Gray, Bowman, Jr. [1]

Gray, Bowman, Jr.

by Nannie M. Tilley, 1986

15 Jan. 1907–11 Apr. 1969

Bowman Gray, Jr., tobacco executive, was born in Baltimore, Md., the son of Bowman and Nathalie Fontaine Lyons Gray. He attended the Reynolda School in Winston-Salem, Woodberry Forest School in Virginia, and was graduated from The University of North Carolina [2] in 1929. The following year young Gray became a salesman with theR. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company [3], in Winston-Salem, of which his father was president. Advancing through the ranks, he was assistant sales manager in 1939 and vice-president in 1949. In 1952 he was appointed sales manager and three years later, executive vice-president. Gray was president of the company from 1957 until 1959, when he became chairman of the board and chief executive officer. Stepping down as chief executive officer in 1967, he remained chairman of the board until his death.

Under Gray's leadership the Reynolds company expanded its sales, produced a number of new brands of tobacco products, and introduced filter-tipped cigarettes. During this time a Reynolds manufacture, Camel cigarettes, was reported to have been the nation's largest selling cigarette. His encouragement of research led to the establishment of a Product Development Center in 1959; the firm also contributed to cancer research. Diversification became a policy of the company under Gray's direction and transportation, food products, and packaging firms were acquired. In one of the most extensive such actions taken by a southern industry, R. J. Reynolds in 1961–62 totally integrated all of its employees. Also during Gray's administration, the company expanded employee benefits in the areas of health care, retirement, education, profit sharing, and other areas.

During World War II [4] Gray was an officer in the naval reserve and on active duty in Norfolk and elsewhere. He developed plans and procedures for the navy's intelligence service and was considered to be the founder of operational intelligence, the branch that analyzed information about enemy operations. He not only taught this plan in an intelligence school in New York, but also implemented it in various naval stations. At Cape Henry, Va., he set up a system to direct ships through protective minefields sown off Hampton Roads, Va., and Cape Hatteras, N.C.

Gray's benefactions were numerous, particularly for orphanages and schools and for research. He aided fund-raising and philanthropic projects and played an active role in community chest and YMCA [5] drives. He also served as a member and an officer of assorted boards, institutes, and businesses.

On 28 Nov. 1936 he married Elizabeth Palmer Christian of Richmond, Va., and they became the parents of five sons: Bowman, Frank Christian, Robert Daniel, Lyons, and Peyton Randolph. Gray died at his home, Brookberry Farm [6], in Winston-Salem and was buried in Salem Cemetery.

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Bowman Gray, Jr. New Salesman Speech 1960. posted by bogray04, Oct. 25, 2011.http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8Nv_tmZmqQ [12]

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