

James L. Rice Dies In Crash

James Lewis Rice, 34, manager of the airport at Van Wert, O., and a native of Adams county, was killed late Monday afternoon when his midget racing plane tangled with another midget as a tragic finish to the national championship event at Baer field.

Rice, who has manager of the Van Wert airport since 1954, was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Rice of Decatur route 3.

Rice's plane and one flown by Charles Bishop, of Nashville, Tenn., tangled about one and one-half miles southwest of Baer Field runway 4, and was witnessed by many of the 10,000 persons in the vicinity.

Bishop's plane tumbled into a cornfield and the plane and its pilot were consumed by fire which followed the crash.

Rice plunged to his death with his plane about 175 feet beyond the spot where Bishop crashed. The Rice plane clipped off some tree drops (sic), flipped on its back and buried itself in a creek bank beneath a large stump in a woods at the far edge of the corn field. His plane did not burn.

There were conflicting stories early of what caused the tragedy. Howard Hutches, Orlando, Fla., flying behind the Rice and Bishop planes, said he believed a wing came off the Rice plane as it rounded the pylons at the southwest end of the 2 3/8 mile course and crashed into the Bishop plane. Another pilot in the race, Paul Booth, Nashville, Tenn., said he saw the doomed planes in good formation as they were rounding the pylons, but when he looked again, pieces were coming off the Rice ship. These stories changed earlier reports which apparently had the planes colliding in the air.

James L. Rice was born in Fort Wayne June 18, 1926, a son of Ralph W. and Helen Chapman-Rice, and graduated from the Monmouth high school in 1944. His father was formerly Root township trustee.

Rice entered the United States Navy during World War II and was discharged in 1946. He entered cadet training in the US Air Force in 1948 and served in Korea where he was wounded in January 1951. He was a member of the Air National Guard until resigning his commission last year.

The air crash victim was married to Miss Doris M. Shoaf March 5, 1946. The family resides at 520 Woodland, Van Wert. Surviving in addition to his wife and parents are four children, all at home, Peggy Diane, 13; James Lewis, Jr., 12; Barbara Jo, 9, and Carol Ann, 6; one brother, Richard C. Rice of Decatur route 1, a sister, Mrs. Leslie (Gwendolyn) Ohmit of Indianapolis, and his maternal grandmother, Mrs. L. L. Chapman of Columbia City.

Funeral services will be conducted at 1:30 o.m. Thursday at the Zwick funeral home, the Rev. Lawrence T. Norris officiating. Burial will be in the Decatur cemetery, with military rites by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Friends may call at the funeral home after 7 p.m. Wednesday until time of the services.