



City of Cambridge

R-78.

IN CITY COUNCIL

September 13, 1999

COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
 COUNCILLOR BORN
 COUNCILLOR DAVIS
 MAYOR DUEHAY
 VICE MAYOR GALLUCCIO
 COUNCILLOR REEVES
 COUNCILLOR RUSSELL
 COUNCILLOR TOOMEY
 COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

- WHEREAS: Ralph J. Burns was born in Cambridge on Christmas Day, 1901; and
- WHEREAS: Mr. Burns moved to Belmont when he was five years old; and
- WHEREAS: Mr. Burns has watched Belmont change from a farming community of 4,000 to a suburb of Boston with a population of 26,000 today; and
- WHEREAS: Mr. Burns is the author of several books including "Out of the Mist" in 1969, a thinly disguised novel of a young boy growing up in "Montvale;" and
- WHEREAS: Mr. Burns has served Belmont with sixteen years on the Warrant Committee, five years on the Board of Assessors and as Secretary to the Building Committee for the Memorial Library on Concord Avenue; and
- WHEREAS: Mr. Burns was elected a Belmont town meeting member on March 6, 1933, and has served Precinct Seven with distinction over a span of sixty-six years; and
- WHEREAS: Mr. Burns decided this year not to seek re-election as a Belmont town meeting member after many years of dedicated service; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED: That the City Council of the City of Cambridge go on record extending best wishes to Ralph J. Burns as he leaves his position as a Belmont town meeting member; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to Ralph J. Burns on behalf of the entire City Council.

In City Council September 13, 1999.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "D. Margaret Drury".

D. Margaret Drury
 City Clerk



Town of Belmont
Massachusetts
Board of Selectmen

78

Councilman Sullivan

RESOLUTION

- WHEREAS: Ralph J. Burns was born in Cambridge on Christmas Day, 1901; and
- WHEREAS: Mr. Burns moved to Belmont when he was five years old and ~~has lived in Precinct 7 ever since; and~~
- WHEREAS: Ralph Burns walked through the farms on the way to the Payson Park School, the same farms on which he worked as a boy picking cherries, currants, apples and pears; and
- WHEREAS: Mr. Burns has watched the ~~town change~~ ^{Belmont change} from a farming community of 4,000 in 1905 to a suburb of Boston with a population of 26,000 today; and
- WHEREAS: Mr. Burns is the author of several books including "Out of the Mist" in 1969, a thinly disguised novel of a young boy growing up in "Montvale"; and
- WHEREAS: Mr. Burns has served ~~his town~~ ^{Belmont} with 16 years on the Warrant Committee, five years on the Board of Assessors and as Secretary to the Building Committee for the Memorial Library on Concord Avenue; and
- WHEREAS: Mr Burns was elected ~~a town meeting member~~ ^{Belmont} on March 6, 1933, and has served Precinct 7 with distinction over a span of 66 years; and
- WHEREAS: Mr. Burns finally decided this year not to seek re-election as ~~a town meeting member~~ ^{Belmont} after those many years of dedicated service; and
- WHEREAS: His voice of reason and well thought out discussion will be greatly missed at future ~~town~~ ^{Belmont} meetings.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that this annual town meeting assembled on April 28, 1999 extend to Ralph J. Burns their sincere gratitude for his innumerable contributions to making Belmont an even better town, and it is further resolved that this Resolution be made a permanent part of the Town Records.



William P. Monahan
 William P. Monahan, Chair

William R. Skelley III
 William R. Skelley III

William N. Brownberger
 William N. Brownberger

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Resolved: That the City Council of the City of Cambridge goes on record expressing best wishes to RALPH J. BURNS AS he leaves his position as a Belmont town meeting member; and be it further

Res - SEC 10/1/99

*****CAR-RT 501
RALPH J. BURNS
39 BETTS RD
BELMONT MA 02478-452

Comment
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Belmont softball, girls track teams
get first league victories.

