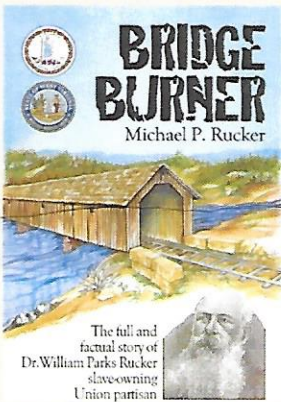


SPRING EDITION

# the RUCKER FAMILY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOL. 25, NO. 1, MAY 2013

## MIKE RUCKER'S LATEST BOOK



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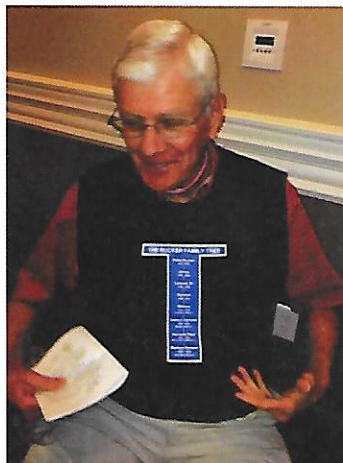
## RUCKER ROUNDUP RECAP

### 2014 Rucker Family Society Reunion

The 2014 RFS Reunion held in Gilbert, Arizona between February 27 and March 2 was a wonderful success, by all measures.

RFS President Chris Rucker states "I'd like to thank everyone who contributed to organizing the latest in a long line of successful Rucker reunions, and to the attendees who enjoyed the fruits of our hosts' labors. Even when we encountered the rare

*Continued on page 8*



Dick Rucker of Sun City AZ, modeling the latest genealogical fashion featuring his Rucker family tree

## *Bridge Burner*

by Michael P. "Mike" Rucker

Those who read the Rucker Family Society *Newsletter* are certainly familiar with the many contributions of Mike Rucker, and many will also know him as the author of the Terry the Tractor series of eighteen children's books. We also know Mike as a raconteur at Rucker reunions and an indefatigable runner of marathons. One of Mike's most recent accomplishments is to publish his 292-page biography of Dr. William Parks Rucker in the book *Bridge Burner: The full and factual story of Dr. William Parks Rucker slave-owning Union partisan*. I have read several reviews, and all are extremely complimentary about the writing and the research involved.

Book reviewer Charles Shea LeMone states, "The exploits of Dr. William Parks Rucker, as revealed by Michael P. Rucker, are the sort of adventures one might associate with tall tales of

***The Rucker Family  
Society Newsletter***

Is published three-times each year  
in January, May, and September

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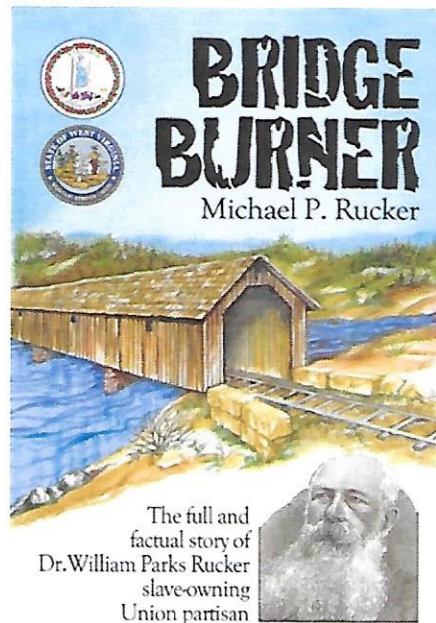
Christopher Rucker

Mike Rucker

Bill Smith

Karen van der Werf

Book reviewer Charles Shea LeMone states, "The exploits of



Dr. William Parks Rucker, as revealed by Michael P. Rucker, are the sort of adventures one might associate with tall tales of fiction and far-fetched Hollywood films. Nonetheless, the author (no relation [actually they are 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins 3-times removed]) extensively researched legal documents and personal letters to write this biography of a controversial and cantankerous Virginia slave owner who opposed the Confederacy and eventually joined the Union Army as a major.

