

DREAMS OF HOPE

By John F. Hall

Sometimes, buried in the middle of a song, one can find a few gems of wisdom that the song writer wants you to discover. The ancients knew that songs are an excellent teaching



and learning tool. When you learn a song, you learn its contents and meanings and they become a part of your identity. When you look at nearly all of the stories that I have written in the past three years, you will find the lyrics to songs. This story ends with the lyrics to a song. It begins with things that I have learned during the 75 years that I will celebrate on June 29th. It's my birthday and I will travel with my wife, Paula down to the music city of Nashville, Tennessee. I'm getting an epidural in my L5 to reduce the pain caused by my spinal stenosis.

So what have I learned in those years that I can pass on to my three grandchildren, Andrea, Heather, and John-John and to my three surrogate granddaughters, Jade, Skyler and Lexie? In my years in law enforcement, I've witnessed enough suffering and pain to know that bad things happen to good people. I know that people with good intentions sometimes hurt those who are closest to them. I know that wishing for the best doesn't make it come true. I know that the future of the world does not hinge on me, my life, my actions or my decisions.

I have dreams of hope in Christ. I am hopeful about the future and our role of leaving a better world for our children and our grandchildren. I do believe in the best in others, and that the-miserable 10 percent that cause so much corruption and grief, will fail in the end. I am an idealist and the charity of my Christian Fraternity Brothers, that have made a difference in the lives of so many needy families, will continue long after I am gone. I do believe that we are capable of treating each other better than we have in the past.

For the past 40 plus years, I have written stories to inspire, to motivate and to entertain. I feel that if I helped one person, out of a crisis in his or her life, that it was not a waste of my talent or my time. In a previous story that I wrote titled: "The Teacher," I mentioned that I admired the late writer, Jesse Stuart. He taught elementary and high school students. He wrote, "I am firm in my belief that a teacher lives on through his students. Good teaching is forever and the teacher is immortal." I was trained to teach in a community college, but I spent three decades teaching and training my fellow Army soldiers.

Where Jesse Stuart and I differ is in our writing of stories. I don't believe in writing fictitious stories. I have to experience, feel, and observe the stories that I write. I have written about the fear I felt being in a cargo ship in the middle of a typhoon, some where in the East China Sea.

I have written about the fear that I felt making a night parachute jump out of a Huey helicopter; knowing that I was going to crash into the trees one bitter January night. I

have written about chasing a bank robber in the woods without back—up or even a hand held radio. I have not, however, written about the dozens of well-timed coincidences and fortuitous events that did not seem to have any apparent causal connections. I have not written about being extraordinarily lucky and being just one step ahead of death. I have not written about the people that replaced me in jobs, and later were killed. I have not written about the soldier that took my place as the M-60 machine gunner in my former infantry platoon in the 101st Airborne Division. He was walking across a field in Vietnam. He was killed by an enemy sniper. The life expectancy of an M-60 machine gunner in a fire fight is about 11 seconds. I have not written about the laborer that replaced me on a maintenance job. He was killed when a construction crane fell on him. I still maintain the belief that some divine intervention was involved that was keeping me alive.

I may never understand why my law enforcement training office was killed when we were investigating a traffic accident on the Pennyriple Parkway in Hopkinsville in 1973. Joe Ward was an experienced Trooper. Yet he told me to obtain driver information, from the drivers, inside our police car while he was getting measurements at night. I had pulled into the median where the two damaged vehicles were located. He made the fatal decision and told me to pull out of the median because he felt that it was not safe. I was the rookie and had to comply with his order. Had we stayed in the median, he would be alive today.

I may never understand why Christ allowed this sinner to survive so many trials? Perhaps the answer may be found in Isaiah, Chapter 55, Verses 8-9 with these words, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Also, in John, Chapter 14, Verse 6 are these words, Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” If anyone has hope that their destiny is to spend eternity with Jesus, then they should heed His words.

When Paula and I married in 1965, one of our favorite singers was Andy Williams. I met his brother Don when I was called to investigate a traffic accident. Ray Stevens was driving when the car hydroplaned and flipped over a few miles from Oak Grove, Kentucky on highway 117. I called my friend, Mike Herndon, the editor of the Hopkinsville New Era newspaper. I told him that Don looked like he was Andy Williams' brother. I also said that the name of the driver of the car is Harold Ray Ragsdale and he looks like Ray Stevens. Mike got to interview Ray.

Paula and I made several trips to Branson, Missouri, to see Andy Williams perform at his Moon Light Theater. One time I contacted Don Williams and told him I'd like to meet him again, but not in my official capacity. He met us at our Branson motel. At one time, Don was an agent/manager for Ray Stevens. They went their separate ways.

Joe Darion and Mitchell Leigh wrote the song, “The Impossible Dream.” It takes more than a good song to accomplish good in this world. But some songs have a way to inspire

and calm our restless souls. These are their lyrics: “To dream the impossible dream. To fight the unbeatable foe. To bear the unbearable sorrow. To run where the brave dare not go. To right the unrightable wrong. To love pure and chaste from afar. To try when your arms are too weary. To reach for the unreachable star. This is my quest, to follow that star, no matter how hopeless, no matter how far. To fight for the right without question or pause. To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause. And I know if I'll only be true to this glorious quest. That my heart will lay peaceful and calm when I'm laid to my rest. And the world will be better for this. That one man scorned and covered with scars, still strove with his last ounce of courage, to fight the unbeatable foe. To reach the unreachable star.”

I believe that the purpose of my life is to be with Jesus Christ when I'm laid to my rest. I believe that this is not an elusive and impossible dream. It is a dream of hope, that requires faith and belief in Jesus Christ.

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