

ALL IN THE CLOUDS

By John F. Hall

Going down the road, as a writer, gives me a different perspective on life. I'm not under any pressure to produce a story. I don't have an earthly editor to please, and my stories are free. Every day, the Good Lord paints a different picture with His clouds up in His blue sky. Some cloudless days, all I can see is clear blue skies. But it takes clouds to make the rain and to make the snow. Joni Mitchell wrote a song called, "Both Sides Now." I was 24 years old, and a college student when the song was released. These are a few of her lyrics: "Rows and flows of angel hair, and ice cream castles in the air, and feathered canyons everywhere. I looked at clouds that way. But now they only block the sun, they rain and snow on everyone. So many things I would have done, but clouds got in my way. I've looked at clouds from both sides now. From up and down and still somehow, it's cloud illusions I recall, I really don't know clouds at all..."



Years ago, I wrote a story and provided a copy of James Castle's painting of a castle in the sky. Many decades ago, I was in Washington DC obtaining film for an Army Reserve training film that I had developed. I had time on my hands, so I walked over to the Smithsonian American Art Museum. I was impressed by his painting of a castle in the clouds. Toni Watson wrote a song called, "Cloudy Day." These are a few of his lyrics: "Am I living? Oh what a funny thing to say. But there's alive, and then there's living, am I living for today? Hmm. And I'm getting older with every memory I make. Now that I'm older, with these moments, will I live with them or just throw them away, away..."

Sometimes, when I look at clouds, they seem to form an image of a face. Cirrus clouds are delicate, feathery clouds that are made mostly of ice crystals. Their wispy shape comes from wind currents which twist and spread the ice crystals into strands. There are many types of clouds that depend upon their height in the sky. Cirrostratus clouds are thin, white clouds that cover the whole sky like a veil. They can cause the appearance of a halo around the sun or the moon. My favorite type of cloud is the cumulus cloud. This type of cloud looks like a fluffy, white cotton ball in the sky.

Before he was killed in a training flight, John G. Magee, Jr., wrote, "High Flight," in 1941. These are his words: "Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth and danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings. Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth of sun-split clouds-and done a hundred things you have not dreamed of-wheeled and soared and swung. High in the sunlit silence, hov'ring there, I've chased the shouting winds along and flung my eager craft through footless halls of air. Up, up the long delirious burning blue, I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace, where never lark, or even eagle flew. And, with silent, lifting mind, I've trod the high untrespassed sanctity of space, put out my hand and touched the face of God."

John Magee's sonnet has always impressed me with its simplicity, and powerful wording.

Greta Zwaan wrote the poem, "Snowy Clouds." These are her words: "White clouds in heavenly splendor glide softly in the sky, they form, they change, they journey like soap suds flowing by. They skip like little children, they float on silver wings, they join their hands in tribute, such lovely, fluffy things. No choreographic wonder could human hands obtain; to equal this performance must be by heavenly reign. Their ultra white appearance, like freshly fallen snow, glides slowly o'er the heavens, they venture to and fro. There's no baton to guide them yet movement comes with ease, like joyful, happy children they glide where'er they please. Who tells them how to function? Who guides the path they take? Who keeps them from destruction? Why don't they crash and break? There has to be an order that we don't understand, a universal program within the Master's hand. The things we rarely notice; the things we fail to see, are part of God's creation; a holy mystery. How do clouds stay above us? Why don't they fall to earth? What makes them move so gently? Does movement cause them mirth? They dance as if they're joyful; the roam. the sky at will; But me? I stand in wonder; how can they be so ' still? I ponder o'er their beauty, I marvel at their grace, and realize God's purpose - He put the clouds in place. Just like in all creation we see His perfect plan, we're privileged to enjoy them, a gift from God to man."

We need clouds to make rainbows to remind us of Gods promise to us. We need clouds on a hot summer's day to give us shade when the wind is absent. Every three months, I have to travel down to Nashville, Tennessee to see by dermatologist, Dr. Natalie Curcio. Several miles from the heart of the city, north on interstate-24, are two very tall television transmission towers. Near the top of the towers are branch antennas. They remind me of pitch-forks. I christened them "The Nashville Pitch-forks." On several occasions, the clouds covered the pitch-forks, and made them invisible.

I selected two short pieces to end this story about clouds. The first was written by Elizabeth Lyulkin called, "Winter Sky." These are her words: "I looked out of my window and saw the Winter sky; the sky was simply glorious - not a cloud passing by. The oaks and maples in the yard were sporting coats of white, the sky was bright translucent blue - it filled me with delight. It made me think of God above who painted all I saw, who created such breathtaking beauty that lasts forevermore. I looked out my window and 'saw the Winter sky; the sky was simply glorious - not a cloud passing by." The second short piece was written by Margaret Cagle called, "Sun Behind the Clouds." Theses are her words: "Sometimes it's hard to feel cheerful when it's raining and gloomy outside, but I remember there's still sunshine that those rain clouds only hide. The rain cannot take away the joy that my Jesus put way down deep. Rain may come, and rain may go, but the joy of Jesus I will keep. There is a good reason, I know for God to send the earth rain. If I experienced a serious drought, I guess I will surely complain. Yes, somewhere else the sun shines the same time it is raining here, as the love of God shines in my heart. It can always fill me with cheer. Thank you for the rain, dear Lord, and thank you for the sunshine too. Thank You for all your blessings that You give us every day anew."

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