

THE FARMER AND HIS DOG

By John F. Hall

When I first experienced and wrote this story there were things that I failed to mention. Subtle things that should have been written. This revised story corrects the original omissions. The farmer drove up on his small green tractor with his tiny dog sitting on his lap. He appeared to be in his 50s. He was in bib overalls. His tiny dog was a mixed bred with short hair. It was hot and humid that sunny afternoon with no summer breeze. The farmer did not tell me his name or his dog's name. So for this story, I will call him farmer Brown. He heard about the bank robbery and the fact that the bank robber had wrecked his car and was fleeing on foot in the woods near his farm. The farmer volunteered to track the robber. He said his dog could track people.

I received a call from Post One which is located in Mayfield. I was working the day in Trigg County. Every two weeks, I was on a rotating schedule. The dispatcher instructed



me to proceed to Livingston County and join the other Troopers from the surrounding counties and report to the supervisor on duty. I traveled through Caldwell County, which is in Post two territory, in order to reach Livingston County. I seldom patrolled Livingston County and was not familiar with its back roads. I found the other Troopers. At that time in State Police history, the organization was woefully behind other police agencies. The Sheriff's departments in nearly all of the

counties in western Kentucky had hand-held radios. The State Police did not. Once a Trooper left his police car, he had no communications with the dispatcher if he ran into problems.

I parked my police car next to the other police cars. I got out and reported to the supervisor on duty. He was giving out instructions to start the manhunt. The supervisor wanted someone to go with farmer Brown. I told him that I would go. To be honest, I had to keep from laughing about farmer Brown's mutt tracking dog. I thought to myself that the only thing that mutt of a dog could track was a biscuit thrown from the kitchen table. I got up on one side of farmer Brown's flat fender. The tiny dog's tail was wiggling and he kept licking my hand. The farmer drove as far as he could in the woods. He had to stop as the trees prevented us from going any further. We got off the tractor and began walking deeper into the woods. Farmer Brown had his tiny dog on a leash. We walked for about for about a mile.

All of a sudden the dog broke its silence and began to bark loudly. The dog's bark was echoing in the hills and valleys. The dog began running and farmer Brown could barely

hold his dog back. I became concerned about a possible ambush by the bank robber as the dogs barking was giving our position away. I was not informed about the type of weapon used by bank robber when he robbed the bank. The farmer was running ahead of me being pulled by his tiny dog. At the time, the State Police issued very thin Kevlar vests. They barely protected the heart and lungs area and they were very hot to wear. I began to sweat profusely as I was running to keep up with farmer Brown and his dog. My mind drifted back 20 years earlier when I was force marching in the Mojave Desert in California. At least I had two canteens of water and two cans of fruit back at that time. I had nothing to drink running after farmer Brown and his dog.

We were running down one hill and up another hill. All the time I was trying to be prepared for a possible ambush. As we ran down one hill and across a dry a creek, I observed something out of place on the ground. It was money. It was then that I realized that the tiny dog was tracking the robber and not a rabbit. I stopped just long enough to pick up the dollar bill. I became concerned about farmer Brown's safety chasing that bank robber.

I had to run even faster to keep up with farmer Brown and his dog. The dog was really barking louder and I realized that we were getting closer to the bank robber. We ran down another hill and I spotted more money on the ground. I stopped to pick it up. I suspected that the robber was getting scared and might be getting rid of the evidence as we were getting closer. From the echo in the woods, the robber might have thought that he was being tracked by a large dog.

Going up another hill, I was just about to get heat exhaustion, when the dog stopped barking. It got too quiet. I did not know if something happen to the tiny dog. I made my way to the top of the hill. Farmer Brown was standing there watching his tiny dog trying to pick up the robber's scent. I was sweating like a football player after a hot summer game. My mind drifted back in time to my junior high days. I was a defensive tackle, more of a safety. Once the offense threw a pass, I would go after the receiver. I would throw my arms around his neck and take him down in a deliberate crash. I used that skill to take down a man with a gun in Fancy Farm decades ago.

There I was, in the deep woods and I did not have a clue where I was from the nearest highway. Thankfully, the farmer Brown knew these woods from years of hunting there. He led me back to his tractor and drove back to my supervisor. Again his tiny dog was wagging his tail and licking my hand. I changed my mind about that dog. I recovered several thousand dollars. I turned the stolen money over to the supervisor. The FBI would take over the investigation. I took some pictures of the police cars that we were using at that time. The State Police changed the color of its police cars from Confederate gray to white. After getting slurs that it looked too much like a taxi cab, they switched back to gray.

Reflecting back on that manhunt made me think of how brave farmer Brown was. He made not have realized how big a risk he was taking. On the other hand, I knew the risks. Later that year, they gave farmer Brown a certificate for rendering aid and assistance to

the State Police. I was not told if the FBI caught the bank robber. While this story occurred decades ago, I still remember the assistance that farmer Brown rendered to this Trooper on that hot summer day.

God puts other people in our in our lives for a reason. Sometimes it may just be for a day as with farmer Brown. Other times, it might be for more than a decade such as when I became a surrogate grandfather to Jade, Skyler and Lexie. At the age of 74, my back keeps me from doing any hard work. I guess the past is catching up with me. Too many bad jumps out of helicopters and planes back when I was a paratrooper. Too much running in combat boots and staying until I was 60 in the military.

The other day I was sitting on my front porch swing and listening to the birds singing high up in the tall maple trees. I could hear the sounds of the vehicles on the new highway 68 and the thunder of an approaching storm in the distance. My old farm house is located in the middle of a farm that is surrounded by lush green fields of corn. Bountiful rain storms have enriched that crop. A song is on my mind by Lee Greenwood with the lyrics, "And I'm proud to be an American where at least I know I'm free. And I won't forget the men who died who gave that right to me." My uncle PFC Francis Race was killed in the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. That might have been the reason I also wanted to be a soldier and then a Trooper. But I never expected to be chasing a bank robber with farmer Brown and his dog in the Kentucky woods.

John F. Hall

*Read more stories written by John F. Hall at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>