

FACES IN STONE
IN MEMORY OF MY NEPHEW, DALE GARNER

By John F. Hall

Fate is defined as the development of events beyond a person's control, as determined by a supernatural power. If one believes that Christ is in charge of their life and that person fears God, then one might conclude that person has wisdom.

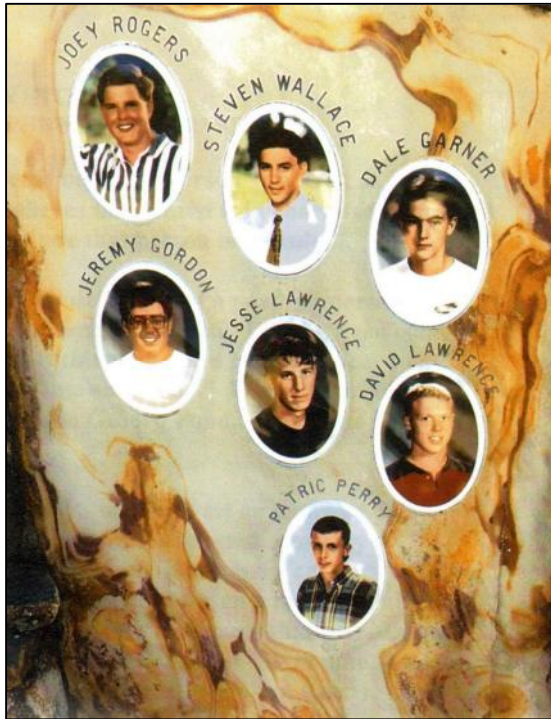
My favorite poet is the late Jesse Stuart. One definition of a poet is a person possessing special powers of imagination and eloquent expression. I do not even come close to Jesse's talents, but I do like to write about things that are near and dear to my heart. Jesse Stuart wrote, "Each life is dirt and time and stone." I've written stories of being in a fox hole as a soldier and plowing a field in Golden Pond. This is the first time that I have written a story about stone.

Down the road from my old, old Kentucky home, going west on highway 68/80, about ten miles west of Cadiz, Kentucky is a grown up and neglected cemetery surrounded by a wire fence. Inside this small, long forgotten cemetery are very tall, thin tombstones. They are the kind that some might say can be scary on a moonless night. One thing that I like to do, before I finish a story, is to visit the places that I write about. I still drive my grandson, John-John, home from school. After taking him home, I stopped off highway 68/80 and walked over to a dirt road near the cemetery. An electric cattle fence and chained metal gate prevented access to within several hundred feet of the cemetery. I wondered if any of the relatives of those souls buried there are still alive or even care to at least cut the grass and remove the dead tree limbs. The names on the tombstones are slowly disappearing due to the relentless wind and rain and exposure to the harsh sun and bitter cold. Coming back east, a few miles on the highway towards Cadiz is the former building that once housed Knight & Hale Game Calls. The building is now the home to a church called Word of Hope. In front of this church is a stone monument. Only the backside of the monument is visible from highway 68/80. On the front side of the stone monument, facing the church are seven faces mounted in that stone. One of the faces is forever in my memory.

On the east side of the stone monument is attached a long bronze plaque. My words are inadequate and pale in comparison to the eloquent words on that plaque. A person that I never met, Jan Wilkins Herzog is the author of those words: "Seven Friends & Comrades. And the seven rode into our hearts, into our souls. And the pain of their leaving only God himself knows. Seven young men out for a brief ride. Seven gone forever a whole town cries. Seven friends and Comrades seven friends in all. Seven times the grief we feel when Heaven made the call. All the boys were workers all strong and able men. A call came down from Heaven and took all seven friends. Must be these days in Heaven must be a shortage of boys to work. Ones to bear the burdens when others try to shirk. But what of us left here on earth, what of the tears we've shed over seven friends a leaving, seven young men dead? Cry no more, the call came in seven angels ride.

Together they're in Heaven now working side by side. Look to Heaven carefully and you might see seven friends riding into eternity. In memory of Dale Garner, Jeremy Gordon, David Lawrence, Jesse Lawrence, Patric Perry, Joey Rogers, and Steven Wallace who

died in a traffic accident December 15, 1993 on US 68 in Cadiz, Kentucky. All seven worked together here at Knight & Hale Game Calls.”



Dale Garner, my nephew, lived less than 50 feet from my old Kentucky home. When Dale was still six years old, he was the youngest Star in my movie “The Boy and the Moonshiners.” He was more like a son than a nephew. He was over at my house on a daily basis. He loved to help my wife, Paula decorate our Christmas tree. At that time the Army Reserve was having me serve as many as 100 days a year on active duty. Dale was just 16 when he proudly asked me to ride with him on a sunny day. He wanted to show his uncle that he was a good driver. He was a passenger in a car the day he died.

