

MEMORIES OF TREES AND POWER LINES

By John F. Hall

I'm happiest if I can start each day working on a story. I notice that not completing a story within a week concerns me. Nor do I like to sit on a story. I'm like "Larry the Cable



Guy" who goes around saying "Git-R-Done." I'm on a self imposed time table. I might be concerned that Jesus Christ may take away the talent that He loaned me, if I don't turn out another story. I believe He keeps me around to write one last great story. But I'm a work in progress and I have seven special people that, hopefully, enjoy receiving my stories in the mail. I'm also trying to do my tiny part to help the Post Office. Their main source of income is postage on mail and packages, but FEDEX and UPS have cut into that revenue. So, without further ado, here is another story from the

second floor of the house on Dyer's Hill.

Many years ago, I planted a southern magnolia tree in front of my deck. During the ice storm of 2009, ice had completely covered all the leaves on that young tree. I carefully walked out on the ice covered grass to shake the ice off the magnolia tree leaves. On the first shake, the top of the tree broke off. My brother-in-law, Roger Garner lives next to me. He was outside and he smiled when it happened. I decided not to shake the tree again. I noticed that the utility pole holding the transformer, with power lines to our houses, was starting to be pulled to the ground. This was due to the accumulation of almost two inches of ice on the power lines. I had a large diameter rope that I decided to use. I tied one end to the rain tree that was two feet from my deck. Roger got his ladder and helped me tie the other end of the rope as high up the utility pole as I could go. All the other trees around my house looked like they had been hit by a winter tornado.

The southern magnolia tree healed and is now over 60 feet tall. The rain tree began leaning towards my house. I advised the electric company that I planned to cut the tree. I expressed concern that I might accidentally pull down their service wire from the transformer pole to another utility pole in my front yard. I felt they should drop their power line in that location. Now the electric company does not want to drop their power lines if they can avoid it. Even though they felt the rain tree would come closer to hitting my house than their power lines, they agreed to cut the tree down in sections. I then removed those sections.

Several years ago, there was a tall maple tree next to my carport. It was beyond its normal life expectancy. Some of its larger branches were breaking off. The National Weather Service was forecasting severe storms with straight-line winds over 60 miles per hour. I still had the large rope that I used to hold the utility pole back in 2009. I had a large steel satellite post that once held a large satellite dish. I tied one end of the rope to the steel pole and tied the other end to the maple tree as high up as I could go. When the storm hit, the rope kept the tree from crashing into my living room. The tree only damaged a small section of the aluminum siding on the house. On another occasion, a

heavy tree limb broke off from the old maple tree across my driveway in my front yard. It barely missed my front porch and it pulled down the power lines going to my house.

When the huge tree limb pulled the power lines down, it also ripped the ten-foot metal conduit away from the house. I knew that the electric code had changed and I asked the line foreman to let me “grandfather” the repairs and restore the service as it existed before the storm damage. He agreed and I replaced the meter base and conduit in record time. I had wired a few houses in my time and I was not required to have a license to repair electrical service to my own house. I also did the plumbing to my old house. I lived long enough to become a “Jack of All Trades” by necessity.

Many decades ago, I planted about 20 apple trees in my back yard. The grandchildren loved to pick the low hanging green apples from my small apple orchard. Only six apple trees remain to this day. I planted Bradford pear trees to replace the apple trees that died. I have two very large maple trees in my front yard that are over 75 feet tall. I love the shade they provide. They are getting closer to their life expectancy and may not have much time left. I just hope, if they must fall during a storm that they will fall away from the house.

