

## **ALEXIS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND THIS WRITER**

By John F. Hall

Alexis (Lexie) Crisp, wrote this in the June birthday card that she mailed to me: “I would love for you to write a story about something you always wanted and if you were able to get it. It doesn’t have to be about an object, but it could be about anything. .”. I guess, like many young men, I wanted to please my dad, Charles J. Hall. He wanted me to get a college education, and to have a career in the military. He lived long enough to see me earn degrees from Murray State University. And, in April, 1979, I was given a Direct Commission in the Kentucky Army National Guard. After four years, I transferred back to the Army Reserve. I retired in 2005, as a Lieutenant Colonel. I wanted to become a Kentucky State Police (KSP) Trooper and I graduated from the Kentucky State Police Academy. My dad wanted me to quit the force, because he felt that organization was getting expert help, dirt cheap. They wanted me to be an instructor at the KSP Academy in Frankfort. I declined the offer for several reasons. My wife, Paula, had a good paying Civil Service job on Fort Campbell, with nearly a decade towards her retirement. I really did not like Frankfort, it felt like the city was in a hole, and I did not like the political games that the KSP played. Besides, I was no quitter. So I stayed, and was able to get an early retirement.

As a Trooper, I wrote my first story 47 years ago. People who read that story really like it. So that encouraged me become a story writer. My Christian Fraternity Brother, Richard Hornbeak, calls me a “weaver of stories.” He was recently blessed with his first granddaughter, that he affectionately calls “Sparkle.” So I wanted to give Alexis a story, that she might cherish, as I’m pushing closer to being 80. I’m also hopeful that Richard might get something from this story too. I would estimate that the majority of my readers have never met Alexis. I believe they might enjoy reading how I became a part of Alexis’ family, and a part of Alexis’ life. If I accomplish this, then I was able to get what I wanted to do. I use four photographs to show how Alexis has changed over time. This story is for and about Alexis Crisp, and how I was blessed to become a part of the history of her life.

In the way of an introduction, Alexis is the youngest daughter of Loretta and Jason Crisp.



(Pictured: Major Jason Crisp, USA (Retired) & his daughter Alexis Lexie Crisp)

She is currently a student at Murray State University. Her older sister, Skyler, was recently married to Kendall Lancaster. Skyler is also a student at Murray State, my alma mater. Alexis and Skyler came into my life when they were elementary students at Heritage Christian Academy (HCA) in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. My three grandchildren, Andrea, Heather, and John (John-John) went to school there. John-John was in kindergarten with Skyler. Alexis’ great grandfather, Elwood Crisp and I were realtors. We sold real estate in Trigg County. I worked for Lynn Waller. My son, John Andrew, renovated a warehouse owned by Elwood Crisp, and turned it into a daycare center. It is located behind the O’Rileys Auto Parts store in Cadiz. I was not able to sell many properties, because I would be out of the county, normally, 100 to 150 days a year,

on Army Reserve Duty. Alexis grandfather, Mike Crisp and I were old friends, but I was not successful in getting Mike to become involved in Alexis' and Skyler's activities at HCA.

Alexis' dad, Major Jason Crisp, USA, (Retired), is a fellow soldier. We both served on Fort Campbell, Kentucky. I'm more like a surrogate dad to him. He also calls me An-Father, as does Alexis' mother, Loretta. HCA held its annual Grandparent's Day, and the grandparents were invited to come to the school, to hear the students sing, to meet the their teachers, to visit their classrooms, and to have photographs taken with their grandchildren. I came that day to have my photograph taken with my grandchildren, Andrea, Heather, and John (John-John). I was about to leave the school, when I met Skyler and Alexis in the hallway. I asked if any of their grandparents were there. They said: "No."

I was saddened to hear that no grandparents came for Skyler and Alexis. My paternal grandfather, John J. Hall, died at the age of 44, during the influenza Pandemic of 1918.



My maternal grandfather, Adelbert Race, died from skin cancer, at the age of 43. I never knew or met my grandmothers. I don't know what is worse, to never know your grandfather, but that grandfather is too busy to get involved in your life? So I said to Alexis and Skyler: "Well, I will be your grandfather. Let's go have our picture taken." I had on my favorite green "Master's" golf jacket, Alexis had on a white sweater, and Skyler had on a green blouse and a white and black sweater.

(Pictured: Lexie, Skyler & An-Father John Hall)

The photographer created the "surrogate grandfather photograph." His camera captured that exact moment in time, of how Alexis, Skyler, and I looked on that Grandparent's Day at HCA. It's one thing to talk about a photograph in a story. It is another thing to be able to effectively incorporate that photograph into this story.