During the early days of the Civil War, the hatred Dr. Rucker evoked in Southern sympathizers was second only to the antipathy reserved for President Abraham Lincoln. More than once, Rucker was threatened with death by hanging if he refused to denounce the Union and pledge

support for the Confederacy. But to his way of thinking, only a traitor would advocate splitting up the states. On one occasion, when confronted by a mob, he knifed one man to death and held the others at bay with a pistol he'd taken from the dead man. Following several postponements of his murder trial, and to the total befuddlement of many people, he was exonerated.

Not long after, Rucker led Union troops to burn down a bridge crucial to the transportation of salt, gravely needed in the war effort for the preservation of meat and the tanning of leather. Furthermore, on the same mission, due to his knowledge of the region, he helped the same troops raid several homes of the wealthiest citizens to steal their horses and confiscate other valuable goods.

Months later, when he was captured, a disagreement ensued between the governor of Virginia and Confederate authorities as to whether Rucker should be tried and hanged as a spy or regarded as a prisoner of war. There are 64 entries in the "Official Records of Rebellion" in connection with prisoner exchange arrangements being set up for him. Also of note, Lincoln authorized keeping a Confederate surgeon as a hostage to be executed if Rucker was not released without harm.

Meanwhile, during his 15 months in captivity, Rucker was transferred among prisons numerous times. On Oct. 18, 1863, he managed to escape and became an aide-de-camp to Gen. George Cooke. His first assignment as a Union officer was to burn down the New River Bridge.

After the war, the doctor began practicing law in Lewisburg, WV, and defended a murderer in the famous "Greenbrier Ghost" case, in which he coerced the victim's mother to testify about her alleged conversations with the deceased about the crime. He also helped a former slave, Charlotte Scott, establish the first monument to Lincoln, the Emancipation Memorial.

*Bridge Burner* also includes maps and photographs. It is a must-read book for all Civil War historians, amateur and professional, to add to their libraries."

Mr. Shea's review was posted on Roanoke.com the website of *The Roanoke Times* on June 15, 2014

\* \* \* \* \*

## Ray Rucker Collins

**Adventurer & Extraterrestrial Aspirant**

**by Michael P. "Mike" Rucker**

"There are a number of dramatic differences between Mars and Fairbanks."

So stated Ray Rucker Collins of Fairbanks, Alaska during his at-

tempt to build and occupy a self-enclosed ecology unit designed to permit the colonization of Mars – growing the necessary food included.

Ray is a founding member and



Ray on the *Acrux* in Hawaiian waters former president of ISECCO, an organization which proposes the colonization of Mars. The goal is to pioneer ways of building life support systems that could work on Mars.

If this sounds a bit far-fetched, you should meet Ray and discuss the subject with him. You will quickly understand that he is entirely serious on the subject. And – that he would be adventurous enough to volunteer for the first expedition to colonize the red planet. His plan for "Mars Base 0" was a "semi-closed ecological life support system (CELSS)." To test the viability of raising the necessary food to sustain oneself in a totally isolated environment Ray built and lived in a CELSS of his own design for 39 days. He explains that his project was much more modest than the three acre Biosphere II in Arizona. Unfortunately both projects have now been shut down.

Ray was born in Fairbanks May 2, 1952, but was reared at the remote community of Lake Minchumina which is located at the geographic center of Alaska and is accessible only by air. He was home schooled until age 14 when the family built a log cabin just north of Fairbanks so Ray and his younger identical twin sisters, Florence (Miki) and Julie, could attend public high school during the winter months. Ray obtained B.S. degrees in both Biology and Geology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks - which sparked his lifelong love of science. Upon completing college he returned to Lake Minchumina and became a trapper for several years.

