

## THE CHRONICLER

By John F. Hall

One definition of a chronicler is a person who writes descriptions of historical events as they happen- I was one of the organizers that established the Trigg County Historical and



Preservation Society in 1981. I am the last person from that group, living in Kentucky that is still alive. I served as the Society's Historian for its 1985, "Volume I and 1987, Volume II, Trigg County, Kentucky History books. I am no longer active in that organization. I recently received an invitation from the Society to attend the Fenton Overlook Dedication. It will be held on September 30, 2023, at 10:00 am. I told my brother-in-law, Bruce Oakley that I would attend. He is one week younger than me, and he is disabled. I've left my mark on Trigg County. But I continue to write my life stories, something to leave my grandchildren and my friends to read.

It was a Friday morning, and the phone rang around 7:45 am. The answer machine picked up. I listened to the message: "This is your Town Center Pharmacy. A member of your household has three refills for pickup." I got up, dressed, washed my face with water, and combed my thinning hair. My wife, Paula cooked breakfast. She was not feeling well, and she decided not to go with me to Fort Campbell. She gave me her dependent military identification (ID) card. The refills were for her, and I needed her ID card to pick up the refills. The traffic on Interstate 24 was heavy, as usual. The civilian police guard, at Gate 4, scanned my ID card. The guard said: "Welcome to Fort Campbell, Colonel. Screaming Eagles!" Usually, the guards would say: "Air Assault!" But this guard was a former paratrooper. Those two words gave him away. It also brought back memories, when I first arrived on Fort Campbell, as a 17 year old paratrooper. Now I am 78, and my best days are written on the sands of time.

Paula asked me to stop at Hancock's Neighborhood Market in Cadiz, to pick up some chicken and potatoes. Dru Thomas came out of the market office. She is the niece of the owner, Mallory Lancaster. When she graduated from Murray State University, last year, I gave her a MSU Racer hat. She earned a degree in Equine Science and she is pursuing a degree in nursing. I started giving Dru some of my stories last year. She said that my granddaughter, Heather looks a lot like my wife, in a picture that I took of Paula back in 1964. I asked her about her Grandfather, Don (Papa) Hancock. He operated a grocery store in Princeton, Kentucky for 31 years. Dru is the only girl on that side of the family. She was spoiled by her Papa. He is in his early 80s with health issues. I listened as she talked about her affection for her grandfather. There is something that seems to light up in her eyes, when she talks about him. It reminded me of the affection that my oldest granddaughter, Andrea has for me. I talked to Mallory back in her market office. She told me that she has operated Hancock's Neighborhood Market in Cadiz, since 1991.

On Sundays, I give a copy of my stories to a few people that go to the small church that I attend. As a chronicler, I will share a few things about these people. I will mix in some

short pieces about kindness, as they are also my friends. My oldest friend, in years, is James (Jim) Ethridge.

He is young at heart at the age of 95. When he parks his car in the church parking lot, I watch as he gets out of his vehicle and walks towards the church door. He uses a cane to help support his balance. I am amazed that he is still driving. I don't have the genes to live to be Jim's age. He enlisted in the Army, like me, when he was just a very young teenager. He is part of the greatest generation that fought in World War II, and later, in the Korean War. I served on active duty during the Vietnam War. And I served in the Army Reserve until I retired at the age of 60.

On several occasions, after church services, Jim and I would stand and talk in the church parking lot, after everyone left. I would listen as he talked about his experiences in those two wars. He went through hell and back. I've seen enough death and gore, in law enforcement, to appreciate the horrific things that Jim was sharing with me. Genie Graveline wrote a poem called, "My Longtime Friend." These are her words: "It's funny how when I'm with you, the years seem to disappear. The past comes back ever so clearly, when my old friend is near. The laughs & the pranks & the problems, that we managed to get into, have a luster that time has polished, they've taken a different hue. They're all tucked away for safekeeping, and when ever I need to smile, I know I can pick out a memory, and sit down and smile for awhile. And though I might not have said it, it comes to this in the end, few things I value more deeply than the memories I share with my friend."