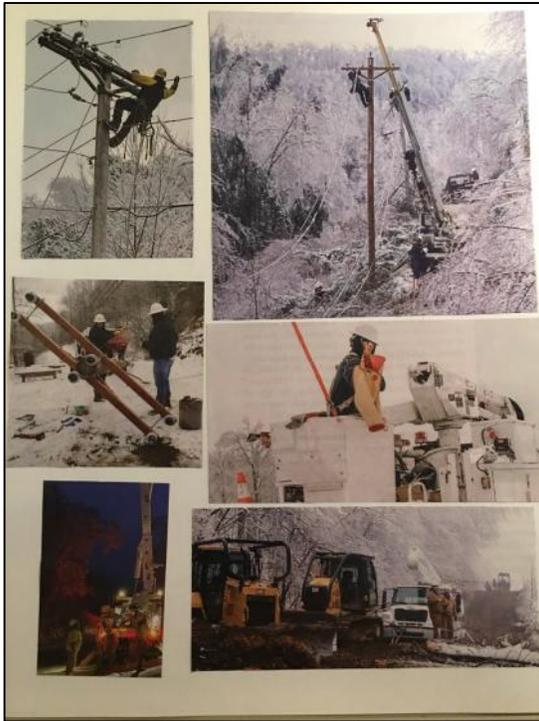
There is a hymn written by the Rev. Steven Starke called “The Tree of Life.” While my story is about trees crashing all around my house, the lyrics in this hymn about a tree are uplifting. These are his lyrics: “The tree of life with ev’ry good in Eden’ holy garden stood, and of its fruit so pure and sweet God let the man and woman eat. Yet in this garden also grew another tree, of which they knew; its lovely limbs with fruit adorned against whose eating God had warned. The stillness of that sacred grove was broken, as the serpent strove with tempting voice Eve to beguile and Adam too by sin defile. O day of sadness when the breath of fear and darkness, doubt and death, its awful poison first displayed within the world so newly made. What mercy God showed to our race, a plan of rescue by His grace: in sending One from woman’s seed, the One to fill our greatest need—for on a tree uplifting high His only Son for sin to die, would drink the cup of scorn and dread to crush the ancient serpent’s head! Now from that tree of Jesus’ shame flows life eternal in his name; for all who trust and will believe, salvation’s living fruit receive. And of this fruit so pure and sweet the Lord invites the world to eat, to find within this cross of wood the tree of life with ev’ry good.”

During the ice storm of 2009, I watched as the utility linemen struggled to raise the power lines off the frozen ground. I watched as their trucks got marred up to their axles in the mud. From the transformer pole, across one field, then across the creek, and across two other fields, it was more than a half mile to the main transmission lines. Even there, five utility poles had snapped in half. After seven days, the power to my house was restored.

Two years ago, lightning blew out the transformer by my house. As the linemen were replacing the transformer, I talked to their supervisor. I suggested that they abandon the power lines going from the transformer, across the creek and three fields to the main transmission lines. I suggested that they put up one new utility pole along Dyers Hill

Road and connect the power lines from my great nephew's utility pole. It is just one tenth of a mile away from the transformer pole near my house.

I told the supervisor this would keep their utility trucks from getting stuck in the mud and



having to maintain power lines going across three fields and one creek. The supervisor thought that was a wonderful idea. He asked me if I would give him permission to do what I suggested. I told him that I just own my old house and one acre of land in the middle of this farm. I told him to ask for permission from the widow lady who owns the farm. She lives in the red brick house by the main road. I told the supervisor that she would give him permission that he needed. And she did. The following week, they set a new utility pole. They set a new utility pole with a separate transformer with power lines to my house. They removed the half mile of power lines and all the utility poles going across three fields.

This is more than just a story about trees and power lines. It is also about helping your fellow man. Jackie DeShannon, Jimmy

Holiday, and Randy Myers wrote the song called "Put a Little Love in Your Heart." These are some of their lyrics: "Think of your fellow man, lend him a helping hand, put a little love in your heart. You see, it's getting late, oh, please don't hesitate; put a little love in your heart. And the world will be a better place. And the world will be a better place for you and for me. You just wait and see. Another day goes by, and still the children cry, put a little love in your heart. If we want the world to know, we won't let hatred grow, put a little love in your heart. Take a good look around and if you're lookin' down, put a little love in your heart. I hope when you decide kindness will be your guide, put a little love in your heart..."

I use song lyrics to enhance the stories that I write. Using kindness as a guide reminds me of the first time I met Glen Campbell during the Kentucky Derby. I was on a security detail. I liked the lyrics of one of the songs he sang that night at a large private party. The song, "Try a Little Kindness," was written by Bobby Austin and Curt Sapaugh. These are some of their lyrics: "If you see your brother standing by the road with a heavy load from the things he sowed. And if you see your sister falling by the way, just stop and say, 'you're going the wrong way.' Don't walk around the down and out, lend a hand instead of doubt. And the kindness that you show everyday will help someone along the way. You got to try a little kindness. Yes, show a little kindness. Just shine your light for everyone to see. And if you try a little kindness, then you'll overlook the blindness of the narrow-minded people on the narrow-minded streets..."

In my stories I share my experiences and observations of a life well-lived. I look out my second story window at the one pink and two white dogwood trees in my front yard. I marvel at the beauty of these trees created by Christ. John-John, Andrea, and Heather, came to visit. I asked them to stand in front of the towering maple tree. I told them that this is now the “Marriage Tree.” When they get married, I want them to come back with their spouses, in their wedding dresses and tuxes, to have a picture made in front of the “Marriage Tree.” Just as that tree survived the ice storm of 2009, I want their marriage to survive the marriage storms of life.

John F. Hall

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