



1974 photo

J. MILLARD TAWES

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Tawes dies at home in Crisfield

Former Gov. J. Millard Tawes, the state's chief executive during most of the turbulent 1960's and a dominant figure in Maryland politics for more than four decades, died at his home in Crisfield yesterday morning.

Mr. Tawes, who was 85, had a heart attack May 31 at Peninsula General Hospital in Salisbury, 11 days after being admitted to the hospital's coronary-care unit complaining of chest pains. He improved steadily, however, and was able to return home June 16.

At 8.20 A.M. yesterday, however, Mr. Tawes's family called for medical help from McCready Memorial Hospital in Crisfield. A doctor and rescue team found Mr. Tawes unconscious and worked for nearly an hour to revive him. He was pronounced dead at 9.25 A.M. of an apparent heart attack.

Services will be held at 2.30 P.M. tomorrow at Immanuel United Methodist Church in Crisfield. The Governor's body will lie in state at the church from noon until the services begin.

The "Squire of Crisfield," as he had become known in his later years, had retired in 1975 from a career in high state office that stretched back to the days of the Depression.

A small, round-faced figure, Mr. Tawes was the only Marylander ever to hold all three posts on the state Board of Public Works—governor, comptroller and treasurer.

"A whole era in Maryland politics has passed with him," former Gov. Marvin Mandel said yesterday.

Governor Hughes ordered flags flown

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at half-mast and praised Mr. Tawes's 40 years of state service in an official statement of sympathy issued yesterday.

"For over 40 years, J. Millard Tawes served the people of Maryland with dedication and energy in both elected and appointed offices at all levels of state government," Mr. Hughes's statement said.

After serving two terms as governor, Mr. Tawes returned to public life as the state's first secretary of natural resources, and in that capacity, as well as in most of the latter part of his life, he was devoted to conservation of the Chesapeake Bay and the development of its vital seafood industry.

Mr. Mandel recalled that Mr. Tawes accompanied him to the governor's office the day he was first sworn into office in 1969. At they walked together, Mr. Tawes told the new Governor, "No one could give me \$1 million for my experience as governor. But no one could give me anything to take it again."

Two years ago, his native Crisfield began sponsoring a seafood festival that was named the annual J. Millard Tawes Crab and Clambake. The affair, drawing thousands, quickly became a "must" stop for politicians.

People came not only from the Eastern Shore, but from the farthest reaches of the state to pay tribute to the elderly Governor while they consumed crabs and other bay delicacies by the bushel and washed them down with beer.

"I had talked to him when he was in the hospital [during May and June] and told him we would see him at the crab feast," said Mr. Mandel.

Mr. Tawes himself clearly had every intention of being at this year's feast in his honor and many to come.

Basking in the glory of a sunny afternoon and the pungent aroma of Old Bay seasoning at last year's festival in his honor, Mr. Tawes told thousands of admirers, "I kissed at least 50 pretty girls here today. That's going to help me live two or three years longer."

Charles McClenahan, mayor of Crisfield, said yesterday that as far as he knew the crab and clambake would still go on as scheduled July 18. But townspeople were "all touched and shocked" by Mr. Tawes's death, he said.

Mr. Tawes's two terms as governor, from 1959 to 1967, left a legacy of political and social change, despite his lifelong

reputation for caution and conservatism.

During a period that saw, among other manifestations of national unrest, the beginnings of the anti-draft and Vietnam war protest movements and a continuation of civil rights controversy, the Somerset countian maintained a steady hand on the reins of government, fostering an atmosphere of relative calm in the state.

He was the product of an era in Maryland politics when rural counties wielded considerably more influence than they do today—influence that continued until the United States Supreme Court ruled that electoral districts must be based on the "one-man, one-vote" concept, and thus changed the face of American politics.

