

## A GOLDEN BOX, STARS, BABIES AND GUESTS

By John F. Hall

I was in Hobby Lobby several years ago, and I walked by several gold foil boxes. I have been mailing my stories to family members and friends. As a Christmas present, I decided to give a gold foil covered box to Jade, Skyler, and Alexis. I told them to use the box to store the stories that I mailed them. Skyler decided to call the box that I gave her, her “Memory Box.” She keeps the cards, letters and the stories that I mailed to her, in her Memory Box.



Ralph Waldo Emerson, wrote a short piece about making the best of each day. In my stories, I try to mentor and inspire my readers. These are Emerson’s words: “Write it on your heart that every day is the best day of the year. No one owns the day who allows it to be invaded with fret and anxiety. Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt creep in. Forget them as soon as you can, tomorrow is a new day; begin it well and serenely, with too high a spirit to be cumbered with your old nonsense. This new day is too dear, with its hopes and invitations, to waste a moment on the yesterdays.” ’

From a gold foil box, I move on to writing about stars. Lee Julien Pockriss and Paul J. Vance wrote a song called, “Catch a Falling Star.” These are just a few of their lyrics: “Catch a falling star and put it in your pocket, save it for a rainy day. For love may Come and tap you on the shoulder, some starless night. Just in case you feel you wanna hold her, you’ll have a pocket of starlight. . . For when your troubles start multiplying, and they just might; it’s easy to forget them without trying, with just a pocket full of starlight...”.

I remember when I was a child, saying the words in the poem, “Star Light Star Bright.” The poem was written by Dorothy Parker. She was an American poet and writer of fiction, plays, and screenplays. The superstition of hoping for wishes granted, when seeing a shooting or falling star, may go back hundreds of years. These are Dorothy Parker’s words: “Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight, I wish I may, I wish I might, have this wish I wish tonight.” When my oldest granddaughter, Andrea, was four years old, we were walking behind my house. It was a clear moonless night. The stars seemed to be shining extra bright. As we walked by a ladder, that I had been using to paint around a window frame, I said to Andrea: “See that bright star up there? It’s yours.” She looked up in wonder at that bright star, that I jokingly gave her. She then looked over at the ladder, and said to me: “Well! Go get it!”

Some precious memories cannot be saved in a “gold memory box.” They have to be saved, for all eternity, in one’s heart.

Andrea was very intelligent for a four year old. She had me wrapped around her little finger. Some of my fondest memories of being with her, was when we would sit in my front porch swing. She would look out at the wheat fields, in front of my house, and then

she would look at me, and say: “An-Father, I know everything that I need to know.” I guess, that all she wanted to know, was how long could she be sitting next to me. I would whistle at the birds that had nests, nearly at the top, of the maple trees in my front yard. The birds would whistle back. Andrea believed that I understood what the birds were saying. I wish that I had recorded a cute saying of Andrea’s. When I would ask her something, and she did not have the answer, she would say: “Not know. Not know nothing.” To this day, she denies ever saying that.

I guess that everyone, at one time or the other, has made a wish. It may not have been when they were looking at a falling or shooting star. Maybe, it was after blowing out the candles, on their birthday cake. How many times, when we did something stupid, did we say: “I wish that I had not done that!” I recommend, when you make a wish, to consider the words in John, Chapter 15, Verse 7: “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

Mrs. Skyler Lancaster, formerly Skyler Crisp, until she married Kendall, asked me to write a story about how I felt when I was in my twenties, and how I felt when I knew I wanted to start a family. The years have rolled by since I was in my twenties. So much has changed. The average age for a first time mother, in 1965, was 21 years old. My wife, Paula, was 21 when our son, John was born. This was on January 8, 1967. Elvis Presley was born on that month and that day. Today, the average age for a first-time mother is 27. Before 1968, there was no federal regulation that cars had to have seat belts. I owned a 1965 Chevy II. It had no seat belts. When my son was one year old, I would lay him on a pillow, on the front passenger side floor board. I would cover him, except for his face, with a baby blanket. I would take him to Mrs. Henry, our babysitter in Hopkinsville. Then I would go on to class at the Hopkinsville Community College. I mainly was thinking about getting a college education. My dad was mad at me for marrying Paula. He thought that I would not be able to get a college education because I was married. At the time that I married Paula, in 1965, there was no G.I. Bill. There was no Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP). The first paid for my two undergraduate degrees. The second paid for my two graduate degrees. I was just in the right place, and at the right time. I always had part-time jobs. Paula and I wanted to have a daughter. We planned to call her Windy. But Paula had a serious medical problem, and she could only have one child. We had nothing when we got married, but each other. We just thought about each other, and our son, John.

In many of my previous stories, I liked to use lists to help my young adult readers. This time, I selected hospitality. It is defined as the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers. I don’t recall ever hearing about a college course that taught students how to be a good guests. Here are some characteristics of being a good guest when staying with family or friends. The first cardinal rule is that you should never show up unannounced. You should never invite yourself to stay at a family or friends house, especially if a person in that house is sick or in poor health. Your Host is stressed enough as it is, and does not need to have to take care of you and entertain you. You should be extremely helpful. You should be more appropriate than usual, like don’t walk around in your underwear in your host’s house. You should be (at least

somewhat) self- sufficient. You should, if invited to stay in a house, remember that the Host is not your maid, is not your cook, and is not your laundry worker. You should bring your own ideas of the things you might want to do or see.

Hosting can be a lot of work, from getting the house ready to making sure everyone is comfortable throughout their stay. The second cardinal rule is to discuss the length of stay with your Host. Use common sense and follow your Host's rules and routines. You should find ways to entertain yourself with out your Host. You should help your Host when needed, but don't pester your Host. You should bring your own toiletries. You should remember that being a guest is a privilege, and not an entitlement, merely because you are related to a family member or friend in that house. Remember that the Host appreciates you saying, "please and thank," when you ask for something, or you are given something. You should restock the groceries that you use. You should leave things cleaner than you found them. You should not leave any messes behind. You should give your Host a thank you card, or a thank you gift before leaving. Remember, if you are not a good guest, don't expect to be invited back.

When all is said and done, Christ has always helped and saved me. I asked Him to give me a good wife, and in absolutely hysterical circumstances, was led to Paula. If it is His will, Paula and I will celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary, on April 17, 2025. Christ gave us our son, John Andrew, and three grandchildren, Andrea, Heather, and John Andrew. He has allowed me to be a surrogate grandfather. He has given me Church friends, Fraternity Brothers, a Christian physician, and so many other good friends, who enjoy reading my stories. It is because of Christ's grace upon grace upon grace, and His inspiration that I am able to write my stories. I invite my readers to become good guests for Christ. Everyone has a pew, in a church, somewhere. When you're depressed, lonely, stressed, and unhappy, find your pew. Talk to Christ, not just when things are bad, but when things are good.

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