



The Rampton family in 1934. Back row: Howard, Ruby, Ron, Beryl. Front row: Cecil, Florence, baby Coral, Frank, Olivine, Lewis.

Photo courtesy of Glenda Harker, granddaughter of Florence and Frank Rampton.

Rampton, Frank Graham (1887–1947)

NEROLI DOUGLAS

Neroli Douglas, M. App Sc. Teacher Librarianship (Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia), retired after over forty years of teaching. Currently Douglas is a school library cataloguer. As an educator and librarian in schools across Australia, Neroli influenced hundreds of children. She is married to Pastor Robert Douglas, with three adult children and ten grandchildren.

Frank Graham Rampton was a literature evangelist, pastor, evangelist, departmental director, and administrator who, together with his wife Florence, worked in New Zealand and Australia.¹

Early Life

Francis Graham Rampton was born on February 14, 1887, in Brunswick, Victoria, Australia.² He was the only son of James Rampton (1858-1928) and Hannah Graham who had both migrated from England.³ He had one sibling, Emily Jane, who was born in 1885.⁴

Rampton, who preferred to be called Frank, was quite a studious young man.⁵ He was active in the Methodist church where he was converted at age 14 and began preaching locally at age 15.⁶ In order to raise funds to fulfil his ambition of becoming a Methodist minister, he moved to Warburton in 1907 to work in Robinson's timber mill.⁷ There, he boarded in the home of a Seventh-day Adventist, R. L. Bond, who greatly influenced him.⁸ When the Bonds returned to America, Rampton moved in with another Adventist family, that of J. M. Johanson. After Rampton had a narrow escape from a falling tree, Johanson talked to him about the Adventist message.⁹

Rampton was positively influenced by other Adventists in Warburton such as S. V. Stratford who became a lifelong friend. Also, at this time two young boys, Ormond and Clifford Anderson, came to the mill handing out *Signs of the Times* magazines to the workers. They gave a copy to Rampton, who said he would like to speak to their father, the magazine editor. This led to further studies. Rampton carefully checked all Bible texts and was convinced of what was being taught. One Saturday morning, early in 1909, instead of going off to the mill, Rampton appeared at Mr. Stratford's door, all neatly dressed, to announce that he was going to church. Of course, Mr. Stratford was delighted, and so were the Johansons.¹⁰ Rampton was baptized in December 1909.¹¹ He left the mill and went to work briefly at the Signs Publishing Company.

Years of Service

In January 1910, Rampton entered the organized work as a colporteur in Victoria. He began by selling books such as *Heralds of the Morning* and *Practical Guide to Health*.¹² He was employed by the Signs Publishing Company as a city periodical agent in 1911 and given a salary. He had just started six girls in periodical subscription sales when he was appointed to be the state agent for New Zealand.¹³ The Church had just one conference in New Zealand at that time.¹⁴

In January 1912, Rampton took a ship to Wellington, New Zealand, where the conference office was located. Also working in that office was a young Australian lady, Florence Mills, who had transferred from the New South Wales Tract Society where she had served as secretary-treasurer. Now she held the position of conference secretary-treasurer.¹⁵ They were married in a quiet wedding in the home of Pastor Meyers on April 13, 1913, in Wellington, with Pastor J. M. Cole, the the conference president, officiating.¹⁶ Florence Rampton continued as

conference secretary- treasurer, as well as secretary to the Sabbath School, young people's, and field missionary departments.¹⁷ She held these positions until August 1915, when Frank Rampton requested to enter full-time ministerial work and they were sent to Auckland. Prior to this, he had been state agent in charge of literature evangelism.¹⁸ After a few months in Auckland, they were sent to Hamilton, which had no organized church as yet, although a few isolated members formed a Sabbath School.¹⁹ Later, after the beginning of World War I, Frank Rampton was appointed religious liberty secretary and they returned to live in Auckland until the end of the war. After the war, they were sent to Hamilton, where, despite opposition from other churches, Frank Rampton felt the work was very promising and a church was established.²⁰

