

MISSIONARY J.S. RICE GETS HIS MAN  
By Paul M. Riley MD; son of John Riley

In January 1937, Free Methodist Missionary James Silas Rice, the Principal of Edwaleni Industrial School in South Africa, felt that he had been dealt a finishing blow. He had struggled and sacrificed to keep the Motor Mechanics training program going since he arrived at Edwaleni in 1913. As cars got more complicated, he had foreseen the need for a fully trained motor mechanic to be in charge. He had finally found John Riley. He and others had helped John get trained to be the new head of the Motor Mechanics Department. John was to start work at Edwaleni in early February, 1937. But suddenly the unexpected had happened! John could not come at the expected time. Then funds to send the Riley family to Edwaleni had been cut off by the Mission Board! Bro. Rice did not have a back-up plan! The Motor Mechanics program at Edwaleni would be closed in just a few days.

Bro. Rice recalled, how, with the help of Rev. N.B. Ghormley, Edwaleni Bible School had been converted to an Industrial School for men. The Bible School was moved to Fairview Mission near the coast. Initially, woodworking, tailoring, blacksmithing, and wagon making were taught. But then more wagon tracks were widened and more and more cars appeared. The rough, dusty roads kept the cars in the workshops much of the time. If a car was driven on the road for a day, it would be in the repair shop for days or even weeks, especially if parts had to be ordered from Durban or from overseas! Bro. Rice had much experience as a blacksmith and as an auto mechanic. So he saw an opportunity to train some of the high school students to be motor mechanics. In spite of great obstacles, the Motor Mechanics training soon proved to be the best in South Africa. Leatherworking, carpentry, and Tailoring were also being taught. Many students were converted in the chapel services and revivals at the School. All the teachers had to be born again Christians. Most of them were also good preachers. Even the Government School Inspectors were Missionary kids who had grown up in South Africa. The students were being prepared to be leaders. They were taught to sing, debate, and give speeches and sermons. Famous Evangelists such as Rev. E.E. Shelhammer, and later Charley Slater and Rev. Nicholas Bhengu held Revival Meetings with students participating. Debating teams competed among themselves and with other Christian Schools. On weekends, Student Evangelical teams were sent out to hold meetings in nearby heathen communities. Sons, Lowell, Winget, and daughter Eleanor were born. But Winget died at age two years of pneumonia. Then in 1920 the Rices went on their first furlough. Bro. Rice was exhausted. He needed to rest, but instead went to New York to learn the Tanning trade. In 1921 another son, Carl, was born in Endicot, New York, while Bro. Rice was learning the new trade. The Rices then returned to South Africa. A Tannery was built down by the Umtamvuna River. George Nyouse was trained to teach the Tanning Trade. He was an excellent teacher. Most of the tanned leather was used for making shoes, saddles, briefcases, wallets, and other items in the leather shop. Later, son John Rice was born.

In 1925 the South African Government realized that the African men trained at Edwaleni were just as good if not better than their White counterparts. If Edwaleni became accredited as a recognized Industrial School, the Government would pay all the teachers' salary and pay most of the students' tuition and some other expenses. Motor Mechanics had become a three year course. The students had to have finished high school and passed their Matric exams before

