# Senator Kirwan Marks 88th Birthday, Bank 60th, Same Week

## Is Dean Of Directorate And Kent Island's Grand Old Man

THREE days before The Centreville National Bank reaches its Sixtieth anniversary and marks the milestone with justifiable pride there was cause for another celebration down on Kent Island.

Quietly in the presence of his delightful family another birthday, his 88th, came for Senator James E. Kirwan, dean of the Bank's directorate.

His birthday fell on Tuesday, oddly enough the day of the week on which the beloved old gentleman has been coming to Centreville for Board meetings since 1898. That was during the regime of the late James Bordley as President. And he never misses a meeting, come rain, snow, hail or sleet.

His birthday with the passage of years has taken on the flavor of an event to be publicly noted in Queen Anne's. He is warmly greeted wherever he goes on that day and messages pour into his home near Chester.

There's usually a fine dinner, a whopping big meal, for relatives and friends but for Senator Kirwan there's little variation from the strict diet he has prescribed for himself—his own ideas of what a man should eat to feel well and live long. There will be more to say about this later on.

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We walked in on him unannounced. He was 'tending a store just like he has been doing since 1873 when he decided that it was time to give up plying the Chesapeake as master of an 110-ft vessel and settle down to raise a family.

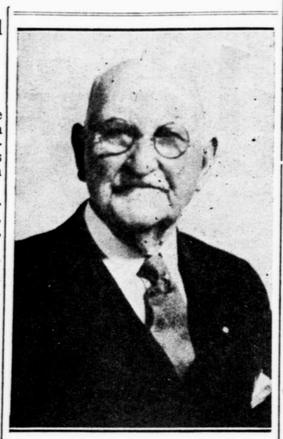
He was waiting on a customer who came for a pound of sixty penny nails. It only takes seven to make a pound, Senator Kirwan said, and pointed to the keg for the customer to help himself. Sure enough the scales fluttered to the pound mark and rested there.

"People from all over Kent Island come here for nails and I don't have half enough different kinds, he commented, indicating with a sweep of the arm to forty or more kegs that circled the counters.

Other customers came and went, some for pies, a Negro girl for a nickel's worth of bird shot, some for Duke's mixture smoking tobacco.

Tobacco naturally brought up the subject of tobacco. "Do you smoke," he was asked. "No, I have no use for cigarettes, they disgust me but I chew —have since I was four or five years old."

Noting the look of astonishment on his interviewer's face, he explained: "I was born in Baltimore City at the corner of Caroline and Fayette Streets.



SENATOR JAMES E. KIRWAN

There was a tobacconist on the corner.

"In those days tobacco came in 12-inch plugs. The stores cut the ends off and threw them in a candy jar, sold them by the penny's worth. The bigger boys in the neighborhood were ashamed to ask for that little bit, so they sent me. I got to nibbling and have been chewing ever since.

This led to a discussion of other vices.

"But I never swore any even though I was a sailor when ten years old. I started as a cabin boy and cook. That's why I still get up at 5 o'clock and fix my own breakfast.

"I was captain of the 110-ft vessel "James Baynes" when sixteen, and in Bay traffic until 1873, but I never sailed beyond Cape Henry. Sometimes I got to Philadelphia. Other ships I was master of was the "Thomas Brinkley", the "Iglehart" and "Rebbeca".

"After I had started in the store business, Billy Henry Legg, (Senator J. H. C. Legg's father) came after me and had me appointed to the oyster navy. I anchored on Bodkin rock in Eastern Bay and caught more oyster dredgers than anybody else in the fleet.

"Later Governor McLane made me deputy commander under Waddell.

At this point Senator Kirwan digressed at considerable length on the doings of Commander Waddell. In the war between the States Waddell was a blockade runner. Chased out to sea by a Union ship and not knowing of Lee's surrender he continued his raids under the Confederate flag for six months and was captured for piracy by a British ship. An English court acquitted him.

"He was a stern commander but I got along all right with him. Maybe it was because I didn't knuckle him like the rest. He even ordered me to Chesapeake City in the oyster war before my commission arrived, but I didn't go until my papers came. Then Waddell assigned me to the command of a brand new yacht, "The Frolic".

Mr. Kirwan quit the oyster navy to devote full time to his store business in 1886.

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In 1889, the year of the Johnstown flood, he moved his store across the street to its present site. And strangely enough the Johnstown flood had something to do with it.

The flood waters that broke Conemaugh dam, costing 2,000 lives, surged down the Susquehanna river and into the Chesapeake carrying houses, logs and vast stores of lumber. Logs and lumber piled up on the shores of Kent Island and Senator Kirwan bought enough of the lumber from Will Denny to enlarge his store and build a number of outbuildings. All these still stand.

When the World War came along Mr. Kirwan, quite naturally was too full of years to shoulder a musket and march off with the boys, but events only slightly less stirring were enacted on Kent Island, which the War Department wanted to buy as a training base. He was in the "thick of the war" to prevent that from happening. The government offered $3,000,000 but Mr. Kirwan was among the many who felt that there was not enough money in the mint to justify moving off the native heath.

Accompanied by the late Dr. John Benton, Henry Palmer, Roland Carville and William E. Denny, Sr., he formed the original committee to intercede with Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, in Washington. With the aid of the late U. S. Senator John Walter Smith the group arranged a hearing.

Halted, yet not convinced of the strength of the opposition to the government's proposal, Secretary Baker asked that a delegation of Kent Islanders come to Washington for another hearing. Senator Kirwan rushed for a telephone, called the late John E. George and other Queen Anne's Countians to spread the word. Then he came home to express himself quietly but effectively to his friends and neighbors.