Despite his rural ties, Mr. Tawes was a favorite of the pillars of the Democratic party organization in Baltimore, where alliances with such bosses as the late James H. (Jack) Pollack and former Mayor Thomas J. D'Alesandro, Jr., helped Mr. Tawes lead the party to victory in his two campaigns for governor.

Few governors ever enjoyed the perquisites of office more, or tried harder to be liked, but the strong-willed Eastern Shoreman also had a stubborn streak and often showed it when he was convinced he was right or felt he had made a commitment on programs or issues.

State House political observers had confidently anticipated that Mr. Tawes would be a "don't-rock-the-boat" chief executive.

But before he left office, he had administered reforms that included reapportionment of General Assembly districts (stripping his own home area and other rural constituencies of much of their political power) and Maryland's passage of the first law south of the Mason-Dixon Line banning discrimination in public accommodations.

His administration also saw the upgrading of the Baltimore court system and the outlawing of slot machine gambling in

Southern Maryland.

And despite his conservative, go-slow instincts, he presided over the greatest economic boom and growth period in Maryland history.

It was not ideology during his years as governor as much as the course and pressures of events that cast Mr. Tawes in the unlikely role of reformer, a designation almost no one would have conferred on him and one he would never have claimed for himself.

His stand against legalized slot machine gambling, for example, was attributable at least in part to damaging attacks by one of his opponents in a primary campaign who, although losing, made Mr. Tawes's support of the "anti-slots bill" his price for party unity in the general election.

And Mr. Tawes's shepherding of the state public accommodations legislation into enactment was less a crusade against the evils of bigotry than the perhaps inevitable result of embarrassing State House demonstrations and insistent demands by civil rights leaders and editorial writers.

With all his political skills and experience, the slightly rotund, silver-haired Mr. Tawes was sometimes ill at ease on speaking platforms or at press conferences, and continued to use written texts even for firehouse dedications and cornerstone layings after being elected governor.

But native and acquired personal attributes—patience, courtesy, a kindly good humor and mastery of the art of compromise—served him well as governor, in the same way they had contributed to his earlier political successes.

A columnist once wrote that Mr. Tawes was the product of a pre-John F. Kennedy era, "the sort of man who snorted at charisma (if he thought of it at all) but memorized precincts and the names of county chairmen . . . and could read a budget like a road map."

As such things are measured, he entered politics late, at age 36, after becoming a successful businessman in his hometown.

He was 44 when he moved from his first elective post, clerk of the Somerset County Circuit Court, to the office of state comptroller, where he served four terms.

Mr. Tawes's political advancement was steady but unspectacular before he won victory as Maryland's 59th elected chief executive in 1958. He rode into office that November by the largest majority Maryland voters had given a candidate for gov-

error up to that time.

He was elected governor immediately after the last of his terms as comptroller. The first of his successful campaigns for comptroller was in 1938, which was followed by another victory in 1942.

After an unsuccessful try for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 1946, he was named state banking commissioner by William Preston Lane, Jr., the Democrat who defeated him in the primary and went on to win the 1946 general election for governor.

Mr. Lane appointed him to his old, by then familiar, job as comptroller in mid-1950 when the incumbent died, and Mr. Tawes held the comptroller's post eight more years, running without primary or Republican opposition in both 1950 and 1954.

Early in 1958, nearing age 64, he decided to run again for governor because, as he later said he told his wife, "If I don't do it now, I'm never going to do it." He said he promised her that, if he lost, "we'd come back home to Crisfield and call it a day."

Instead, they lived until 1967 in Government House at Annapolis, where Mrs. Tawes earned a reputation of her own as a warm and gracious first lady.

Mr. Tawes became the Democrats' 1958 "harmony candidate" for governor—heading a ticket that included Mayor D'Alesandro for United States senator, C. Ferdinand Sybert, who had considered running for governor, for re-election as attorney general, and Louis L. Goldstein for the first of his six terms as state comptroller. Only Mr. D'Alesandro lost in the November general election.