According to Ray's sisters Miki (Florence) and Julie in their book *Trapline Twins*;

"Ray, a year and a half older, taught [us] about the land, its kindness and its cruelty. We had to learn from him, but he didn't learn from anybody. He simply absorbed it. As a youngster he brought home voles and rabbits, a baby squirrel and once a kit fox. All of them caused trouble. The voles perpetuated themselves, and the countless offspring escaped to infest our cabin. The hares became tame then domineering. They won wrestling matches with the house dog, chewed electrical cords and left rabbit pellets in the farthest corners. When we petted them,

they'd nibble and lick our arms gently, but after cleaning off a spot they would chomp down and draw blood.

The fox made a general nuisance of himself until he was evicted. The squirrel, Oliver (named because his home was in an old olive can), his insulation and graham crackers in our antique clock, chattered in the early morning hours, and later ran away with a lady friend never to return. His progeny came back, though, to invade three old cabins, two caches and the dog food shed.



Ray was a "Master Catcher." He grabbed rabbits as they sped past, he grabbed spruce hens in the forest and he grabbed ducks in the marsh. He caught a marten in a hand-held snare while both swung from the top of a spruce tree. He stalked moose without a weapon; he got treed once, but he continued the sport undaunted. He once captured a bald eagle in his bare hand, and he snatched a swallow in flight as it swooped past him.

Ray taught us to shoot, set snares

and traps, gut a moose and distinguish ducks, geese and loons in flight. Once he led a pack of wolves along a riverbed to us as we watched, enchanted, as the great animals approached to within fifteen feet and answered our inviting howls with a chorus of their own.

One day when we were far from home he got hungry, caught a frog, drowned it, and swallowed it whole, partly to impress his bug-eyed sisters. Then he turned pale. "I'm not sure it was dead," he told us weakly.

Ray was in incorrigible schemer and he usually sold us on his marvelous ideas. One plan was an infallible method of catching muskrats, and as the pelts were valuable to kids on a fifty-cents-a-week allowance, Miki and I came along.

"Now we cut off the tops of the muskrat pushups in the ice, and when a 'rat comes out to eat his dinner, we take our sticks and wham! Bash his head in. We'll each stake out a pushup so we'll be sure not to miss any. Piece of cake."

I sat on the ice beside the pile of weeds that made up the muskrat's winter feeding lodge. I sat there until my feet went numb clear to my knees. Then – up popped a muskrat.

*Wham!*

The little beggar was gone before I even started the swing. Miki and Ray dashed over, ex-

citement running high. Let's go home," I said. Well, maybe, that wasn't such a good idea. But we learned.

Ray took us ice skating on sparkling moonlit nights when the lake ice froze smooth and glassy. We picked cattails, soaked them in diesel fuel, and lit them as torches. Skimming across the black ice we followed the reflected white path of the moon in the heavens. The ice lay speckled with small and large shell-like bubbles of methane gas, trapped under films of frozen water. The spots signaled weak ice and we'd swing wide, but when we found a big bubble we'd circle back and examine it.

Ray always took the lead. If the bubble looked good, he'd kneel beside it and tap a tiny hole through the ice over the bubble. As the water pressure forced the swamp gas out, Ray's cattail torch swept down to light the gas. With a soft *whomp* an ephemeral blue flame would burst up from the frozen lake, sometimes a few inches and sometimes three feet tall.

We'd spend the dark evenings skating and searching for bubbles to light. Sometimes the methane exploded for a few seconds and sometimes it lasted half a minute

Once we came across a four-foot bubble with several more chambers of gas frozen around it. This would be spectacular! Eagerly

we crowded around looking for the best place to break the ice.

“Get back!” Ray warned dramatically, “It could blow sky high.” Miki and I retreated upwind of the bubble as Ray held his torch ready and lightly kicked the fragile shell ice with the pointed heel of his skate, when the gas exploded from the hole with flames roaring six feet high. For some seconds we watched, speechless, as the blue flame blazed upward until it withered, sank back into the hole, and out popped a bubble of water.



Ray tottered to his feet, eyes red and watering, his shaggy brown hair singed, while Miki and I gazed at him with awe.