applying. When Rev. Ghormley left in 1925, Bro. Rice realized he couldn't continue much longer to run the Motor Mechanics Department. The School could not continue without financial aid from the South African Government. The South African Government in turn required more and more courses and trained instructors! Finally they told Bro. Rice that someone with a British or American degree in Auto Engineering would someday be required to be head of the Department. In 1927, he met John M. Riley who was working as a garage Foreman at God's Bible School. He encouraged John to finish high school after Bible school. They met again in 1931-1932 in McPherson, Kansas, where John graduated from high school with Lowell Rice. Bro. Rice was on furlough teaching at Central Academy in McPherson, Kansas. The Rices attended John and Edna Riley's wedding on July 31, 1932 in Kansas City. Back in South Africa Eleanor barely survived after she was bitten by a night adder. Finally John Riley was able to graduate from Nashville Auto-Diesel College in 1936. Meanwhile Bro. Rice was given an ultimatum by the South African Government. If a fully trained Auto Engineer was not found by February 1, 1937, the Motor Mechanics Department would be closed and moved to a Government school. Bro. Rice was relieved when the Free Methodist Mission Board agreed to pay for the Riley family to come; but then Edna Riley became pregnant. Her due date was January 1, 1937. The Rileys wouldn't reach Edwaleni in time! Then after Lois Riley was born the Mission Board notified Bro. Rice that NOW the Rileys had too many children so the Board refused to send them. Bro. Rice wondered if he would be next since he had four children! Bro. Rice was very frustrated because the Mission Board did not seem to realize the importance of Edwaleni. They did not realize that Students were being converted and were becoming Church Leaders and even Evangelists! They also did not seem to realize that there was a deadline. A suitable person would need to be found in just a few days! Carl Rice remembered his father spending hours on his knees groaning and asking God to work a miracle. They had spent much of their own money on John Riley's education, now there were no funds available for their trip. How would he be able to tell his teachers that they would have to leave Edwaleni and move to a Government School? But the Lord had not forgotten him. Unknown to him, there was a fully trained ex-missionary mechanic in Port Shepstone just forty miles away!

One day in January, 1937, Rev. Ray Miller, a Pilgrim Holiness missionary, who had held Revival Meetings at Edwaleni, stopped by Edwaleni because his car was not running right. He was on his way back to his Mission at Mount Frere, in the Transkei. There was great cooperation between all the Holiness Missions. With Bro. Miller was William Greenburg, a former missionary from another Holiness Church. Bro. Greenburg's Mission had become short of funds. Now he was on his own! Bro. Greenburg was working as an Electrician and Motor Mechanic in Port Shepstone, forty miles from Edwaleni. In his spare time he traveled to various mission stations and donated his time to work on electric and mechanical projects and repairs. Bro. Rice explained his problem to his guests. Bro. Greenburg then stated that he had just been certified as a Master Mechanic. He was a bachelor without any financial obligations. He then told Bro. Rice that he knew John Riley. His Mission had required that he take a course in Missions at God's Bible school before he could go to South Africa. There he had met John Riley and spent a lot of time with him at the garage and in classes. He was also convinced that John Riley was the right man for Edwaleni. He agreed to take John's place at Edwaleni for a year. If he was given room and board, he would send all his salary from the South African Government to make it possible for John to come the next year. Bro. Rice and his guests knelt and thanked

the Lord for this wonderful answer to prayer in the nick of time. Bro. Greenbrg was able to move to Edwaleni just in time for school to start.

When it came time to pay for the Rileys to come to Edwaleni, still not enough money had been collected. Bro. Rice met with the teachers and explained that if John Riley did not get to Edwaleni by January 31, 1938 they would have to leave Edwaleni. The teachers agreed to give up one month's salary! This was just enough money! Fortunately the teachers were paid back from Bro. Greenburg's future monthly earnings.

The entire Rice family met the Rileys as they got off their ship, the Duilio, in Durban on 27 January, 1938. Grace Allen, Mrs. G.H. Agnew and Daisy Frederick (from Mozambique) were also there. The new school year started February 2, 1938. Mr. Greenburg helped John get started and loaned him his own prize set of tools until John could get his own. Seventeen year old Carl Rice was very impressed with John Riley. In spite of his youth he taught some courses for John. Bro. Rice and John Riley realized that their paths had not crossed by accident. God had been working behind the scene. John's meeting Mr. Greenburg at GBS made it possible for the Rileys to serve in South Africa. Bro. Greenburg is one of our unsung heroes! He had given a year of his life and a year's salary to help a friend even though he belonged to a different Church!

