

THE ASHES IN THE CANE

By John F. Hall

My dear readers in Christ, I take this opportunity to thank each of you, for your encouragement, and for taking the time to read my stories. I hope that you have enjoyed reading them. As long as Jesus Christ, will give me breath, I will continue to write. I like to write Christian centered, nonfiction life stories. Some say that life is a sober matter. Jesus is described as a man of sorrows. I have not found a single text in the New Testament that explicitly says Jesus laughed. In John, Chapter 11, Verse 35, is the shortest verse in the Bible: “Jesus wept.”

Most of us have heard the expression, “The only sure things in life are death and taxes.” This is the month of March, and I’ve gathered all the necessary documents and tax forms to do my taxes. Somehow, I was put on what I call, “taxfare.” Since I was a college student, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) put me on their annual audit hit list. They would dun me to pay them, an extra dollar or two, nearly every tax year. It is just pure harassment. I have 20 college credits in accounting, and I know a rotten service when I experience one. I prepare my own taxes, so I make sure that the IRS has to give me a refund every year.

I tell my wife, Paula, that I’m no longer a “spring chicken.” I spent too many times parachuting out of perfectly good helicopters and planes; having too many high-speed car chases; dealing with arresting people; and investigating too many vehicle accidents, that killed some many young lives. Just having to deal, with that five percent, that made life miserable for others, wore me out. But, I’m blessed to have my son, John. In 2023, I came within an hour of dying from congestive heart failure, respiratory failure and kidney failure. I don’t smoke, but my lungs are scarred from my military service, and second-hand smoke. My doctors put me on a dozen and more, prescriptions, to just keep me alive. The problem is that will make me light-headed and dizzy. I have a dual (two sides) three-step and a three-foot by four-foot landing in my carport. It gives me access to my kitchen door. I was standing on the landing, talking to me son, when I lost my balance. I started to fall off the landing. My son was standing on the carport’s concrete floor, talking to me. He caught me, as I was halfway off the landing.

If I would have fallen off the landing, and hit my head on the concrete carport’s floor, that would have ended my life. Sadly, falls kill one out four people my age. The next day, my son built an ingenious metal railing, up the dual three stair steps, and across the landing.

One of my favorite actors is the late Charles Bronson. He died at the age of 81. He began to use a wooden cane, as his health began to fail. I enjoyed watching his performance in the movie, “The Magnificent Seven.” Bronson played the role of Bernardo O’ Rielly, a gun fighter of Irish-Mexican heritage. Bronson died from respiratory and congestive heart failure. Bronson’s wife, the late actress, Jill Ireland, died in 1990, of breast cancer, in her home in Malibu, California. She was cremated, and her ashes were put in the wooden walking cane used by Charles Bronson. When he died in 2003, that cane was buried with him at Brownsville Cemetery in Vermont.

Lesley Mcdade wrote the poem, "My Walking Stick." These are her words: "You are very mischievous, my walking stick, and love to play on me a trick. I leave you hanging on the back of my chair, and when I return, I find you not there. "Now where's my stick", in desperation I cry, and when I look everywhere, I find you in a most unexpected place, fearing I have lost you, my heart starts to race. For I cannot do without you. Like a sword to a knight of old, if I may be so bold, I rely on you walking stick, to help me over the stony ground, and where other pitfalls bound. So let it be just a trick, I would hate to lose you my naughty stick." I'll end this story with the words found in Genesis, Chapter 3, Verse 19: "By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return."

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