As many other true Alaskans, Ray got his pilot's license before he obtained his driver's license. After high school, Ray took a year off and spent the winter trapping. During that winter as a professional trapper, Ray flew his family's Piper Super Cub out to the end of the trap line for a

day's work. The temperature plunged and his family became worried. By the time Ray finished his trap line work the temperature had dropped to thirty-five below and the engine would not start. He encased the engine in his sleeping bag, and he kept a fire burning all night to warm the engine, and himself. He had to search in the brush all night for tree limbs to keep the fire burning. One of the wooden skis on the plane was scorched by the fire but luckily no other damage. Shortly after dawn he was able to get the engine started and fly back to the family cabin at Lake Minchumina.

Ray now takes the story: “The next fall (1977) I started college (University of Alaska Fairbanks) During Christmas break I smacked up a plane (the beloved Piper Super Cub) and wound up spending most of the spring semester recovering from a broken talus bone (ankle), crushed femur, crushed elbow and dislocated shoulder... not to mention chemical burns from the gas the wing tanks dumped all over me when they ruptured. (Note: the plane was in even worse shape than I was.)” [Even more significant: the fuel did not ignite.]”

After obtaining a degree in biology, Ray took another year off and again spent the winter trapping. Upon finally deciding that there were better ways to earn living, he established a construc-

tion company in Fairbanks. After constructing several buildings, he expanded into rental properties and now owns 70 units.

In 1986, Ray decided to buy his second sailboat and in June he bought a 26 foot boat and spent the rest of the summer and winter repairing it. The next summer he moved the boat to Valdez and spent 5 years exploring Prince William Sound. In late 1990, he spotted a potential bargain, the *Acrux*, a 48 foot trimaran sailboat which had been neglected, in fact it had sunk at the dock and needed repairs including a new diesel engine and rewiring. Ray bought the boat and, over the next 12 years, undertook the repairs to restore the boat to near-new condition. He and his wife Frances (Frankie) sailed in Alaskan waters until 2003 when Ray decided to sail (alone) to Seattle for an extensive overhaul.

In June 2004 the freshly overhauled vessel was ready for some *serious* sailing (5,105 statute miles of serious sailing). The family, [Ray and his wife Frances (Frankie), who was two months pregnant, and 2 year-old son Richard] boarded the *Acrux* in Seattle and, first, headed north to Alaska on a shakedown cruise. From Kodiak Island the adventurous family headed for Hawaii. On August 28 they reached Oahu after a four week cruise. They secured the *Acrux* in Honolulu and flew a commer-

cial airline back to Fairbanks a few days later.

The family [now expanded to four with two-month-old Karen] was back in Honolulu the following March and spent the next 4 months sailing around the Hawaiian Islands before sailing the *Acrux* to sail back to Alaska. Their first stopover was Midway Atoll 1,150 nautical miles northwest of Hawaii. Midway is a tiny U.S. possession with two tiny islands of only 2.4 square miles. The primary inhabitants are more than 3 million sea birds and nearly half of which are albatrosses. Unfortunately three-year-old Richard fell off a stool as the family was visiting the only café on Midway. The only X-ray machine on Midway indicated a spiral fracture of the tibia. The tiny U.S. Navy clinic on Midway could not properly care for the injury, so the U.S. Coast Guard said they could take him to Honolulu the following day. Ray and Richard flew to Hawaii, had the leg set with a nice purple cast, and flew back to Midway. A few days later they cast off on the cruise back to Kodiak Island, Alaska.

Every summer Ray and Frankie are off on an adventure somewhere in the world – in an attempt, it would seem, to prove that Alaskans are among the most adventurous people in the world...of course Ray would prefer destinations like Mars.

