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Dave Russell honored for more than 30 years service to Gilmanton

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GILMANTON — Dave Russell, who later this year will turn 77, says he's retired but not inactive.

More than 50 people turned out Saturday at the Academy Building at a reception honoring Russell for his more than 30 years of service to the town, which included five years as fire chief (and 10 years as deputy chief), 10 years as selectman, 19 years on the planning board and most recently 14 years as state representative.

Russell, known to many townspeople originally as the owner of the Gilmanton Iron Works Store, which he ran from 1974 until 1988, was praised by many of those present for his tireless dedication to public service in what many saw as thankless jobs which subject those who perform them to endless and unrelenting criticism.

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Russell himself didn't disagree with the assessment that the jobs are sometimes thankless but said that they are necessary and that the criticism that comes with them eventually loses some of its sting. "After a while it's just like water running off a duck's back. I doesn't bother you because you know you can't make everybody happy. You just listen to everyone and try to do what you see as right," says Russell.

He was presented with a clock embedded in polished granite which is in the shape of New Hampshire, an appropriate symbol for Russell, who is also stepping down as president of the Profile Auto League, an organization of antique and classic car collectors which organizes care shows and weekend excursions for its 200 members.

Russell has owned a 1949 Chevrolet convertible which he bought for \$650 from a backyard in North Brookfield, Mass., in 1977 and spent many years restoring.

"It was basically in a basket when I bought it," Russell recalls, saying that since that time the car has cost him at least 20 times what he originally paid for it but that it has provided he and his wife, Barbara, with many memorable experiences over the years.

Russell says that he still remains active with a state commission which is involved with Cannon Mountain in Francine Notch and won't become a hermit in his retirement years.

"I was down at the selectmen's meeting Monday night talking with them about the Bureau of Security Regulations and the NH Local Government Center. The center was supposed to serve as an agent for the towns in providing health insurance at lower rates to retired town employees. But they're now being asked to reimburse the towns and employees \$53 million because they were overcharging them. I'm one of those that would like to get my money back. They were charging us nearly three times as much for the same same coverage that you could get from Anthem for \$400 a month," said Russell, who noted that 14 towns have joined in a suit against the LGC in an attempt to recover those costs.



Russell says that he is currently looking forward to a fall excursion being organized by the Profile Auto League which will take he and Barbara and their well loved 1949 Chevy to the Maine seacoast for a three-day weekend.

"It's always fun being with people you like and sharing a good experience," says Russell. Which was pretty much the unanimous sentiment of his fellow townspeople who turned out Saturday afternoon to express their appreciation for his long and dedicated service to the town.

CAPTION:

Steve and Liz Bedard talk with Dave Russell, who was honored by the town of Gilmanton for his more than 30 years of service to the community at a reception held Saturday at the Gilmanton Town Hall. (Roger Amsden photo for the Laconia Daily Sun)