March 1921 saw the Rampton family serving in Dannevirke, New Zealand, where a new church building was erected in 1923.²¹ Then after a year in Fielding, the family returned to the capital city, Wellington.²² Rampton worked alone in evangelistic work in Wellington until they sailed for Australia on April 3, 1925.²³ During his time in New Zealand, Rampton had been ordained to the gospel ministry at a camp meeting at Masterton.²⁴ Five children had also been born into the family: Ronald (1915-1987), Beryl (1917-1998), Ruby (1920-2013), Howard (1923-2009), and Lewis (1925-1973). Three more children were born after the family moved to Australia: Cecil (1928-2009), Olivine (1930-), and Coral (1933-).²⁵

After eighteen months of pastoral evangelism in Ipswich, Queensland, Rampton was appointed to Wairoa, New South Wales, to become the field missionary secretary of the Australasian Union Conference, in charge of the literature evangelism, a role he filled for the next four years. Colporteurs were encouraged by the policies and privileges he initiated.²⁶ The work prospered, especially as a result of the Bookmen's and Home Missionary Convention held in Warburton, Victoria, where plans put in place emphasized evangelism.²⁷ Rampton travelled to many conferences and churches during this time.

An invitation in 1931 to be president of the Tasmanian Conference prompted the family to move to Hobart. In 1932, the conference purchased a large tract of land in Fleet St., Moonah, and building commenced on a church, hall, and school that opened in 1933.²⁸ Growing membership resulted in other churches being built including Irishtown (later Smithton),²⁹ Kaoota, and Bishopsbourne. Collinsvale, the first Seventh-day Adventist church built in Australia, which was enlarged and a hall and schoolroom added.³⁰

Next came a move to Christchurch, South New Zealand, where Rampton was elected president in 1935. However, the following year, after an extensive road trip visiting the churches, Rampton became very ill and the doctors felt a warmer climate would be better for his weakened heart. Consequently, arrangements were made for him to become president of the Queensland Conference, a position he held until 1939.³¹ He then was appointed to the district of Albury for evangelistic and pastoral work before moving to Wollongong and Bulli in 1943, where he worked under difficult conditions.³² After three years, the family purchased a block of land in Fairy Meadow, a suburb of Wollongong and commenced building a house. They were able to move there in November 1946, but Rampton, who had suffered heart problems since 1936, became weak and very short of

breath. After a week in the Wollongong Hospital, he died on January 29, 1947, aged 59.³³ Gordon Branster, president of the South New South Wales Conference officiated at his funeral.³⁴ Florence Rampton remained in Wollongong for a further 23 years until her death on March 21, 1970.³⁵

During his thirty-seven years of active service, Rampton never spared himself.³⁶ He served as a colporteur, public evangelist, church pastor, departmental director and conference president. For many years he served on the Australian Union Conference executive committee and conference executive committees. He was a member of the Union Conference Committee of Special Study and was always regarded as a good student and one who had a thorough knowledge of the Bible.³⁷

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NOTES

1. Unless otherwise credited, the information in this biography comes from the personal knowledge of the author, a granddaughter of Frank and Florence Rampton.
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3. Howard Rampton, "Rampton Ramblings," unpublished manuscript held in the personal collection of the author, 5.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Francis Graham Rampton Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, folder: "Rampton, Frank Graham," document: "Biographical Information Blank."
7. "Rampton Ramblings," 5.
8. Francis Graham Rampton Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, folder: "Rampton, Frank Graham," document: "Biographical Information Blank."
9. Ibid.
10. "Rampton Ramblings," 6
11. Francis Graham Rampton Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, folder: "Rampton, Frank Graham," document: "Biographical Information Blank."
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14. "Rampton Ramblings," 8
15. Ibid.
16. "A quiet wedding took place...," *Australasian Record*, May 11, 1914, 8
17. "New Zealand Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association), 133-134.

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25. Personal knowledge of the author as a granddaughter of Frank and Florence Rampton.
26. F. G. Rampton, "Six Pounds a Week in the Colporteur Work," *Australasian Record* February 14, 1927, 7.
27. F. G. Rampton, "The Bookmen's and Home Missionary Convention, Warburton," *Australasian Record*, August 29, 1927, 7.
28. Howard Rampton, "Rampton Ramblings," 24.
29. James E Cormack, "Church Grew from Meeting by a Waterfall," *Australasian Record* January 25, 1960, 3.
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