I give Norman Geist and his wife, Kelly a story to share. Norman is a fellow Vietnam War Veteran. He was a M60 machine gun tail gunner on a Huey helicopter. His job was to protect the helicopter, its crew, and what it was transporting, usually seven soldiers. Because a door gunner is an exposed position, the life expectancy of a door gunner on a Huey in Vietnam, was just two weeks. In a fire fight, it is eight to nine seconds. Near the end of the church service, as I walked by Norman in his pew, I would gently lay my hand on his shoulder. It's in recognition of his service. I was also a M60 machine gunner, but I was an infantry paratrooper, and the less time that I spent in a Huey, the better I liked it.

Mark Withers wrote a song called, "Lean On Me." These are some of his lyrics: "...Sometimes in our lives we all have pain, we all have sorrow. But if we are wise, we know that there's always tomorrow. Lean on me when you're not strong, and I'll be your friend, I'll help you carry on. For it won't belong till I'll need somebody to lean on. Please swallow your pride, if I have things you need to borrow. For no one can fill those of your needs that you won't show. You just call on me brother when you need a hand. We all need somebody to lean on..."

I give Maria and Daniel Bruzeski, a story to share. Dan is a fellow Vietnam War Veteran. Like Norman Geist, Dan was also a Huey M60 tail gunner. Maria said that Dan appreciates the stories that I write. He has as much experience as I have. Maria is an enthusiastic reader of my stories. She sings in our little church choir, and she is also on

our Church's health ministry health team. She will mail out a post card to those who are not well, to let them know that they are in the team's prayers.

Linda Grazis wrote a short piece called, "When Friendship Touches The Heart." These are her words: "I believe that God sends friendships to brighten up our humdrum days, whether they be sunny-filled hours or cloud-filled skies of stormy gray! A loyal friend is honest and true and stands by your side; it's someone who shares the bleakness - someone in who you can confide! Friends offer a cup of warm coffee or tea and share a reassuring word when moods are blue; good friends refuse to offer a ton of advice - only if you wish them to! Friends love to laugh and chuckle while reminiscing over the present and the past; why, it seems the friendship is so real! That perhaps a lifetime it will last. Take time to praise God for companionship when friendly togetherness touches the heart; for almighty God is so good to us - He'll send a faithful someone to share a part."

I give a story to Nancy Thomas. Before her husband, Tony passed away, he sang with Nancy in our small Church choir. He was an Air Force Veteran. We would salute each other before Church services started. As I stated in previous stories, if just one of my stories helps just one person, then I have accomplished what I set out to do, 45 years ago. While my stories are meant to mentor young adults, Nancy likes to read them after Church. I have this belief that a person should have younger and older friends. The younger ones keep you young at heart; the older ones give you some of their wisdom.

I give Everett and Joan Lee a story to share. Like me, they are a part of our church congregation that is getting older by the day. I can speak from experience, that health is a fragile blessing that can slip away. Maurine Hathaway wrote a poem called, "True Friendship." It is my belief that friends make life worth living. These are her words: "True friendship has a sweetness that flavors all our years, it banishes our little cares, and dries our springing tears. It sets the heart to singing, and starts the lips to smile, sometimes it seems that friendship is what makes this life worth while."

This old chronicler tries to save a little history in the stories that I write. A man named Richard Gust comes to Church every Sunday. All that I have to do, is to say to him: "Good morning young man!" And Richard would give me a big smile, because he knows that he is not a young man. But we all need a little more humor. Isabella Mauldin came to church with her boyfriend, Thomas. I mentioned him in a previous story, but I did not know his last name. After church service, I asked him how did he spell his last name. He said, "Wynne." Isabella, always the funny girl, said, "He's the winner and I'm the prize." And that is about the best that I can do, for humor in this story.

Jesus Christ was very specific about friends. In John, Chapter 15, Verses 12-15, are these words: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

John F. Hall

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