

# Former Sheriff Celebrates Birthday

By Katherine Cornell

Mr. James Samuel "Sam," Dishman was ninety years young on December 21, 1975. Surrounded by his family and many friends, he celebrated at a party, planned by his children, in his home at Ninde where he has maintained his residence for the past fifty-eight years. The highlight of this year's birthday came to Mr. Dishman in an official White House envelope, postmarked December 9, 1975. On a greeting card bearing the Presidential Seal, the following message was handwritten;

"Mrs. Ford and I extend our warmest congratulations on a very special occasion, your 90th birthday. We wish you every happiness. Gerald R. Ford"

Although, in his lifetime his work brought him in contact with many dignitaries, Senators, Governors, Judges etc., both state and national, Mr. Dishman does not know how Mr. Ford learned of his birthday.

Mr. Dishman is an alert, active man for all of his years. He is a native of King George County, having been born and reared in the Ninde area where he now lives. A tall man, well over six feet, he squares his shoulders and stands a bit more erect when he speaks with pride of his 16 years service as King George county Sheriff. Reflecting on those years, Mr. Dishman stated "I had a good career and never had any trouble. I retired with a record that in all the time I was sheriff, I never hurt anyone and I was never hurt myself."

First appointed as County Sheriff by Judge Leon Beziel on December 1, 1942, to fill the unexpired term of Sheriff T.C. Payne, Mr. Dishman served for one year and one month until 1944, after which time he was elected four times to the office. His term expired January 1, 1958 and he was succeeded by Sheriff Jay Powell.

During Mr. Dishman's term

of office, he was on call 24 hours a day and he traveled an area of 2,000 to 2,500 miles per month. He never had a full time deputy, but did have the assistance of a part-time deputy, the late Mr. J. Crabtree. Both Sheriff and Deputy were required to furnish their own car and they had to buy all radio equipment for the car. Mr. Dishman remembers that he purchased his first car for \$400. and his last car for

\$2500. When he took office, he received \$100. per month and was paid five cents per mile travel allowance; when he left office, his salary was \$4,000. per year and he was paid a travel allowance of seven cents per mile. At various times, as Sheriff, he was required to drive to other states to return a prisoner. He traveled for this purpose to Cleveland, Ohio, Miami, Florida, Philadelphia, Penn., and Bluefield, Va.

With further reflection, Mr. Dishman speaks of "the County Officers when I took the Sheriff's job are now all gone". He quickly recalls and names: "Judge Leon Beziel of the Circuit Court; Judge Douglas Gray of the County Court; L.B. Mason, Clerk of the Court; Cleveland Grigsby, Treasurer; Joseph A Billingsley, Sr., Commonwealth Attorney, and R.A. Peed, Commissioner of Revenue."

Mr. Dishman believes that "everybody violates laws, maybe not intentionally, but unintentionally even sheriffs, judges, and state troopers may violate laws; people violate not only traffic laws, but hunting laws, and not only that, but the divine moral law." He believes that a word of warning is a good thing. He married the former Betty Grigsby of King George. She taught school before their marriage and later assisted him in keeping records required in his work. They had two sons

and five daughters; all are now married and living in various areas of Virginia. As for the number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren, he cannot recall how many he now has.

Mr. Dishman has been a widower for eleven years but he says he is quite capable of taking care of himself and managing his home and 80 acres. He does his own housework, cleaning, and laundry, and boasts of being a "good cook".

Mr. Dishman's drivers license expired last December 31. He took advantage of his privilege to drive his car on that day, but it was for the last time. He says he feels that he is not as alert for driving as he once was and so did not renew his license and he no longer has a car.

A belated birthday greeting is extended to Mr. Dishman from all the area residents with a wish that the entire community may join in a celebration with him ten years from now.