In previous stories I remind the readers to cherish those who remain in their lives after a tragedy such as above. On a cold day in December 1993, the Garner, Oakley and Hall families drove to the cemetery high above Hurricane Creek Baptist Church for Dale's graveside service. I wrote a eulogy for Dale.



(Pictured: Dale Garner).

I read those words as the families cried. Some of the words that I spoke that day are found in John, Chapter 3, Verse 8, “The wind blows where ever you hear it's sounds, but you cannot tell from where it comes or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the spirit.” I drove to the stone monument and sat on a concrete bench in front of the monument. I gazed at those faces in stone. Christ sent the wind and it caressed their faces. Christ sends His breath and it will comfort those who believe in Him. Christ said, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe in Me.” John 14:1. Those who may one day visit those Faces in Stone, as I did, may remember Christ's own words, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Matthew 5:4.

This story is not to just remember Dale. I wanted to leave a message in this story to those young people that I love. I remember the words of William Shakespeare, “They do not

love that do not show their Love.” Bob Dylan wrote the lyrics to his song, “Forever Young.” It is addressed to those young at heart,” May God Bless and keep you always. May you always do for others and let others do for you. May you build a ladder to to the stars and climb on every rung. May your heart always be joyful. May your song always be sung. May you grow up to be righteous. May you grow up to be true. May you always know the truth and see the lights surrounding you. May your hands always be busy. May your feet always be swift. May you have a strong foundation when the winds of change shift. May you stay forever young.”

Life is constant change. Family and friends will pass away. All we have is the here and now. I tell people to cherish and show love to those in their life now. I want Andrea, Heather, John-John, Skyler, Lexie and Jade to know that I love them. Shakespeare is spot on that we should show our love . We should honestly tell those that we love, We should give them a hug. We shouldgiow kindness when we can. We should show strength in matters of the health and welfare of those that we love. We should show happiness and be joyful. We should put our life in Christ's hands because He loves us!!!

Dale's name is written above his face on the stone. Another face on the stone is Patric Perry. On the Saturday of the 2018 Ham Festival, I drove over to my oldest friend, Tom Vinson's house. Tom is 92 and his mind is sharp. Patric Perry's face is also on that stone. Patric is Tom's nephew once removed. Tom and I became friends as we worked for two years on the 1985 Trigg County History Book. We talked as his wife, Nell took our picture. We talked about the two Faces in Stone that knew us well.

Tom Vinson and I talked about our dads. They came from a generation that seldom, if ever, told their adult sons that they loved them. Even I could not recall my dad ever telling me that he loved me. When Paula, my son and I would drive down to Florida to visit him, they would go to bed and my dad and I would talk until late into the night. I knew that he loved me, he just could not say those words. It was my oldest granddaughter, Andrea who first called me “An-Father.” She would always say at the end of our conversations, “Love you.” That made me reply, “Love you too!” I believe that God does put people in other's lives for a reason. Only Christ knows those reasons.

It is just a few weeks away from Thanksgiving. I invited my niece, Gabrielle (Gabby) to visit us for that holiday. She is an MBA Candidate at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. She sent me a text and then an email to help her on an assignment that calls for her to interview a person over the age of 65. I asked her to send me the questions in advance. It nearly floored me with 50 questions. But I love Gabby who looks at memore as a mentor then as an uncle. One of the questions, “Who do you interact or communicate with on a daily basis?” This is something that Tom Vinson and I talked about last month. I communicate with several young people as their grandfather, blood related or adopted. I love each and everyone of them. My only regret is that I did not spend enough time with my nephew, Dale Garner. This story is dedicated to him. To the adults who read it, the message is clear. Give the young people in your life some of your time. Be a mentor to them. Listen to them. Help them ifyou can. Tell them that you love them. Appreciate and pray for them. These are true blessing from Christ who loves

each of us no matter our status or situation in life. Christ said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." John 14:6. My communication on a daily basis begins with this simple prayer, "Good Morning Jesus! Thank you for my life. Thank you for all the gifts you have given me. Thank you for all those who love me. Please keep all those that I love safe-if that be Your Will. Foregive my sins and help me become a better person." If you hope that your day will be good, start it out right with a prayer and thank God at the end of the day for all His blessings. Dale Garner was a blessing to me. He is gone but certainly not forgotten. His face is on that stone for all to see.

John F. Hall

*Read other stories by John F. Hall at:
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