

## MEMORIES CAPTURED IN A ROOM

By John F. Hall

In the winter of 1978, during a snow storm, I moved my wife, Paula and my son, John into an old Antebellum house, on a hill, at the end of Dyers Hill Road. The house is located in the middle of a farm, about five miles west of Cadiz. The house had been vacant for over a year. Paula's grandmother, Ivy Oakley, lived in the house since 1967.



She died in 1977. Paula's father, Andrew Oakley inherited the house and an ISO-farm from his mother. Miss Ivy lived in only two rooms, on the first floor, of the old house. We were living in a very small mobile home, between Miss Ivy's house and Andrew's house.

Miss Ivy's house was built in 1861. The second floor has two bedrooms. The west side bedroom is called the girl's room. It originally had a very narrow, straight staircase from the living room. The east side bedroom is called the boy's room. It is accessible by the main staircase. At one time, there was no door to the girl's room from the second floor. There was two reasons for this. The boys had no access to the girl's from the second floor. This insured the girl's privacy. Secondly, the girls would go down their private stairs, early in the morning, to cook breakfast, and not wake the men.

The second floor bedrooms in 1978, had no insulation. The second story had a portico. The portico was removed in 1918, and a full length front porch added, to save more rain water into the front cistern. The house, when it was built, was called a McMansion. So many changes to the house were made, that it lost its historical value. The house was built by John J. Dyer, the Sheriff of Trigg County during the Civil War.

As a nonfiction Christian writer, I write best in a quiet, comfortable place. I write most of my stories, in the fall and winter months, in the girl's room. I believe that Christ has given me the grace upon grace upon grace, and the inspiration to write my stories. In this story, I will write about the girl's memories captured in their room. I did not want to change how my granddaughters, Andrea and Heather wanted the room decorated. In the late 1980s, I began a major renovation of the room. It had an inside chimney, with a flu, that allowed a pot belle stove to provide heat in the winter. Coal was the main source of fuel. I completely removed the chimney. The room had no closet, so I built one over part of the space occupied by the chimney. I installed a half-bath over the space once occupied by the separated staircase to the living room. I

I insulated the walls and covered them, and the ceiling with sheet rock. The girls wanted the walls painted purple, and they wanted purple carpet. Andrea and Heather would stay on the weekends. It's where they would have sleep-overs and invite their classmates from Heritage Christian Academy. My wife decorated some of the walls with Word Art pictures. Next to the folding bathroom door is the Heather Word Art picture with these words: "Heather. H is for happy, such joy and love. E is for energy, from heaven above. A is for adorable, for all to share. T is for terrific, way beyond compare. H is for heart,

courage, big as the sky. E is for entertaining, not at all shy. R is for radiant, makes such a glow. The love of Heather will surely grow.”

On the other side of the bathroom door is a large Word Art picture with these words: “Why God Made Little Girls. God made the world with it's towering trees, majestic mountains and restless seas, then paused and said, 'It needs one more thing, someone to laugh and dance and sing; to walk in the woods and gather flowers; to commune with nature in quiet hours.' So God made little girls with laughing eyes and bouncing curls; with joyful hearts and infectious smiles. Enchanting ways and feminine wiles, and when He'd completed the task He'd begun, He was pleased and proud of the job He'd done. For the world, when seen through a little girl's eyes, greatly resembles Paradise.”

On one side of the large Word Art picture is a dance picture of Andrea. On the other side, is a dance picture of Heather. Below their pictures is a make-up table with a mirror, two small lamps, and a stool. The size of the girl's room is 18 feet by 18 feet. It has two windows, the front window gave the girls a clear View of Dyers Hill Road, and the farmer's crop fields in front of the house. In the summer time, I put a window air conditioner in the front window. I would take it out in the fall.

My wife and I kept three pieces of our first bedroom furniture, that we purchased 58 years ago. It was inexpensive wood furniture then, but it is expensive today. The first piece of furniture is a standard size bed. It has a wide headboard that holds tissue, the girl's two pink piggy banks, two small lamps, and a dozen small books to read. Above the bed is a large picture taken with Andrea, Heather, grandson John-John, Paula, and me.

Across the room is the second piece of furniture, a dresser with a tall mirror. On each side of the top of the mirror are two artificial corsages with a gold metal wick, with the letter “M” (for Murray State University). One year, when Andrea was eight and Heather was six, I pre-ordered the corsages with streamers. One corsage has Heather's name, in large letters on one of the streamers. The other corsage has Andrea's first name on one of the streamers. I did the same thing for Paula. 'We would go with the girls and my grandson, John-John to watch the Murray State Homecoming Parade. John-John would say to me: “I'm going to eat me some of that homecoming.” He was talking about the candy that is given out during the parade. We had breakfast before the parade at the Murray Middle School, provided by the College of Education. Murray State held its first classes, in 1920, when the building was a high school. I

On both sides of the mirror, on the dresser, are ballerina lamps. In the middle of the dresser is a small AM/FM radio in a wood cabinet. My dad gave it to me as a Christmas present, 50 years ago. The dresser has six drawers. The girls wanted the front of each drawer painted purple. The third piece of furniture is a chest with four drawers. The girls wanted the front of each drawer painted purple. On the top of the chest is a small fax machine. Next to the fax machine is a volcano lamp. When I turn it on, it heats up and circulates silver flakes. Next to the lamp is an hour glass. Next to it is an antique coal oil lamp, with a fancy cloth lamp shade. The shade is kept away from the hot globe by wires. The lamp came from Paula's grandmother's house in Gracey, circa 1880.

