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Rabb Family Honored for Fred T. Perris Day



David Rabb, a member of the pioneer Perris family, holds a City proclamation honoring the Rabb family at a Jan. 27 ceremony. With him are Perris City Councilwoman Tonya Burke, City Councilman David Starr Rabb, David Rabb's son, Mayor Pro-Tem Malcolm Corona and City Councilwoman Rita Rogers.

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East Seventh Street in Perris.

That's where generations of the City's Pioneer Rabb family called home since the 1940s.

At one point, seven Rabb brothers and sisters owned homes on Seventh Street and dozens of siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents and cousins grew up, worked hard, developed a strong religious faith and—over three quarters of a century—became vital threads in the City's fabric.

On Jan. 27, in a ceremony at the historic Depot Building, the descendants of Prentice G. Rabb and Ora Lee Currie were honored by the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association.

More than 40 Rabb family members attended the festivities including David Rabb Sr. the last survivor of 11 children of Prentice and Ora Lee Rabb and his sons, Perris City Councilman David Starr Rabb and DuBron Rabb.

David Starr Rabb, the valedictorian of Perris High School class of 2004, said the family appreciates taking its place among the pioneers of a great City and community. Dignitaries included Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Malcolm Corona, City Councilwomen Tonya Burke and Rita Rogers and Barry Busch, who represented Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley. Perris Mayor Michael Vargas was in Washington accepting an award on behalf of the City.

"This is a great event and we are glad to be honored," David Starr Rabb said.

Guided by faith

Rabb also addressed the audience as one of the keynote speakers, recounting how his grandmother and grandfather pulled up roots in their native Louisiana for better prospects in the Golden State. Prentice and Ora Lee Rabb initially settled in the Imperial Valley before making the trip west to Perris in 1941 and making their home at 336 East Seventh.

From the beginning, Prentice and Ora Lee became pillars in the First Baptist Church of Perris. Prentice assumed the role of assistant pastor just a year after arriving in the City and the family drew strength from their enduring faith through the decades.

"Give glory to God for bringing the Rabb family through 77 years in Perris!" David Starr Rabb said to thunderous cheers from his relatives and visitors.

His brother, DuBron Rabb, voiced a similar sentiment.

"I just thank God for this honor," he said.

Prentice and Ora Lee Rabb's children included Zepolia Peevy (1918-1982), a Perris resident; Lee Cora Kittling (1920-2004), a Perris resident; Prentice Rabb (1922-2007), A World War II veteran; Carrie Lee Love (1924-1967), a Perris resident; Bennie Rabb (1925-2006), a World War II veteran; Josephine Jones (1927-1917); Glennis Rabb (1930-2006), a Perris resident; Paul Rabb (1933-1971), who moved to Lake Elsinore; Magadeline McCullough (1932-2015); Jessie Rabb (1939-1996), a Perris resident and David Rabb Sr. (born 1941) the only Rabb sibling born in Riverside County. The elder David Rabb was born in Riverside General Hospital.

David Starr Rabb recalled fond memories of his aunts and uncles while growing up on East Seventh Street. He said he still remembers his Aunt Cora cooking "some mean tacos" that were always quickly gobbled up. Uncle Glennis was famous for playing 8-track cassettes and for keeping a pot of greens cooking on the stove. Aunt Josephine was the first Rabb to earn a high-school diploma, graduating from Perris High School in 1947. Aunt Magadeline was a rock of faith but still enjoyed gambling at casinos.

Some of the Rabb children moved away, planting roots in El Centro, Merced, Lake Elsinore and Alabama. But when they got the chance to return to Perris far off siblings labeled the trek "going back to Seventh Street."

Son of the Pioneers



Generations of the Rabb family pose for a photo outside the Perris Depot as part of the annual Fred T. Perris Day.

David Starr Rabb's father, David Rabb, remembered growing up in Perris as an idyllic time, an era when everyone seemed to know everyone else and there was plenty for a kid with an adventurous spirit to pursue. Rabb, 76, recalled catching crawdads and catfish from a reservoir near the now-abandoned Good Hope gold mine and once in a while taking a swim there.

Closer to home, a kid with a nickel could grab a Frosty from a stand at Seventh and D streets. The specialties at the PM Café at Seventh and G include burgers and beans—each for 26 cents. Soul-food lovers know Wallace's Café on Seventh between G and F streets as the spot to satiate their appetites.

Rabb said he never felt the sting of segregation at a time when most of the U.S. was divided along racial lines.

"Here in Perris no place was segregated," David Rabb said.

The town had its share of colorful characters, people like Mr. Gilbert and his white horse that plowed peoples' lots and removed weeds. There was Banta Beatty, who functioned as Perris Police Chief and City engineer, among other duties. Perris High School students all knew better than to cross Mr. James Hoadley, the one-armed principal known for administering his paddle on the backsides of erring kids.

Rabb was stricken with polio when he was 11, right before the vaccine to prevent the disease became readily available.

He recovered with only a slight limp and went on to form his own business, Rabb's Reasonable Plumbing, which he operated for 44 years. About the year 2000, Rabb learned he had contracted post-polio syndrome, which led to a gradual weakening in his legs. He decided to sell his business and retire.

He remains upbeat and thanked the City and the Perris Valley and the historical society for honoring his family.

"I had a lot of fun growing up in Perris," he said. "It does my heart good to be recognized."

City officials' comments

City Councilwoman Burke said families like the Rabbs "set the foundation and the history on which our City rests."

"Without their contributions, we would not be where we are as a City," she said. "It's also great to recognize one of our own—Councilman David Rabb."

Mayor Pro-Tem Corona said he was pleased to honor the Rabb family, who he called "hard-working, honest people who care about their community." Corona attended Perris High School with David Starr Rabb and now served on the City Council with him.

"Our City has a long history of families who have impacted and made significant contributions—like the Rabb family."

City Councilwoman Rogers said the Rabb family "has long been entrenched in the history of Perris."

It's wonderful to be able to honor our pioneer families in Perris," she said. "They are the founding fathers of this community who made contributions in business, education and now on the Perris City Council."

After all the remarks and reminiscing about the Rabb family legacy was completed, the crowd trickled out of the Depot to continue their weekend. Not far away was the place where much of that history took place—East Seventh Street.



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