

## BUSH ICE CREAM WITH A “DOLLOP” OF CULTURE SHOCK!

Written by Missionary Kid Paul M. Riley, MD

The Missionaries at Edwaleni Free Methodist Mission Station in South Africa were excited. The year was 1920. The First World War had kept them isolated; now Bishop W.A. Sellew was coming to visit again after being gone fifteen years. Missionaries and pastors from the other FM Churches and Mission Stations had gathered at Edwaleni for the Celebrations! The Missionaries were anxious to show the Bishop how much progress had been made while he was gone. They also wanted to feed him American food, not the cornmeal, hominy and beans he had endured during his previous visit. In 1905 the Bishop had to travel by horseback, on foot, or by ox wagon, Now there were even two cars available to carry him to some of the Churches and Missions, provided the cars were in working order and the roads were open! The cars spent most of their time in the repair shop! The Mission ox wagon was slow, but much more reliable. Often the Mission team of oxen would have to be sent out to haul in motor vehicles that had broken down on the road! Miss Lucy A. Hartman, a veteran missionary who served from 1898 to 1950 related this story to the Riley family who had arrived in South Africa on January 27, 1938.

Miss Hartman recalled the first visit Bishop Sellew made in 1905. He came to organize the scattered Missions and Churches, some started by Independent Missionaries; all wanting to join the FM Church. They would then be part of the Free Methodist Churches in America and other parts of the world, teach the same doctrine, and follow the same rules. He had to make sure that the right doctrine was being taught so he carefully explained the Church policy and organization to the African pastors, and answered their questions. After a long and frustrating discussion with the preachers, he later addressed Miss Hartman. “Lucy I am surprised they cannot understand my explanation of sin; they seem very confused. Yet they know their Bible and Doctrine very well. I am surprised that you missionaries have not taught more about sin; you missionaries should have taught them that long ago!” “Well Bishop” Miss Hartman replied; “That is because you used words the interpreter did not understand! When you said: “There is a difference between a misdemeanor and a foul sin”, he interpreted it as: “There is a difference between the sin of a maiden, and the sin of a chicken.” No wonder the preachers were confused!”

In the last fifteen years Grace Allen had started a Girls’ School at Fairview, Miss Hartman had started a Church at Itemba along with a primary school plus several outstations. At Edwaleni, Rev. Ghormley had started a school for boys now being taught Industrial Arts with the help of J.S. Rice who came in 1913. Many Outstations and Churches had been started. Since the students were gone on vacation there was room for all the Missionaries and Pastors. The School’s large kitchen and dining room could be used. Mrs. G., a gourmet cook, was in charge of the food. She had ordered food staples from Port Shepstone, forty miles away. These had then been brought by train to Izingolweni, then to Edwaleni by ox wagon. The fatted calf (steer) had been prepared. The coarse brown flour had been sifted through organdy cloth to make the white bread and cakes. Vegetables had been brought up by ox wagon from the gardens down by the river. After the food had started cooking Mrs. G. unpacked her mystery box, her secret weapon, a hand-cranked ice cream freezer. Now, she was going to really surprise Bishop Sellew. “Where is the ice?” a missionary asked. “Oh I spoke to the storekeeper at Izingolweni”, she replied. “He orders twenty five pound blocks of ice for his ice box from Durban. It comes to Izingolweni by train twice a week; so he ordered an extra block for me. It was to arrive early this morning. I sent our postal carrier plus our strongest workman early this morning before daylight to fetch it. With two men, it will come much faster; they can take turns carrying it. The block of ice is covered with several layers of sawdust and burlap, all neatly sewn together with twine. It is so well insulated that the ice won’t melt! The ice will be here anytime now.” An older missionary, looking shocked,

replied: “Lady, in this part of Africa, you never send two men for just one package no matter how heavy it is! Bad things happen if you do! You notice we send only one man the ten miles to Izingolweni once a week for the heavy mail bag. In this part of Africa heavy loads are only carried by women. They are very proud of this skill! As children, these women are trained to carry heavy loads on their heads. They even learn to carry heavy buckets of water long distances without spilling a drop! This is why these women have such perfect posture and never have any back problems! The women get angry if a man, carrying any object, does not let them carry it. That is why, often, we see a woman carrying our heavy mail bag. African women never get tired as long as they carry their loads on their heads. In fact they consider it a privilege to do so! The postman passes by at least twenty kraals (homesteads) in the ten miles he travels, so he has plenty of “volunteers”.

