

THE KEROSENE LANTERN

By John F. Hall

When my wife's grandfather, G.C. Towler, died, they had a sale of some of his possessions. I purchased two old rusty kerosene lanterns. He used one of the lanterns to light his way from his house to his barn. I paid a few dollars for each lantern. Today, each lantern is considered to be an antique and would sell on Ebay for about one hundred dollars. I cleaned the rusty lanterns and painted them with gold spray paint. I keep them on the floor in the foyer of my old antebellum farm house. The old lanterns add to the decorum of the house



In this story, I tell about going into a historic cemetery on Fort Campbell and writing about a teenager buried there. I then share, in a song, a story that a grandfather is telling his granddaughter about her grandmother who died before the granddaughter was born. What is to be imagined in this story is the granddaughter sitting next to her grandfather as they watch the fire in the fire place one night. He tells her stories about how he once lived. One thing that I wished I had when growing up is a grandfather to share his stories with me. He might have told me stories that I could share. But in this, we have to accept the hand that we are dealt.

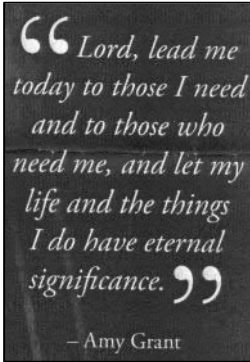
As I was writing this story, my mind drifted back to the time when I was a 17 year old paratrooper on Fort Campbell. My company completed a forced 10-mile march. We were told to take a break on the side of the gravel road I spotted a shade tree inside a small neglected cemetery. It had a rusty three-stranded fence. I climbed over the fence, took off my helmet, turned it upside down and sat on it. The seed ticks were bad that summer day. I don't believe that I disturbed those resting six feet below in the silent earth. After wiping away the sweat on my forehead, I started to look at the few old tombstones. The sun, the wind and the rain had faded the names on the tombstones. I was able to make out the name, "Katherine." From the dates on the tombstone, the girl died when she was 16. If I remembered correctly, she died in 1857, a few years before the start of the American Civil War. I wondered how she died. Some times, because girls married so young back then, that Katherine might have died giving birth to her baby. They don't engrave the cause of death on most tombstones.

Wince Coles wrote a song titled, "By The Glow of the Kerosene Light." His song tells a story of a girl about Katherine's age. These are most of his lyrics, "I remember the time when my grandpa and I would sit by the fire at night. And I would listen to stories of how he once lived. By the glow. of the kerosene light. He said mom and dad sent me off to school where I learned how to read and write. And they would listen for hours as I read from my books..."

"By the glow from the kerosene light. Your grandma and I we were wed at 16. Lord she was a beautiful sight. And proudly I placed the ring on her hand. By the glow from the kerosene light. About one year later, your daddy was born. And your grandma held my

hand so tight. On I cant tell the joy as she brought fourth new life. By the glow from the kerosene light. But having her child, it weaken her so. She just wasn't up for the fight. For she looked so peaceful she went to her rest. By the glow of the kerosene light. Then as now the times they were hard. To succeed you would try all your might. And sometimes love bloomed and sometimes dreams die. By the glow of the kerosene light”.

Normally, I use lyrics from a song to enhance my story. I also try to find a picture or two to include in my story. I put a picture of the kerosene lantern that once belonged to Paula's grandfather in this story. I also put a picture of Christian music singer Amy Grant along with a statement she made, “Lord, lead me today to those I need and to those who need me, and let my life and things I do have eternal significance.” I believe that I need Jade, Skyler, and Lexie, perhaps as much as they might need me. I appreciate the encouragement that I receive from Trish Cunningham, Mike Herndon and Dr. Daniel Butler. As God puts people in our life, he send Audrey Lambert to put my humble stories on her web page. In this unprecedented time, when our Nation's governors have issued stay at home orders, I feel my stories, as insignificant as they are, serve some useful purpose.



In all that I write, whether to comfort or cheer, I feel that Christ helps guide my pen. The old kerosene lantern that once belonged to Paula's grandfather, no longer gives off any glow. There is another lamp found in the book we all know, “Your word is like a lamp that shows me the way. It is like a light that guides me.” Psalm 119:105.
John F. Hall

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