



RALPH FRANCIS DABB

1913-1995

The family of Allie Poorte and Hyrum Moroni Dabb lived in a home away from any neighbors. It was located about two blocks up a lane, north of the only road through Harrisville. This is where Ralph Francis Dabb was born on 5 March 1913.

Ralph attended his early years of school in the Harrisville four room yellow brick school located south of the Harrisville's first LDS chapel. He said of himself he "was neither the best nor the worst student." He did take notice of a couple of pretty girls in his class, one of whom he later married. He went all the way through elementary school with her. Her last name began with C and his with D. Since students were generally seated in alphabetical order, most of the time she sat in the desk in front of him.

In the winter, Ralph, his brothers and some friends found it fun to ice skate or coast on sleds down hills they could find. Their best sledding hill was located about a half mile from their home and had the Four Mile Creek at its bottom. Occasionally they plopped into the creek, and came up all wet, and had to make a quick trip home for dry clothes. They also ice skated on the Western Irrigation Canal. It was full of fish, carp, suckers, and minnows and as they skated in the winter they could watch the fish skitter around under the ice. At times they would break the ice and get all wet trying to catch some fish. Often they would break the ice and then spear the fish. In those days the water was clear and clean and suckers, chubs, and carp were good table fare.

They fished the canal in the summer where it ran through their place between the barn and the old buggy shed. One time Ralph laid his fishing pole down and when he returned he found that a red hen had swallowed the hook baited with a worm. The family probably had chicken for supper. His brother Stanley (born March 1916) fell into the canal once and passed under a bridge but was rescued by their father who came running when Ralph started to yell. In the summer, the canal was a place to swim and cool off after hauling hay or doing other farm labors.

Ralph contracted diseases that young flesh fall heir to, including measles, mumps, chicken pox, small pox, and pneumonia. He and his brother Stanley got pneumonia at the same time, probably as a result of spending one whole rainy afternoon in early spring climbing up to magpie nests to rob them of the eggs. These were the days before antibiotics. Whenever any members of the family contracted a communicable disease, the whole family was quarantined. The home was off limits to any other people and no members of the family could go around other people until all of the family members had had the disease and until the house and all the clothing had been fumigated, which meant burning sulfur candles in the house and airing it out well. In the fall of 1932, Ralph came down with rheumatic fever. This caused him a heart condition for the rest of his life.

Ralph grew up in an era of transition on the farm from hand labor to complete mechanical labor. He and his older brother Clyde (born January 1911) earned much of their spending money in their teens by thinning beets. They got nine dollars an acre and between them they could thin nearly an acre a day. Topping the beets required stooping over all day long and by the end of a long day of topping, a person could hardly stand erect. Hauling the hay seemed to go on endlessly all summer because hay crops had to be harvested several times. Some summers, Ralph worked on the grain thresher to provide some ready money.

Farm life provided many circumstances for close acquaintance, and Ralph recalled that his most intimate talks with his mother were when they were picking fruit, or peas, or beans. Washing clothes was a chore in those days, especially in the winter, so they used to wear one set of clothes all week and bath only on Saturday nights. The picture pump was used to draw water from the well to the surface. Pumping enough water for washing clothes or watering the live stock was not easy. In the summer the young people went bare footed from the time school was out until school started.

Ralph liked to read, and sometimes he would go off by himself to think, or play the harmonica which he took along with him. He developed quite a talent for playing the harmonica. He was very close with his older brother Clyde as they shared working, playing, romping, fishing, and fighting together. They even both broke arms on the same trip on the same Easter Day. His other siblings included, Wilmer (Nov 1923) and a sister Emily (January 1919).

Ralph and Clyde trapped muskrats on the Four Mile Creek. A fall's trapping would usually net them about twenty or thirty pelts. Just before Christmas they would sell them to a fur house in Ogden and use the money for Christmas. However, one time, someone stole their pelts just before Christmas.

Ralph was generally left handed growing up but became quite ambidextrous. He graduated from Weber High School, and during the summer of 1933, he worked at Weber Academy washing walls for 17 cents an hour. He made enough to pay one quarter's tuition, which amounted to about \$15.00. He started college winter quarter of 1934 and went for two quarters. He borrowed money from his bishop (which he later paid back) for spring quarter. Money was scarce and his parents could in no way assist him financially. He was hired to work on the farm of Alvin Wood, which helped provide the means for him to attend Brigham Young University. Shortly after beginning at BYU, he was hired as a stage hand for the drama department. He graduated from BYU with a B.A. in June of 1938.

