

## THE OLD WRITER AND HIS OLD KENTUCKY HOME STORIES

By John F. Hall

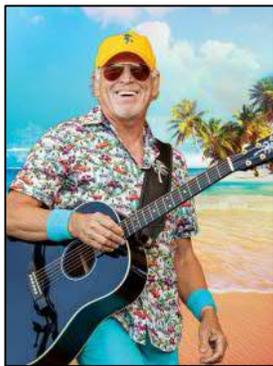
Sometimes I wonder where some of the inspiration comes from that allows me to write all the stories that I have written these past 42 years. I believe that Christ gave me the talent to do this. In the scheme of things, I'm just an insignificant part of His plan for me. When I wake up some mornings, I have an idea for a story. This story is unusual in that I woke up at two in the morning and began a draft in the notes section of my iphone. So what is happening in this twilight time in my life? I'm still sequestered with my wife, Paula in our old Kentucky home. The vaccines to combat the virus, that originated in China, are still in the testing stages.



I was able to get out of the house to rake some leaves in my back yard; to sow some additional seed, fertilizer and straw on a patch of ground where I recently had a really big bonfire. I trimmed the branches on four trees before the remnants of Hurricane Delta stopped me. I guess I'm doing alright for an old man of 75. I try to ignore the chronic pain in my back, shoulders and joint pain, courtesy of my arthritis. It's a constant reminder that I am not a kid anymore.

I type my stories in my second floor room in my old Kentucky home. I try to write at least one story a week that I mail to my surrogate granddaughters, Jade, Skyler, and Lexie. I also mail a copy to my friends Trish, Audrey, Mike and Dr. Daniel Butler, our family physician. My wife thinks I'm wasting my time writing stories. When she has an appointment to see Dr. Butler, he tells her to tell me hello and that he enjoys my stories. It's true that opposites are attracted to each other. We have been married for the past 55 years and we have a few things in common. I stay connect with my family and friends by cell phone and e-mail.

I will start this story by telling about Jimmy Buffett. In 1977, he started writing a song when he was in Austin, Texas. He finished the lyrics in Key West, Florida. The title of his song is, "Wasting Away in Margaritaville." The word Margaritaville, in the song, is a feeling and not a place. Not too far from where he finished the song is the former home of the famous writer, Ernest Hemingway. The house was built by Asa Tift in 1851 and it is ten years older than my house. I was on a family vacation many decades ago and we - drove by Hemingway's former home. Writers have a curiosity about their fellow writers. When Hemingway's was given the Nobel Prize for literature. He was too ill to travel to receive the award, so he had John M. Cabot, US. Ambassador to Sweden, read his speech on December 10, 1954. This is part of what Hemingway wrote: "For



he does his work alone and if he is a good enough writer he must face eternity, or the lack of it, each day... A writer should write what he has to say and not speak it." I might have detected a "Freudian slip" in Hemingway's speech. That's an unintentional error regarded as revealing subconscious feelings. Those five words, "or the lack of it," may suggest that

Hemingway may not have believed in eternity. Either a person believes in eternity, which is Jesus Christ, or he does not. One cannot sit on a fence and hedge his or her bets. There is life after our outer self is no more.

Everyone has a soul that lives for all eternity. It is that soul that will be judged by Jesus Christ for what we did or failed to do during our brief journey on this earth. Hemingway was a volunteer Red Cross ambulance driver in World War I. He was injury during an artillery attack. He also survived two airplane crashes. Hemingway, perhaps wracked by too much pain, may have decided that he did not believe in eternity. He may have lost his faith and his hope Christ. I say this because he ended his outer self. I experience pain every hour and every day, but that does not give me the justification to end my outer self. I'm a sinner and not a saint. I write stories with the hope that someday they might help, or inspire, or motivated someone. I just write what is on my mind. I don't write for money and my stories are free. I also write, in part to give glory and honor to Jesus Christ. He gave me the talent to write. He can easily take that talent away.



I mentioned the writer F. Scott Fitzgerald in some of my previous stories. My first college course was at night and the professor gave the class homework to read some of Fitzgerald's writings. I studied really hard, but after taking the final exam, I felt that I had failed the course. I was the last to finish the test and the last to leave the classroom. I was about to go out the classroom door when my professor said, "John! Don't give up." This is one message that I want to leave all of my grandchildren. They should do their best and, if they fail a course, I want them to pick themselves up and try again. I made a "C" in that literature class, but I gave myself an "A+" for effort. I still have the text book from that class. I wonder what the English professor, if he were alive today, would think of me for not giving up? Those four words of encouragement worked. Our young people need to believe in themselves and their ability to succeed. They need to believe in Christ to help them achieve success.



My favorite Kentucky writer is Jesse Stuart. He was 76 when he died. He had a stroke when he was 74. He spent the last two years of his life in a coma. Ruel E. Foster, a critic, wrote this about Jesse Stuart: "Mr. Stuart had a feeling for the life of things. He depicts things exactly and lets the universal shine through. He is the observer, the enjoyer - - not the exhorter, the preacher. He lets the world speak for itself. He had avoided literary cliques... He has swum alone." Unlike Jesse, I don't write fictional stories. The people that I write about are real and not a figment of my imagination unlike the 4,000 characters created by Jesse. I just write about the things that I have experience and observed.



It is best not to know how or when our outer self will end. I would hate to spend the last two years of my life in a coma, like Jesse did. On my front porch swing or sitting in a

rocking chair on the deck of my old Kentucky home, I am content to observe and write about the fields of wheat and soybeans that surround my house. I can hear the traffic on the new four-lane highway that bypassed the old, two-lane highway 68. Paula and I have several doctor visits this month in Nashville, so we will become part of that traffic. After 42 years, we decided to have indoor storm windows made, in Murray, for the side windows at the front door. The outside storm window don't stop the cold winter air.

Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein wrote the song, "Old Man River." I like their lyrics at the end of that son: "I gets weary, sick of trying. I'm tired of living, feared of dying. But old man river he's rolling along." Like old man river, I'll keep rolling along until the Good Lord says it's time for me to roll on home.

I spent an hour writing parts of this story at two in the morning. I thought about Christ's disciples that fell asleep in the garden. Jesus had been praying and realized that all of his disciples were asleep. He said to Peter: "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?" Mark 14:37. I remember when I was an M-60 machine gunner in the 101st. I was in a foxhole with my assistant gunner and my ammo bearer. They were sound asleep. I just let them sleep. Sometimes I ask Christ to help me on a story. I use a mix of song lyrics, scripture, some history and things I have experienced or observed. Writing gives me the opportunity to express my appreciation to the Good Lord for all the gifts that He has given me. This includes my family, my extended family of Jade, Skyler, Lexie and Trish, and all my friends to include Audrey, Mike and Dr. Daniel Butler.

In 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4, Verse 16, are these words: "So we don't lose heart. That our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day." Each day I seek



renewal as I realize that time is taking a toll on my outer self. I start each day with a brief prayer thanking Jesus for my life and for those that love this old man. My old Kentucky home, that Paula and I worked so hard to restore, gives me solace. We will leave it much better than we found it.

I've written many stories in the past seven months. I've surprised myself being so prolific at this old age. And Audrey Lambert, bless her heart, puts

my stories on her web page. As long as I don't lose heart, I believe the Good Lord will continue to allow me to write several more stories. So from this old Kentucky home on Dyers Hill, allow me to remind you to never, ever, forget that Christ loves you. Keep your faith, your hope, and your belief in Him. Happy trails to you until we read again.

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

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