A delegation 600 strong swarmed into Washington for the hearing. Marching two-by-two the procession reached from the Capitol building to the Union Station. Leaders were entering the capitol when the tail enders in the line left the depot.

depot.

Mr. Kirwan had to make still another trip, this time on the day that would have marked his Golden Wedding anniversary, before the War Department ceased its efforts to take over the Island.

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Whatever Kent Island's Grand Old Man takes part in he takes part all the way. For thirty years he has been a member of the Board of Trustees at the County Almshouse and never misses a meeting. He is Vice President of the Board and meetings are held the first Thursday in each month.

Last Thursday Col. W. Hopper Gibson, President of the Board, warmly congratulated Mr. Kirwan on his long and faithful service, and pointed out that the Senator had lived longer than any other member. Col. Gibson recalled that the late James P. Brown, Sr., died when nearly 87.

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The home life of the Kirwans is one of friendliness and charm. They love company and are delightful hosts. Their home has all the flavor of true Eastern Shore hospitality.

To the rear of the house Senator Kirwan showed this interviewer a flock of Barred Rock frying chickens. There must have been three hundred of them. "We never sell one", Mr. Kirwan said, "we keep 'em for the company". On both sides of the road were large vegetable gardens. The rows were straight as a string and not a weed in sight. Near the chicken pen was a pigeon house, built of the lumber that had washed down the Bay from the Johnstown flood. Squabs are on the menu frequently. There's a cellar outside the kitchen door that fairly bulges with fresh eggs, ham, country butter, cream, milk, and endless good things to eat.

But Senator Kirwan doesn't eat all these things. He has his own ideas about eating. Maybe his lovely family life and his diet have something to do with an 88th birthday, a firm step, an eager mind, and a retentive memory.

We asked him about his food. His

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

# W. Ray Tabler Learned Banking From Ground Up In West Virginia

## Started As High School Youth To Learn Fundamentals. Career Led Through Public Accounting, Examining, And All Phases. Likes Job Here

IN September, 1910, three months out of high school, a young man got himself a job with the First National Bank at Parkersburg, W. Va.

Early duties included sweeping out of mornings, keeping the bank stationery neatly piled on the desks in the lobby, trotting back and forth to the postoffice with the mail, and making himself generally useful.

Gradually these miscellaneous chores gave way to more important things as he solved the intricacies of the adding machine, learned to flick a ledger sheet in and out of the posting machine with no lost motion, and took on the responsibility of pinch-hitting during the lunch hour for the tellers.

All this played a part in "growing up in a bank" and served to launch a career that later led to Pennsylvania, Ohio, back to West Virginia, and thence to the Eastern Shore where he became cashier of The Centreville National Bank in February, 1934.

The subject of our sketch, we should have set forth some time back, is W. Ray Tabler.

Ray admits that back in his school days he harbored ideas of becoming a newspaper man but now he's glad he didn't take off on that tangent because he likes his banking, his facts and figures, his role of business counsellor to big and little, and all the ins and outs that his job entails.

He got the newspaper bug in his youthful bonnet when he arose before day to deliver papers back in Parkersburg. Later he got another whiff of printer's ink when he was Associate Editor of "The Quill", his high school publication. A class mate of his at Parkersburg, was Earle "Greasey" Neale who carved out a chunk of fame for himself as an outfielder with the Cincinnati Reds, as coach of various major football teams, and is now assistant mentor at Yale.

The World War took Tabler away from the banking business in 1918. He was commissioned a 2d Lieutenant in the infantry. He didn't get overseas and was mustered out in 1919. At that juncture Ray decided to sharpen up on economics from the text-book standpoint with an accounting and banking course from Duquesne University, Pittsburg. Pittsburg, incidentally, is only a hop, skip and a jump up the Ohio River from Parkersburg.

A period of Public Accounting with Ernst and Ernst in Pittsburg provided much valuable experience and then Tabler became a bank examiner. For the next decade he was variously an Assistant National Bank Examiner in West Virginia and Ohio, assistant Commissioner of Banking in his native state, a Deputy of Internal Revenue, Collector and at one time was receiver for thirteen closed banks in West Virginia. Then he went back to his home town as Cashier of the Wood County Bank. While in Parkersburg the offer to become Cashier of The Centreville National Bank came his way through his wide banking connections.

Tabler had never been on the Eastern Shore before. He studied the map, liked the lay of the land, came for an interview, saw at first hand the beauties of the Peninsula, and lost little time in becoming an Eastern Shoreman by adoption. In that role he is one of the Shore's strongest boosters. For Ray the Eastern Shore is the "Promised Land".

As soon as school was out in June, 1933, Mrs. Tabler and their two sons, Bud and Danny, came to Centreville to take an active part in the church, civci and social life of the town.

Ray's hobbies run strongest toward things "military and financial". He transferred his membership in the American Legion from the Parkersburg Post to the Jeff Davis Post, and for the past two years he has been adjutant of the local post. He's Maryland Vice Commander of the Sons of the American Legion, and District Commissioner of the Boy Scouts in the Tri-County area. Back home he was a member of the "Yellow Jackets", crack drum and bugle corps of the Parkersburg Post, which twice won the State Championship. He's a buddy of Louis A. Johnson, former National Commander of the Legion. His "financial" hobby is collecting old coins and shinplasters, and his collection is one to marvel at.

He plays a fair game of tennis but last year bunged up a knee and is on the shelf.

Somehow or other he seems to find time for everything, and this is largely possible because he has the knack of doing a lot of things and doing them quickly and well.


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