

COCOA BEACH

By John F. Hall

When I began writing stories over 40 years ago, the purpose was mainly to inspire or motivate the reader. I also wanted some of my stories to be entertaining as well. Unlike F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Jesse Stuart I only write non-fiction stories based on what I have experienced and what I have observed. When Lexie Crisp told me



that she was going to Cocoa Beach and her sister, Skyler and their first cousin, Isabella “Izzy” Valdaperez would be there, I had all the “makings” of a good story. I was surprised to learn that Izzy’s mother Alice used to live close to Cocoa Beach and she knows lots of people in that area. Alice and her sister, Loretta the mother of Lexie and Skyler, do many things together.

The mention of Cocoa Beach triggers memories that have laid dormant in my mind for many years. I miss my dad and one might say that I associate that town with my dad. I had a restricted

Florida driver's license when I was 15 years old. I had to have my dad or another adult with me when I drove a car at that age. I know a few things about Cocoa Beach. The area was first inhabited by native Americans, the Ais Indians. In 1924, cars would race on the beach at speeds up to 180 miles an hour. In 1939, a Naval Air Station was built near the Banana River west of Cocoa Beach. In 1948, the government changed the name to Patrick Air Force Base. Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center are five miles north of the town. This is where my dad, Charles J. Hall worked. He told me that NASA did not have the technology to send men to Mars in his lifetime. My dad was a member of the team that helped put a man on the moon in 1969. After Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon, my dad felt there was nothing left to challenge him. He had served our nation to the best of his abilities and he felt the time was right to retire.

I began to write stories five years before my dad died. I had been mailing my stories to Skyler and Lexie and to Jade Hakes, another surrogate granddaughter. She would sing with me in our church choir, with her godmother, Trish Cunningham. Jade's mother and her stepfather moved to Russellville a few years ago. I have not seen Skyler, Lexie, or Jade since last year. I put a picture of Trish, Jade and me in the church choir in this story. I also put a picture of Lexie, Skyler and me in front of the Cadiz, Post Office. The pictures were taken before the pandemic hit. I began checking on them, daily, to see how they were doing. I then began to see if I could “crank out” and mail them more stories. I would also mail Trish, Mike Herndon (a college friend), Audrey Lambert (a friend that puts my stories on her web page (ajlambert.com), and my family physician, Dr. Daniel Butler a copy of my stories. I don't really consider myself to be a good writer. I just feel this is something the Good Lord wants me to do.

I asked Skyler, Lexie, and Izzy to tell me what is the best thing that they like about the ocean. Skyler told me that she loves the energy of the ocean. It can be calm and welcoming or it can be so powerful. She loves that it's a home to so many things on earth. Everything relies on what the ocean has or how we use it. When I was sitting on that

Cocoa beach, as a kid, I just liked to stare at the ocean. According to Dr. Shuster, staring at the ocean actually changes our brain waves' frequency and puts us into a mild



meditative state. The blue color of the ocean has been found by a significant number of people to be associated with feelings of calm and peace. Lexie told me there is one thing that she likes about the ocean. It is the feeling of peace all around her when she is there. The smell of the ocean breeze and the consistent ebbing and flowing of the waves splashing on the shore soothes the mind. Izzy said that her favorite thing about the beach is the sunrise in the mornings. Sunrises are intimately connected with God, love, life, friendship, family, the beach and the ocean.

Jeannette Walls wrote, “If you want to be reminded of the love of the Lord, just watch the sunrise.” Anthony Hincks wrote, “The secret to a good morning is to watch the sunrise with an open heart.” And Suzy Kussem wrote, “— Each day is born with a sunrise and ends with a sunset, the same way we open our eyes to see the light, and close them to hear the dark. You have no control over how your story begins or ends, but by now, you should know that all things have an ending. Every spark returns to darkness. Every sound returns to silence. And every flower returns to sleep with the earth. The journey of the sun and the moon is predictable. But yours, is your ultimate art.” I would add to Suzy's theme that with faith, hope and belief in Jesus Christ, you paint your eternity in His arms.



I like to put pictures with my stories. Because I could not be with them on the beach, I ask for pictures of Skyler, Lexie and Izzy laughing and frolicking in the ocean, to put with this story. They may not realize that this is the best time of their lives. They are not burdened with adult responsibilities and concerns. There is an old song titled “Sunrise Sunset.” It was written by Sheldon Harnick and Jerrod Bock. These are some of their lyrics: “Is this the little girl I carried? Is this the little boy at play? I don't remember growing older when, did, they? When did she get to be such a beauty? When did he grow to be so tall? Wasn't it yesterday when they were small? Sunrise, sunset, sunrise, sunset, swiftly flow the

years. One season following another laden with happiness and tears. Now is the little boy a bridegroom? Now is the little girl a bride? Under the canopy I see them side by side. Bless the gold ring on her finger. Share the wine and bread per glass. Soon the whole circle will have come, to, pass...Sunrise, sunset...” The following lines came from unknown authors: “There is no place like home, except for the beach. A walk on the beach is worth a thousand words.”

“I hope someday I'll wake up to see that I live on the beach. At the beach, life is different. Time doesn't move hour to hour but mood to moment. We live by the currents, plan by

the tides and follow the sun. It doesn't matter where you go in life as long as it is to the beach.” The pictures they sent me must have had some interference from the “Force” or Dr. Shuster's brain wave frequency was messing up the quality of the pictures. To decipher some of the pictures, Izzy is carrying Skyler, piggyback on the beach. Lexie and Skyler are standing, side by side, bare feet in the Shore's wet sand. My conclusion is that all three were happy and laughing and enjoying one of Christ's wonderful creations.



I'll use P.R Mendoza's and Henry Beston's words of beach wisdom to end this story. Mendoza wrote: “Every time I stand before a beautiful beach, its waves seem to whisper to me: if you choose the simple things and find joy in nature's simple treasures, life and living need not be so hard.” Beston wrote: “The three great elemental sounds in nature are the sounds of rain, the sound of wind in a primeval woods, and the sounds of the outer ocean on a beach.” I miss Cocoa Beach and the sound of the small waves coming onto the shore. I miss hearing the seagulls with their mew calls flying overhead. I miss the sea breeze blowing through my unkempt hair. But my memories are just sitting on the sand in Cocoa Beach and looking out at the ocean. As I was writing this story, my mind drifted back to when I was a 19 year old Army soldier and I was given three days of shore leave and put ashore on Waikiki Beach in Hawaii. I was part of an Army security team guarding a classified cargo on a Merchant Marine cargo ship going to Korea. I had enough money to eat at places where the local Hawaiians could afford to eat. But I had no money to pay for a hotel room. So I decided to sleep on the beach. The sand was warm. The Army Military Police checked on me. I did this for three nights. The beach belonged to the Army. It had restrooms and a place to shower. I took off my shirt, push up the sand to make a pillow and put my shirt on that small pile of sand. I would look at Diamond Head, a 300,000-year old volcanic crater, in the distance. The British soldiers who visited the area in the 19th century thought that the sparkling calcite crystals on the neighboring beach were diamonds. Diamond Head stands at an elevation of 762 feet above sea level. But it is the sunset that I watched as I fell asleep, a young soldier on the warm sands of paradise.

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*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at:
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