

APRIL 26, 1979



Emond Testimonial

Happy smiles reflect pride of wife and daughter of Col. Wilfred A. Emond of Gilmanton Iron Works who was honored at a dinner at the elementary school. Mrs. Emond is at left and their

daughter, Mrs. Barbara Hong of Lynn, Mass., right. Among citations presented the retired Army colonel is a plaque from the N.H. Congress of Parents and Teachers.

On his return to the states, Col. Emond was assigned executive officer of Headquarters, Walter Reed Army Hospital, Washington, D.C., until his retirement in 1953.

Emond, and the former Bobbi Jean Williams met in San Francisco in 1937 and married three years

later. They are the parents of four children. Present Saturday night were a son-in-law and daughter, Paul and Barbara Hong of Lynn, Mass.; their son Robert Emond and grandson Johnny Emond of Manchester.

Following his testi-

monial, Emond told the gathering that he was overwhelmed and at a loss for words. "I've been criticized many times and asked 'why do you do this, work your head off for no pay, nothing.' This is the thanks....No money on earth could buy this tonight."

GILMANTON — Saturday, April 21, was officially proclaimed "Col. Wilfred A. Emond Toast and Roast Day" by Speaker of the N.H. House George Roberts who announced his directive at a banquet at the elementary school where some 150 persons met to pay homage to the beloved personage who has set "a fine example of citizenship for the community," and in deep appreciation "and gratitude for all he's done for us."

Col. Emond was lured to the school when supposedly en route to dinner in Laconia, on the pretext of listening to a musical rehearsal in progress.

The event, planned for Emond's return from 11 weeks in West Haven, Conn. at the Eastern Veterans Administration Blinded Veterans Rehabilitation Center, was arranged by the Gilman-ton Fire Department, assisted by other organizations of which Emond is a member.

After a social hour, a delectable roast beef dinner was served under the chairmanship of Moe Trombly, director of Hidden Valley Boy Scout Camp. The invocation was offered by the Rev. William H. Marsell, formerly of the Gilman-ton Town Ministry.

Master of ceremonies for the hilarious, and sometimes touching, evening which followed was Fire Chief Ralph G. Forsyth. He established the mood of the evening by commenting: "It couldn't be a teary, sad, retirement affair so we decided to make it a roast." (Before leaving for West Haven, Emond had turned over books he had kept for many years for the department). In "retiring" Emond's badge, Forsyth presented him an official one inscribed "Colonel, Gilman-ton Fire Department." When Emond retired as secretary-treasurer of the GFD, he also turned in the department's scanner. On behalf of all members, Walter Skantze, GFD president, presented Emond a new radio so he can still monitor the calls.

Selectman Elizabeth "Betty" Smithers paid honor to Emond for his "accomplishments and contributions to the town". ("One of the finest things I ever did for the welfare of this town,"

Emond said later on in the evening, "was getting Betty to run for select-man!")

Dave Murray, past president of the Winni-pesaukee Shrine Club, roasted Emond (also a past president) by reading notes scribbled on toilet paper. In a more serious vein, he noted the assistance given officers of the fraternal organization over the years and pointed out that although the colonel's eyesight might be "a little bad, his mind is still super." Murray urged all his friends not to forget the man who had done so much for all of them.

Past potentate of Bek-tash Temple, Dick Lestef of Melvin Village, stated: "I can't roast you, Sir, because when we needed something done you'd get it done. Colonel, I hope you're proud of yourself tonight. I'm proud of you, Sir."

Also present for the occasion was John Putney of Durham, current potentate, and Tom Davenhall of Farmington, current Shrine president.

Emond was made the first life member of Ellis Geddes Leavitt Post 102 American Legion. The announcement was made by Commander Dan Webster who reported that Emond had served as the Post's finance officer for 22 years; had placed flags on veterans' graves in Gilman-ton cemeteries for 20 years; organized Legion observances of Memorial Day, including parades, essays, etc.; was the guiding force behind World War II, American Revolution and Vietnam War Memorials at the Smith Meeting House; and of the Post's 30th anniversary celebration. He was presented a silver membership card and pin for his cap.

Pat Webster of Gilford, formerly of this community and an ex-PTA president, worked with Emond many years ago when he was president. He also later served as president when Gilman-ton and Gilman-ton Iron Works school districts merged. Mrs. Webster mentioned his great interest in children and education and his hard work to get the present school built. "He was always tight with money," she said, "and didn't think we needed a new school. But he was put on the space needs

committee and after thoroughly studying the situation, became the biggest booster." She presented Emond a plaque from the N H Congress of Parents and Teachers, hailing him for "outstanding service with children and youth," and making him an honorary life member. He was also given a lapel pin from the association.

Speaker Roberts, who is also town moderator, presented the aforementioned proclamation, stamped with the gold state seal. He observed that if "you don't like what people are doing, get involved yourself. And that's what Bill has done." He added that Emond had helped him in the best traditions and now he was in a position to help him by issuing the proclamation which honored him for the "many hours of time and energy" he had devoted to the town, for serving "diligently and relentlessly as a member of the Gilman-ton Planning Board, including a number of years as chairman;" as "an active member of the PTA;" for being "the motivating force behind the Gilman-ton Fire Department, working selfishlessly to modernize and improve the department so members of the community could live safely and securely knowing that there was a professional fire department protecting their lives and property."

The proclamation also mentioned: "Wilfred Emond has served his country valiantly in the medical service corps where he contracted a tropical disease which caused him to lose his sight, but he has nevertheless given able and valued guidance to such veterans' organizations as the American Legion;" ... "he has been an active member of the Winni-pesaukee Shrine Club, serving as secretary and treasurer;" and that "the town would not be the great place it is without the sacrifices, talent and energy of people like him."

A prayer, written especially for the occasion by Earl Anderson, was read by Geraldine North. It mentioned how everyone's lives had been enriched by Emond's actions.

The guest book was presented by Mrs. Walter Skantze. Mrs. Ralph

Forsyth was in charge of the tickets.

Immediately following the program, music for dancing was furnished by The Ambassadors

A native of Newton, Mass., Emond entered the regular Army medical department in 1923, was commissioned a second lieutenant in the regular Army Administrative Corps assigned at Mitchell Field, N.Y. in 1934, and retired Oct. 31, 1953, (with 100 percent visual disability, after 30 years service). His continental service had included the metropolitan areas of New York, Washington and San Francisco. Foreign service began in the Philippines, June 1938-'40, prior to Pearl Harbor. While in the islands, he was commanding officer of the Philippine Medical Department, responsible for furnishing and equipping the 250 bed hospital at Malidia Tunnel on Corregidor and for maintaining all medical departments of the war reserves (a lot to do with Bataan). He also had additional medical administration duties at Sternberg General Hospital in Manila. During World War II, Col. Emond served as director of the administrative division and executive officer to the surgeon at headquarters of the 2nd Corps Area of the 2nd Service Command and 1st Army in the Philippines, successively.

After the war, Emond was director of the personnel division of the medical section of General headquarters for the Far East Command in Tokyo under MacArthur. In that position he traveled to Korea, Okinawa, P.I., Guam, Japan and China.