

THE ICE STORM

By John F. Hall

Robert Baden-Powell was a soldier, a writer and founder of the world Scouting movement. We share a few things in common. I was a Boy Scout, I was soldier, and I am a writer of non-fiction short stories. Robert made two famous quotes, he said: “Leave this world a little better than you found it. And the most worth-while thing is to put happiness into the lives of others.” I try to do this mainly by the stories that I write and helping others if I can. For years I tried to explain why I write stories. I was not satisfied with my answers until I read what Robert wrote.



Robert Baden-Powell wrote: “No one can pass through life, any more than he can pass through a bit of country, without leaving tracks behind, and those tracks may often be helpful to those coming after him in finding their way.” So my tracks are my stories and one reason why I share them with my family and friends.

When I am not writing stories, I continue to make repairs to my old Antebellum house on the hill. In that respect, I have made my old house better than I found it. Recently, I put a roof over my deck that is located on the east side of my old Antebellum house. The deck



was in need of repairs. The treated deck boards, needed to be replaced. Some of the damage was caused by “Mother Nature” in the form of rain and snow. Additional damage came from a golden rain tree formerly located a few feet east of the deck. This Asian native tree was introduced to North America in 1763, and it was a familiar sight even before the Revolution. The tree has seed pods that look like Chinese's lanterns. The seeds inside the pods are round and hard. When the pods fall off the tree, they break and fall onto the deck. The tree leaves are small and they fall onto the deck. They get stuck along with the pods and seeds between the boards. This allows the rain water to get trapped between the boards and this contributes to the rotting and splintering of the wood.

Another problem with the golden rain tree is that it was leaning over the deck and getting close to hitting the house. The life span of a golden rain tree is short lived at 50 years. My tree was older than 55 years and the branches were dying. I called the electric company and explained that I was going to cut the tall rain tree and I was concerned that it might fall on their electric wires. The electric company agreed to cut the tree. The clean up and removal of the tree limbs and sectioned trunk logs would be my responsibility. In the process of cutting the top portion of the tree, a lineman observed a large, black rat snake in a hollow hole in the cut section of the tree when it hit the ground. Another lineman pulled out the snake. That hollow section of the tree was about 25 feet above the ground.

The golden rain tree served a useful purpose in 2009, when an ice storm hit Kentucky. I tied a heavy-duty thick braided rope from the golden rain tree to the utility pole that holds the transformer. I did this to help keep that utility pole from breaking and being pulled to

the ground. At that time, the electrical wires went from the utility pole at my house, across several fields, a deep creek, and connected to the main power lines on the Maple Grove Road. That is a distance of more than a half mile. The heavy ice on the electrical lines was breaking pole after pole in half. We lost power for seven days. The cell towers stopped working when their back-up generators ran out of fuel.

I had phone service because my telephone line cable is underground. My son stored his 7-K diesel generator on my carport. At that time, the county water line did not extend up to my house. I have a 160-foot deep water well and I shared that water with Paula's mother,



her sister and her brother-in-law. We have a gas log heater that requires no electricity. It was the only heat available on our hill as the other two houses have electric heat. Like in the Walton's television show, they all moved into our house. I ran an electrical line from the 7-K generator to keep the well working, so we had water and a bathroom. I ran an electrical line to keep the refrigerator working so that our food would not spoil. I have a small television that operated off a 12-volt car battery, so we had some

entertainment and Channel 6 local news. The road leading to my house was covered with several inches of ice. One could slide down that hill but could not make it back up the hill in a car or a tractor. We had no mail service for those seven days. All the trees in my front, sides and back yard sustained heavy damage from that horrific ice storm.

Two years ago, the Pennyrile Rural Electric Company began replacing its older utility poles. Their foreman knocked on my door and asked if it would be okay to cut off my power for about two hours to make the replacement. The reason that he was asking for permission is partly due to a "Medical Alert Do Not Disrupt" red warning label on my electric meter. Before she died, Paula's mother was on a portable oxygen concentrator, an electrical device that makes oxygen. The electric company put that label on my meter. I thought it was a mistake as Paula's mother lived two houses over. It's like the "Dog Paw" sticker that our mail carrier put on the side of my mail box. It warns substitute mail carriers that the resident has a dog. But my mail carrier put the sticker on the wrong mail box. It should have been put on Paula's sister's mail box. They have several beagle dogs. I don't have a dog.

I gave the electric company foreman permission to pull the power. It was a very hot summer day and I had no need to watch what they were doing. But I changed my mind and went outside to offer a suggestion to the foreman.

I appreciated the fact that they cut the golden rain tree for me. I also remember how hard the foreman and his crew had worked to restore power to my house during the ice storm of 2009. The utility poles that survived the ice storm all needed to be replaced. The electrical power lines were stretched and broken. They tied the wires back together many times, but they would easily break in the next ice storm. They all needed to be replaced.

Even in the spring, the crews had problems working on the lines going across the fields as they would get stuck in the mud.

A few years ago, my great nephew, Corey Harrison built a house about one tenth of a mile down Dyers Hill Road from my house. A new utility pole was put across the road from his house. The power comes from service lines by Highway 68. The AT&T underground phone cable runs from Highway 68 up to a utility pole by a garage across from my house. The cable comes up the pole and then overhead to my house. I walked over to the foreman and asked if I could make a suggestion that would save them a lot of work and money. The foreman was very interested. I suggested that they run electrical wires from the pole located across the road from Corey's house and install a new utility pole in front of the phone company's pole up the hill at the garage. By doing that, they could eliminate their poles and electrical wires coming across the fields from the Maple Grove Road to my house.

I looked at the foreman's face as he pondered what I had just suggested. He got a big smile on his face. He realized that if he did as I suggested, no longer would they get stuck in the mud. His crew would have to install only one new pole. They could eliminate over a half mile of bad poles and damaged wire. He asked me if I would give him permission to do that. I told him that I wish that I could, but I only own my house and one acre of land in the middle of the farm. I told him that I'm sure that the widow that owns this farm would give her permission and Paula's sister and her husband, that own the lot next to my house, will give their permission. They all gave their permission and the foreman was very happy. Robert Baden-Powell was spot on when he said that "the most worth-while thing is to try to put happiness into the lives of others." In 1 John, Chapter 3, Verse 17 are these words, "Suppose someone sees a brother or sister in need and is able to help them. If he doesn't take pity on them, how can the love of God be in him?" Kindness in the form of a suggestion, put some happiness in the lives of that foreman and his crew. One could say that bringing that suggestion to life also made me happy. As I sit on my front porch swing and look at the new utility pole, I am thankful to Christ that he has allowed me live on this farm for the past 42 years. I am also grateful that no longer would I have to be concerned about the next ice storm.

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