

## BEACH SAND, SONGS AND STORIES

By John F. Hall

At one time, there was sand in my shoes from my walking on sandy beaches of the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean. I left my shoe prints in the sand on those beaches. Then the waves would come ashore and wash my shoe prints away. When I was a child, I remember building sand castles in the moist sand. The waves came in and destroyed my hours of playful construction. I have an affinity for the oceans and their sandy beaches. After all these years, I still have fond memories of sleeping on the sand, for several days, on the Waikiki Beach in Honolulu, Hawaii. I do get inspired when I can sit in the shade on a sandy beach. In Miami Beach, I could usually find shade under a coconut or palm tree. When trees were not available, I would sit under a large umbrella. I did this 31 years ago on a beach in the Bahamas.



John Phillips, Mike Love, Scott McKenzie, and Terry Melcher wrote a song called “Kokomo.” I don’t write fiction. True stories, with my glass of lemonade, have served me well all these years. One line in their song contains these words: “Off the Florida Keys, there’s a place called Kokomo...”. I like that song, but

Kokomo is a fictitious place. I was just a young child when I lived in Miami, Florida. I spent a week in Key West where Ernest Hemingway use to live. The song has a catchy beat. These are just a few more of their lyrics: “Aruba, Jamaica, oh, I want to take ya. Bermuda, Bahama, come on pretty mama. Key Largo, Monte, baby why don’t we go, Jamaica. Off the Florida Keys, there’s a place called Kokomo, That’s where you wanna go to get away from it all. ..”. \_ ’

Glover, David Garcia, and Jonathan Allen Steingard, wrote the song, “Live Like You Are Loved.” These are some of their lyrics: “You’re not the only one that feels like this; feeling like you lose more than you win. Like life is just an endless hill you climb, you try and try, but never arrive. I’m telling you something, this racing, this running, oh, you’re working way too hard. And this perfection your chasing is just energy wasted, cause He love’s you like you are. So go ahead and live like you’re loved; It’s okay to act like you’ve been set free. His love has made you more than enough. So go ahead and be who He made you to be...And live like you know you’re valuable, like you know the One that holds your soul. Cause Mercy has called you by your name. Don’t be afraid to live in that grace...”.

When I was child, sitting on the beach sand, was such a joyful experience. I liked the sound of the small waves coming ashore. I liked to look at the big cargo ships as they were sailing by. I wondered where they were going. I keep my socks and shoes on until I

decide to go swimming in the ocean. I also wear a t-shirt when I went into the water. Later on in life, skin cancer on my forehead almost ended my writing days. Every three months, I drive down to Nashville to see my dermatologist, Dr. Natalie Curcio. Thanks to her surgical skills, the skin cancer on my forehead, that had gotten down to my skull, was removed. I like how she matter of fact responded when I told her that she saved my life. She simply said, "I did," and continued to freeze off the recurring precancerous cells.

She referred me to Dr. David Gilpin. His skills as a plastic surgeon closed off the hole, about the size of a half-dollar, and with no skin graft, and no scars. The radiation to my forehead played havoc to my teeth and caused accelerated loss. As a high risk patient for recurring cancer, Dr. Curcio exams me from the top of my head to bottom of my feet. I have always enjoyed driving down to the "Athens of the South."

My wife, Paula feels like I'm wasting my time writing stories. I feel that writing keeps my mind active. It's a creative talent that Christ loaned me. I believe that if I don't use it now, in the December of my life, that it will be lost to family and friends that come after me. William Shakespeare used the word "ocean" 200 times in his plays. In his Romeo and Juliet play, he wrote: "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep. The more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite."

Albert Lasry, Charles Trenet, and Jack Lawrence wrote the song, "Beyond the Sea." These are only a few of their lyrics: "Some where beyond the sea, somewhere waiting for me, my lover stands on golden sands and watches the ships that go sailing...We'll meet beyond the shore. We'll kiss just as before. Happy we'll be beyond the sea and never again I'll go sailing...". As a teenager of 13, I would sit in the shade on the sands of Miami Beach and listen to a transistor radio. Joe Burke and Edgar Leslie wrote the song "Moon Over Miami." At that time in history, I looked into the back seats of cars in my neighborhood. Rifles and ammunition were in plain sight. They would be driven down to Key West and taken by small boats, at night, to Cuba. The Cuban Revolution was on and the Cuban people put their faith in Fidel Castro. He turned out to betray their trust. The Cuban exodus to Miami changed that city forever.

At the age of 15, I remember listening to Ray Charles sing "Moon Over Miami." I memorized the first few lyrics: "Moon over Miami shine on my love and me. So we can stroll beside the roll of the rolling sea, Moon over Miami shine on as we begin, a dream or two that may come true when the tide comes in." Two years later, in November of 1962, I was in jump school at Fort Benning, Georgia. I noticed that M-1 rifles and ammunition were being loaded into the planes. I was told that my third jump would be made over Havana, Cuba. And I knew that my chances of surviving that combat jump were slim to none. Castro was crazy. He let the Russian begin to put the nuclear—tipped missiles in Cuba. This is just 90 miles from Key West, Florida. He wanted Russia to go to war with the United States.

Thankfully, the Cuban Missile Crisis ended and the Russians pulled their missiles out of Cuba. I survived death more times, than a cat with nine lives, to become the nonfiction

short story writer that I am today. And I owe it all to the grace upon grace upon grace loaned to me by Jesus Christ.

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