

BLESSINGS IN MY FOYER

By John F. Hall

One of God's blessings is the foyer, in my two-story very old antebellum farm house. It has a carpeted staircase with two landings. There is a desk under four steps, and the first floor landing.



On the desk is the three-owl table lamp. In front of the desk hangs the picture that I took of my dad, Charles J. Hall. He was sitting in his favorite chair, and my son, John, was looking up at him, when he was four years old. There are three brass school house picture frames with K through 12 school pictures of grandchildren, Andrea, Heather, and John-John. To the right of the desk, there is a hard paper school house picture with one through 12 school pictures of my son, John. Also on that wall is a cross of Christ, that came from my dad's house in Edgewater, Florida. There is a door on the left side of the desk that goes into the bathroom. On the other side of the door is a five-foot tall, and three feet wide curio cabinet. On top of that cabinet are three picture frames of the grandchildren. Next is the east wall of the foyer. Back against that wall, and several feet out from under the first landing, is an eight-foot tall, by five feet wide, curio with Paula's depression glass and other crystal items. Past the door going into the first floor bedroom, is a piano.

Above the piano, on the wall, is a very large picture of my wife, Paula, my son, John, and me. The professional picture was taken in a photo studio in Hopkinsville, for our 25" wedding anniversary. My son and I wore a tux, and Paula had on a sequin dress. On the top lid to the piano, there are a dozen small picture frames of Andrea and Heather when were taking dance lessons. The girls can play the piano. There are dozens of picture frames on the walls going up the staircase, and on the walls in the second floor landing. There is a computer desk and chair on the second floor landing, and a wide flat screen TV on a low cabinet. There is a two-seat bench and four chairs on the second floor landing. All of the pictures on the walls, in the foyer, capture memories of family and kin.

I've been writing my life stories for the past 48 years. They tell about my journey through life. I share where I've been, who I am, and where I want to go. This summer has been very hot, humid, and rainy. A lightning surge, blew out a window air conditioner in my first floor bedroom. My son, John, and my grandson, John- John, came over to my house. They removed the damaged unit, and installed a new window air conditioner. The most effective way, to fully protect the new unit, during a lightning storm, is to unplug the window air conditioner. My grandson is 24. he gave me a hug before he left. He sees that I am getting weaker by the day.

I went on my front porch, and sat on a two-seat rocker. I remember the song written by Billy Wheeler, and his lyric, “Hotter than a pepper sprout.”

I felt a person could cook an egg on the sidewalk going to my mail box. Mary Oliver wrote the poem, “The Summer Day.” These are her words: “Who made the world? Who made the swan and the black bear? This grasshopper, I mean — the one who has flung herself out of eating grass, the one who is eating sugar out of my hand, who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down — who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes. Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face. Now she snaps her wings open and floats away. I don’t know exactly what a prayer is. I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down into the grass, how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields, which I’ve been doing all day. Tell me what else should I have done? Doesn’t everything die at last, and too soon? Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”

What I like about Mary Oliver’s poem is that it explores themes about life’s purpose, her connection to nature, and mortality. The one thing missing is faith. We are put on this earth, I believe, because the Good Lord is testing us. The test is the narrow gate. Do we have a strong enough faith to make it through that narrow gate? Think about the billions of people who came before us. Think about the billions of people who will come after us. In Matthew, Chapter 22, Verse 14, are these words: “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Ruthmarie Silver wrote the poem, “Always There.” These are her words: “No matter where we are in life, there’s One Who’s always there. In good times and in bad times, we are always in His care. In times when we ignore him and succumb to great defeat, He’s still there in the shadows to rise us to our feet. When all good things surround us and we’re lost in applause, He smiles there in the sidelines and, too, joins in the laud. When hardship strikes and headaches come to bring us to our knees, He wraps His arms around us in love, for there he sees the brokenness that he has known when hung upon a cross. He knows of our pains and sorrows... He knows of our great loss. What a Friend we have in Him, a Friend Who deeply cares; someone we can rely on — someone Who’s always there.”

I’ll end my story with a poem by James Huesgen called, “He Takes Me Away.” These are his words: “How many Springs in my life do I have to behold? How many more Summers will be Summers of gold? How many Autumns will haunt me with dreams of the past? How many Winters will chill me until I’ve seen my last? Each one holds a treasure of things I have seen — the moods I’ve lived through, the places I’ve been. Every breeze, every sunray seems to hold me so tight, and the darkness will comfort until the dawns early light. How many days are before me, how life must I play? How many God-given seasons until He takes me away?”

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*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>