The two African men picked up the package from the train. They kept asking, “Where is the other package? Nobody sends two men for just one package”. Finally they were convinced. They sat down and scratched their heads. “How can two men carry one package?” Finally they thought of a solution. They carefully undid the package saving every piece of string and every grain of sawdust. The weaker man carried the lighter load; the stronger man carried the block of ice. Almost immediately women came running; they all wanted a turn. No one had ever seen such a large block of ice. All they had seen were small pieces of hail and occasional frost down by the river! They had to show their families and friends this amazing object! The men also made side trips to show it to their friends and relatives! It was a hot, humid, day and the block of ice kept getting smaller!

Mrs. G. was ready to send out a search party when there was a knock at the kitchen door. There stood the two men. One was dripping wet with sweat, the other was dripping wet with ice water. Neither man had even considered changing loads back and forth along the way so that they both could stay cool! When Mrs. G. asked for the ice she was proudly handed a small ice cube. Then she was handed a bundle of sawdust neatly wrapped in burlap. Their mission had been successfully accomplished; so the two men thought! In fact, they also thought they deserved a bonus for carrying out such an unusual undertaking! Bishop Sellew was baffled when he saw the hand cranked ice cream maker on a table, in the shade, on the back porch, along with an ice pick, a bag of rock salt and scoops all covered with netting to protect them from the flies. But he had been in Africa long enough not to ask any embarrassing questions! Dessert that night was angel food cake and warm custard pudding!

The Rileys became well acquainted with Lucy Hartman between 1938 and 1950. She spent a lot of time at Edwaleni even though her mission station was fifteen miles away. She never learned to drive her car. Instead, her handyman had been taught how to drive on the mile long oval test track that went around the edge of the hilltop at Edwaleni. This track was used later by the John Riley’s motor mechanic students in order to test the cars they had repaired. No one knew how “Jehu”, Miss Hartman driver, got his license. No one would ride in her car a second time. Jehu never learned to slow down on bad roads. The other drivers would recognize the car from far away and get out of the way. Jehu also never learned to slow down before he hit a pot hole or how not to put on brakes at the same time as he hit the pothole, something other drivers quickly learned! So, Sr. Hartman often spent time at the Riley’s home, waiting for her car to be repaired. The junkyard had broken springs, broken clutch housings, and other broken pieces of the under carriage of her car. Lucy would sit in the front passenger seat of her car quite unconcerned about all the hard bumps and near misses! She had complete, unwavering, trust in the Lord!

While waiting for her car repairs, Auntie Hartman entertained the Rileys with numerous almost

unbelievable stories of her past. Unfortunately most of these stories have been forgotten. The Rileys all attended Lucy Hartman's funeral in 1950. She had refused furlough or retirement and had died at her post at Itemba, the Mission Station she had started fifty years before. She had started several schools and churches and had over 500 converts. All of her converts, who could, attended her funeral and burial.

\* MAIL BAGS:- these were made out of heavy waterproof canvas. These were cylinders up to two feet in diameter and up to four feet long. A steel cable was threaded through metal eyelets in the mouth of the sack. In closing the sack, a flap covered the contents, then the cable was pulled tight and padlocked. The post office had one key, the recipient had the other key. These bags could be thrown from moving trains or railway buses. Farmer usually lived miles from the main road to avoid the dust from passing vehicles. The bag would be hung on a tree or a high gatepost. The farmer could look through binoculars or a telescope to see if he had mail. A woman would carry the mail if the bag was heavy or if it could not be picked up by car or ox wagon. The empty bag would be returned to the post office or left at the drop off place. Edwaleni over 300 boarding students, plus other personnel so had a very large private mail bag.

After the South African Railways had a regular truck and bus service to towns far from the railroad, Edwaleni's mail bag was dumped at Rice's Halt, five miles from Edwaleni. Sometimes the bag would be there unattended for several hours. It was never stolen!

When I was 2 years old, I remember that we had an ice box in Smyrna, Tennessee. The ice man brought 25 lb blocks of ice whenever we needed more ice. He carried the ice in a large pair of sharp tongs. In 1948, when the Rileys returned to South Africa, they bought a kerosene refrigerator. (Serval brand, made in Sweden), Whenever it stopped working, they would turn it upside down, for an hour, then it would start working again!

This was written to make sure the Riley children and grandchildren never forget Auntie Hartman and her "Bush Ice Cream" story.

PAUL M. RILEY MD:

Email:- [hlinza@ymail.com](mailto:hlinza@ymail.com)