

The Abingdon Kiwanian

Tues, Mar 29, 2011 • Vol 3, No 25

<http://www.abingdonkiwanis.org/>

This is a 5th Tuesday; there will be no meeting

Special Issue

This newsletter is published during the weekend before each meeting. This being a 5th Tuesday, we will not meet and have a social event next month instead. But the death of our last charter member made this issue appropriate.

Last Rites

Dick Gardner will be buried with a graveside service on Sunday at 2pm by the family plot in Knollkreg Cemetery on East Main Street. Kiwanians should plan to arrive a few minutes early so we can stand together.

A weekly publication of news, information and images from the Kiwanis Club of Abingdon, Virginia

Dick Gardner, Club's Last Surviving Charter Member, Dies at Age 104

By Jack White, Editor

The reasons why they did it are lost in the sands of time. But Dick Gardner and 30-some of his local friends chose a most unlikely time – the second year of World War Two – to start a new “civic club”, as they then were called.

We have long heard that most of the charter members of the Kiwanis Club of Abingdon left the local Civitan Club. No one now seems to know why and the reasons were not recorded. The Town of Abingdon already had a Rotary Club and those Civitan refugees may have just thought Kiwanis to be a better brand.

To receive a charter, each new Kiwanis Club must have a sponsor, and the Bristol club stepped forward, although it was formed across the state line and its Kiwanis home always has been in the Kentucky-Tennessee District.



Jim Gardner

I have been a member of this club for almost 47 years and, one by one, have watched these proud founding members leave us, mainly by death.

The last was E.L. (Dick) Gardner who, by statistical odds, should have passed on many years ago. But he was from sturdy stock and was a regular attendee at meetings until he was well past 90. When he no longer could attend meet-

ings and participate in our activities, the Board of Directors made him an Honorary Member.

On Thursday, in the modest East Valley Street home where he and his beloved wife Maxie lived for decades and raised their four talented children, this last survivor of our charter members died.

The published obituary has more details, but Dick came to Abingdon from his native Floyd County to teach agriculture at the old Greendale and Wallace High Schools. He later worked at the Pet Milk plant, which was located where Food Lion and Rite-Aid now sit.

Banking became Dick's primary career, and he worked as a loan officer for the old Farmers Exchange Bank, which became one of the first branch banks in Virginia after our General Assembly allowed such. Farmers Exchange was bought by Virginia National Bank and by the time of his retirement in 1971, Dick had advanced to become the local Executive Vice-President.



Ray Duncan

But Dick would not stay inactive and he and Ray Duncan, a well-known local builder and developer, opened a real estate agency in the old home then owned by the family of our Past President, Dr. French Moore. That building now is used by the House on Main Restaurant,



Dick Gardner in a 95th-birthday portrait

and Dick and Ray sold real estate there together for 25 years, as Abingdon Real Estate & Auction Co. Ray also was a member of this club until health issues caused him to resign last year.

Dick's accomplishments were many, but he always was proudest of his children and their careers. Jim Gardner, now retired, was an Abingdon orthopedic surgeon who followed his father into this club. Richard is a local periodontist and Vaughn is an orthopedic surgeon in Palmer, Alaska, near Anchorage. His daughter, Linda, was married to the late Dr. Roger Neal, and operates a B&B in their family home on East Valley Street.