Christmas 1938 was a memorable event. The missionary Christmas party was held on Monday, December 26, at Fairview Mission. Bro. Rice had given my mother a 1927 Buick which my dad, John, was fixing up to make the seventy mile trip to Fairview. But time was running out. Bro. Rice suggested he make repairs on the model A Ford and drive it. I believe it was the same Model A that Lowell Rice drove back and forth to medical school in Johannesburg. John finally got it fixed at about midnight on Saturday night, Christmas Eve. The Rileys left very early Monday morning. The Rices, Rileys, Bro. and Sr. Ralph Jacobs, Sr. Mae Armstrong, Bro. and Sr. A.M. Anderson, Sr. Margaret LaBarre, Sr. Grace Allen, and Sr. Lillie Smith (Mrs. G. Harry) Agnew were there. Mrs. Agnew died the next year (1939). She was buried at Fairview near the grave of Dr. Backenstoe. She had carried on after her husband died thirty six years previously in 1903! G. Harry Agnew's first wife, Susan Sherman Agnew, had died in 1895. She had been in Africa less than a year! In 1947 Mrs. A.E. Haley was also buried at Fairview.

Christmas celebration in 1939 and 1940 were held in the living-dining area of the Rices' home. The students were all gone for the holidays. All the people living on the mission station were invited. Everyone got a small gift. Bro. Rice really looked fearsome in his Santa Claus outfit! Several African children got scared and escaped through the window. The Christmas tree with home-made decoration was beautiful! We did not know that 1940 was the last Christmas at Edwaleni for Bro. Rice. His daughter, Eleanor then became very ill and died of leukemia on April 8, 1941. Carl was already studying at Greenville College. He had left Edwaleni in August, 1940. The loss of their only daughter was a terrible blow for the Rices! She was buried on the Mission Station beside her brother Winget. The Rices left on furlough three months later. Lowell Rice was Santa Claus for the next few years.

I attended school in Port Shepstone. I often would see Mr. Greenburg doing electrical work at several businesses, homes, and at one of the hotels. When other electricians had a difficult electrical problem, they would call Mr. Greenburg! If he was called out on Sunday he would not charge a fee, but asked to be permitted to preach to the hotel guests or conduct prayer and Bible studies in the homes. He would stop his work and talk to me. My brother, Tom

was getting toxic injections for Bilharzia and had lost a lot of weight. Whenever Mr. Greenburg saw Tom he would buy him some ice cream! Mr. Greenburg even told me about the time he got arrested for shoplifting when he was very young! He was from New Jersey. My dad, John Riley, stayed with Mr. Greenburg, whenever he had to stay overnight in Port Shepstone. Bro. Greenburg would travel to different mission stations to help with their electrical and mechanical problems. He paid all the expenses from the money he made as an electrical contractor in Port Shepstone.

In spite of other obstacles, Edwaleni continued to graduate top students who were Spirit filled. They had been trained to be leaders in their communities. They spread the Gospel wherever they went. Some Motor Mechanics even quit working on cars and became Preachers and Evangelists!

Bro. J.S. Rice was worn out from his struggle to keep Edwaleni School from being closed. While on furlough, on August 28, 1942, he had a heart attack and died in McPherson, Kansas. He had given his life for Edwaleni. With God's help, John Riley and Lowell Rice kept Edwaleni Industrial School open throughout the War, when money, equipment, car parts, and gasoline were in very short supply. No missionaries were able to travel to or from America until after the War.

Several years after the War, the School was unable to meet all the Government requirements and was moved, along with the Instructors, to a Government School in Edendale. These teachers continued the traditions started at Edwaleni by Bro. J.S. Rice even though they were no longer in a Mission School. Churches continued to be started all over South Africa by former students. One of the Motor Mechanic teachers became an Evangelist. Today, his son is a Free Methodist Bishop in South Africa.

Not only did Edwaleni train Tradesmen, it also trained future Christian Leaders!

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