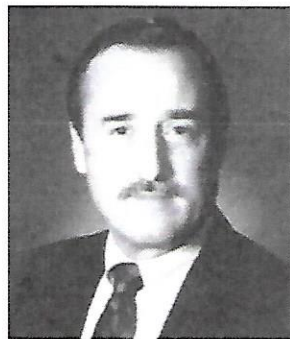
Ray Collins' Rucker lineage is: Ray Rucker<sup>9</sup> Collins, Florence<sup>8</sup> Rucker, Benjamin<sup>7</sup> Parks, Benjamin<sup>6</sup> Lindsay, Benjamin<sup>5</sup> Jennings, Isaac<sup>4</sup>, Ambrose<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

[For those who wish to know more about our Alaska cousins, an article about Ray's mother, Florence Rucker Collins, appeared in the Mar 1993 RFS *Newsletter* and an article about his sisters Miki and Julie (The "Trapline Twins") in the Sep 2005 issue].

\* \* \* \* \*

## In Memoriam

**Harry W. Porter III**, age 74, a retired Deputy Assistant of State for Foreign Missions, died unexpectedly on February 18, 2014 of complications related to a fall at his home. He was married to Rebecca S. Franklin-Porter for 35 years and



is survived by sisters Lee Porter of Midlothian, VA and Key Lo-Medico of Arlington, VA and brothers Bayard Porter of Sarasota, FL and Kent Porter of Norfolk, VA.

He was born in Washington, D.C. and was a resident of Alexandria, VA at the time of his death. After college he served in the U.S. Army where he was assigned as Executive Officer of Headquarters Company, 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 33<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division. Following his military service he joined the FBI as a Special Agent in 1965. He served in the Detroit, Chicago, New York City and Houston Divisions, until his retirement in 1990. He was an Honors Graduate of the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, CA.

In 1990 Mr. Porter was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and served as Deputy Director of the Office of Foreign Missions. He served as Assistant Secretary of State on several occasions.

He was the recipient of numerous service awards with the FBI, a Superior Honor Award by the Department of State and an Outstanding Performance Award from the Senior Executive Service.

Harry Porter's Rucker lineage is: Harry<sup>9</sup> Wilson Porter III, Lelia<sup>8</sup> Rucker (m. Harry Wilson Porter, Jr.), Bayard<sup>7</sup> Ambrose, William<sup>6</sup> Ambrose, William<sup>5</sup> Ballenger, George<sup>4</sup>, John<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

**Rev. W. Ramsey Richardson**, 82, of Charlottesville passed away on Tuesday December 3, 2013 in Charlottesville.

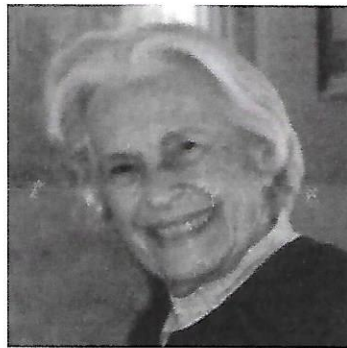
Born on January 24, 1931 in Charleston, WV William Ramsey Richardson was the son of the late Jewel Burgess Richardson and Zelema Atkinson Richardson.



Rev. Richardson served with the United States Army and was stationed in Frankfurt, Germany. He was the Rector of the Church of the Redeemer Episcopal Church in Richmond between 1966 and 1978, then the Rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Charlottesville from 1978 until his retirement in 1991. He also served as interim Rector of four other Episcopal churches in Virginia. Ramsey was very active on the local and the national level in many genealogical societies serving as President of the Thomas Jefferson Chapter, SAR and as National Chaplain of both the Sons of the American Revolution and the Sons of the Revolution. He also served as Governor of the Society of Colonial Wars in the state of Virginia. He is survived by his wife of 46 years, Emily Tongue Richardson of Charlottesville; sons, Thomas Ramsey Richardson and his wife Susan of Nashville, TN, David Kirk Richardson and his wife

Linda of Richmond and James Smiley Richardson and his wife Nicole of Alexandria; and six grandchildren, Jensen, Finian, Conor, Brennan, Sasha and Leo. A funeral service was conducted, December 14, 2013 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Ivy, VA.

