

SWAZILAND MISSIONARY TRAGEDY JANUARY 1, 1975

By Paul M. Riley MD: FACS

New Year's Day, 1975, started off very quietly. Usually, New Year's day at RFM Nazarene Hospital in Manzini, Swaziland, was much busier. I remember a previous year when I had been busy that day, and half the night before, repairing injuries suffered by several drunk drivers! I especially remember fixing a broken kneecap and repairing numerous deep lacerations for a German pilot and his wife. They were very drunk. Now I had the day off and planned to have a quiet time at home doing painting, paper work, and repairs around the house. Our house had been built four years previously. It was at the far end of the Mission Station. I had noticed that several sheets of galvanized roofing on our house were starting to rust! Apparently the builder had installed old roofing when I was not watching. So I wanted to paint those areas with aluminum roofing paint to stop the rust. Our three girls were resting at home enjoying their school vacation. I did not know that that day would change many lives forever!

Samuel and Rosemarie Hynd and their three daughters, who lived between us and the Hospital, had reason to celebrate that day. Samuel was Superintendent of the Hospital. Samuel's older sister Isabel, a Nurse, had come from England for a rare visit. She was staying with her parents in Mbabane, twenty six miles from Manzini. Dr. David Hynd had retired there several years before. He had started the Medical work in Manzini in 1926. Now his son, Samuel, was carrying on with his work. Isabel was five years older than her brother, Samuel.

David Hynd drove down in his small Austin car, bringing his wife, Agnes, and his daughter, Isabel, to visit the younger Hynds. Agnes had been showing signs of senile dementia for several years. After lunch, and afternoon tea, the older Hynds were preparing to leave and drive back to Mbabane. Dr. Samuel said goodbye, then drove up to his office at the Hospital to catch up on some paper work. The three Hynd girls went to visit some of their friends on the Mission Station.

That same afternoon, I was about to finish painting the roof when Martha called up to me. She had just answered the phone. She said; "Samuel needs you, he says Rosemarie is dead." What a shock! How could Rosemarie, his wife, be dead? She was only forty three years old! I quickly drove up the hill to the "Big House" about half a mile away. To my left, as I entered the driveway, in the front terraced flower garden, below the parking area beside the house, I saw a car down over the side of the front yard stuck on one of the terraces. It was a small white Austin. Standing up in the side yard were Samuel, David, Agnes and Isabel Hynd. Isabel and David were crying and sobbing very loudly! David Hynd had called Samuel back from his office. Isabel was pacing around the parking lot. Samuel was trying to keep his composure. Agnes stood there almost emotionless. She kept saying over and over; "Why couldn't it have been me? I have lived long enough. It would have been a short-cut to heaven." I then walked down the bank to the car that was still upright but leaning with its left side facing down the hill. It had been stopped from sliding further sideways down the hill by the thick stems of a honeysuckle bush. Pinned between the bush and the left side of the car was Rosemarie's lifeless body. Only her face, neck,

arms and shoulders were visible. The rest of her body was under the side of the car. There was a deep cut or tear down the inner aspect of her right forearm from the elbow to her wrist. The left rear car door was wide open and folded forward against the closed left front door. The restraining steel bar for the left rear door had broken free from inside the door and was protruding out from the door pillar on the body of the car. It had a sharp hook on the broken end almost like a large fishhook. There was blood on the "hook". A thick rope had been tied to the back bumper of the car, but the rope had snapped. They must have already tried to tow the car backward away from the bush but the rope was too weak.

Agnes Hynd was for a while very clear mentally. She remembered details of the accident! She was the only one who saw the accident happen from outside the car. The car had been parked by the side of the house with the rear bumper of the car facing downhill toward the terraced garden and flower beds. David had asked his daughter, Isabel, to drive back to Mbabane. I think Rosemarie had helped David into the left front seat and shut the door while Isabel got behind the wheel. Rosemarie had told Agnes to wait by the right rear door of the car so Rosemary could open the door and help Agnes into the car. I think Agnes rode in the back seat because the rear doors had child locks. If she rode in the front passenger seat there was always a danger she might become confused and open the door while the car was still moving! Meanwhile Rosemarie opened the left rear door and reached across the back shelf to get an empty Tupperware container or maybe to return it to the back shelf. Suddenly the car's engine roared and the car took off in reverse. Rosemarie was off balance, leaning forward with her upper body inside the car. The car went over the edge of the yard, then turned sideways and slid down the terraces, dragging Rosemarie with it. The left rear door was forced open too far, breaking the restraining bar loose from inside the door. The hook at the end of the bar pierced into Rosemarie's arm at the elbow, holding her against the side of the car as it slid sideways on its left side down the terraces. Her legs went under the car, then her body, as the hook ripped down her arm to her wrist, finally tearing loose. Rosemarie screamed "Isabel" then was silent. She was crushed under the side of the car. Agnes stood there for a few second after the car had so suddenly disappeared from in front of her. The car never touched her. Hlatshwayo, the tractor driver finally came with the tractor. He said he needed a steel cable to tow the car off Rosemarie. I remembered I had a steel tow cable in the trunk (boot) of my car. I had just purchased the cable a few days previously. The cable was attached to the rear bumper of the Austin; then the car was pulled off Rosemarie with no further damage to her body. Rosemarie's body was transported in the Ambulance to the morgue, where, at Samuel's request, I later sewed up the long laceration on her right forearm.