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BELMONT

THURSDAY, MAY 6, 1999

Watching Town Meeting from the sidelines

Burns honored for years of dedication as TM member

BY SCOTT AUBREY
CITIZEN-HERALD EDITOR

Ralph Burns got a new seat last Wednesday night.

After years of serving as a Belmont Town Meeting member, Burns gave up his usual place on the Town Meeting floor — the first chair in the second row on the right side of the room — for center stage. It was there he was honored by town and state officials for his role as a Town Meeting member for more than 40 years.

"That was very nice for those fellas to do," Burns said, appreciative, but still questioning all the attention. During a conversation last week, he regarded his service to the town and continued re-election as business as usual.

Were it not for his advanced age, he would likely have run for re-election last month. As Burns put it: "There comes a time."

"I'm 97 years old," he said. "I think there must be younger men that could do it better than I could."

He adds, however, that those younger men

would certainly lack his experience. Just about anybody would. Burns' service to Belmont has not been limited to his status as Town Meeting member.

"It seemed like forever I was on some kind of

'I'm 97 years old. I think there must be younger men that could do it better than I could.'

RALPH BURNS,
FORMER TOWN MEETING MEMBER

committee," he said. "There was always something to do — a new building going up, a new high school going up, a new library going up."

It is his part in the creation of the current Belmont Memorial Library in the late '60s that Burns seems particularly proud of. "That building is built so well," he said. "It's just as good today, it seems to me, as it was when we built it."

The same could be said of Burns' memory. Although he claims he doesn't remember some things as well as he once did, he can still spin tales of his exploits and past town goings-on with the best of them. He is particularly descriptive when it comes to the open Town Meetings that predate Belmont's current version, which employs elected members. Before 1927, anyone could speak — even people in the Town Hall gallery's upper balcony — and they didn't wait for permission.

"That gallery — it was filled," Burns said. "You couldn't get a sardine in there in the good ol' days."

To have Burns tell it, disagreements that arise at today's Town Meetings are nothing considered to those of days past. "I went to ... Paris," he said, "but I think I would rather have gone to a New England Town Meeting. The things they said and the language they used. It was a riot."

Burn's Town Meeting recollections are not all so amusing. He said the Town Meeting has handled many important issues over the years. He spoke briefly of the current McLean development, but chose the construction of the current high school 30 years ago as the

■ SEE BURNS, PAGE 5

After 66 years, Burns relinquishes TM member seat

■ **BURNS**, FROM PAGE 1

most important matter ever handled during his time as Town Meeting member.

"That was a big debate," he said. "Some people didn't even want a new high school. ... I think it took us three sessions to come to an all-around decision."

Although Burns' enjoyed being part of that process and others like it, he said he was not always so enthused about his service as a Town Meeting member. He said he didn't even want to be a member at first.

As Burns tells it, George Olson, a former superintendent of the Highway Department, who also had much political weight in Burn's Precinct 7, came to Burns and suggested he run for Town Meeting member. Burns told him he had no interest, that his business—a small number of clothing stores—was in Boston. Olson eventually convinced Burns to



Ralph Burns, in his younger days

throw his hat in the ring, citing the town's need for the business experience Burns could provide. He was first elected in 1933.

And, as they say, the next 66 years are history. Literally. After the standing ovation and a few comments to those in attendance at the Belmont High School auditorium on Wednesday, Burns returned to his Betts Road home to watch Town Meeting on TV.

"I came right home and put [the television] on channel 8," he said. He said the coverage was good and the audio was clear ...

but still, it could not have been missed [not being there], you the same. would," he said. "I did enjoy every minute of it. I really did."

"You would have to say that I



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Resolution #78

97/R

Councillor Sullivan re: Best wishes to Ralph
J. Burns as he leaves his position as a
Belmont town meeting member..

In City Council September 13, 1999

ORDER ADOPTED