**Ruth Irene Moore McBride**, 91, of Lynchburg, passed away Sunday, January 5, 2014, at Lynchburg General Hospital. She was the wife of the late Albert Paul McBride. Born February 24, 1922, in Lynchburg, VA, Ruth graduated from E.C. Glass



High School and became one of the first women in Virginia to become a Real Estate Broker in 1959. She was a member of Randolph Memorial Baptist Church, the Board of Directors of the Jones Memorial Library. Since she had a passion for genealogy and history, it was natural that she was a member, officer and former Regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution-James River Chapter, a founder and charter member of the Colonial Dames-West of the Falls Chapter, and an officer of the Amherst County Museum and

Historical Society.

She is survived her sons, Kenneth Paul McBride and his wife Natalie of Lynchburg, Douglas Moore McBride and his wife Pam Alexander of Lynchburg, and Russell Eugene McBride and his wife Judith of Damascus, VA; four grandchildren, Stephen McBride and his wife Sandy of Roanoke, VA, Michael Craig McBride of Lynchburg, David McBride of Forest, VA, and Thaddeus McBride of Sweeny, TX; 8 great-grandchildren, Katie Hill and her husband Joel, Emily McBride, Stephen McBride Jr., Dailee Helfrich, Courtney Taylor McBride, Zoe McBride, Allee Aldrich, and Aksel McBride. She was preceded in death by one brother, Howard Moore; and one grand-daughter, Cary Alyssa McBride. Her funeral service was held January 9, 2014.

Ruth's Rucker lineage is: Ruth<sup>10</sup> Irene Moore, Gladys<sup>9</sup> I. Johnson, William<sup>8</sup> A. Johnson, Frances<sup>7</sup> A. Ware, Wilkerson<sup>6</sup> Ware, Rosamond<sup>5</sup> M. Rucker, Reuben<sup>4</sup>, Ambrose<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.

### **Ruckers in Fiction – *The Racketeer***

**Reviewed by Michael P. (Mike) Rucker**

Jeannie Brydon handed me a book a few months ago. Occasionally, I have written brief book reviews for newsletter titled "Ruckers in Fiction" and

Jeannie suggested that I summarize this one since “The bad guy in this novel is named Rucker.” The novel, *The Racketeer*, is the latest legal thriller by superb storyteller John Grisham. Once I started it and could hardly put it down – truly a real “page turner.”

Quinn Rucker is one of the two major characters. He is a drug kingpin and a confessed murderer (not necessarily a nice guy). Of great interest to me is that much of the action takes place in the Shenandoah Valley – from Winchester to Radford with action in nearly every town along the way – and even to Richmond, Norfolk and Washington, D.C. – then all the way to Florida and Antigua.

But I digress. The focus of the novel is the murder of a Federal judge in the mountains west of Roanoke with the motive of the theft of a huge fortune in illegal loot.

The story takes fantastic twists and turns, each one more amazing and diabolical, until you think you have figured out the plot and then—well, you’ll just have to read it for yourself.

Amazon has this to say about the book (odd though, they didn’t mention the name of the, obviously, most important character, Quinn Rucker): “In the history of the United States, only four active federal judges have been murdered. Judge Raymond Faw-

cett has just become number five. His body is found in his remote lakeside cabin. There is no sign of forced entry or struggle. Just two dead bodies, Judge Fawcett and his young secretary, and one large, state-of-the-art, extremely secure safe, opened and emptied.

One man, a former attorney, knows who killed Judge Fawcett, and why? But that man, Malcolm Bannister, is currently residing in the Federal Prison Camp near Frostburg, Maryland. Though serving time, Malcolm has an ace up his sleeve. He has information the FBI would love to know. Malcolm would love to tell them. But everything has a price—and the man known as the Racketeer wasn’t born yesterday.”