He dated Jennie Rose Crowther, the girl who sat in front of him in his early school years. After three years of courtship, he finally convinced her that he was a "nice fellow," and they married in the LDS Salt Lake Temple 23 December 1938. In August 1939, he got a teaching job at Iona, Idaho. It was while in Iona that their daughter Janice was born in October 1939. They later moved to Nephi, Utah, where he taught English and Dramatics and served as school librarian at Juab High. While teaching in Nephi, he also worked in a grocery store

and on a turkey farm. By the time he received a teaching contract from Weber County, Carolee was born June 1943 at Payson, Utah, hospital.

When they first returned to Weber County, they lived in an old house in Riverdale and Ralph taught English, Speech, Journalism, and Dramatics at Riverdale Junior High School. They bought a new home on Harrison Boulevard, lived in Roy, Farr West, North Ogden, and finally moved back to Harrisville. Their son Keith Ralph was born in October 1946, while they were living in Roy. After teaching at Riverdale Junior High for 3 ½ years, Ralph moved to Weber High School and taught English and Dramatics where he directed many plays during his seventeen “great years” there. He spent the last three or four years as chairman of the English department. While teaching, he earned a Master’s Degree in English with a minor in speech from Utah State University. When there was a change in the administration at Weber High, he worked next for the Ogden City School District and taught at Ben Lomond High School one year before beginning his 16 year career as a professor at Weber State College in 1963. He retired in 1979 after a teaching career that spanned 40 years. His philosophy to “have fun while teaching” made him popular with his students.

During his teaching years, Ralph, and two other teachers, Jay Anderson and Lindsay West, did contract painting for individuals during the summer and also nights after school and on Saturdays. Ralph was painting on the outside of the Harrisville church which was being remodeled in 1956, when the scaffolding gave way and he received a black eye. The next day he and Jay Anderson were painting and the scaffolding slipped, and he crushed his left heel. He was on crutches for some time. He had a weakness for hernias and on four different occasions he underwent surgery. He was also plagued with migraine headaches for years, but these subsided somewhat as he grew older.

In the fall of 1965, their son Keith left to serve a mission for the LDS church. Six months later, their daughter Carolee and husband Michael Downs borrowed Ralph’s camper for a weekend trip. When they did not return, the entire community rallied to help search for them. After about five days, searchers found the couple asphyxiated in the camper in Saint Charles Canyon, Idaho. This was an overwhelming loss to the family and community.

A month after his daughter and son-in-law were laid to rest, he was called as bishop of the LDS Harrisville Ward. Other church positions he held included serving in the YMMIA, and many years teaching Sunday School. After being called as bishop, Ralph suffered a full blown gall bladder attack and underwent surgery. It was while he was recovering from surgery that he learned about cabin lots for sale in Island Park Idaho. He had always dreamed of having a cabin in the pines, and he and Jennie made that dream come true. Their cabin was a place of great solace to Ralph, and he also enjoyed sharing it with his family and friends.

Throughout their life, Ralph and Jennie enjoyed camping and travel trips with their family and friends. Their son Keith moved a few houses down the street from them, and their daughter Janice lived across the street. Ralph and Jennie felt fortunate to have all their grandchildren living within walking distance of their home. This was especially comforting after Jennie passed away 13 December 1991, and helped dispel Ralph’s loneliness.

Ralph suffered from congestive heart failure and a bleeding ulcer and passed away while in the care of his daughter, Janice, at her home, on 12 October 1995. He is buried beside his wife Jennie in the Lindquest Memorial Gardens of the Wasatch in South Ogden.

SOURCE:

Dabb, Ralph. *My Life*. Unpublished manuscript.

“Educator Will End 40 Year Career.” Standard Examiner. Undated article.

Knight, Janice D. Remembrances.

Anderson, Jay	Dabb, Keith Ralph
Crowther, Jennie Rose	Dabb, Stanley
Dabb, Allie Poorte	Dabb, Wilber
Dabb, Carolee	Downs, Carolee Dabb
Dabb, Clyde	Downs, Michael
Dabb, Emily	Poorte, Allie
Dabb, Hyrum Moroni	West, Lindsay
Dabb, Janice	