

For Immediate Release
Wilmot Historical Society
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OLDEST LIVING RESIDENT RECEIVES WILMOT'S BOSTON POST CANE

Wilmot – On May 8, 2016, with about 60 people in attendance, Marc Davis, president of the Wilmot Historical Society, presented Wilmot's Boston Post Cane to Gerald Roger Biron, Wilmot's oldest resident. Following the presentation, a program, sponsored by NH Humanities and focusing on the archeological history of New Hampshire's Abenaki people, was presented by Professor Robert Goodby of Franklin Pierce University.

The Boston Post Cane was given to the Town of Wilmot in 1909 when Edwin Grozier, publisher of the Boston Post newspaper, presented a personalized cane to the select boards of 700 towns throughout Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

The cane, permanently on display in the WHS history room in the Wilmot Town Offices, is taken down each time a Boston Cane Holder is identified, and a photo is taken of the person holding the cane. The cane is then returned to the history room for safekeeping. Each Boston Cane Holder receives a certificate of recognition and a framed photo of him or her holding the cane. A copy of the certificate and photo are posted both in the town office and on the Historical Society website.

Gerald Roger Biron was born on November 10, 1922 in Manchester, NH, where he lived until World War II when he joined the Navy. A member of the launching crew of the light aircraft carrier USS Belleau Wood, he was designated a "plank owner" of that new ship that passed through the Panama Canal en route to Pearl Harbor. She arrived in port on July 26, 1943, and Mr. Biron remembers to this day the horror of the devastation that greeted the crew as the ship wove her way through the channel to anchor.

The *USS Belleau Wood* carried 30 planes of Air Group 24, and Aviation Machinist Mate Biron was the plane crew chief of one of them. The ship's Pacific operations included the Battles of Tarawa, Gilberts, Marshalls, Truk, Marianas, and Palau Islands. On October 30, 1944, during The Battle of the Philippine Sea, she was hit by a kamikaze killing 92 men and destroying 12 aircraft. After repairs she returned to the South Pacific for the duration of the war and her planes flew over the surrender ceremonies in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945. Leaving Pearl Harbor in late October 1945, she spent the next three months returning servicemen to San Diego, CA. Biron served aboard the *USS Belleau Wood* all during his war time service. He was discharged on February 14, 1946.

On May 25, 1946, Biron married Gertrude Thibeault, and they lived in Allenstown, NH, for the next 38 years with their three sons, Rick, Bill, and Gary. On December 5, 1955, almost 10 years after leaving the Navy, Biron joined the Air Force. He served with New Hampshire Air National Guard, stationed at Grenier Field in Manchester, and later moved to Pease Air Force Base in Portsmouth. He had the opportunity to fly a mission and sit in the co-pilot seat where he remembers witnessing the amazing feat of an inflight refueling. On his 60th birthday in 1982, Biron retired as master sergeant with many wonderful memories and received an Air Force commendation medal for his 27 years of service.

Two of his sons followed Dad's patriotic example – Rick in the Air Force and Bill in the Navy.

Over the years Mr. Biron's other jobs included driving a truck throughout the northeast for HP Welch Trucking and serving as a hearse driver and helper for Petit Funeral Home in Pembroke, NH. Following retirement Biron and his wife lived in Concord at Jensen's Senior Residence Park for 28 years.

Biron lost his wife in 2009, then his son Bill in 2012, and another son Gary in 2013. In April 2013, Biron moved to Wilmot where he currently lives with his son Rick and wife Joan Marie, who have lived in town for over 33 years.