Mr. Tawes defeated James P. S. Devereux, the Republican congressman, former Marine Corps general and World War II hero of Wake Island, by more than 206,000 votes, then a record majority.

In 1962, he was a surprisingly easy victor over George P. Mahoney and others in

the primary and went on to defeat Frank Small, Jr., the Republican gubernatorial nominee.

Mr. Tawes held the reins of Maryland's government at a time when Baltimore's Democratic party machinery was operating at maximum force and the city's bosses played pivotal roles in the state's politics.

The former governor and his close confidant, George H. Hocker, a beer lobbyist who was dubbed the "associate governor," would travel frequently from Annapolis to Baltimore for political powwows at the old Emerson Hotel.

In 1959, Governor Tawes's traditional "green bag" of political patronage appointments was filled with the names of friends and relatives of Mr. Pollack and Mayor D'Alesandro.

The appointments and the uproar that followed were widely credited—or blamed—for assuring the defeat that year of Mr. D'Alesandro's bid for another term as mayor.

Meanwhile the Tawes-Pollack political friendship cooled quickly after the green-bag episode and gradually turned into outright enmity.

By 1962, when Mr. Tawes was running for his second term as governor, the breach was complete, and Mr. Pollack was supporting one of his opponents, George P. Mahoney.

In May of that year, Mr. Pollack produced a tape recording of a conversation that, he said, he and Mr. Tawes had during the 1958 campaign. Mr. Pollack contended that during the conversation he was promised several key green-bag (patronage) appointments by Mr. Tawes in return for a \$5,000 campaign contribution.

The Pollack charges caused considerable uproar and a probe by grand jurors who finally dropped their investigation after characterizing the tape as "a garbled mass of unintelligible conversation," with uncertainty as to either the subject matter or "the principals involved."

Calling the tape a fake, Mr. Tawes also denounced the Pollack charges as an attempt "to blackmail me." He went on to win the primary and general elections in spite of them.

Mr. Tawes was 73 when his second term as governor ended and was delighted to return to his beloved Eastern Shore. But when the new cabinet system of state government was approved by the 1970 legislature, his close ties to the bay, his interest in the welfare of watermen and his

upbringing close to the soil led to his selection as secretary of natural resources.

He left the cabinet about 2½ years later and was asked almost immediately to fill out the term of John A. Leutkemeyer Sr., the retiring state treasurer.

Mr. Tawes said he accepted because he felt he "owed it" to his state and the Democratic party. The annual salary for the part-time interim treasurer's post was \$2,600. As secretary of natural resources he had been earning \$36,800 a year.

"If anyone really served the people of this state it was Millard Tawes," Mr. Mandel, the governor who appointed him as treasurer and natural resources secretary, said yesterday. "There was never anything that was too much for him when you needed his service."

Mr. Tawes's final retirement from state service came only three months before his 81st birthday. Since then, he had continued an active schedule up until his hospitalization in May.

Of particular interest to him was the campaign by the Somerset County Maritime and Industrial Committee, of which he was a member, to develop Crisfield as a deepwater port.

He and his wife of 63 years, Helen (Lulu to Mr. Tawes and sometimes Lulu in the family), had spent most of their time at their home overlooking the Little Annessex River in Crisfield.

Their son, Philip, lives next door. There is a pool between the two houses, built mainly for the grandchildren.

Looking back from a 1970's perspective, the record of the Tawes administration has been enhanced with the passage of years, both in general importance and in the number of laws and programs now regarded as major accomplishments.

Public higher education, especially the state's community college system, made great strides during his final years in office. Mr. Tawes said later that this was

the single achievement for which he wished most to be remembered.

"Putting these colleges all through the state," the former governor said in an 85th-birthday interview this April, "made it possible to go to school in your own area. People could commute as day students. It's holding down the costs of getting a degree."

Other matters, however, attracted more attention and involved greater controversy.

