

EDWALENI MISSION 9 DECEMBER, 1941

THAT DAY started very quietly at Edwaleni Mission and Industrial School in South Africa. Ordinarily, it would have been the day the School ended for the holidays. Buses would have there to pick up the students and take them home or five miles to the bus stop at Rice's Halt, or to Isingolweni, ten miles away to catch the train or transfer to other buses. But the School had been informed that the buses could only come on 8 December so all that activity had already taken place. The Pearl Harbor attack and the Declaration of war against Japan had occurred two days previously. The Principal, Dr. Lowell Rice and his wife, Marjorie, had gone away for a much needed rest, leaving my father, John Riley in charge. David age 8, and I, Paul, almost 7, were also on vacation from school. My mother was home schooling us, teaching us the Calvert Course at home. My sister, Lois, almost 5 and Thomas, age 3, were playing together. The Rileys and a few workers and caretakers were the only ones left on that flat hilltop.

That evening just before 5 O'clock, David jumped on his little wooden scooter and coasted downhill to the Isibaya (Cattle Corral) to watch the cows be driven in from the fields and be milked. Suddenly there was a strong wind that scared David; he jumped on his scooter and was propelled, by the wind, uphill to our house where he grabbed the front doorknob with both hands, but the wind was too strong, the doorknob broke off in his hands and he was blown around the corner where he grabbed that screen door knob. I heard him screaming and unlocked that door for him and let him in. Meanwhile my Dad heard the wind and rushed upstairs. He recalled that the attic stairs were down in the apartment on that side of the house. As he closed that trapdoor, he heard a loud crash on the roof, and then saw the roof and ceiling on that side of the house blow away! There was a driving rain that caused damage to the interior of our home. The wind and rain suddenly stopped. Looking out, we saw a large water tank in the orchard at the side of our house. Later, we found it had been half full of rainwater and had blown over our home knocking down the chimney onto our side of the roof, which kept it from blowing away. Then we saw the large 100ft. by 50ft. workshop that was below us had been completely demolished. Even the reinforced concrete walls were no match for the wind. Roofing material, washtubs, bushes, trees, and other debris littered the country side. People brought us back washtubs they found miles away from us. But the other buildings remained fairly intact. No one on the Mission Station was hurt. Huts on the hillsides, near the Mission, had completely disappeared. It took a lot of time and effort to rebuild and do all the repairs. It was war time and all materials were in short supply.

Earlier, Carl Rice had left the Mission to sail to America to attend Greenville College. Then Eleanor Rice, age 21, died in her home on 8 April. She had leukemia. Then several Missionaries, including J.S Rice, Mable Rice, and John Rice had left on Furlough just before United entered the war. Lowell Rice and Marjorie Peach were married 30 July. Lowell had already graduated from Medical school. All four of us Riley kids had whooping cough. A nurse, Miss Allis (maybe Ollis) stayed with us Riley children so our parents could attend the wedding.

YES, 1941, ESPECIALLY, DECEMBER 9, WAS FULL OF SURPRISES. BUT GOD WAS ALWAYS IN CONTROL!
WRITTEN BY PAUL M. RILEY MD. FACS, ALMOST 83, WHO NOW ALSO IS A SURVIVOR OF GALLSTONE
ATTACKS AND RECENT SURGERY. HE STILL CHOSE TO STAY UNDER GOD'S UNFAILING PROTECTION.
THERE ARE TOO MANY CO-INCIDENTS, IN MY LIFE, NOT TO BE MIRACLES!