

JOHN DAVID RILEY, BORN 24 MAY, 1933, DIED 26 FEBRUARY, 2014. (PAUL'S RECOLLECTIONS)

David was born at Oakdale Free Methodist Mission in Breathitt County, Kentucky. He was delivered by Nurse Harriet Francis who became a close friend of our family. She even came to South Africa to work as an independent missionary and lived with us at times.

The winter of 1933-34, Rileys moved to Rock Lick, a remote Mission Station, six miles back in the woods from Oakdale Mission. There David developed Rickets, he was sick and his bones were becoming deformed. David was not getting enough sunshine because of the bitter cold. No milk was available; the moonshiners, surrounding the mission, were trying to "starve out" the Rileys! But after reading Proverbs 27:27, Edna Riley was not surprised when a lady from their Church in McPherson, Kansas, sent them, unsolicited, several milk goats by train. David recovered completely and the whole family regained their health by drinking the goat milk. After I was born January, 1935, David's mom found him under the bed with a pair of pliers working on the bed springs. When asked what he was doing David said; "Fixing motor car." David had never seen a motor car! Later, in Africa, at age 5, David would sneak down to the shop where his dad was lecturing to motor mechanic students, all high school graduates. He would hide behind the students since his dad had told him to stay away from there. Later he caught David repeating the lectures to the students and answering their questions. One day David got into our 1927 Buick and drove it around the Mission station shifting perfectly and then parked it so my dad could not tell it had been moved. He understood cars so perfectly that he did not need any driver's Ed! But he had to stand up all the time to reach the pedals! If a student hadn't ratted on him our dad would have never found out. David's brain was prewired for mechanical stuff. He could not concentrate on his studies in first grade because he said wheels were going around in his head all the time. When someone lost the key to a trunk, David made one from scratch. Soon women were coming from miles away carrying huge steamer trunks, foot lockers, phonographs and even pieces of furniture on their heads. They had lost the keys to these items. Using pieces of scrap metal, drills, files and a hacksaw David would successfully make keys for these people. He was only stumped once. Someone found a beautiful key and insisted that David make them a lock to fit the key! When he was 12 years old he made a steam engine out of car parts. In high school he said the teacher was wrong when he said a straight line was "the shortest distance between two points." David told him: "A straight line is the arc of a circle whose radius is infinity." David was already thinking like an astrophysicist.

In college, David worked in the print shop. He kept the machinery operating smoothly. A few days ago LeOra (Samuelson) Mudge, who operated the linotype machine at the print shop, told me by Email, how much she learned from David about the machine. In college he also helped with the college radio station, and was a licensed Ham radio operator. In Burundi, David found a large 440 volt generator. He stripped all the wiring off of it, then rewound the motor by hand changing it to the local 220 voltage. He then used it to supply hydroelectric power to the Station. He also made a voltage regulator to keep the voltage constant in spite of changes in the flow of water to the generator. He also made an automatic telephone switchboard for the mission station to replace the unreliable manual switchboard. His unorthodox thinking kept Radio CORDAC on the air. During the genocide in Burundi, David's innovations helped several pastors and their families escape from the country. Losing so many close friends, and

former students, caused him great anguish. His grief was almost unbearable! Sometimes all he could do was to pray with the victims and make sure they were ready to go to heaven!

In 1936, the Rileys moved to Smyrna, Tennessee, where John Riley pastored the Church and graduated from Auto Diesel College in Nashville. When a dog kept coming to attacks the goats, John had to shoot it. I was not awake but David was watching. I remember him telling me the next day how he was impressed by the big flash of the shotgun. In 1937, the Church burned down. This was very hard on David, I remembering him screaming;- “The Church is burning down, the Church is burning down!”. I remember both of us riding our big black billy-goat Drum-drum. We both rode him at the same time. But later our dad heard David screaming. Drum-drum had him against the fence and was butting him repeatedly. Fortunately, that goat had no horns but the bruises were bad enough!