Convening a special session of the General Assembly in late 1965 on the strength of edicts from the U.S. Supreme Court, Mr. Tawes persuaded reluctant state senators and delegates to enact a bill that ended the centuries-old rural domination of the legislature by reapportioning the seats on the one-man, one-vote basis.

In that same year, he named a commission to lay the groundwork for a convention two years later that drafted a replacement for the state's outmoded 1868 Constitution.

Although Maryland voters rejected the proposed new constitution, key recommendations made by the convention have been the basis for reforms in the 1970's, resulting sometimes from legislation and other times from executive action or court rulings.

Earlier, despite his skills at compromise and penchant for it, Mr. Tawes resisted and overcame the opposition of powerful supporters in his own party by prevailing on the General Assembly, in his first year as governor, to create Baltimore's first real lower courts, through passage of the Municipal Court Act of 1959. The new municipal courts replaced the politically sacrosanct but problem-plagued magistrate system.

To an almost unanimous chorus of objections and complaints from Democratic leaders in Baltimore, including most of those who had helped elect him, Mr. Tawes replied that he was obliged to abolish the magistrate courts.

"It was a campaign promise," he said.

The city politicians need not have worried too much, since the municipal court system quickly became a lucrative source of political patronage.

In another post-retirement interview, Mr. Tawes expressed his intense distaste for the exaggerated claims and promises that often dominate national and state elections. One secret of his own two successful campaigns for governor, he said, was that "I was careful about the platform. I didn't want anything in it I couldn't deliver."

In the chief executive's office at the State House, he added, "I used to keep a copy of [the platform] in the top right-hand drawer of my desk and I'd check it every day to see how we were accomplish-

ing our goals."

During Mr. Tawes's first term, he also pushed a law through the General Assembly putting building and loan associations under state regulation for the first time, another highly controversial piece of legislation.

Later, when he had been governor six years, he pressed hard for a parallel span for the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. The bill was initially defeated by the legislature, but Mr. Tawes made it his top priority the following year and won. It was petitioned to referendum and defeated in the 1966 election. The following year, the legislature again approved it, with the support of Spiro T. Agnew, Mr. Tawes's successor. The new westbound span was opened to traffic in 1973.

Mr. Tawes, born into a family with roots that date back to 1790 in Somerset county, was planning to become a lawyer after completing his studies at Crisfield High School and what is now Wesley Junior College in Dover, Del., where he later served on the board of trustees.

But relatives urged him to help manage the expanding family business interests—which included lumber, seafood packing, banking, real estate and insurance. So instead of law, he studied accounting at business school in Baltimore.

On Christmas Day, 1915, the year after he became office manager for one of the family companies, Mr. Tawes and Helen Avalynne Gibson were married at Fruitland, in neighboring Wicomico county. Her uncle was a partner in several Tawes-Gibson enterprises.

By the middle 1920's, Mr. Tawes was a reasonably affluent businessman—well-

known, popular and a pillar of the community. "What I wasn't, though, was interested in politics," he said. "I was involved in the family business and I couldn't afford to be away."

In 1926, he added, "Some friends of mine asked me to run for the state Senate and I said no. Politics just didn't appeal to me then."

But four years later his friends were more persistent and more persuasive. They wanted him on the Somerset county Democratic ticket so badly that they told him to pick whatever position he wanted.

"I finally said I'd do it, but I wanted to know which job would require the least amount of time. They said 'clerk of the court,' so I said, 'Well, all right, then, that's what I'm running for—clerk of the court.' Durned if I didn't win, too, and get myself re-elected four years later. It surprised me almost as much as it did my backers."

It was the beginning of a political career that lasted even beyond his final retirement. Since the last trip back to Crisfield in 1975, the town and county's leading citizen had come to be regarded by some as a statewide political institution.

To benefit from his experience and seek his advice, mayors and state officials came to the big clubroom Mr. and Mrs. Tawes added to their home nearly 15 years ago—a virtual museum of national, state and local politics with a staggering array of memorabilia.

