

JADE AND THE STORYWRITER

By John F. Hall

There is a stairway to the room upstairs where I do some of my writings. It's where I communicate with the people that enjoy and receive my stories. I like the poem "Halfway



Down The Stairs." It was written by Alan Alexander Milne. These are his lyrics: "Halfway down the stairs is a stair where I sit. There isn't any other stair quite like it. I'm not at the bottom, I'm not at the top; so this is the stair where I always stop. Halfway up the stairs isn't up and it isn't down. It isn't in the nursery, it isn't in town. And all sorts of funny thoughts run round my head. It isn't really anywhere! It's somewhere else instead!"

I remember the first time that Jade came to visit when she was a little girl. She was with her godmother, Trish Cunningham. I went upstairs to get Jade something out of one of the rooms. I came out of the room and I looked over the top handrail and I saw Jade sitting on the stair that was halfway up. I don't know what she was thinking, she just sat there. This is the same little girl that sat next to me in church, for over ten years, before she moved away with her folks to Russellville, Kentucky. She used to call me John, then Trish told her that she needs to be respectful and call me Mr. John. I miss seeing Jade at church where I serve as an usher and, sometimes, sing in the choir.

One time, Trish was with Jade and there was some kind of meeting going on, and Trish asked me if I would babysit Jade. I decided to take Jade on a field trip to the Land Between the Lakes. I wanted to show her the ruins that were temporarily relocated from the Tennessee side of the Trace highway, next to the former town of Model, Tennessee. All that remains from that unincorporated town is the remnants of the Great Western Iron Furnace. The furnace only operated for two years in the mid 1850s. One summer, in the late 1960s, I worked for the TVA cutting grass and other labor jobs. There was a maintenance building across from the furnace where we sharpen the mower blades.

My wife, Paula was tired and did not join us on this field trip. She told me to be careful and not let Jade fall. The TVA moved the buffaloes to a fenced-in area on the westbound side of highway 68/80, just east of the Trace. I parked on the side of the highway. As we were crossing a shallow ditch, Jade slipped. I was holding her hand, but she still fell to her knees. I felt bad about letting her slip. We walked up next to the fence where several buffaloes were grazing on the grass. I told Jade that I wanted to see if I could call up the buffaloes. Jade reminded me that they are called bison. I tried to call them up just like I use to call up the cattle on my father-in-law's farm. I felt a little stupid as the bison just looked at me. Then Jade and I went over to watch a program at the Planetarium.

One time, Paula and I took Jade to Fort Campbell to see the aircraft and other military items on display across from the Pratt museum. The museum was closed, that day, and I could not show her the amazing items on display there. Maybe another time will come to do that. In the Commissary, I took Jade's picture with two Military Police soldiers.

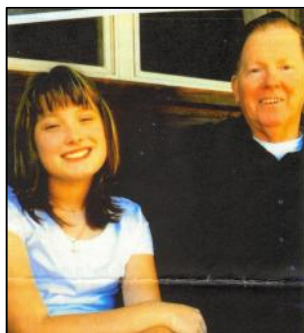
Today, Jade is a young adult and ready to graduate from Logan County High School. I thought I might write her a “Senior Letter,” and give her some advice and encouragement. But Jade already knows what she wants to do with her life. During the pandemic, I’ve been giving her advice and mentoring too. I ordered her a custom-made graduation gift, and like the inexpensive necklace that has a gold cross, that I want her to have as a keepsake, I did my best to treat her as one of my own granddaughters. On a recent, late night phone conversation that I had with her step dad, Bill Trembley, I told him that Jade is my granddaughter, not by a piece of legal paper, but by love that I have for her, all of her life.



There is a hymn called “At The Cross (Love Ran Red).” It was written by Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, Jonas Myrin, Matt Armstrong, and Matt Redman. These are some of their lyrics: “There’s a place where mercy reigns and never dies. There’s a place where streams of grace flow deep and wide. Where all the love I’ve ever found comes like a flood, comes flowing down. At the cross, at the cross, I surrender my life. I’m in awe of You, I’m in awe of You. Where Your love ran red and my sin washed white. I owe all to You, I owe all to You. Here my hope is found, here on holy ground. Here I bow down, here I bow down. I owe all to You, I owe all to You, Jesus (oh). Where Your love ran red, Your love ran red...”.

I talked with Jade the other day. We talked about the time and place for her high school graduation. She will have family and friends coming to Bowling Green as the graduation ceremony will be held on the campus of Western Kentucky University (WKU). Jade has overcome so much physical adversity in her young life. When Trish brought her to church for the first time, Jade was in a child’s car seat with a small oxygen bottle with a tube running to her nose. Jade was born premature at two pounds and four ounces and was not expected to live. She has cerebral palsy and a stint, under her skin that drains fluid off her brain. In spite of a difficulty walking, it did not stop her from being in junior ROTC in her high school

Jade is in the Upward Bound program at WKU and takes summer college courses. This will put her ahead of her classmates when she enrolls full time this fall at WKU. She has grit and a strong will to succeed. Jade’s mother, Maryann, told me: “Christ puts other people in our lives for a reason.”



Watching Jade grow and having her sit next to me, for over ten years, endeared her to me. This story is for Jade, rather than a Senior Letter. As I told Bill, the last time I saw Jade, was over two years ago, at his house. She is smart. I put an old picture with this story that was taken with Jade and me on the front porch of her parent’s former home southeast of Russellville. Jade texted me her Senior Picture that I also put with this story. Jade always seems to be thinking with that far away look. Jade has her mother’s face.

Jade is one reason why I became a prolific storywriter during this ongoing pandemic. I look back to a memory, many years ago, when Jade was a little girl. She was sitting on the middle step of the staircase of my old Antebellum house. She had that far away look and only she knows what she was thinking. Several years ago, my Pastor told me that Jade-was my gift from God. I have been so blessed, during this pandemic, with grace upon grace upon grace, and inspiration from Christ to continue to write my stories. The time has now come to end this story about Jade and this storywriter.

John F. Hall

*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at:
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