

## MY STORY OF HERITAGE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

By John F. Hall

Under the staircase of my very old and weather worn Antebellum farm house, on Dyers Hill Road, about five miles west of Cadiz, is a framed plaque with a picture of the students, staff, and teachers at Heritage Christian Academy, in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. It appears that someone took the picture from the roof of the school. The picture shows the students, staff, and teachers forming the letters H. C. A. Below the picture is an engraved plate with these words: "John "An-Father Hall" Your service to HCA is greatly appreciated. Thank you for being a grandfather to us all! You will be greatly missed!" The back of the picture shows that it was taken on November 23, 2010.



The first chapter of this story begins with my granddaughter, Andrea Hall in 2000. The final chapter may end with my adopted granddaughter, Lexie Crisp in 2022. William Shakespeare wrote the following words in a play: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts." I had the part of being a Tennessee plumbing contractor for several years. I would obtain plumbing permits, to help my Son, John with plumbing jobs in that state. I was 55 years old in 2000. Twice a month, I would drive 460 miles, one way, to the Army Reserve 85th Division located north of Chicago. I was their Inspector General.

I told my son that I would still obtain plumbing permits in Tennessee, but I was getting too old to be working those outside jobs with him. I had frost bite when I was a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division. I have a bad back from jumping out of a Huey helicopter, at night, and slamming into some trees. It was not my time for Jesus to call me home. I told my son that I would find an office job. I applied for a Kentucky Revenue position. I had 19 semester hours of accounting and a BS Degree in Business from Murray State University. I was hired as a Compliance Officer and I went to work in the state's Revenue Office in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

Every work day, I would drive by the construction site for the new Heritage Christian Academy (HCA) school. I remember when my son was in the first grade at Millbrooke Elementary School. He had 30 students in his classroom. His teacher was retiring that year. She lied to my wife, Paula that our son was doing fine reading. The next year, my son's second grade teacher told my wife that our son could not read. I hired a tutor to teach him how to read, and he was reading before the end of that school year.

My oldest granddaughter, Andrea was nearing the age to go to kindergarten. When she was very little, I would rock her to sleep as we sat in my rocking chair. I wanted her to call me "Grandfather." So I would whisper in her ear as she was sleeping: "Grandfather, grandfather, grandfather." I lost count of the number of times that I whispered into her



ear. Then, one day, she called me “An-Father.” I thought to myself, “that’s close enough.” So I became her An-Father forever. Sitting at my office desk, I decided to drive over to the HCA construction site. The school was almost ready to open. I had only one question to ask the Headmaster.

During my lunch hour, I drove over to HCA. I asked the receptionist if I could speak to the Headmaster. He invited me into his office. We sat down and I told him that I had only one question. I asked: “How long will it take you to teach my granddaughter, Andrea to read?” The Headmaster answered: “We have a new kindergarten teacher, Tara Felts, and she just graduated from a special teaching program at Murray State University. She can have Andrea reading in six months.” I told the Headmaster that I would have to talk to Andrea’s parents.

I live six miles from my son’s house in Trigg County. We talked that night and I gave him the enrollment packet from HCA. I told him that the new kindergarten teacher would have Andrea reading in six months. I told him that I would pick up Andrea at his house and drive her to and from HCA. If I was on an audit assignment, or on Army Reserve duty, Paula would take Andrea to and from HCA. I told him that I would pay Andrea’s tuition and buy her school supplies. He signed the enrollment papers. On the way to HCA, Andrea always wanted me to drive under the big American flag at the Wildcat Chevrolet dealership. I had a picture taken with Andrea on her first day of school at HCA. She was reading after only five months of teaching by Mrs. Felts.

Needless to say, Andrea was delighted that I would be taking her to school everyday. I made her a promise that I would eat lunch with her everyday that I was not out of town on an audit or up north of Chicago for Army Reserve duty. It was a little unusual to sit with her classmates at their tiny table and eat lunch with them. I kept that promise for ten years. I also volunteered in the HCA lunchroom for many years. The financial burden got tough when Andrea’s sister, Heather, and her brother, John-John enrolled at HCA. But a Christian education is well worth the cost.

Several students were having a hard time when their dad’s were deployed to Iraq. I was a long time friend to Jason Crisp. When he was deployed to Iraq, I became the grandfather



to his two daughters, Skyler and Lexie. I would sit across from Skyler, in the lunchroom, for about five minutes each school day, and encourage her to eat her lunch. I would bring her orange slice soft candy, or a brownie. I told her that she would have to eat at least half of her lunch before she could eat one of the treats. Her sister, Lexie was good about eating her lunch and she was always excited to see me.

When I volunteered in the HCA lunchroom, I wanted two things from the students, after they finished their lunch. They would come up to me and ask for a peppermint. I would

buy the individually wrapped peppermints at Walgreens. First, I had them recite their favorite Bible verse. Then they had to say: "May I please have a peppermint?" When I gave them a peppermint, they had to say: "Thank you." I was teaching them to be courteous and polite. When more and more students found out that they could get a peppermint for reciting a Bible verse, I thought that I was going broke buying peppermints. Because Andrea would always call me An-Father, her classmates and the teachers, began calling me An-Father.

On Grandparent's Day at HCA, they were taking pictures of the grandparents with their grandchildren. I had a picture taken with Andrea, Heather, and John-John. Skyler and Lexie had no grandparents there that day, so I became their grandfather. I keep all the



pictures of my grandchildren in my wallet. I have three special memories of HCA. The first is Andrea's first day at HCA. The second is when the late HCA volleyball, Eldridge Rogers had the volleyball players introduce their grandparents. I came onto the gym floor with Lexie. She was handed the microphone and she said: "This is my grandfather, John Hall. I call him An-Father." The third memory is my time with Coach Rogers. He trained me to be a volleyball referee. He was very impressed with Lexie's volleyball talent. He had her playing Middle, JV and Varsity to get the experience. I was protective of Lexie and I called him aside, one day, and said: "Coach, I'm concerned that you might burn her out." He just smiled. He knew exactly what he was doing.

I went to Senior Night for the HCA senior volleyball players. During the game, I talked to the new Headmaster, John Walsh. He told me that his niece and my granddaughter, Andrea are good friends. I've been a close friend of the Crisp family for several decades. Lexie's dad, J son, a fellow soldier, retired from the Army this past June. I took several pictures Lexie as she walked out onto the gym floor with her parents, Jason and Loretta, and her sister Skyler. HCA had Homecoming and I put pictures that Lexie provided with this story.

In nearly all of my stories, I will use lyrics from one of my favorite hymns. Stuart Townend and Keith Getty wrote the hymn "In Christ Alone." These are their lyrics: "In Christ alone 'my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song; this Cornerstone, this solid Ground, firm through-the fiercest drought and storm. What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease! My Comforter, my All in All, here in the love of Christ I stand. In Christ alone! - who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe. This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save: till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied -- for every sin on him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live. There in the ground His body lay, Light of the world by darkness slain: then bursting forth in glorious day up from the grave He rose again! And as He stands in victory sin's curse has lost its grip on me, for I am His and He is mine -- bought with the precious blood of Christ. No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me; from life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand: till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I'll stand."

I'm just a writer of simple, true stories, thanks to the inspiration that Jesus Christ freely gives to me. This is my story of Heritage Christian Academy. In the story, I also use it to mentor Skyler, Lexie, and Jade by the hymn. My Pastor once told me that they are gifts from God, and he knows better than me. In my stories, I try to give Jesus Christ honor and glory for all the grace upon grace upon grace that He has given me.

John F. Hall

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

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