

WILMOT BOSTON POST CANE

MAY 8, 2016

GERALD ROGER BIRON, Recipient

Age: 93 Years 6 Months

Gerald Roger Biron was born on November 10, 1922 in Manchester, NH, where he lived until World War II when he joined the Navy. He was a member of the first crew of the light aircraft carrier, the USS BELLEAU WOOD making him a "plank owner" of that new ship. She passed through the Panama Canal en route to Pearl Harbor where she arrived on July 26, 1943. He remembers the horror of the devastation at Pearl Harbor as the Belleau Wood 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. Her Pacific Operations included the Battles of Tarawa, Gilberts, Marshalls, Truk, Marianas and Palau Islands. During the Sea Battle of the Philippines on October 30, 1944, 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. She left Pearl Harbor in late October 1945 and spent the next 3 months returning servicemen to San Diego, CA. During his Pacific service Biron experienced crossing the equator where, in the Navy tradition, he became a Shellback. Mr. Biron was aboard the USS Belleau Wood for this entire time. He left the navy on February 14, 1946.

On May 25, 1946, Gerald married Gertrude Thibeault, and they lived in Allenstown, NH, for the next 38 years with their 3 sons, Rick, Bill and Gary. On December 5, 1955, almost 10 years after leaving the Navy, Gerald joined the Air Force. He served with New Hampshire Air National Guard, which was 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 was able to witness an inflight refueling. Gerald retired as Master Sergeant on his 60th birthday in 1982 with many wonderful memories and received the Air Force Commendation Medal for his 27 years of service. Following retirement Gerald and his wife lived in Concord at Jensen's Senior Residence Park for 28 years.

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.

Gerald lost his wife in 2009, then his son Bill in 2012, and another son Gary in 2013. In April 2013, he moved in with his son Rick and wife Joan Marie in Wilmot, where they have lived for 33 years.

To the best of our knowledge, Gerald Roger Biron is the oldest resident of Wilmot, NH, as of May 8th, 2016 and was designated official holder of the Boston Post Cane at a meeting of the Wilmot Historical Society.