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Dies At *May 15,* Pinnacle *1936* Of Success

Willard H. Ray Passes Away Friday At His Home In Norfolk, After Long Illness.

FUNERAL SERVICES WERE HELD THERE SUNDAY

Willard Was The Son of Mrs. W. G. Ray. Had Enjoyed Brilliant Business Career.

A brilliant business career and a life of unusual promise came to an untimely end when Willard H. Ray, son of Mrs. W. G. Ray of this city and a brother of Mrs. Harriett Ray McMurray, editor of the Brooklyn Chronicle, passed away Friday at 12:15 o'clock p. m. at his home in Norfolk, Va., after a long and painful illness. Funeral services were held Sunday, May 17, from the Episcopal church in Norfolk. He would have been thirty nine years old on his next birthday, July 22.

Willard was the oldest child of Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Ray. He was born in Grinnell on July 22, 1897, and attended the Grinnell schools, graduating from high school here in 1912 and from Grinnell College in 1916. He early showed superior mental endowments, taking a high rank in his studies and following his distinguished father into the membership of Phi Beta Kappa, honorary scholastic fraternity.

After graduation from college he spent one year in Outlook, Saskatchewan, Canada, where he was employed in a bank. While there he became greatly interested in the war in Europe, then in progress, because of the excitement which that great conflict had aroused in Canada and he enlisted in Grinnell in April of 1917 on the first day of the entry of the United States into the war.

He attended the first officers' training camp at Ft. Snelling, Minn., and received his commission that summer, being stationed at Camp Dodge until the

summer of 1918 with a field artillery unit. In August of that year he was ordered to France and was connected with the radio department of the army while overseas. He was taken sick on Thanksgiving Day of 1918 and was unable to return to this country with his regiment. He was transferred to Mediterranean resorts during the winter of 1918-19 and in May of 1919 was sufficiently recovered to return to his home.

He went at once to Denver,

Colo., where he was connected for several months with a firm dealing in auto accessories and then entered the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he completed a three year course in Civil Engineering in a year and a half. He was a member of the Beta fraternity during his course there.

Following his graduation he entered the oil business, which was to constitute his life work, with the Tidewater Oil Co. of New York City. He early showed the unusual ability as a sales promoter which was to distinguish his business career and was advanced rapidly, making many friends in the company and allied enterprises. In 1928 he launched an independent oil business with headquarters in Norfolk under the name of the Colonial Oil Co., handling Pureoil products. He was president of this company from its organization up to the time of his death. The company under his leadership built up a large and profitable business and several states were added to his territory.

One year to a day before the day of his death the Colonial Oil Co. opened a fine new office building in Norfolk; one of the outstanding business edifices of that thriving city. On that day Willard gave radio talks and presided at the banquet which honored the event. His office was filled with gifts of flowers from companies throughout the east in honor of the event. He was rated as one of Norfolk's most successful young business men and during the eight years that he was in business there had acquired a wide and influential acquaintance, especially among business men in his chosen field.

He was married in 1923 in Middletown, Conn., to Roberta Page Newton, who survives him, with three children, Roberta, aged eleven, Joan aged ten and Sarah, aged eight. Two years ago he purchased a beautiful home on the bay at Lochaven, a suburb of Norfolk. His home life was singularly happy and those who have enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Ray know that it was as unstinted and generous as their natures.

Willard was a member of the Episcopal church in Norfolk, having taken his letter from the Congregational church of Grinnell.

His fatal illness came upon him in the prime of his life and at the pinnacle of his success and though he fought for life with a courage which commanded the admiration of all who witnessed that brave struggle, the disease was not to be denied. Courses of treatment at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore and at Rochester proved of no avail in restoring his health but up to his last hour he continued to make definite plans for the future of his family, his business and himself. Like his father, who preceded him in death only a few weeks before, he never gave up or admitted that he might be defeated and that unshaken courage and heroic spirit will be one of the precious legacies which he leaves to those who knew and loved him.

In addition to his mother and sister he is also survived by one brother, Bobby Ray.

Mrs. Ray, who returned from his bedside only a short time ago, was not able to return to Norfolk to attend the funeral services.