

MUMS, PUMPKINS, SCARECROWS AND STRAW

By John F. Hall

My son, John Andrew decorated my front yard with an Autumn display of mums, pumpkins, and scarecrows on top of several bales of straw. My two great nieces, Katie and Lilly, and great nephew, Jonah, live about 800 feet down Dyers Hill Road from my house. Last week, they invited a church group to come visit them. Their dad, Corey Harrison, had two wagons, with bales of straw, that served as seats. Corey pulled the wagons by a small tractor, on the dirt road going around the barren fields. He is making it an annual tradition for his children to have an Autumn hayride. I decorate my front porch for Halloween, as Katie and Lilly love to come up the hill to Rick or Treat. My son called me on my cellphone, that his neighbor, Jason, would have his three grandchildren come to my house to Trick or Treat.



On my front porch, that goes the length of my house, I have two antique metal milk cans, a grill, three rocking chairs, and two porch swings. On the left side of my porch front door, I have two girl scarecrows. One has a name tag of Andrea, and the other has the name tag of Heather. They are named for my granddaughters. On the right side of my porch front door, I have two boy scarecrows. One has a name tag of Cole, and the other has a name tag of John John. They are name for my grandsons. When Katie, age nine, and Lilly, age six, come to Trick or Treat, they remind me of Andrea and Heather, who loved to put on costumes for Halloween. My sister-in-law, Marsha Garner, made Katie's costume for the character "Wendy," from the movie Peter Pan. Katie won Second Place in the costume competition. Lilly wore a "Tinker Belle" costume, and Jonah wore a "Peter Pan" costume. All three won Second Place in the group costume competition.



I have two more scarecrows on the sides of one of the front porch windows. My son put three scarecrows with the Autumn Display. In the movie, "The Wizard of Oz," on their long journey to the Emerald City, Dorothy and Toto are joined by the Scarecrow, who wishes he had brains. He wanted the Wizard to give him a brain. The Scarecrow thought he wasn't very smart, so therefore he didn't have one. The truth was, he already was smart. And everyone around him knew it. The Egyptians were the first group of people in recorded history to use scarecrows, to protect their wheat fields along the Nile River. My dad, Charles J. Hall was married on Halloween, and he retired from NASA on Halloween. My wife, Paula prefers to decorate for Christmas. She purchased a Halloween table cloth, when my oldest granddaughter, Andrea was 18 months old. It glows in the dark. We still use it, and Andrea is 27 years old. When the children come to Trick or Treat, we have the lighted "Pumpkin Man" in our foyer. We lay out the candy on the piano bench, and extra, if they want it, in the Pumpkin Man's bowl.

The weatherman issued a Freeze Warning for the morning of November 1, 2023. It will be a record low of below 27 degrees. I put some old towels over the tops of each of the five mums on the Autumn Display in my front yard. I'm not sure if the towels will be sufficient to protect the flowers. Mum flowers can last anywhere from four to eight weeks. I would like the flowers to last until Thanksgiving Day.

Nancy Dodrill wrote a short piece called, "Harvest Has Its Season. These are her words: "Hands gather in the wheat fields where grains are tall and gold; harvest has its season, then Winter wind blows cold. The countryside is ravaged and fields are barren, still; peace now lingers everywhere, for we have got our fill. God's bounty here is endless, as Autumn starts to fade; Thanksgiving celebration is much more than a parade. Our barns and bins are satisfied, so we offer up to God a prayer of love and giving with psalms, praise and laud."

Twice a day, my brother-in-law, walks his horse, Harley on the road in front of my house. Harley is 16 years old. The average horse lives for 25 to 30 years. Harley's stable is next to my house. Every time I'm outside, and Harley hears me, he will "nicker." It is a succession of jerky sounds, initially high-pitched and gradually lower. It is Harley's way of saying, "Hi." Clay Harrison wrote a short piece called, "A Time For Thanksgiving." These are his words: "Autumn's a rainbow of colors that's merry and bright, before Winter arrives with her blankets of white. It's the tree's last hurrah before shedding their leaves when the scarecrows are forgotten somewhere in the sheaves. It's the season for pumpkins and candy apples galore, and the pecans are falling like I've never seen before! There will be pies in the oven for some time to come, and soon fruitcakes for Christmas will be soaking in rum. It's the time of the year for hayrides, for asters and mums, before maple trees are tapped once mid-Winter comes. Autumn's a brief shining moment when Heaven seems so near, when we celebrate Thanksgiving this glorious time of the year."

Before the rain began last week, the fields were ravaged and barren. The combines had harvested the corn crop. The corporate farmer had two of his large tractors bush hog the corn stalks. Then they came back to pulverize what ever remained, before planting the wheat. In my foyer, I made three piles of candy on my piano bench for Katie, Lilly, and Jonah to put in their Halloween bags.

The next day, Paula and I began to take down the Halloween decorations. My wife, Paula will replace some of them with Thanksgiving decorations. Her favorite time of the year is Christmas, so after November 23rd, we will put up the Christmas tree, I will put a lighted Nativity display on the front porch, and turn it on. I will put the "Keep Christ in Christmas" magnet emblems on my two cars. I will plug in the small Nativity, that my wife and I purchased 58 years ago. It has a special place in our foyer.

In an age where social media, mainly smartphones, have replaced personal letters, I still write stories and brief letters. I mail them to my granddaughters, and my surrogate granddaughters. I mail them to my family physician, Dr. Daniel Butler in Murray. I mail them to my friends.

John F. Hall

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