So I decided to use another photograph in this story. It was taken by Alexis' sister, Skyler. It was taken in front their house at the detached garage. Skyler and Alexis practiced a lot of volleyball in their fenced in backyard. Based on what I was wearing, in the picture, I may have stopped by their house after getting off from my work in Hopkinsville. I was invited to come to their house for birthday parties, family reunions, Christmas and other events. I became an extended member of this Crisp family.

On September 14, 2017, HCA volleyball Coach Eldridge Rogers held "Grandparents Night." He invited the HCA volleyball players to come onto the floor with their grandparents. He then asked them to introduce their grandparents, to the fans in the bleachers. I came to Hopkinsville, early that night, to watch Skyler and Lexis play volleyball. I had a meeting with my Christian Fraternity Brothers at seven PM that night, so I was not able to stay long at HCA. I walked onto the HCA gym floor with Alexis Crisp. Her mother, Loretta, video taped the introduction on her smartphone, and texted it

to me. Alexis was handed a microphone, and she said: “Hi! I’m Lexie Crisp. And this is my grandfather, John Hall, and I call him An-Father.” Alexis’ introduction lasted for only eight seconds. Had I been able to include that video, with this story, then I might have said, that I brought a part of this story to life. I was able to extract one frame, from the video, and convert it to a hard copy picture, for use in this story. I sometimes wonder what Alexis thought about that night, so long ago. Some young adults feel that life is moving too slow. I feel that my life is moving too fast.

Benjamin E. Hays wrote a short piece called, “Life is just a minute.” These are his words: “I’ve only just a minute, only 60 seconds in it. Forced upon me, can’t refuse it, didn’t seek it, didn’t choose it, but it’s up to me to use it. I must suffer if I lose it, give an account if I abuse it, just a tiny little minute, but eternity is in it.”

Alexis would love for me to write a story about something that I always wanted. To tell what that is, I have to go back in time, to when I was 19 years old. I did not own a car, so I would take an evening Greyhound bus, from Fort Campbell, to Austin Peay College, in Clarksville, Tennessee. It was my first college course. It was a literature class. The prerequisite for the course was English 101 and English 102. In other words, I was not suppose to take the Literature course, until after I passed the 101 and 102 English courses. But it was the only available evening class at that time. I had not been assigned a college advisor. What did I know? I was just a soldier. I could disassemble an M-GO machine gun, blinded. But the college syllabus, that was given to me for the course, made me realize that I had gotten into something way over my head. The syllabus is a guide for the course.

I started to read what was expected of me. I would be required to memorize, and to know the meaning of, a long list of what I call “twenty five cents and fifty cents words.” Some had 15 to 20 letters. Nearly, all of the words, were uncommon to me. It made me wonder who dreamed up all of those words? I got this sickening feeling that I was not college material, and that I had wasted my money paying for the tuition, fees, and Literature textbook. The one thing, that helped save me, was being assigned as a Colonel’s driver at the 101st Airborne Division Headquarters. I could not go on classified missions, until my “Secret” security clearance was granted. While waiting to drive the Colonel, I sat at a school-desk-chair outside of his office. For every hour I that I spent in the literature classroom, I spent 10 hours reading stories in the literature textbook. I enjoyed reading the letters that F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote to his daughter, Scottie. He gave her all kinds of advice. Like my grandfather, John J. Hall, Fitzgerald died at the age of 44. I somehow passed the course with a letter grade of a C. I still have that literature textbook.

I was intrigued with F. Scott Fitzgerald’s stories. I think that was the spark that turned into a passion, when I wrote my first story in 1977. Today, I have achieved a level of success, as I writer, that I never expected. I feel, strongly, that the talent I have to write stories, is due to the grace upon grace upon grace upon grace, and the inspiration, that only comes from Jesus Christ. I achieved what I started out to do. But it is the smile on the faces, when I give one of my readers a story, that amazes me. When Major Jason Crisp was a Captain, and away in a resident Army course, I would mail him some of my

stories. It is the same thing that I am doing, today for Alexis, and for my other granddaughters. I give stories to some members of my church, and I mail others to my friends. My Christian Fraternity Brother Richard Hornbeak, emails them to our other Fraternity Brothers. I'll end this story with a fourth picture, that I took at Skyler's and Kendall Lancaster's wedding reception. It's a picture of Major Jason and Alexis Crisp.

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

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