

ORAL HISTORY

Oral History of Norma Gamble by:

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Wyoming History

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**Early Years:**

Norma was born in Green River, Wyoming on February 7, 1921 to Henry and Sarah Buckles. The birth was attended by Dr. Charolett Hawks. The house was located where the Arctic Circle Drive In is now located in Green River.

Henry Buckles brought his family to the Rock Springs area because the Union Pacific had hired him for his ability to play baseball. He was a professional ball player. He moved the family to Reliance when Norma was two years old.

She says of Reliance. " I remember it being a wonderful little place to raise children and live in." The town was laid out in three parts. Upper Camp where the mines were located. Middle Camp and Lower Camp or Sandtown where the houses and other buildings were located. There were no ethnic neighborhoods in town.

The houses consisted of only four rooms but were of fairly good construction. Early they had no indoor plumbing. Water was supplied by an outside faucet used by several families. It was piped in from a well located West of town. Baths were taken in a large galvanized tub. The toilet was an outdoor privy.

The company store was where everything was purchased. It consisted of a grocery store, butcher shop, clothing store and miners supply store. Purchases could be charged against the miner's paycheck. Many families never saw a paycheck because they owed the company store more than they made. Norma said the song, "I Owe My Soul to the Company Store", is very true as there were many families in just that shape.

There was a company doctor in Reliance who attended to the day to day sickness and injuries in town. If something major such as surgery or major medical problems arose people went to the hospital in Rock Springs or elsewhere.

The union hall was located across the street from the Buckle's home. There were frequent meetings held in the hall. Some were very loud and boisterous with the arguments and disagreements being carried out into the street. Norma's father was the secretary treasurer of Local #905 of the UMWA in Reliance for many years.

Norma attended school in Reliance from 1927 to 1938. The schools were a mix of ethnic groups and cultures with very few discipline problems. The teachers were excellent and the high school was accredited by North Central Association. Norma graduated from Reliance High School in 1938.

Marriage and Family



Norma married Bob Gamble in February 1942. She said they eloped and were married in Randolph, Utah.

Karen was born on May 5, 1943 in Rock Springs. She is their only child. Norma has three grandchildren and two great grandchildren at this time.

Norma and Bob live on their ranch in Burntfork where they have lived since they bought it in 1942.

Norma is a member of several organizations and clubs. She belongs to the Order of Eastern Star in Rock Springs where she just received her fifty year pin. She is the president of the Sweetwater County Cowbelles and a member of the Homemakers Club.

#### **Employment**

Norma graduated from the University of Wyoming as a teacher. Her first job was teaching in Burntfork for a salary of ninety dollars per month. There were twelve students in five different grades. All of the training she had received at the university hadn't prepared her for this. The superintendent of schools helped her through the first year. The years after that it was easy to teach five different classes of arithmetic, spelling and language.

Norma's teaching experiences are unique because she taught in the same schools for thirty nine years. Many of the students she was teaching when she retired had parents and grandparents who had been her students. When Norma

retired in 1985 many of the three hundred people who attended the retirement party were these same students.

Norma still helps with the annual Christmas Party at the McKinnon school and occasionally substitute teaches. She still tries to keep in touch with the kids because she loves them.

In addition to being a school teacher Norma spent many hours in the summer helping in the hayfields. The first years all the haying was done with horses. When the ranch began to mechanize Norma still used the horses because many of the young people they hired couldn't handle horses. The only job Norma didn't feel qualified to do was irrigating the hay meadows.

Now that Norma has retired from teaching she has become active in the Sweetwater County Cowbellees promoting beef.

### Politics

Norma is a lifelong Democrat in Sweetwater County. She attributes part of this to the fact that her parents were staunch Democrats in the coal camps and the Democratic party always seemed to represent the working people. Norma has served as a committee woman for many years. Her first vote was for Franklin D. Roosevelt. She says that she doesn't get rabid about politics.

### Changes in the area



Norma thinks that the two biggest changes to affect the area have been transportation improvements and REA.

When Norma first moved to the ranch the only power that they had was supplied by their own 32 volt power plant. When the Rural Electrification Association or REA brought power to the area it changed her life forever. They were able to drill a well and pump water into the house. This enabled them to add a bathroom and have not only running hot and cold water but an indoor toilet. This also brought about the ability to receive television.

Transportation has improved over the years. The road to Green River was dirt in 1940 when Norma first came to Burntfork. A trip to Green River at that time was an all day excursion if the weather was good. If the weather was bad people just stayed home. Today families have more than one car and drive to Green River and Rock Springs in less than an hour just to go to the show. They drive to Salt Lake and back in a day now.

These changes have made life much easier on the ranch in Burntfork, Wyoming.

Norma's final words in this interview were to her grandchildren: I hope our grandchildren keep this place intact.

NAME: Norman Dumble

PRESENT ADDRESS: McKinnon, Wyo 82938

1. Present profession or occupation: Retired school teacher
2. Occupations followed in the past (give dates): School teaching 1940-1985 (45 yrs for 39 years)
3. Date of birth: 2/7/21 Place of birth: Green River, Wyo.
4. Date of moving to Wyoming: 1921
5. Full name of parents (give mother's maiden name) Henry Edward Buckles - Sarah Ellen McConaghey
6. Names of brothers and sisters (and to whom married):  
Harry Buckles - married Penny } Rachel married Carl Jorgensen  
John Warren Buckles - married Louise Hickoy } Done. married Rene Jacobs
7. Schools attended (give dates): Rehanna 1927-1938
8. Places of residence in Wyoming (give dates): Rehanna 1928-1940 Green River 1921-1923 Burnt Fork 1948 - present
9. Military service (dates, awards, area served, rank, etc.): None
10. Political offices held (give dates):
11. Political affiliation: None
12. Religious affiliation: Wesbyterian
13. Marriage (spouse's name, date and place of marriage): Bob Dumble Feb. 1942 Randolph, W. Va.
14. Children (names, dates of birth, grandchildren, etc.):  
Karen 5/5/43 Daughter  
Grand children  
Donald Kirk - 1/5/64 / Robert Lewis Nov. 16, 1966 Conn Lewis April 2, 1972

Best Grandchildren  
 Kayla Lewis  
 Dec 10, 1987  
 Robert Lewis  
 June 20, 1989

15. List of clubs and societies of which you are a member:  
Eastern Star  
Pioneers Club  
Sweetwater County Cowbells