The book was published by Doubleday in 2012, and is currently available on Amazon in paperback and audiobook formats.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Mini-Profile

**Mary Ann Laurence  
and John J. Scarpino**

**by Jeannie Brydon**

Mary Ann, or Ann as she is sometimes called, is a board member of the Rucker Family Society. She lives in Des Moines, Iowa and winters in Phoenix, Arizona. She was on the 2014 Rucker Roundup Reunion committee.



She was born in Hillsboro, Texas to William Andrew Smith and Lovella Clay Weir. She attended Baylor University in Waco, Texas and married James Bentley Laurence in Dallas, Texas. Together, they had two boys: James Bentley Laurence, Jr. and Dan Smith Laurence.

In 1968, they moved to Des Moines, Iowa, where James worked in sales and marketing farm equipment. In 1981, James became sick with cancer and died. Mary Ann pursued her masters at Drake University in Des Moines and became a public school teacher and worked in administration for 30 years.

Mary Ann married John J. Scarpino in 1991 and they have been married for 23 years. John has two sons and one daughter. Now retired, Mary Ann and John enjoy traveling and visiting with their grandchildren.

Mary Ann’s Rucker lineage: Mary<sup>9</sup> Ann Smith, William<sup>8</sup> Andrew Smith, James<sup>7</sup> Rucker Smith, Lucy<sup>6</sup> Frances Rucker, James<sup>5</sup> Jr., James<sup>4</sup>, Benjamin<sup>3</sup>, John<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>



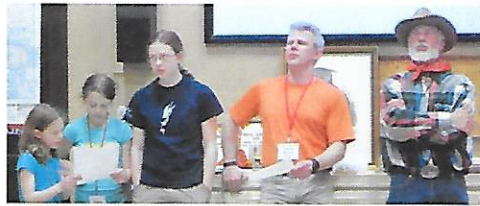
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## RUCKER ROUNDUP RECAP

*Continued from page 1*

'bump in the road,' everyone pulled together to improvise and keep things running smoothly. Example: the rare rain [the first in the 97 days before the reunion and the last so far this year] that graced the Phoenix area required some last minute scrambling, but Karen and her crew improvised and the show went on. Another example: when Loren and Alice Rucker and I drove out to the Suspicion Mountains for a day of sightseeing, and were sidelined when Loren's truck died, the Board soldiered on without us and took care of business. Thanks to all, and I hope to see everyone back in West Virginia at the next reunion."

Dick Rucker wanted to "Thank you, Karen, and thanks to all those that helped you make my first Rucker Family Reunion an



Cowboy Mike Rucker, his son Derek and Derek's daughters serenading us

interesting and fun one. I especially enjoyed the Marshall Trimble presentation. I had seen some of his work over the 43 years I've been in Arizona but had not seen him in person and didn't know he had such a great sense of humor.

Sheila Englert feels "The Rucker Roundup was well organized and very impressive. Thank you so much for helping me join the Rucker events at the last minute. You did a wonderful job, as did Verona, in making me feel welcome. My family and I had been following the Ruckers since early 1980's when my mother began putting our family tree together. It is nice to know so many Ruckers live in Arizona!"

Mary Ann Laurence wrote, "The Reunion in AZ brought several new members into our family gathering. Especially interesting to me was the opportunity to learn more about the Rucker family migrations and relationships from members and special speakers."

Alice and Loren Rucker state, "During the reunion we broke into smaller groups according to descendants of Peter Rucker. It was a fruitful time for those new to Rucker genealogy research, and for the more seasoned researchers, it was a great pleasure to learn of new families to add to trees. To have some social functions in the very beautiful private homes was a real treat at this reunion. The auction was fun, and the family camaraderie was enthusiastic and enjoyed by all. Thanks to Karen and her crew for a very well-run reunion. We had a great time! "





# THE RUCKER ROUNDUP



2014 Rucker Family Society Reunion—Feb 27-Mar 2, 2014



A group photo of Rucker Family Society members during a tour of the beautiful new Gilbert LDS Temple that was dedicated during the weekend of the Rucker Roundup

## The RUCKER *family* SOCIETY



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