher was one of those people."

"I may be known to many of you as the 'local cranberry grower.' The truth is I would never have become a grower had it not been for Link."

Cakounes, a former Barnstable County Commissioner, said he always referred to Mr. Thacher as his big brother. When Cakounes and his family moved into Spring Tide Lane, across from the Thacher cranberry bogs, Mr. Thacher stepped in to help out and took his family under his wing. Mr. Thacher always invited the Cakounes family to gatherings on the holidays and influenced Cakounes' decision to farm cranberries.



Mr. Raymond "Link" Thacher, a cranberry farmer in Harwich for 70 years, passed away on Wednesday, April 21. CHRONICLE FILE PHOTOS

"I'm certainly going to miss him," Cakounes said.

Cakounes also reflected back to when Mr. Thacher was tree warden and he started the sapling tree give-away program, each spring providing 300 free trees to residents. The program continues today through the conservation department.

Tim Millar served on the three-member town forest committee with Mr. Thacher and the late Sheldon Thayer for many years. Millar said it was always fun serving as stewards of the 170-acre town forest in East Harwich. They would pick a time to meet and walk the trails and Mr. Thacher always brought his bog dog.

One of the group's tasks was keeping dirt bikes, which were prohibited, away from the town firing range. Millar reflected on the annual committee meetings with selectmen in which they always quipped about the need for "uniforms and horses" to catch up to the bikers.

"The heart of Link's life was cranberry farming," according to Mr. Thacher's obituary. "In fact he has been



Link Thacher was a hands-on cranberry farmer for more than 60 years.

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called ‘the heart of the Cape Cod Cranberry.’”

The obituary continues, “His life as a farmer actually began shortly after he graduated from high school when he bought a truck and bulldozer and started pitching in on the bogs of local farmers. The farmers would often pay for his services with pieces of the bogs, providing the foundation for a business and life dedicated to producing the little red berry at the heart of Cape Cod life.”

In 1956, Mr. Thacher bought the five-acre Dam Brook Bog in Harwich, close to the eventual family home on Main Street. In 1964, he and two partners bought an 80-acre parcel of bogs stretching across to Great Western Road. The Thacher cranberry business

grew and thrived, with his wife of 65 years, Beverly, and other family members taking turns out on the bogs or helping to manage the business. In 2015, Mr. Thacher turned the reins of the business over to his son, Ray.

“He will always be remembered for his great sense of humor and lively storytelling, and for serving as a role model for many. To quote one Harwich resident, ‘He taught me the meaning of hard work and taking pride in everything he did.’” the obituary reads.

A wake was to be held from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesday at Chapman Funerals and Cremations Blute Chapel in Harwich Center. A private burial was to follow at the Island Pond Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to either the Harwich Historical Society at 80 Parallel St., Harwich MA 02645, or The Family Pantry of Cape Cod at 133 Queen Anne Rd., Harwich, MA 02645.