

FROM THE EYES OF AN OWL

By John F. Hall

One late evening, a while ago, I was coming home from a Christian Fraternity meeting in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. I was slowly driving up Dyers Hill Road, to my old house on the hill. At the top of the hill, there is a side circular drive way off Dyers Hill Road. The mail courier will use that drive way to get to my mailbox, which is located in front of my house. As I was passing that



driveway, I startled an owl that was sitting on a branch, in a tree at that location. It was not expecting me, to be out and about, on that moonless night. It flew off, in a sudden flight, from its home in that tree. Louise Tucker wrote a poem called, “Midnight Call.” These are her words: “I heard the owls call your name. Woo, and answering Woo-hoo, I tried to block them out — send them away, but they were persistent like driving rain. “It’s his time,” they said. Their calls echoing overhead. They came on consecutive nights, each

time filling my heart with dread. I wasn’t ready to let you go, but the noxious fiend beside you, delivering it’s fateful message. So the owls winged away knowing that soon your soft silver soul would join them in flight. I heard the owls call your name.”

On my front porch concrete floor, I have two antique glass telephone insulators. One is white and the other is blue. They are reminders to me that time changes many things. Some cars on the road have extra bright, blue headlights. Many drivers of those cars, seem to be waiting longer and longer, when they meet me, to dim their bright lights. It’s almost blinding. The fraternity meetings are over 30 miles away from my old house. Thankfully, today, I can attend the meeting using video conferencing via the Zoom app. My internet provider is AT&T. During some meetings, a warning will come across my monitor with the words: “UNSTABLE INTERNET.” Since 1978, I have the old copper phone line that is buried in the ground. Prior to that time, there were thin utility poles that had two glass insulators, identical to the ones on my front porch. They supported the telephone lines. AT&T is phasing out the underground copper phones, and changing to over the wireless service. The company is trying to eliminate the cost of maintaining those copper lines.

AT&T has been sending me weekly advertisements, to switch over to wireless phone and internet service. I have a separate (SDI) phone line for my internet. I always find it interesting to read the fine print on those advertisements. They offer reduce rates, but then, in the fine print they say: “Rates can change at any time without notice.” The problem, with wireless phone and internet service, is that wireless degrades with distance. The further away from the cell tower, the weaker the signal. I live about three miles from the nearest cell tower. My cellphone shows only one bar out of four bars. Four bars mean a strong signal.

One signal bar, as far as I’m concerned, is almost like having no signal at all. So I just ignore their advertisements. AT&T is also involved in laying fiber optic lines in the county. The photons in the fiber optic lines travel at the speed of light. The electrons in the copper phone lines travel at less than one percent of the speed of light. Because I was receiving so many official emails, when I

was in the Army Reserve, I felt it necessary to have a dedicated SDI line. Years ago, I was talking to an AT&T repairman, who was checking my phone lines. He let something slip, to the effect, that fiber optic line put into the front of a copper phone line, and fiber optic line, attached to the end of that copper phone line, shows no significant loss of speed. But what do I know?

I'm like a "night owl." I prefer to be active late at night and into the early morning. I sleep until relatively late in the morning. I may have delayed sleep phase syndrome, on top of my Sjogren's syndrome. The one exception for me is Saturday. I go to bed early and I get up early Sunday morning for church services. Pernille Augustson wrote the poem, "The Nights Are Mine." These are her words: "The nights are mine, nothing can change that peace, quiet and serenity. I'm alive, I can breathe. I can see clearly because the darkness comes and the light fades. The nights are mine, and I never feel better. While you sleep, I live life to the fullest. I smile, I laugh, I create, I learn. After a long day, I can finally relax. Not to be judged, just be me. The nights are no body owns. I'm by myself, running my own show, just letting my creativity flow, and my intellect grow."

The small church, that I go to, is about five miles from my house. I park near the front door. I use a cane to help my balance, as I go from my car to the church door. One of the ushers will open the heavy glass doors for me. I will sit in a wheel chair by the church door, and greet the congregation, as they come into the church. After about two hours in the church, my back pain returns with a vengeance. The sooner that I can drive back home, and lay flat on my back, the sooner that I can reduce the pain. My pain meds help, but they give me the weirdest dreams.

Kelly Deschler wrote a poem called, "Night Owl." These are her words: "Sitting by her open window was a girl deep in thought, lost within a book of Poe, a perfect poem she thought. With a curious eye he watches her pen, for she gives it a try every now and then. He will visit her forevermore in silent hours of midnight, casting his shadows on her floor with the full moonlight. Mysterious, nocturnal bird calling out to darkened land, speaking such wise words which I cannot understand. I am lonely, I must confess it's you, me and the moon, you are much like me, I guess. So, please sing me another tune. A message of death wailing songs of a banshee, has my grim reaper cometh was that warning meant for me? My soul was projected in the shadow of a fowl, a raven I expected not the silhouette of an owl."

Under my staircase, I have a desk. On that desk I have a three-owl table lamp. I don't know the history of the lamp. It has a built-in part to hold an ashtray. The lamp was given to me from my sister-in-law, Marsha Garner. She purchased it at a yard sale. I believe she got it for less than \$20. I noticed on Google, a similar one to mine for the asking price of \$400. The owl soared in the 1970s as a symbol of nature, wisdom, and honesty. I was not able to credit the person who wrote the following: "A wise old owl lived in an oak. The more he saw, the less he spoke. The less he spoke, the more he heard. Why can't we be like that old bird?" Every wise old owl has a wise old tree, like I have across the circular drive-in front of my old house. It suggests that wisdom often comes from experience and a nurturing environment, much like how an owl, often seen as a symbol of wisdom, and is typically associated with trees. A tree provides shelter and a home for an owl.

In Psalm Chapter 102, verses 6-7 are these words: "I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins. I lie awake; I have become like a bird on a roof."

Richard C. Leigh and Wayland Holyfield wrote the song, "Only Here for a Little while." I've used the song before. These are some of their lyrics: "Gonna hold who needs holdin'. Mend what needs mendin'. Walk what needs walkin', though it means an extra mile. Pray what needs prayin'. Say what needs sayin'. Cause we're only here for a little while. Today I stood singin' songs and saying, Amen. Saying goodbye to an old friend who seemed so young. He spent his whole life workin' hard to chase a dollar. Putting off until tomorrow the things he should have done. Made me start thinking "What's the hurry, why the runnin'?" I don't like what I'm becoming, gonna change my style. Take my time and not take it all for granted'. Cause we're only here for a little while...Let me love like I'll never see tomorrow. Treat each day as though it's borrowed. Like it's precious as a child. Whoa, take my hand. Let us reach out to each other. Cause we're only here for a little while..."

Christ is in charge of my life. He, alone, will decide the time, when I have to forever leave my earthly tent. And that wise old owl, who lives in the old tree, in front of my old house, may keep looking for me, after Christ has taken my soul. Perhaps it might be on some distant, quiet, moonless night, when only the eyes of that wise old owl can see.

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