Proceeds from the crab and clambakes

go toward establishment of an actual museum at the Somers Cove marina in Crisfield to house these records of Mr. Tawes's career in government.

The old governor could be found most weekdays when he was in downtown Crisfield at the tiny, cluttered office on Main street that he shared with his brother, a retired banker.

In the office, where paint peeled from the door and a shabby, untouched-by-time look prevailed, Mr. Tawes was surrounded by scrapbooks full of newspaper articles, along with thousands of editorials, letters and papers relating to his years in politics. Cartoons that appeared in *The Sun* and *The Evening Sun* during his terms as the state's chief executive lined the office walls.

Outside his government career, Mr. Tawes was a confirmed "joiner" of civic and fraternal organizations, never a hindrance to a politician.

He was the last surviving charter member of the Crisfield Rotary Club, which he helped organize in 1922. He was the first president of the Maryland State Firemen's Association and a past president of the Crisfield Fire Department. He said a few years back that in his heart, "I've been a volunteer fireman all of my life."

He was elected chairman of the Southern Governors Conference in 1965 and was a past president of the National Association of State Auditors, Comptrollers and Treasurers. He had served on the governing boards not only of Wesley Junior College but also of Washington College at Chestertown, Md., Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pa., and McCready Memorial

Hospital in Crisfield.

The University of Maryland, Washington College, Morgan State University and St. Mary's College at Emmitsburg, Md., awarded him honorary doctor of laws degrees.

He was also a member or past member of the Elks, Masons, Shriners, Tall Cedars of Lebanon, Order of the Eastern Star, Hibernian Society of Baltimore, Maryland Society of Pennsylvania, Advertising Club of Baltimore, Knights of Pythias, Eastern Shore Society of Baltimore and other organizations.

He had served on the Chancellor's Advisory Committee of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in nearby Princess Anne since its inception in 1975.

"He didn't miss a meeting, and was very helpful to us," Dr. William P. Hytche, the chancellor, said yesterday. "I could take problems to him I couldn't discuss with anyone else," Dr. Hytche said.

These numerous affiliations took him away from home countless evenings. But the Tawes family was close, with mutual shared interests, including a love of the water and music.

Mr. Tawes had retained the ability he displayed in his youth as a trumpet and saxophone player with the Crisfield Fire Department band. Mrs. Tawes studied at the Peabody Conservatory, playing piano and organ. Their son and daughter were both musically trained, so living room concerts were frequent at the Tawes home.

The family members' fondness for

boating was natural for persons born and reared within range of the smell of salt water from Tangier Sound. At one time when he was comptroller, Mr. Tawes had five sailing craft, including a 48-foot yacht. Fishing and duck hunting were two of his favorite sports in later years.

As a teen-ager and young man, he had participated in almost every major sport and was captain of several varsity team in high school and college. Later, he briefly pitched semi-pro baseball for \$5 a game. He was in his 50's when he finally stopped working out on the parallel bars and still was bicycling for exercise when at home in Crisfield after his 80th birthday.

A Methodist from boyhood, Mr. Tawes was an official of his church in Crisfield and taught the men's Bible class there a various times.

He had been treasurer of the Wilmington Conference Education Society, United Methodist Church, and a delegate to a national general conference of the church in San Francisco.

At another Methodist conference in Westminster, shortly after he was elected governor, he recommended "a little fire and brimstone," like that preached by old fashioned evangelists, to help cure the ills and anxieties in an "age of materialism" decried by many church leaders.

In addition to his wife and his son, Mr. Tawes is survived by a daughter, Jimmie Lee Wilson, of Salisbury; two brothers, A. Wellington Tawes and Marvin H. Tawes, Sr., both of Crisfield; a sister, Roselyn Stephenson, of Everett, Pa., four grandchildren and one great-grandchild.