

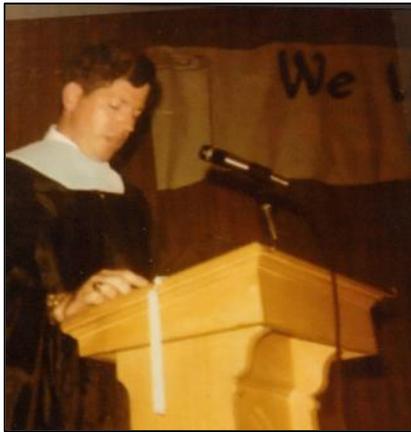
ONCE UPON A TIME IN FANCY FARM

It is in giving that we receive (Saint Francis of Assisi)

By John F. Hall

Jesse Stuart wrote, "Write something to suit yourself and many people will like it; write something to suit everyone and scarcely anyone will care for it." My writing stories for the Journal began, once upon a time, forty years ago with the story, A Cry In The Night. A late friend asked me if I was in competition with another writer named Lanny Wilson. I told him "No!" Lanny is one of Fancy Farm's favorite sons. I, on the other hand, just happened to be a stranger that lived in Fancy Farm for one year. In 1978, I had the privilege to work with 24 senior high students at the former Fancy Farm High School. This is more than just a true story about a school and its senior students. It is really about everyone that ever went to high school. It is about you and me and those teachers that molded us into the adults that we are today.

The lyrics from the song, Wonderful World, written by Herb Alpert, Lou Adler, and Sam



Cooke, might bring back strong memories from those days that we sat in the high school classrooms and dreamed and wished for things that never came to fruition. The following are some of their lyrics, "Don't know much about history. Don't know much about biology. Don't know much about a science book. Don't know much about the French I took. But I do know that I love you. And I know that if you love me too, what a wonderful world this would be. Don't know much about geography. Don't know much about trigonometry. Don't know much about algebra. Don't know what a slide rule is for. But I do know that one

and one are two. And if this one could be with you, what a wonderful world this would be. Now I don't claim to be an A student, but I am trying to be. For maybe by being an A student, baby I can win your love for me." I use lyrics to a song to enhance] my story. Richard Puz, an excellent fiction writer, copied an inscription from an Irish headstone, "...Love leaves a memory no one can steal."

Before I first walked into the Fancy Farm High School, I was a part time graduate student at Murray State University (MSU) and a full time Kentucky State Trooper. Congress passed the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) in 1969. This Act paid for my tuition and books to earn a Master of Arts in College Teaching (MACT) degree. At that time, MSU offered another degree beyond the MACT, called the Specialist in College Teaching (SCT) degree. I have a minor in guidance and I was working on the SCT degree when my college advisor, Dr. Charles Tolley, told me that I needed to complete a directed project. So I came up with a project to help high school seniors select career options using multiple tests and shadowing. The success of the project depended on the participation of the Fancy Farm High School seniors, their guidance counselor, and the financial support from the local KCs to pay for the tests. I completed the project and

received an A from my college professor and I earned six graduate semester hours towards my SCT degree.

The seniors invited me to be their Commencement Speaker. This was one year before I was given a Direct Commission as a First Lieutenant in the Kentucky Army National Guard. I had previously served three years on active duty as a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division. The commencement gave me my first speaking experience before a large audience. Someone gave me a picture taken when I gave that speech. I put a short newspaper clipping about that night and a picture of the high school. Seven years after the commencement exercises, Fancy Farm High School consolidated into Graves County High School. I am very thankful and very grateful to those 24 seniors for helping me. It is my honor to recognize those students, from a time so long ago. The following are the names of the students that participated in the project:

Lisa Ann Ballard, Lori Ann Crick, Tina Marie Ellegood, Phyllis Eugenia Elliott (Valedictorian), Lisa Gale Englert, Penney Adele Kresse, Lorena Fay Pollock, Donna Jean Riley, Denise Ann Thomas, Karla Rose Thompson, Karen Frances Toon, James Timothy Burgess, Paul Scheer Carrico, James Ray Carter, Timothy Edward Carrico, Timothy William Elder, Timothy Gordon Elliott, Michael Louis Hayden (Salutatorian), Joseph Wayne Hidgon, John Christopher Higgins, Mark Raymond Hobbs, Steven Patrick O'Guinn, Anthony Joseph Thomas and Thomas Wayne Toon.

Some of my stories, unlike those written by my favorite writer, Jesse Stuart, are about real people that I have known, like "Shorty" Thomas and his large family that lives in and around Fancy Farm. I write about my family and my grandchildren and my exploits in law enforcement and in the military. I just write about what I know and about the things that I have witnessed. I'm not really sure why Lanny Wilson and I became regular columnists for the Journal. Lanny calls his column "The Healthy Journey." I never met Lanny. I was told that he may live somewhere in the "Windy City," I did meet several members of his family one year at the Fancy Farm Picnic.

There is an art to being an effective writer. First and foremost, I acknowledge Jesus Christ and His hand in guiding my pen as I draft my stories. Christina Fox wrote that writing is an art form. It's a way of painting a picture, but instead of using a paint brush, the writer will use words. The craft of using 26 letters and arranging them into words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs is a creative art. The form of writing that I do, and the content that I put in it, when all is said and done, is all for the glory of God. You will find in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." I only write about true facts, real events and real people. From living three days in the desert at China Lake, to surviving a typhoon in the East China Sea, I draw from real events in my life. But nothing can compare to trying to make a difference in the lives of 24 students, once upon a time in Fancy Farm, Kentucky.

John F. Hall

*Read more stories written by John F. Hall at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>