

# **The Hampton Union**

## **Byron Kirby humbly accepts his honor**

**BY LARA BRICKER**, Hampton Union Staff Writer

July 18, 2000

HAMPTON — To many, Byron Kirby is known as the "Father of North Hampton."

He has lived there for over 50 years, served on the Planning Board for over 30, been a force behind the Friends for the North Hampton Bandstand and been a representative on the State Pesticide Board.

This week, Kirby added another honor to his record when he was chosen as the Hampton Area Rotary's Citizen of the Year at a ceremony held at the Partridge House. In front of about 50 Rotarians and community members, he accepted a plaque Tuesday morning and a \$1,000 check to be donated to the charity of his choice all with "a great deal of humility."

"For the last 50 years, I've had an ongoing love affair not only with North Hampton but the Seacoast and the whole state of New Hampshire," Kirby said. "I have never accomplished anything great or spectacular."

Yet those who spoke of him at the Rotary meeting had a different take on his endeavors. Forest Griffin has been Kirby's neighbor for 42 years on Hobbs Road.

He spoke of Kirby's love for horses, which resulted in him maintaining a stable by the church for many years. He could often be seen cruising around town in a horse buggy.

"He convinced all the neighbors on Hobbs Road that horse manure doesn't stink," Griffin said.

But his first love was the North Hampton Common, which he mowed for many years and where he successfully worked to install the bandstand. Kirby was on the Planning Board when Griffin was first elected to the board "and he was on when I left." Throughout the years, he has been known for his quiet diplomacy.

"He could support anybody but a 'liberal Democrat,'" Griffin said.

Throughout his dedication to the area, Kirby said the one thing that has sustained him is his wife of 58 years, Anita. He recognized the roomful of Rotarians and their guests as he spoke of receiving the Citizen of the Year award.

"You people out there are the citizens of the year every day," he said.

He then turned to Griffin and said, "Thank you, Forest, I hope that's all true." Rotary Member John Dowd has known Kirby for over 20 years.

"This tribute couldn't possibly be more fitting," Dowd said.

The first word that comes to mind when he thinks of Kirby is "integrity."

"You look up that word in the dictionary and I'm sure you'll see a picture of Byron," Dowd said.