

THE WAYWARD WIND

By John F. Hall

It was a nice spring day, the sun was shining, and the wind was calm. This is the second week that I have sheltered in place with my wife, Paula. I made my first trip into the city to pick up medications from the Cadiz Pharmacy drive-in. The pharmacy technician informed me that they could only give me a 30-day, versus a 90-day supply of Plaquenil (generic for Hydroxychloroquine) due to a national shortage. I stayed in town long enough to pick up the meds and return home. On the way up the road to my house, I observed my nephew-in-law, Lonnie standing by his car. I waved and he waived back. The coronavirus caused his manufacturing plant in Hopkinsville to shut down.

I pulled into my carport and parked. I went upstairs and raised the window where I do my writing. I turned on my desktop computer and a toner cartridge warning red light came on in my Lexmark printer. I needed six copies and felt that there was enough toner. It printed four of the six copies that I needed and then stopped. A warning message came across a small one inch by three-inch screen in the front top of the top of the computer, "CHANGE CARTRIDGE." So I called the Dell Company and ordered the cartridge, I was told it would be delivered in five business days. It was delivered FEDEX Express Second Day Air and at no charge for the shipping. I do a limited amount of paper work for my son that requires a printer.

One week before the cartridge needed to be replaced, my son called and asked me to type



up an estimate and email it to an individual in Las Vegas, Nevada. This individual flew into Nashville and met my son in Mount Juliet, Tennessee. They assessed the damage to a house caused by the recent tornado that hit that city. The house is a rental owned by this individual's company. I used my laptop to type out the estimate. I scanned the estimate into my desktop computer and emailed it. It contained these few words: "Demolition of entire house. Hauling off of all debris and left over contents. «

Exclusion: Car removal is not part of this estimate."



Two years ago, Paula and I drove to Cookeville, Tennessee. I had an appointment to see a spine surgeon, Dr. Jestus. He felt that surgery was not needed at this time. So Paula and I went to eat at a recommended restaurant called the Dipsy Doodle. It was just outside the city in Putnam

County. As I was typing up the estimate for my son, I realized that the tornado that hit the house my son was about to demolish, may have been the same tornado that roared into Putnam County, Tennessee. It is a straight line, 56—mile distance between the two cities. Tragedy hit with a vengeance and fury. In a matter of seconds, the wayward winds rotated and took the lives of five children and 13 adults. There would be no need for anyone to type up demolition estimates for the houses where the deaths occurred. The wayward winds accomplished that and only left the need to haul off the splinters of debris that could barely be found.

President Donald Trump flew into Putnam County to View the destruction and to comfort the survivors. Many of the grief stricken survivors stood in disbelief and shock at the loss of all those little children. As Debi Daniel, owner of the Dipsy Doodle Drive-in, told the reporter from Channel 4 News in Nashville, “Their life was just beginning y'know?” They say that doctors should not get too emotionally attached to their patients. I feel that writers should be the same way about the stories they write. I guess that I became emotionally attached to my stories about the Dipsy Doodle. Audrey Lambert put those stories on her web page. The time may come when I will have to see Dr. Jestus again. Paula and I will eat lunch at the Dipsy Doodle. We will come full circle and meet some folks affected by the wayward wind.

A certain song spins around in my mind when I write a story. I don't hesitate and ponder too much when a story is conceived. I ask Christ to make me an instrument of His peace. As my Pastor Greg told me, “Those young people are my ministry.” I like the words found in Romans, Chapter 12, Verses 6-7, “We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given to each of us. Do you have the gift of prophecy? Then use it in keeping with the faith you have. Is it your gift to serve? Then serve. Is it teaching? Then teach.” My days of teaching in a classroom are long gone. I'm like the cowboy's horse that is worn out and is set free in a green pasture to spend his last days in freedom from having to work.

I recall back when I was 11 years old and I first heard the song, “The Wayward Wind.” The country song was written by Stanley Lebowsky and Herb Newman. This is the first verse of their lyrics: “The wayward wind is a restless wind. A restless wind that yearns to wander. And he was born the next of kin. The next of kin to the wayward wind...” The song became a number seller by Gogi Grant. It was a song that I listened to over and over again. I wandered a lot when I was younger. From Key West, Florida to the Mojave Desert in California, to Niagara Falls, New York and most of the states in between, I've travelled there. There is hope in our country when suppliers are doing their best to help put us back on the road to recovery. Previously, I mailed a story titled, “The Wooden Boat On The River” without the four pictures that I felt would enhance that story. I found two more copies of those pictures. I mailed them to Skyler, Jade, Lexie, Trish, Mike and Dr. Butler. I mailed the original color copies to Audrey.

Other than composing stories, there is not much that this, soon to be, 75 year old writer can do. My rheumatologist told me to stop writing my stories using a pen. He told me to purchase a software that he had been using for the past 17 years. It is called Dragon and it

is the world's best selling speech recognition software. Actually, I use my smartphone to draft a story. I don't use my thumbs due to joint damage. I use my third finger on my left hand. It's turtle slow, but I compose as I write. I got out of the house and went into my backyard. I had several trees growing around my old pontoon boat that is stored on large concrete blocks. I sold the boat's outboard motor and single axle trailer long ago. The last time the boat was on the water was 1991. My son plans to turn the boat into a duck blind. I can work for about two hours before my back makes me stop. I put a 40—volt battery into my electric chain saw that has a 12-inch bar. I was able to cut down about half of the trees before the battery died. I remember what Vivian Leigh said at the end of the movie, “Gone With The Winds.” She said, “After all tomorrow is another day.” I took the battery out of the chain saw and put it in a battery charger. I'll cut the rest of the trees on another day.

The pandemic that is impacting the entire country has caused a historic shutdown. My son is self employed. His wife, Lori, is a respiratory therapist at the Murray hospital. My oldest granddaughter, Andrea is a salaried employee for the Rush Truck Center in Smyrna, Tennessee. She lives in Nashville. Her employer gave her a letter stating that she is an essential truck employee in case they close certain highways. She lives in one county and works in another county. She plans to move in June to the county where she works. My next oldest granddaughter, Heather, works for Rafferty's in Bowling Green. She is working TO GO take out orders. She had been hired to work for a start-up investment firm in Louisville, starting in June. But the pandemic may have doomed that company. Thankfully Skyler, Lexie, Jade, and John— John are students. Skyler and John-John attend Hopkinsville Community College. All their courses are continuing online and communications with their professors are by email.

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*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at:

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