

SPRINGING MY “HOUSE TRAP”: (AS TOLD TO ME BY MY BROTHER, DAVID RILEY)

Mr. Riley, your house will be robbed tonight. We have checked several other houses in our city, but your house is ideal for this operation. Do not worry, you will be safe. We have planned this robbery very carefully. All the necessary arrangements have been made. If you listen carefully and do exactly as I say, you will not be harmed. At least twelve armed policemen will be here to protect you. Just for tonight, you will no longer be Mr. Riley, You will be Mr V., a rich, Greek, diamond merchant. You have just purchased a large supply of diamonds

The year was 1965. I was really surprised. The Chief of Police for the City of Bujumbura, Burundi was at my door. He was speaking French. I knew that he was an honest man. He had been well trained at the Police Academy in Belgium, to take over from the Belgians, when the County became Independent, in 1962. I invited him into the house where we sat down and discussed plans for that night. I knew that men, dressed in Police Uniforms, were going around at night to the homes of foreigners saying that they were checking for illegal guns and contraband, but, then, they would steal cash, and other valuables, at gun point. The Chief told me that a gang of real Policemen were the culprits. Fortunately, a Police Informer had infiltrated the group. They now had plans to catch those rogue Policemen, red-handed! So, I agreed to help them set up a “HOUSE TRAP” for the culprits!

I, David Riley, left my Missionary Family in South Africa and sailed back to USA in early 1953 to attend Greenville College in Greenville, Illinois. From an early age, I had a flair for mechanical and electronic devises. At Greenville, I obtained my HAM radio license. I also fell in love with Annie Robinson, a graduating senior. We were married in 1954. Our daughter, Judyth, was born in 1956, the year I graduated. We were then accepted as Missionaries to Burundi by The Friends’ Church. I would be an engineer for Radio CORDAC, a Christian radio station, broadcasting the Good News to Central Africa. Annie would be teaching. But, first, we were to go to Belgium for a year to study French. I had already studied the Afrikaans language in South Africa. It closely resembled Flemish, the other language that was spoken in Belgium.

In Bujumbura, Burundi, the Mission had rented a beautiful, ranch style, concrete block house for us. It belonged to the American Embassy. The Ambassador had actually lived there at one time. Our other three children, Teresa, Susan and Eric, were born in Burundi. The house was on the outskirts of the city and was surrounded on three sides by trees, bushes, and cultivated fields. Occasionally, at night, hippos would travel several miles, from the river, then, graze, and destroy crops, in the field next to our house. They would drive our dog crazy. To protect from intruders, there were heavy, locked, iron lattices over the windows and outside doors. Next to the house there was a locked garage. Attached to the back of the garage was a room for a live-in guard. He would be on duty all night and whenever we were away from home. We also had a

guard dog. One night, I quietly, walked up the long hall, to the other end of the house, to the dark living room because I heard clinking sounds just outside that window. Suddenly I heard the dog growl, then a blood curdling scream. I quickly turned on the outside lights and looked out the back door. Around the corner came my dog wagging its tail triumphantly. It had a bloody piece of cloth in its mouth. I recognized that it was the part of the seat of someone's trousers! The next day I saw pry marks on the bars over that window. Now, I had the complete story. Someone had been trying to break and enter. The dog had completely surprised the burglar! After that, the word got out. There were no more break-in attempts. No one else wanted, to be suddenly grabbed, in the dark, by the seat of their pants! I had, initially, been impressed with my hired guard. Day or night, he was always wide awake, standing by the driveway whenever we returned home. But, then, I found out that the man usually slept in his bed, with his door ajar, when he was supposed to be on duty. Whenever I went to check on the guard, or turned off the main road, headed back home, the dog would run in and bark in his ear, to wake him, so he would be on duty when I came! The dog, who was always on alert, was the real guard!

The Police Chief, who had come that morning, had sworn me and Annie to secrecy. Lives depended on it. So Annie arranged a "sleep over", for her and the children, at another Mission house. She also sent out an urgent, widespread, prayer request for my safety. I dismissed the guard, driving him back home. Then, I was all alone in the house.

Just after dark, there was a soft knock at the door. When I opened the door I saw two Police vehicles drive behind the bushes. Twelve armed Policemen entered the house. They all quietly sat on the floor so no one outside could see them. The Chief of Police, who had attended Mission Schools, sat at the piano and softly played Gospel songs. He was quite a musician. He seemed completely relaxed, and confident that he had done all his homework! The back of both his hands were white and scarred. As a child he had fallen into the fire and had been burnt. Finally, the man looked at his watch and signaled for everyone to get ready. At the far end of the hall there was our large bedroom on the left. On the right there was a room used as an office. There were barred windows in each room. There were no outside doors at that end of the house. I had left a key in the lock inside our bedroom door. The bathroom, on the right side, midway down the hall, was at least twelve feet long and eight feet wide with several wash basins, a tub and a separate shower. The police crowded into the bathroom. When I heard banging on the security door, the Chief also entered the bathroom and locked the door. I had all my keys on a large key ring with a lot of extra old keys. I purposely had trouble unlocking the door, as well as the metal latticed security door. I admitted six policemen who explained that they were there to check for guns and contraband. While they watched me carefully relock both doors, I explained to them that I was afraid of robbers. One of them snickered. Then, I heard water running in the bathtub. They all smiled. "Oh, this is our lucky day! We will get to

see your wife taking a bath”, one of them gloated. I quickly told them to come back to my office where I kept all my money and valuables.

All six robbers entered my office. Two of them pulled out their pistols while others opened the cash box and pocketed the marked bill placed there by their Chief. Others started to examine a foot locker. Then, there was the sound of the opening bathroom door. The two men re-holstered their pistols. Their eyes got big! Now they would see a women emerging from her bath; so they thought! I dashed across the hall, into our bedroom. I shut the door, turned the key in the lock, and hit the floor. The robbers all stood in the hallway waiting for Annie to emerge. For several seconds, the robbers just stood there, staring in disbelief, at all the guns pointed at them. One of them ran into the office and dived through the curtain and window glass only to be knocked cold by the steel bars on the outside of the window. Their driver, in the police car waiting outside for them, tried to escape, but he quickly surrendered, when he was surrounded by armed policemen firing shots into the air. All the robbers surrendered peacefully. They were all disarmed and handcuffed. A long rope was used to tie them together, single file, with a slip knot around each neck in case any of them tried to escape. Once they were outside, I was told it was safe for me to leave my bedroom. The robbers were paraded around town to discourage any future robbers. They ended up in prison for several years. Several of them threatened to kill me or have me killed. So the Police Chief encouraged me to buy a pistol and carry it at all times. I had been a rifle marksman in my Cadet Military Classes in High School. I soon became a crack shot with my pistol. When the jailed robbers learned of my accuracy, with guns, they decided, it was healthier for them, not to try to retaliate. Again, owning a gun, helped prevent a Crime. It also kept the Mission from being robbed! But, without so many people praying, at that critical time, this story could have had a very tragic ending.

P.S. David, my older brother, who told me this story, died 26 February, 2014. His wife, Annie died before him on 28 June, 2011. I think this is an amazing story that should be told. It may have been published many years ago in a Christian magazine, but, so far, I have not found it.

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