Next to the antique coal oil lamp, on the wall, is another Word Art picture. It contains these words: "Andrea. A is for adorable, cute, as can be. N is for noticeable, for all to see. D is for darling, such a delight. R is for radiant, a heavenly light. E is for energy, so much to spare. A is for affection, plenty to share. 'Andrea'. Like God's heavenly lights she's beyond compare."

Below the Word Art picture is a desktop computer. I put the monitor and keyboard on an old typing table. The computer belongs to my son, John. It's a high speed gaming computer. Previously, for two years, he worked for American Homes 4 Rent. It is a property rental corporation that owns over 6,000 rental homes in the 13-county Nashville Metropolitan area that includes Murfreesboro, Franklin, and Spring Hill. The corporation operates out of California. My son is called a "Vendor." He makes all types of home and plumbing repairs. The corporation has other vendors that compete for repair jobs. When a job shows up on the monitor, I have just seconds to decide if my son wants it. The corporation began to call him directly and not put out certain bids. They did this because of his workmanship, and the fact that he would tackle jobs that other vendors would not touch. But he grew tired of the daily drive to Nashville. He is back doing plumbing work in Kentucky, and he stays cover-up with work.

Across from the dresser is a desk that I painted white for the girls to draw on or to do their homework. Next to the desk is a small lamp table. On that table is a laptop computer. It is a hand-me-down from my granddaughter, Heather. It became too slow for her college needs. I use it to type estimates, job bids, completion invoices, work leans and releases and other business documents. I use a Dell mono printer below the table to print out the documents. I have a one-page scanner that I use to scan documents and one page pictures for some of my stories.

Across from the dresser is an entertainment cabinet. It contains a TV, a VCR, and a satellite receiver. In front of the cabinet, I set up a card table that I use for business and personal correspondence. I have a second card table next to the front bedroom window. On that table I have a combination record player, AM/FM radio, and CD player. In front of that combination, I have a third computer. It's hand-me-down from my granddaughter, Andrea. I use a Lexmark printer to print my stories from this laptop. I draft my stories on my old iPhone 6 that has no SIM card. I have a small cellphone holder that is next to this laptop. I type from that cellphone. On the right of the record player, I have a replica of an Orient Express electric table lamp. In front of the lamp, I have a phone answering machine. Below the card table, I have about twenty, 33 RPM vinyl records. Back in my younger days, I would listen to songs by Neal Diamond, Peter, Paul and Mary, Glen Campbell, Petula Clark, Gene Pitney, Andy Williams, and others.

In 2015, for the 50th Anniversary of Hopkinsville Community College (HCC), I was invited to the reunion of the first graduation class. I transferred to Murray State in 1968, and I lacked six credit hours to earn an Associate of Arts Degree from HCC. I contacted the HCC Registrar and requested that the college award me the AA degree.

The HCC Registrar said to me: “Mr. Hall, you have not demonstrated computer competency.” I had been using computers for over 20 years. That was HCC's polite way of saying that I did not take a computer course. The Registrar went on and said: “The University of Kentucky has a scholarship program for students like you. It will pay for your tuition and fees.” My granddaughter, Andrea gave me her computer textbook from HCC. So, at the age of 70, I enrolled as a freshman for the required computer course. The course was taught on line. I passed the course, and HCC asked me to walk the line and receive the AA degree. I asked to be the last to receive my degree.

Taking up a good part of the girl's room, is Miss Ivy's old cast iron bed. I painted it white, and I estimate that it was built 150 years ago. Above the bed is a hat holder with Andrea's and Heather's Easter Bonnets. They wore them to church when they were little girls. In between their hats is one of their purses. Two other bonnets, that they wore, when they were a little older, are hanging on the wall on each side of the dresser mirror. As you walk into the girl's room, above the light switch, is a large wooden plaque. Wooden letters spell out their names, and their individual small picture is attached to a magnet on the plaque. The pictures were updated each year.

I enjoy looking out the front window in the girl's room. I enjoy writing my stories in a room built in 1861, that is powered by technology, and filled with melodies that bring back such wonderful memories. Life can end in a blink of an eye. I know this from experience, as I was told that if I waited another hour, in March, 2023 to get to the Emergency Room, I would be dead. As in most of my stories, I try to include a little mentoring for my younger readers. There are a few things, in my humble opinion, that are certain in this life. The first thing, is that you cannot make someone like or love you, if they don't want to. The second thing, is that Christ gives us a free will to accept or reject Him. Of course, if we reject Him, He will reject us before His Father who is in heaven. The third thing is that beauty, fame, and health, will fade, over time, so appreciate them while they last. The fourth thing, is that life is really about our relationships with other people, be they family, friends, even those that do not like us. I'd rather have just a few faithful, honest, and loyal friends, than a hundred false ones. The fifth thing, is that the old saying that you cannot pick your family, but you can pick your friends, is only half true. You can pick others to be a part of your extended family, that are not blood related. I have young and older readers that love me, as much as Andrea, Heather and John-John love me. Sixth, being a Christian, nonfiction, lay writer, gives me a way to be a witness for Christ. I am able to put power behind my words, because of Christ's grace and inspiration. The little girls, that once occupied the room where I draft and write my stories, have grown up and moved away. But their memories are forever captured on the walls in that room.

John F. Hall

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