

VOICES ON THE CHRISTMAS TREE

By John F. Hall

To end 2020 on a joyous note, I decided to write something about my Christmas tree. This year has been a bust because of the pandemic. The traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners with all the family was cancelled. Paula and I put up the pre-lighted Christmas tree in the living room. She did not want to put up the Christmas tree ornaments stored in two large plastic containers. They held hundreds of ornaments



accumulated during the 56 years that we have been married. She just wanted to put the sixty plus ornaments stored in a small Christmas box, on the tree. This box measures 20" by 15" by 9". The lid on box has pictures of four snow men. Below the snow men pictures

are these words: "These Memories Belong To." We never filled out who the memories belong to. Nearly all of the ornaments in the box have pictures of our grandchildren, Andrea, Heather, and John-John taken during their school years and younger. Several ornaments are recordable photo ornaments that have a 20-second message. Each of those ornaments contains voices of the grandchildren.

I disassembled one of the recordable photo ornaments to replace the three corroded button cell batteries. That ornament has a picture of John-John when he was about four years old. Paula came into the living room and asked if I heard that country music singer Charlie Pride had died from complications of COVID-19. He was 86 years old. Paula said, "You know, he was such a kind man and he did not have to see Andrea and be kind to her." So what is the story about Charlie Pride and Andrea? When she was ten years old, she loved the song, "Kiss an Angel Good Morning." The song was written by Ben Peters. His wife, Jackie, had a newborn baby named Angela. That inspired him to write the song that Andrea loved. These are some of his lyrics: "When ever I chance to meet, some old friends on the street, they wonder how a man got to



be this way. I've always got a smiling face, any time and any place. And every time they ask me why, I just smile and say. You've got to kiss an Angel good morning and let her know you think about her when you're gone. Kiss an Angel in the morning and love her like the devil when you get back home. Well people may try to guess the secret of my happiness. But some of them will never learn it's a simple thing. The secret I'm speaking of is a man and a woman in love. And the answer is in this song that I always sing.

You've got to kiss an Angel good morning. And let her know you think about her when you're gone...".

It was around Christmas time in 2006, and Andrea heard that Charlie Pride was performing in Owendboro, Kentucky. Charlie was 72 at that time. Andrea wanted to meet him and watch him perform her favorite song "Kiss An Angel Good Morning." Now granddaughters have a way of wrapping their grandfathers around their little fingers. So I called and purchased tickets for Andrea, Paula and one for me. Heather did not want to go. We arrived early and got front row seats. I told Andrea and Paula that I would be back. I found Charlie Pride's security officer and showed him my badge and Trooper identification. I asked him to check with Charlie Pride and see if I could go back stage with Andrea and have her meet Charlie. I went back to my seat and waited. The security officer came out and motioned for me to bring Andrea backstage.



Andrea and I followed the security officer into Charlie Pride's dressing room. We walked over to Charlie and I said, "Charlie, I'd like you to meet my oldest granddaughter, Andrea. She just loves your song Kiss An Angel Good Morning." He smiled and looked at Andrea, and said, "Andrea, you have a space between your front teeth, just like me." I took a picture of Andrea with Charlie Pride as he gave her a little hug. I shook Charlie's hand and thanked him for allowing us to visit with him. Charlie has five grandchildren and two great grandchildren. The oldest is named Skyler Pride. What I liked about Charlie is a statement that he made. He said, "I tried to do my best and contribute my part." It's a message that I will pass on to Jade, Skyler, and Lexie.

In 1846, Horatius Bonar wrote the hymn, "I Heard The Voice of Jesus Say." These are his lyrics: "I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Come unto me, and rest; lay down, thy weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast.' I came to Jesus as I was weary, worn, and sad; I found Him in a resting-place, and 'He has made me glad. I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Behold, I freely give the living water; thirsty one, stoop down, and drink, and live.' I came to Jesus, and drank of that life giving stream; my thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in Him. I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'I am this dark world's



light; look unto Me, thy morn shall rise, and all thy day be bright.' I look to Jesus, and I found in Him my star, my Sun; and in that Light of life I'll walk till trav'ling days are done.'"

So where are the voices on my Christmas tree? They are in the recordable photo-Christmas ornaments hanging on my Christmas tree. In 2005, my oldest granddaughter, Andrea was eight years old. This is what she recorded on her ornament: "Today is December 3, 2005 and I am at MaMaw's and An-Father's house. And I want

to tell you all that I hope you have a very Merry Christmas and that I love you very much and I hope you never die. Good night and have a very Merry Christmas.”

When Paula and I married 56 years ago, we purchased a creche with Mary, Joseph, the



baby Jesus, the Shepard boy, his sheep, the three Wise men, a donkey and an oxen. At the top of the creche is an Angel. We kept that creche all these years. It is a reminder that Christmas is about the birth of the Christ child. It is also reminder of what Jesus said more than two thousand years ago: “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.” John 15:12. I hope the readers of this story have a holy and blessed Christmas. Keep

the love and joy of Jesus in your heart and in your soul.

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