

MEMORIES, REFLECTIONS, AND TRADITIONS

By John F. hall

Forty eight years ago, I was faced with the possibility of having to shoot an intoxicated armed man, who had fired several times at his brother. I was able to surprise and tackle the man, and get his gun. Had I shot the man, I would not have written my first, ever, story in 1977. I called it a “Righteous Tackle.” I would not have become a prolific writer. In this story I share some memories, some reflections, and a few traditions. I believe that



three things have made my journey, on the broken roads of life, worth living. These are faith, family, and friends. My wife, Paula and I have lived in our old house, on Dyers Hill for the past 47 years. Jesus Christ has given me the grace, the inspiration, and the talent to write my life stories. I have one simple purpose, and that is the hope that one of my stories might help just one person. I know that is not a very high bar to reach. I do not sell my stories, I give them away. In my stories, I will acknowledge the lyrics of song writers, and the words from poem writers. I quote scriptures, as a witness for the Word of Christ. The beneficiaries of my stories are mainly my grandchildren. Some of my stories may entertain, inspire, or motivate some of my readers. I write to please myself. I find it difficult to proof read my own stories. Some of my stories have typos, run-on sentences, improper grammar, and improper punctuation. I was never trained to be a writer. I’ve never taken a journalism course. I’m like a piano player who cannot read sheet music, and who plays by ear. I go by the flow in my stories.

In 1868, seven years after my old house, on the hill, was built, Charles Crozat Converse wrote the hymn, “What a Friend we Have in Jesus.” These are his lyrics: “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer. Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged, take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer.”

I’m writing this a few days before my 80" birthday. There is a heat advisory from the National Weather Service, calling for heat index values up to and around 105 degrees. The prophet Moses said in Psalm, Chapter 90, Verse 10: “Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures...”. My strength has been in a state of decline since 2023, but I’m blessed and thankful to still be here. The Kentucky writer, Jesse Stuart, wrote: “By your own soul’s law learn to live. If men thwart you, take no heed. If men hate you, have no care. Sing your song, dream your dream. Hope your hope, and pray your prayer.”

I would say: “keep your faith — strong. Keep your hope in Jesus Christ. Give Christ some of your time on Sunday. Start your day by asking the Good Lord to give you a good day.” C. David Hay, wrote the poem, “Reflections.” These are his words: “We are but

scholars of our past, mirrors of lessons of age, reflecting the smiles and ‘signs upon a twilight page. There is no turning back. The moment passes on; we have a choice but once and then the time is gone. We could have gifted flowers, been quicker with a hand, shared more tears of grief to show we understand. We learn from our errors in the trials of don’t and do and the Master tallies all when the final course is through. So forgive mistakes of youth, and care not about the score. We meant to do our best — no one can ask for more.” I would add, as found in the Lord’s Prayer, to forgive those who trespass against you, and not to seek revenge. Leave the judgment up to Christ.

I like it when writers use a mirror to tell their story. Mandie Hines wrote the poem, “My Reflection.” These are her words: “I’ve only seen myself in a mirror, a watery surface, a reflection of who I really am. It should be no surprise then that I don’t perceive myself the way as others do. I see the words of myself reflected back to form gibbering irregularities. Some bizarre, flawed, anomaly. I hear my recorded voice and wonder at the sound of a stranger. I will never see myself the way others do. The version they see is unknown to me.”

I’ve been so blessed by my wife. For 60 years, she has been by side, in the good times, and in the hard times. My son, John, does so much, on a daily basis, to check on me and Paula. He and his wife, Lori make food runs if we need anything. My grandchildren, Andrea, Heather, and John-John, stay in contact with us. Paula’s sister, Marsha, and her husband, Roger Garner live next door. They also help getting things that we need.

On my 80th birthday, my family and kin, will all sit at the large dinner table. My grandson, John-John, will sit next to my son, at the south end of the table. Uncle Roger will sit next to John-John. Next to him will be grandson-in-law, Andrew Jansen and my granddaughter, Andrea Jansen. Granddaughter, Heather, will sit next to me, at the north end of the table. Paula will sit next to me, and Aunt Marsha will sit next to her. My son’s wife, Lori will sit next to him. I will pray the grace and ask the Good Lord to bless the food. My son caught the fish that we will eat, at Lake Barkley, a few days ago. He will also cook the fish. It’s a long Hall tradition to celebrate everyone’s birth, Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving at this dining room table. When one grandchild had a birthday, we would give the other two, an “Un-birthday” gift. I’ll give the girls and my son DVDs, and a gift to John- John.

John F. Hall

*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>