

AN AUGUST RAIN

By John F. Hall

After this Sunday morning Church services, I came home and changed out of my Sunday clothes. I sat in my easy chair and raised my feet up. I do this to help prevent blood clots in my legs. I'm taking the prescription drug Eliquis. This drug treats blood clots in the legs and lungs and reduces the risk of stroke in people with an irregular heartbeat called atrial fibrillation. The drug is the second most expensive one that I take. The manufacturer charges Medicare \$811 for a 90-day supply. The most expensive prescription drug that I take is Multag. This drug helps keep the heart beating normally in people, like me, with life-threatening heart rhythm disorders of the atrium (the upper chambers of the heart that allow blood to flow into the heart). The manufacture charges Medicare \$1,100 for a 90-day supply. These two medications, I believe, are part of the reason that I am still here and writing.



I continued to do what I have been doing for years. And that is to draft another story using the note apps on my old iPhone 6. I just use it as a computer as it does not have a SIM card. I cannot make or receive calls on that device. Because of the arthritis in my hands, that make it painful to hold a pen, I just use one finger to type out one individual letter at a time. Usually, as I am composing a story, I will doze off into a nap, and think of some melody that comes to mind. Krist Kristofferson wrote the song, "Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down." The song reminds me of a lonely, lost soul, on a Sunday morning. These are some of his lyrics: "Well, I woke up Sunday morning, with no way to hold my head without it hurting... I fumbled through my closet for my clothes, and found my cleanest dirty shirt. And I washed my face and combed my hair, and stumbled down the steps to meet the day... Then I crossed the empty street, and caught the Sunday smell of someone fryin' chicken. And it took me back to somethin' that I lost somehow, along the way. .. In the park I saw a daddy with a laughin' little girl he was swingin'. And I stopped beside a Sunday school, listened to the song they singin'. Then I headed back for home, and somewhere far away a lonesome bell was ringin'. And it echoed through the canyons like disappearing dreams of yesterday... On the Sunday morning sidewalk... there's something in a Sunday makes your body feel alone. There ain't nothin' short of dyin' half as lonesome as the sound on the sleepin' city sidewalks. Sunday morning coming down..." '

Like Krist, when I wake up, I wash my face and comb my thinning hair. Then I'll slowly walk down the stairs in my house, that has been a home to me and my wife, Paula for the past 45 years. Some song writers tend to write true songs about their life. Krist Kristofferson lead a wildlife, until one day he walked into a church. I don't know what he heard or what was said in that church. After that visit he wrote the song, "Why Me." These are his Lyrics: "Why me Lord, what have I ever done to deserve even one of the pleasures I've known? Tell me Lord, what did I ever do that was worth loving You, or the kindness that You've shown. Lord help me Jesus, I've wasted it so. Help me Jesus I know what I am. Now that I know that I've needed You so, help me Jesus, my soul's in

Your hands. Tell me Lord, if You think there's a way I can try to repay all I've taken from You..." "Maybe Lord, I can show someone else what I've been through myself, on my way back to You. Lord help me Jesus, I've wasted it so help me Jesus I know what I am. Now that I know that I needed You so help me Jesus, my soul's in Your hand. Jesus, my soul's in Your hand.'

On most Sunday afternoons, I write some of my better stories, thanks to Christ's grace and inspiration. It's true that Krist Kristofferson may have seen the "Light," as he sat in that church, one Sunday. Sadly, I know so very good people that look at Sunday as just another passing day. Going to church is not on their schedule, and even giving Christ a second's thought, throughout the week, is out of the question. Some people don't get anything out of going to church, mainly because they don't bring anything to church.

Last Sunday, after Church services, I went to Hancock's Food Market in Cadiz, Kentucky, for some eggs and milk. While going up one aisle, I noticed that Dr. Michael Gross was coming up behind me. He said, "It seems like we make the same food run every Sunday." I smiled and asked him how long he intends to continue practicing dentistry? He replied: "I've been a dentist for 42 years. As long as my health holds out, I'll keep working." I asked him his age. He said that he was 71. I told him that I almost died in March from a bad reaction to the antibiotic, Levaquin. I told him that the drug should not be given to people my age. I'm 78. I recommended, that should he become sick, that he should not take it. Dr. Gross said that drug was third on the list of the antibiotics that he prescribes. I told him that after taking the drug, I suffered congestive heart failure, kidney failure and fluid on my lungs. If I had not made it to the Emergency Room in Murray, with only one hour to spare, I would have died. Even today, I have not gotten my strength back.

