

THE SHORT WALK TO MY MAILBOX

By John F. Hall

In the cold of winter and the heat of summer, the short walk to my mailbox is always easy. I merely go out my front door, walk across my concrete front porch and go down



two steps. Then it is about 30 feet from the steps, on my concrete sidewalk, to my mailbox. What is different each time I do this is the time of the day. The mail carrier comes up Dyers Hill road and makes a right turn onto a circular road in front of my house. When I have outgoing mail, I raise the plastic flag that is attached to the plastic mailbox to let the mail carrier know that I have outgoing mail.

When I was 17, I observed the importance of receiving a letter. I looked into the faces of my fellow soldiers when I was in basic training. I was detailed to hand out mail in my wooden barracks. I would call out the soldier's name and hand them their mail which was mainly letters from home or from a girl friend. The sad expressions on their faces and the sadness in the eyes of the soldiers, that did not receive a letter, is a memory that never left me. A letter to them was more than just an envelope with a sheet of paper inside.

Today, writing to someone, taking the time to craft each word, selecting an envelope, and



going to the post office to buy stamps, becomes an important thing to do. I write a brief letter with each story that I mail. Before it is even read, it has already said: "I care about you! You are someone special." A handwritten letter is a tangible thing. It is something that the recipient senses in a way that technology, text and email, cannot convey. The recipient can tuck a letter into a book or on a shelf or on a nightstand. I know that Jade, Skyler and Lexie put my letters and stories in the "memory boxes" that I gave them. I don't know what Trish, Audrey, Mike and Dr. Butler do with the letters and stories that I mail them. '

My letters and stories are a physical reminder of this writer. My thoughts are forever etched onto a physical object, a piece of paper. A letter is arresting. It demands the attention of the reader. To read my letter and my story, one usually has to sit down and pay attention for a few moments. Handwriting a letter requires disconnecting from the world of technological stimuli. I live in those thoughts that I craft for the recipients. Being able to live in a moment is a rare gift. It is one that helps us remain happy by shutting out regrets and fears that arise from too much focus on the past and the future.

In my brief letters and long stories, I share my thoughts and feelings. I also share the feelings of others by sharing their lyrics in the hymns and song they have written. Sometimes, four writers will get together and write a song that has a one-word title. I'll share their song later in this story. It's hard for me to write long letters, so I keep them short. Writing by hand has wonderful benefits for both the writer and the recipient. It is a seldom—used communication. Handwritten letters can be an unexpected gift from the

past. Walking to and from my mailbox, and looking out at the lifeless fields and leafless trees, reminds me that Christ will make the fields produce food and the leaves will return.

There is a Christian hymn titled, “The Old Love Letter,” by the McKameys. These are some of their lyrics: “I found an old love letter that was written just for me. It told me how much I am loved, sweet and tenderly. With a broken heart I read each line of God’s love for me. It was written by a nail-scarred hand of Calvary. Oh how this old love letter spoke to my heart and soul. I was captured by every word as I watched this love unfold. With special care He wrote it down for all eternity. It was written by a nail-scarred hand of Calvary. I found the old letter, the pages stained with red. I am yours eternally is what the post script said. I treasure my letter that He nailed upon that tree. My tears stain its pages every time I read...With special care He wrote it down for all eternity. It was by a nail-scarred hand of Calvary.”

Both of my grandfathers died before I was born. So they were not able to mail a letter to me. I put on my warm jacket, Stetson black hat, earmuffs, and gloves and walked out my door to go to the mailbox. There was a cold wind blowing from the north. I remember what a friend told me over 40 years ago. He laughed and said, “John, the folks that use to live in your old house said that when wind the wind was up, and they opened the front door, it would blow out the fire in the fireplaces. I noticed some snow on the roof of the stock barn as I walked my mailbox. At the bottom of the cedar post holding the mailbox, I put an old mule shoe. It’s just a reminder that mules were once used to till the land in front of the house. Next to the post I put a “Pitcher” hand pump. It was once used to pump water out of the cistern that once existed in front of the house. I opened the mailbox to retrieve the mail.



I had additional lyrics that I wanted to use, but I've spent more time revising this story than I had intended. So I will close now and bid the recipients, a pleasant good night!

John F. Hall

*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>