

**IN
MEMORIAM**

RALPH EARLE DICKMAN

(March 18, 1908 • February 1, 1948)

**HENNEPIN COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION
DISTRICT COURT
HENNEPIN COUNTY
FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

FEBRUARY 28, 1948

Ralph Earle Dickman

(1908 - 1948)

RALPH EARLE DICKMAN was born March 18, 1908, at Lismore, Nobles County, Minnesota. His father was Dr. Lester Dickman, and his mother was Stella Minet Dickman. Dr. Dickman was the typical country doctor whose aim in life was not to accumulate riches, but to alleviate pain and suffering amongst the sick and needy. He was a great humanitarian and preached the doctrine of human welfare to his children. Young Ralph, as a boy, became impregnated with the doctrines of his father, and they remained with him all through his life.

After graduating from high school at Lismore, Ralph attended the University of Minnesota and was graduated therefrom in 1933, receiving his degree of Bachelor of Arts. Thereafter, in 1935, he obtained his degree of Bachelor of Laws, passed his bar examination and was admitted to the practice of law in 1936.

It is worthy of note that while attending the University, Ralph was intensely interested in social welfare and worked with the young people at the Wells Memorial Settlement House. Later he joined the staff of the B. F. Nelson Settlement House. The B. F. Nelson Settlement House was located in Northeast Minneapolis and also in the First District of Hennepin County. Ralph felt that this section of the city was neglected insofar as programs for recreation, prevention of juvenile delinquency, and for the many other handicaps that go with an underprivileged district were concerned.

According to his philosophy, there were two groups in the district that needed special care, those were the youngsters going to school and the old people, who, because of age, were unable to work and had no reserves with which to live. Pushing aside all personal and aggrandizement, he made up his mind to devote his life to the social betterment of these groups, and so we find them working day and night to establish boys' clubs and mens' club on the East side. The mens' clubs consisted mainly

of men who themselves had rather underprivileged childhoods and who knew that the road that begins at poverty and leads to success is indeed a rough one and difficult one on which to travel.

He was one of the founders of the East Minneapolis Recreation Association which consisted of a small group of East side men who wished to prevent juvenile delinquency in that district. By solicitation, they raised over \$5,000.00 which was used to send underprivileged children to camp each summer and to provide halls and other places so that children would have some place to play and to work and which would serve as an outlet for normal child activity. All children, without regard to race, color or religion, were taken care of and the project was a tremendous success. So worthwhile was this program, that the organization has now become a Community Fund agency with a regular staff and a budget of \$15,000.00 a year.

Ralph was very proud of this accomplishment. He felt, however, that the East side was somewhat handicapped by lack of representation on the Board of County Commissioners, and at the request of groups of young people, he filed for, and was elected County Commissioner the First District in 1940. He was re-elected in 1944 for a second term. During his entire term as County Commissioner, we find again the strong regard for human welfare exerting itself. Old age pensions were raised, the County bought a magnificent old home out near Lake Calhoun which was to be used for the care of underprivileged children and which is now known as the Vince A. Day Home for Children.

He always looked upon slum districts as being a great hindrance to social advancement and child welfare, and so we find him, wherever possible, removing these slums and encouraging modest homes to be built where once there were unsightly hovels.

He loved the beauty of nature and one of his special projects was to keep the shoreline of [Lake] Minnetonka beautiful. The protection of that shoreline for the benefit of all the people of

the County was one of his ambitions and the protection of the people who lived along the shores of this famous lake was another. For this purpose, he was instrumental in obtaining a patrol boat to patrol the lake and to render the protection of law to the people on its shores.

After his election as County Commissioner in 1940, he suffered a stroke and during the rest of his life, he was handicapped physically to a marked degree. Most men would have quit then, but not Ralph E. Dickman. There was work to be done, youth and age still depended upon him and he was not going to forsake his friends now. Overwork at last exacted its toll, and February 1, 1948, he peacefully passed away. He left surviving him a devoted wife, Cynthia Sundal Dickman who was his childhood sweetheart, and who married him in 1931. He also left two young children, Cindy and Rolf Dickman.

It is hard to believe he is dead, or should we believe with the poet:

“There is no death
The stars go down to rise upon another shore
And bright in Heaven’s jeweled crown
They shine forever more.

And ever near us unseen
The dear immortal spirits tread
For all the bondless the universe is life
There are no dead.”

Ralph Dickman is no longer with us, but he still lives. His accomplishments, noble ideals and spirit of unselfishness will forever live in the hearts and minds of the people of the East side – the people he loved so well!

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Prepared and read by Michael J. Dillon, February 28, 1948.