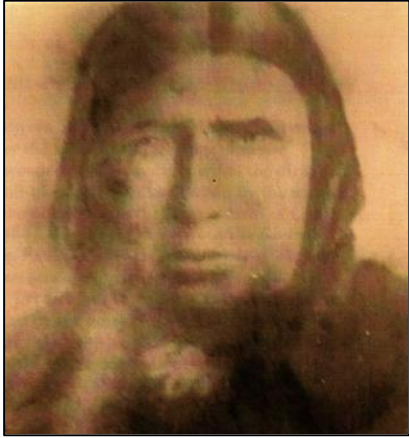


## THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

By John F. Hall

Long Creek Cemetery is located in the Land Between The Lakes (LBL) in Trigg County, Kentucky. You drive about a mile, after you cross over the Lake Barkley bridge, and the cemetery is the first gravel road to your left. A large wooden gate prevents entry to the dirt road going up the hill leading to the cemetery.



There is a full-blooded Cherokee Indian by the name of Nancy Bass Oakley (pictured) buried on that hill. Those of us who once lived in the former town of Golden Pond, located several miles west of the cemetery, call the LBL, the Land Between the Rivers. I spent one day in Long Creek Cemetery with my wife, Paula Oakley Hall and my two granddaughters, Andrea and Heather Hall. Their ancestors are buried on that steep hill. Some of their ancestors served in the American Revolution. I remember listening to the peaceful sounds on that hill. Today, those sounds are interrupted by the noise of the traffic traveling on the westbound lanes of Highway

68/80. That road runs below the north side of the Long Creek hill. The eastbound lanes of Highway 68/80 run below the south side of Long Creek hill. Totally enveloped by the forest, high on a very steep hill, hundreds of people drive by the cemetery weekly and are not aware of its existence. Another generation or two will pass and that historic cemetery may be forgotten. One day, a small crowd drove up the steep hill to clean off the fallen tree branches and leaves. They stopped their work to pray before eating lunch. I made repairs to the ground by a large Oakley tombstone that is on the side of the steep hill. I wrote the following story, ten years ago.

On a steep hill in the Land Between the Rivers, you can visit a cemetery called Long Creek. Prior to the 1960s, a small church called Long Creek Primitive Baptist was located near the top of this hill. During the 1930s and 1940s, the Pastor of this small church, Joseph Nuck Darnell, preached once a month to the small congregation. Few people had money in those years. The Pastor was not paid a salary and no offerings were collected during the church service. Pastor Darnell earned a living as a farmer and later he became a toll collector on the bridges going to and from the Land Between the Rivers. People with kin that were members of the small church were buried up and down the steep hill.

For a few years my three grandchildren, Andrea, Heather, and John-John Hall fished with their dad across the road from Long Creek Cemetery. They called their favorite fishing place the "snake pond." Andrea is almost 15 and Heather is almost 14. They did not fully appreciate the fact that many of their ancestors on the Oakley side of their family are buried on that steep hill. During my last visit to the cemetery, I noticed soil erosion around the tombstone of their great, great grandparents, Chester and Iva Oakley. I decided to make some repairs to stop the soil erosion at the April 2011 cemetery cleaning.

Age has its way of wearing down the body and my four decades of being a soldier were starting to take its toll on my feet. I needed surgery to correct the damage to my left foot. Therefore, I asked Andrea to help me make the repairs at the Saturday morning cemetery cleaning. I felt that by helping me she would gain some appreciation of the fact that she has ancestral roots on that steep hill. My wife, Paula (Oakley), prepared some food to be shared with the other volunteers who would be coming to help with the cemetery cleaning. We drove the six miles to pick up Andrea at her home. To my surprise, Heather came to help with the repairs and cemetery cleaning. My son, John Andrew, realized that my feet would play out if I worked more than two hours. Therefore, he sent some reinforcements.

Heather told me that she liked Bill Miller because he was not a grumpy old man and he was the life of the party. I guess Heather was referring to the lunch served on the steep hill that day. It was chicken, Bar-B-Que, baked beans, salad, chips, cherry pie and other pies, cookies and sodas. J.B. Oakley gave the blessing and thanked God for the food. I marveled, as I sat in my van with my shoes off, due to the pain, at how the stormy weather had cleared away. The sun was shining and a cool breeze swayed the evergreen trees. Andrea filled a plate and gave it to me. I had both sliding van doors open to enjoy the fresh air.

My mind drifted back to a newspaper article in the Cadiz Record dated May 14, 1970. I came up with the idea to give the town of Golden Pond a proper burial. After all, the TVA had bulldozed all the buildings into the ground. They were hell bent to prevent me from having the Kentucky Historical Society erect a Marker for the former town, They lost. I constructed the coffin and I asked Bill Miller to give the eulogy at the dedication of the Historical Marker. This is part of that newspaper article, "John Hall, who played an active role in obtaining the marker and in planning the program presented a small wooden coffin into which was placed a noose designating the 'unjust fate' of the once thriving community, This coffin was interred at the base of the Marker." The sun came out that day, just like it did in the Long Creek Cemetery in 2011. In 1970, Andrew Thomas, was situated on a hill above the Marker, to play the haunting "Taps."

I have no way of knowing if cleaning a cemetery would be a good way to bring history to life for Andrea and Heather. After lunch at Long Creek, Andrea and Heather had to leave to practice for volleyball. Bill Miller came over and gave Andrea and Heather a hug good bye. They are the great, great, grandchildren of the man that Bill Miller worked for as a teenager. Some day they might bring their children to the steep hill and tell them the story of the Land Between the Rivers.

In his 1970 eulogy for Golden Pond, Bill Miller said, "In years to come many strange people will tread her land, the same land that you and I have trod and loved. They'll view her beauty of springtime and her brilliant colors in the fall. However, as they view these scenes, they will hold no stories or memories for them. This hill, or hollow, or ridge, or bottom will not recall to their minds a family name. Many of them will not know that here once lived a people who loved and laughed and had sorrows and shed tears..." I was a stranger when I first came to Golden Pond one very dark night in 1964. \_I never

expected to become a part of that town's history. I never expected Jesus Christ to bless me with so many people, both young and old, that I love and cherish. I never expected to become a writer. The Sounds of Silence is written in memory of those souls who sleep beneath the silent earth on a steep hill at Long Creek.

John F. Hall

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

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