Garth Brooks and Randy Taylor wrote the song, "Much Too Young (to Feel This Damn Old)." There may not be any real demand for a worn out, old writer like me. I'm just blessed to have family and friends that love to read my life stories. These are a few of Garth's and Randy's lyrics: "This old highway getting' longer, seems there ain't no end in sight. To sleep would be best, but I just can't afford to rest, I've got to ride in Denver tomorrow night... And the white lines getting longer, and the saddle getting cold, I'm much too young to be this damn old. All my cards are on the table with no ace left in the hole, I'm just too young to be this damn old...Lord, I'm just too young to be this damn old...". Chet Stanhope wrote a short piece called, "Ol' Timers." These are his words: "We call 'em Ol' Timers but I wonder if we will see the value of that old man in the park - there by the tree. He may not seem important - there's no shine upon his shoes, as we pass him with our briefcase to a world beyond his view. But his value may be greater, and his worth a thousand times, when we stop to think of sacrifice, for this land of yours and mine. Like when the country was in trouble and they fought to keep her free. It is taken all for granted what they did for you and me. So when you see Old Glory waving, let's not forget who kept her there, and give respect and gratitude to those Ol' Timers everywhere. We call them Ol' Timers and I hope they'll be in the hearts of those who treasure the joy of being free. We call 'Ol' Timers, but I wonder if we will see the value of that ol' man in the park - there by the tree."

I have two briefcases, the first one is brown and very worn, I use it to keep the minutes from the meetings with my Christian Fraternity. The other briefcase is black, I keep what I call my final papers in that briefcase. I told my son, John that he needs to read what is in that briefcase, when I pass away.

The weather man called for heavy rains this Sunday, in Kentucky. I told my son that I plan to go to the grave side service for Mike Crisp. The Service will be held at the Green Hill Memorial Gardens, just west of Hopkinsville, by Highway 68, at 2:00 pm. Mike's dad, Elwood and I were Realtor's in Cadiz, several decades ago. I worked for Lynn Waller Realty. Mike was in Trigg County High School with my wife, Paula. I became a friend to one of Mike's sons, Jason. He went to school with my son, John. His children, Skyler and Lexie, and my grandchildren, Andrea, Heather, and John-John, went to Heritage Christian Academy (HCA) in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

Jason Crisp was on active duty in the Army at that time. And I was still serving in the Army Reserve. I was also a volunteer in the HCA lunchroom. When Jason was deployed to Iraq, I became a surrogate grandfather to Jason's two daughters. Every school day, for about ten minutes, I would sit down at Skyler's table in the lunchroom, to encourage her to eat her lunch. I would stop by Lexie's table, but she did not need any encouragement to eat her lunch. When my oldest granddaughter, Andrea started school at HCA, I promised her, that if I was not away on an audit, or on Army Reserve Duty, I would eat lunch with her.

The day of Mike's graveside service came. I go to a small Church where I serve as an usher. I'm the first to arrive at the Church, and I unlock the doors and turn on the lights. It was raining very hard out in the parking lot. A stream of water was flowing by the main Church doors. I prayed a selfish prayer and said: "Lord, I'd like to ask you for a favor. It would be nice if You could hold off the rain, for about 30 minutes, during the graveside Service. But only if that is Your Will."

For the Sunday graveside Service, I wore a black tee shirt, a long sleeve black shirt, a black vest, and black pants. I wore a black Stetson hat. I arrived a little early at the cemetery and parked by the cemetery keeper's house. The hearse drove by, and I followed one of the vehicles carrying the pallbearers. They got out and stood behind the hearse. The pallbearers were all wearing black shirts, and I just blended in. I walked over to Jason Crisp. He greeted me. He was one of the pallbearers. I gave him a hug. The last time that I came to a funeral at this cemetery was in 2014, for Jason's brother Todd. Jason pointed out his two daughters, Skyler and Lexie. They were standing with the others that came that day. The rain had stopped, but the clouds were dark and heavy. I walked over and gave Skyler and Lexie a hug.

We followed the pallbearers as they carried Mike's coffin into the funeral tent. Lexie was walking with me, to insure that I did not fall. The uneven ground had puddles of rain water, and was slippery. The funeral director had the pallbearers stand by one side of the coffin.

He told the people to come closer to the entrance of the tent. I was standing behind the chairs for the family. Lexie and Skyler were standing nearby. Brother Steve Hardy officiated at the service. When he began to speak, I took off my hat. The Preacher mentioned that Mike was 74 years old. He opened his Bible and read from Psalm, Chapter 90, Verse 10: "Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away." I pondered that verse, because I'm 78 years old, and my strength may not endure to age 80. But that is up to Christ to decide. Near the end of the Service, a very light, rain mist began to fall. The Service ended and I gave Lexie, Skyler, and Jason's wife, Laura, a hug. After leaving the tent, I gave Jason a hug.

Ed Stallons came up to me. We were students at Murray State. He said that it had been a long time since the last time that he saw me. I told Ed that I could pick him out of a crowd because he is as tall as a tree. Ed is about seven feet tall. I asked him how the car body repair business was going. He said that it was slow. I told Ed that it was good to see him. A couple, that parked their SUV in front of my vehicle, came by me. I held my umbrella over the lady, as her husband walked ahead. When he arrived at his SUV, he said to me: "They were not calling for all this rain. We got 11 inches already." Driving home, I was thankful not to be stuck in another August rain.

John F. Hall

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