The Rileys arrived in South Africa on 27 January, 1938. When WWII ended, hundreds of missionaries in South Africa, were overdue for furloughs. There was only room for three more on the freighter, MARSHFIELD VICTORY. So, early in 1946, David, Paul, and their dad sailed several months ahead of Edna and their two younger kids. On that ship the passengers were housed in the old gunners’ quarters directly over the propeller. The floor of the cabin was vibrating all the time and the grinding of the propeller was very loud. When the sea became rougher, the propeller would lift up right out of the water, speed up and the plunge back under the water. All the twelve passengers, except David, became seasick. But David was immune. He visited every part of the ship and spent most of the time in the control and engine rooms and wanted to learn everything about the ship. He timed the fuel consumption. He was impressed that the engines were burning twelve gallons of fuel oil every minute! In turn, when I was feeling better, every morning, I would collect the flying fish that had landed on the deck during the night. I would clean and fillet these fish. Then I would feed them to several cats that lived on the ship. Several months later our mother, Edna, and the two younger children, Lois and Thomas, sailed to America on the converted troop trip, “Marine Tiger”. Several thousand passengers were packed in like sardines! Our mother and dad home schooled us using the Calvert Course.

After David and I finished the eighth grade, we needed to start high school. There was no room left in the Hostel in Port Shepstone, forty miles away from Edwalweni Mission. Then, Pilgrim Holiness missionary, Romey Strickland, who lived in Brakpan, near Johannesburg, agreed to keep both of us in the Servant’s quarters next to his house and enroll us in the local high school. He said he would soon be starting a school for Missionary Children. We had to travel over 400 miles by train to reach Brakpan. But we found that we were attending a Commercial High School. We were being prepared for a trade. We would have to leave school after two years, then, start as apprentices, learning a trade. We would be unable to go to College or University. Fortunately, after six months, two places in the Hostel in Port Shepstone opened up, so we took the train back home and were enrolled in Port Shepstone High School. On the train, at night, on the way home from Brakpan, many miles north of Durban, David’s mechanical ear woke him up. The train noise had changed! He sensed danger! The other passengers, and the conductor, were sleeping soundly. David rushed to the front of our rail car which was swaying badly. He saw that the baggage car in front of us had derailed. Large showers of sparks were coming from the

wheels and the rails. He immediately knew what was going to happen next! David quickly pulled the cord for the emergency brakes and stopped the train. He was told that he had saved the train as well as many lives by his quick action. The train was about to go around some dangerous curves and cross a deep ravine. Everyone was surprised that a 16 year old had acted like a professional railroad man.

In high school, in Port Shepstone, South Africa, we had compulsory CADETS. It was like the ROTC here in USA. David excelled in target shooting. It was also a science which he perfected. Often the bulls-eye in the target was one big hole. No one could believe he could put all ten bullets through one hole so David had to purposely spread all ten bullet holes around in the bull's eye so they could all be counted. Once had mastered that subject, he lost most of his interest in guns and shooting. Most of his problem solving methods were very unconventional. He even learned to be an excellent care giver and "nurse" for his wife, Annie, when she became so disabled. He faithfully turned her every two hours so she developed no bedsores or pneumonia! He even obtained a Holter lift and a van with a wheelchair lift so he could haul Annie to the hospital as well as to her numerous medical appointments. That was God's last big assignment for him. He mastered that subject as well.

David was so different and unique, that, sometimes, it was very hard to follow his logic. He had so many questions that were so deep that no one could answer them. His IQ test was above the 99 percentile. Fortunately, His wife, Annie, was down to earth and practical and knew how to keep David in check whenever his discussions and actions could cause him to make a social blunder. Several times she was able to stop him from risking his life for, or giving all his money to suffering and needy people! After Annie died, on 28 June, 2011, David felt lost without her.

They are now back together again. And David has the answers to all his perplexing questions!

Written by: DAVID'S YOUNGER BROTHER, PAUL RILEY, Riverside CA, E-mail;- hlinza@ymail.com