

MY FRONT PORCH SWING

By John F. Hall

My wooden front porch swing has been the scene of laughter, singing, and story telling for over 40 years. I was sitting on my porch swing watching as 25-mile per hour winds were hitting the lush green fields of grain in front of my old farm house. The wind made the green grain fields roll like waves on the ocean. Majestically, the wind caressed the still unripened grain. It is a sight to hold and my meager words fail to adequately describe the wave after wave of the action as the wind rippled across those green fields of grain. Some day, in the near future, the green fields of grain will turn to amber fields of grain.

Craig Perry, the corporate farmer that rents the farm, lives about two miles away. His daughter, Shannon is his foreman. They have about 30 Mexicans come up from Mexico to harvest the row crops and several hundred acres of tobacco on other rented farms. The era of the small farmer is over. Shannon's uncle, Tom Vinson is a dear friend and he is 93 years old. His mother, when she was eight years old, would walk the few miles from her house to my old house. She would play with her friend Lulu Jackson, her best friend. I know this because I talked to Tom's mother before she died.

Since 1978, I have written nonfiction short stories. Ernest Hemingway, F Scott Fitzgerald and Jesse Stuart were mainly fiction writers. They would conjure up fictitious characters like *The Old Man & The Sea*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Taps for Private Tussie* (Stuart sold more than a million copies of that novel in two years). I don't have their kinds of imaginations. My stories are limited to what I have observed and experienced. When the weather is hospitable, I like to sit on my front porch swing and draft stories. My grandson, John-John uses his thumbs to text messages, on his smartphone, to his friends. His thumbs are faster than a jack rabbit. I have rheumatoid arthritis that makes it painful to use my thumbs, so I use my index fingers to text and to type, turtle slow.

In the past, I have written stories about my old farm house. It is located on a hill, about five miles west of Cadiz, Kentucky. It is situated in the middle of a farm. It is surrounded by a farm owned by wife's brother's widow. Paula and I own the house and one acre of land. I call it God's green acre. When I sit on the front porch swing, I usually get some inspiration to write a story. As I was writing this, I thought about a hymn written by Horatio Spafford titled, "It is Well with My Soul." These are some of his lyrics, "When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, what ever my lot, thou has best taught me to say, it is well, it is well, with my soul..."

"Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blessed assurance control, that Christ has regarded my helpless estate. And hath shed His own blood for my soul. My sin, oh, the bless of this glorious thought. My sin, not in part but whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul..."

Horatio lost his four year old son to scarlet fever. Then most of his property was destroyed by a fire. Then his four daughters died when the ship they were on with their mother, hit another ship. It immediately sank. Their mother survived.

Horatio, rather than blaming God for the loss of his four daughters, turned his heart to the faithfulness of Christ in the mist of loss. The hymn focuses less on what was lost and more on where hope can be found. Christ is always with us, especially in times of tragedy. It is hope that will see all of us through the pandemic.

On my front porch is a wooden pallet that is painted to look like an American flag. My son, John purchased it at a yard sale and gave it to me. Directly behind the swing, leaning



against the wall, are three wood fence pickets, six feet tall and nailed together. The decoration is hand-painted with the words, Home Sweet Home and John & Paula. It is stained for a rustic look. Jade Hakes' mother gave it to Paula and me, as a gift. Trish Cunningham and Jade have been to this old farm house a few years ago. From the east side of the front porch, one can see all the way down Dyers Hill Road. It is two tenths of a mile from the front porch to the main highway.

On May 7, 2020, late at night, I walked across my front porch to look at the last super moon of 2020. The super moon appears to be 7% larger and 15% brighter than the usual full moon. May 7th is also the National Day of Prayer. Lou Ella Cullipher wrote an article titled, "Today I'll Walk Among the Flowers." I have rose bushes and flowers across the front of my porch. This is what she wrote," Today, I'll walk among the flowers, though I'm confined to home... I'll smile and while away the hours, tomorrow may not come. God has given me many years, I can't complain at all... He's near, to wipe away the tears, if I should let one fall. I see the young folks passing by... So full of life and dreams; I see that once I was as spry, but I must not dwell on these scenes! Instead, I'll keep a song within my heart, I'll sing like a bird! Ah! But now my voice is growing weak... I'm afraid it can't be heard, except for God Who is standing near and shall never depart... He's not to far away to hear the songs deep in my heart. Today, I'll walk among the flowers and pick a big bouquet... I'll laugh at lingering clouds of showers, God's given me another day!" I am sitting on my front porch swing and all is well with my soul.

John F. Hall

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