



Janet & Ralph Keoppel

BY DRIENIE HATTINGH

How the dancer met the motorcyclist and lived happily ever after in Huntsville, Utah.

"I love to dance!" says Janet Keoppel, a lovely woman with an engaging, infectious laugh.

"Then I met Ralph," says Janet with a twinkle in her eyes, "at the Berthanna Dance Hall down in Ogden." It was New Year's Eve and Ralph asked her to dance. He would come back later that night and ask her to dance again.



"That New Year's morning I told my mother that I met the nicest guy who would make someone a wonderful husband – but he cannot dance at all!" said Janet.

"The year I met Ralph (in 1956) I was 26 years old," said Janet. "One year on New Year's Eve I went dancing in Ogden again, with my sister and two girlfriends. We stood lined up against the wall – like wall flowers!" Janet says laughingly.

"A girl we knew came over to where we stood and said, 'Would one of you like to dance with my brother-in-law?' I said, 'Is he as tall as I am?' She said yes and she brought Ralph over," explained Janet.

Two weeks after they met, Ralph and Janet went to the

dance hall again and danced all night. When Janet left the dance hall that night she saw Ralph standing on the corner. She wondered if he was waiting for her.

Ralph Keoppel laughs, "She picked me up!" "He always says that!" said Janet. "But what really happened is that he waited for me to ask if I would go with him and his family to a restaurant called Kay's Noodle Parlor in Ogden."

Janet learned that Ralph loved to travel almost as much as she loved to dance. And when he traveled, he did so by motorcycle. At that time, Ralph had traveled all over the United States. Janet loved hearing about all the far-away places he visited. The couple started seeing each other every day of the week except for Sundays. They loved to go to the movies and saw at least three pictures a week.

"Ralph had a lot of money back then and we spent it!" Janet remarks with her unique sense of humor.

But Janet's mother was apprehensive as she watched her daughter grow fonder of Ralph. She could not see Ralph settling down. "He's got a motorbike and he travels all the time. A man like that does not like to settle down," she told her daughter. But Ralph and Janet did get married in 1959.

Janet's father sold them a lot in Huntsville and Ralph started building their house. It took him eight years to finish

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it but when the house was done – it was paid in full. The Keoppels always paid as they went. They never did own a credit card.

When Ralph was done with the basement, which consisted of a bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and a living room, they moved in. All their children were born in the basement.

Work was scarce in those days but Janet and Ralph worked at whatever job was available. Janet sewed all the girls' clothes and Ralph was a maintenance worker for the Weber School District for 30 years. Ralph also had a part-time job for 20 years at Cemetery Point in Huntsville – digging graves. In later years the children helped mow grass at the cemetery.

“We just had such a good life!” Janet says with happy tears brimming over. “You see – what I really like is to be with him.” “To us, everything is much better being on our own, at home or on vacation. And when the children were still at home, vacations were our best times. We always do everything together,” adds Ralph.

Janet and Ralph's daughters now live in Ogden, Clearfield and Riverton, Utah and Mesa, Arizona. They are proud grandparents to 10 grandchildren. The family often reunites in

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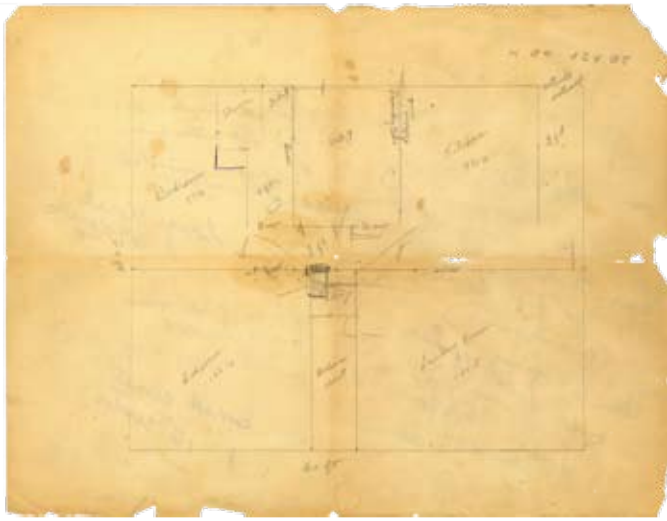
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Original house plans sketched by Janet Keoppel.

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Huntsville at the house that Ralph built.

Ralph was born in Logan and grew up in Ogden and Janet was born and raised in Huntsville. One often sees this lovely couple riding their bikes through the picturesque streets of this rural little town. Janet's bike is very special to her. "My dad gave the bike I ride to my mother on her 74th birthday. Some time after she passed away, my dad gave it to me," said Janet. As the Keoppel's ride their bikes through the peaceful streets of Huntsville, they reflect on how their hometown changed since they got married.

"It is different and yet it is the same," said Janet. Certain landmarks and houses are gone or replaced with new businesses and houses. But the atmosphere is still that of small-town Huntsville. The neighborhood is still the rural and peaceful neighborhood where Janet grew up and they both raised their children.

According to Ralph and Janet, Huntsville has not grown much since they first married. "Growth has been outside the Huntsville city limits," they said.

Back in Janet's childhood days, Huntsville residents did not have to leave their hometown much for anything. Where the Ogden Valley Community Church sits today, used to be Leon's Market. "We almost never went to Ogden – for anything. This store had everything from gasoline, to a yard of material, to feed for your chickens and horses. There was a long counter with everything behind the counter. You stood on the one side of the counter and asked for butter or oil and the store owner would put it on the counter," said Janet

While Janet was in junior high school in Huntsville she worked at Allen's Grocery and Confectionery right next to the Shooting Star Saloon. "One side of the store was a soda fountain and the other side a grocery store. That was pretty neat

you know! I had a job in junior high school," said Janet. During her junior and senior years in high school, Janet also worked at Snowbasin Ski Resort. Back then there was only one small lodge. "One of my jobs was to cook hamburgers. The grill wasn't that big but it all was so much fun and I made \$20 a weekend," she said.

I ask Janet about other significant memories from her childhood. "We used to have a lot more snow. I remember how we walked to school on the crust of the snow and it was above the fence posts. And I remember how our houses were heated with oil, coal and wood," she recalls.

Janet and Ralph were all for the changes the Olympics brought to Snowbasin and the area, including the highway over Trappers Loop (State Route 167). This highway has provided a welcomed alternate route into Ogden Valley.

Listening to these old-timers, learning more about their lives and seeing their obvious love for each other after 46 years – it is not peculiar at all to hear their unique view of the Ogden Valley and its people.

They know that the Ogden Valley can not stay the way it was or is now - and they definitely do not want to keep newcomers out of this beautiful place that they call home.

"We came up here, so why not other people? Let the people come!" they concluded.

An advertisement for SERIO construction. The top part features the word "SERIO" in large, orange, serif letters, with "construction" in smaller, black, sans-serif letters below it. Below that, "Custom home builders" is written in a white, cursive font. The background is a collage of architectural drawings and a photograph of a modern home interior. The bottom part of the ad lists three bullet points: "Over 25 years of experience", "A reputation of high quality homes", and "Flexible home designs, attention to detail and built with excellence". At the very bottom, it says "contact us at 801.430.4803" in white, bold, sans-serif font.