At the request of the Swaziland Police I did a limited autopsy. There were multiple rib fractures and a badly crushed chest and abdomen with extensive damage to internal organs. Death had been almost instantaneous. I am sure Rosemarie did not suffer. It appears that the car had been parked and left in reverse. It was a "stick shift". It was best to leave such cars parked in first gear or reverse; especially if the car was parked on a slope. Isabel, being very unfamiliar with the car, may have thought it had an automatic transmission or maybe she didn't have the clutch in far enough. She may have thought she had her right foot on the brake when it was on the accelerator. In any event, the car started with

reverse gear engaged and the accelerator depressed, causing the car to suddenly shoot backward over the side of the level parking area.

As we would expect, Samuel wished he had stayed at home long enough to see his parents and Isabel off to Mbabane. David Hynd wished he had not asked Isabel to drive an unfamiliar car. Of course Isabel felt the worst. She really could not remember anything she did wrong. She just remembered the car starting and racing backward over the edge of the parking area next to the side of the house. The bad news quickly spread throughout Swaziland and Churches around the World. A Stream of Swazi people started coming through the Mission, some were beating themselves with switches. They were crying loudly. They gathered and sat on the floors in the living room, the front porch, and the front yard. They considered Samuel a Swazi. This was the Swazi way of showing grief over the loss of a loved one.

Rosemarie was loved by everyone. She had held meetings with women in ordinary Kraals as well as the Kraals of the Swazi Queens. All the women really looked forward to Rosemarie's visits. She always encouraged them and treated them all very special! Our daughters spent a lot of time with Margie Hynd at her house. Our girls loved Auntie Rosemarie. She included them in her family functions, served them tea and crumpets, and made them feel very special!

Samuel Hynd and his family were sustained by love of thousands of people. His three daughters showed amazing maturity and gave their dad great support. I am told that that they sang at the funeral. Dr. David Hynd, an old man in his 80s, suddenly stood up at the podium and sang "I will meet you in the morning", a-capella. He sang beautifully. Martha Riley, although not related, felt she had lost a sister. She had gone with Rosemarie to some of the meetings. On the day of the funeral Martha had the worst migraine headache she had ever had. It started the evening of the accident. No medicine seemed to work. She couldn't eat or drink or get out of bed. I stayed home to care for her. Besides that, I could not face the funeral! I felt so numb and so drained emotionally!

We Missionaries as well as the Swazi Christians were all devastated by the loss. Of course for the family it was much worse. We did realize, however, that Rosemarie had accomplished so much in her short life. One of the things she had done was to fly to England to bring her parents, who were dying from cancer, back with her. She cared for them in her home, watched her mother die, then her father. They were buried on the Manzini Mission Station. She had already prepared and packed her younger daughter Margie's clothes for going away to boarding school! Rosemarie did not know that, before long, she would be buried next to her parents! John and Marjorie Wise's twelve year daughter, Mary, is also buried there. Mary had died many years previously from a parasitic infection that spread to her brain!

Isabel was in no condition to return to England on schedule. She also wanted to stay and help all she could. No one was ever blamed for the tragedy! Isabel and her family received great love and support

especially from the Missionaries. Her ticket was non refundable, so I started taking up a collection to help pay for her trip back home to England. I remember we gave her R100.

There were other Nazarene Missionary tragedies in Swaziland. Five years previously, three out of four of the Bach family plus two neighbor children were killed in a fiery head on collision on the road between Pigg's Peak and Endingeni. They were new Missionaries from Arizona! The only survivor was two year old Bradley Bach. The Bachs are buried at Endingeni beside Harmon Schmelzembach and three of his children. These first Missionaries were the victims of Malaria and malnutrition! Johnnie, the son of Tom and Faye Riley died of leukemia when he was just four years old. Two of the three sons of John and Sandra Estey died with cancer. In 1973 Willie Young, one of the first converts, was killed in a car accident. He was a leading Layman in the Swazi Nazarene Church. We felt he was one of us. He was also a Businessman, who, with his family, was a big supporter of the Church.

The next year after Rosemarie's death, another missionary, Paul Whittaker, was almost killed in a tractor accident. It was the same tractor used to pull the car off of Rosemary the year before. He had to be given Ketalar anesthesia with Morphine in order to pull him out from under the tractor. His right femur had been broken, crushed, and twisted with the bone protruding through the skin. The bone was covered with mud. While he was being loaded into the ambulance, he stopped breathing and had to be given mouth to mouth resuscitation! At first he had no circulation in his right lower leg, but after pulling the leg straighter the circulation came back! He had to have immediate surgery to debride and irrigate the wound. Then he had old fashioned traction in bed for several weeks since the bone was too crushed and shattered to hold screws. The bone finally healed, but it was quite a crippling injury!

I feel like our Church must have been doing a good job in Swaziland, because the Devil tried so hard to defeat and destroy us! But no one left the work because of all these tragedies! Dr.Samuel Hynd will be 86 years old in December, 2010. He continues to work in Swaziland caring mainly for patients suffering with the AIDS virus.

I realize that I should have written this many years ago, but it was too painful emotionally for me to do so. I could not finish painting the roof of my house. It would have brought back painful memories! But then I found that some people have blanked out this time in their minds and now are still trying to heal. As I continue to age I know I will be forgetting more details or remembering incorrectly. I welcome any further details or corrections so I can make the necessary changes in this document.

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