

- May 15, 1975 -

TOWN CRIER DEPARTS. Provincetown is without a Town Crier for this summer. Marty King, who with the late Fred Baldwin had in recent summers patrolled the Provincetown streets, submitted a letter of resignation to Town Manager Gardner Benson this week.

King thanked both the manager and the "great people of Provincetown for the past three years of happy memories during the summer season."

The crier's job is salaried at \$1200 and covers the summer months. While the job was recently advertised, no selection has been announced. The appointment is at the discretion of the manager.

### Crier has news for the Queen

The selectmen unanimously authorized Marty King, the town crier, to present the Queen of England next month with a proclamation noting Provincetown's 250th anniversary.

King, whose town crier's bell cracked over the Labor Day weekend, asked the selectmen to authorize him to deliver the message to the queen during his trip to England in October.

"Why not, it's cute," said Selectman Chairman Mary-Jo Avellar. Selectman Charles Mayo suggested that the proclamation include something about the Pilgrims stopping here before settling in Plymouth.

"We could give her a little history lesson," Mayo joked.

As if to signify the end of the tourist season, the town crier's bell cracked on Labor Day. Town Crier Marty King said the old bell, with its distinctive loud ring, cracked while he rang it in front of Town Hall. He plans to display it in the Heritage Museum.

"It just doesn't sound the same," King said sadly. He has used the bell during his entire five-year tenure as town crier. He now intends to insert an article in the October Town Meeting warrant to get funds for a new bell.



Town Crier Marty King displays cracked bell.

Advocate photo by Gregory K...

The Advocate, Thursday, September 28, 1978

## Nova Scotia hosting international event

# King off to crier's championships

By Susan Areson

The bell-clanging and resounding "Hear ye! Hear ye!" so familiar to Provincetown ears will be ringing through the streets of Halifax, Nova Scotia on Saturday.

Martin King, the town crier of Provincetown, will join more than a dozen other town criers from England, Canada, Bermuda and the United States in Halifax this weekend for the first International Town Criers' Championship.

Each summer since 1972, King, dressed in his traditionally austere Pilgrim's uniform, has carried on Provincetown's long-standing tradition of town criers. Before the advent of newspapers, criers served to spread town news, and the position of town crier here has survived the coming of newspapers and other media.

Today King, clad in black buckled clogs, dark knickers and coat, white stockings, and a black felt hat, fulfills the role past criers made famous in Provincetown. Heads turn as King, with his bell slung in a holster around his waist, passes by on Commercial Street. About every 20 minutes each afternoon King cries out announcements ranging

from historical facts about Provincetown to descriptions of lost pets.

King takes his job very seriously. "The tradition of the town crier is one of dignity," he said. "People look at the town crier as part of the town and they respect the office."

For the past two weeks at the end of his regular announcements King has practiced the two proclamations he will cry in the contest. He admits he's nervous about the competition but it's hard to believe when he stands so relaxed in front of Town Hall surrounded by photo-snapping tourists, as well as residents who want to know what's happening around town.

For 12 weeks starting in June, King alternates speaking in front of Town Hall and the Provincetown Heritage Museum. Meantime he strolls around town being generally helpful.

As soon as King begins ringing his bell, onlookers crowd around him. Reading from dog-eared papers from his leather pouch, King begins his series of announcements which last a few minutes. After a quick survey of his audience to determine if they are

townspeople or tourists, King says he decides whether to concentrate on historical information or events happening around town.

King's tattered roll of reference sheets are "almost like a security blanket" to him although he knows much of the material from memory. He has carefully saved scraps of paper from newspapers, bulletins or notes from friends and pinned, glued or scotch-taped them to the larger sheets. Insisting that they're in perfect order, King points out that he always begins with the sheet with the Heritage Museum information and ends with the sheet containing someone's unusual want ad for bat colonies, picking and choosing which to read along the way.

King has three different colored uniforms: blue, green and cranberry. He got them at Plymouth plantation, but the finishing touches come from Provincetown. The cuffs and collar, "with a hint of lace," were made by Gloria Silva of Provincetown, King's landlady. The brass buckles on his black, shiny clogs and floppy felt hat were made by a Provincetown craftsman King knows only as Emile. The pouch he wears is new this season and is inscribed,

"Made especially for the town crier of Provincetown by Northern Lights Leather." And the leather bell carrier was made for King by "Zebo," a town leather worker. Peter Carter, a member of the Provincetown Historical Commission, is making King a special uniform for Saturday's competition.

The brass bell King picked up in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, last summer after his old one cracked when he was ringing it in front of Town Hall. Last summer, when King was in England delivering a proclamation to Queen Elizabeth II announcing the 250th anniversary of Provincetown, he found a pair of bells for sale in a British antique shop. After ringing them he bought the one that sounded "just right." It is inscribed "Fiddian" but King hasn't been able to learn what that means. The bell weighs about three pounds. No one taller than his waist pouch is allowed to ring it.

King has come a long way since his first summer as crier during which he earned the name "the silent town crier." He was one of 50 applicants for the job and was hired on the basis of a verbal interview without any "tryouts."

"I think they were looking for someone who would be friendly and someone who wouldn't lose his patience," King said. "I really used to freeze as soon as I got up in front of Town Hall, and I kept thinking maybe tomorrow."

Now King can hardly get down the block without being stopped by friends. One summer a woman friend dressed up in an 1800s black Puritan dress, walked up and down Commercial St. with him for a day. King has become so familiar in town that a local craftsman, Annette Peterson,