

THE NAUTICAL PAINTING

Story by John F. Hall

In the past, several of my stories revolved around being on a World War II Merchant Marine cargo ship. Some short falls when writing those stories is that I did not know the name of the captain or the name of the cargo ship. I had a picture taken of me steering that ship. Twenty five years after that voyage, I found myself on a cruise ship with my



wife Paula. We were celebrating our 25th wedding anniversary. Fast forward another thirty years and it occurred to this writer that a good story could be told about that voyage I want to capture the reader's interest in what I write with pictures, documents, musical lyrics and Bible verses.

Paula and I arrived at Fort Lauderdale, Florida and parked our car at the port parking lot. We carried our luggage onto the M/S Noordam cruise ship. We were greeted by a lady in Danish costume. Standing next to this greeter were two new brides. One bride was still in her wedding dress. Both ladies were still holding their bouquets. I put a wine box full of Paula's diet Mountain Dew on the



deck. I asked them if I could take their picture with my wife. They agreed and then their husbands carried their luggage to their cabins. These two brides would enjoy a voyage and memories to last a lifetime. The definition of a cruise ship is generally a large passenger ship used to make ocean voyages in which the voyage itself, the ship's amenities and the ports of call all are part of the passenger's experience. A small cruise ship (1,200 passengers) is like a floating hotel going forward on the ocean. A large cruise ship (5,000 passengers) is like a floating city. We were in cabin 220 on the Upper

Promenade Deck. It had four good size windows and immediate access to the outside Deck. At sea, on Sunday, April 15, 1990, they had religious services. That night they had a Captain's Welcome Dinner. The dress code was formal with Tuxedo or business suit, jacket and tie was required all evening. I put a copy of the menu for the Captain's Welcome Dinner and activities for that day. I included pictures from that night that captures those memories. Pictures tell more than I can put into words.

Yet, one painting that I sought, is a story onto itself. Our ship pulled into Saint Thomas harbor. Paula and I did the usual things that tourist do and shopped downtown. There was so much to do and see, but not enough time to explore the island. We walked into a small shop and I noticed a painting high on a wall. It was dusty and may have been hanging there for years. It was not framed but it had a solid backing. I asked the shop keeper how much he wanted for that painting. He said it was not for sale. I said, "OK." I first thought the painting might have been a part of the shop's decor. I looked around the shop. Paula

purchased a few items. I went back and talked to the shop keeper. I said, "If the painting was for sale, how much would it cost?" I think he was puzzled by this question. He paused and then said, "Twenty Dollars." I took out my wallet and removed a twenty and a five. I laid the currency on the counter and did not say a word. There is something to the phrase, "Silence is golden." The shop keeper picked up the money. He walked to the back of the store and came back with a ladder. He climbed up and retrieved the painting. He wrapped it in white paper. We walked outside and Paula stopped and rested on the shop's window edge. I took her picture. She was tired from all the walking that we did that day. I wanted to visit Blackbeard's Castle, but we had to get back to the ship.

So much can be written about that voyage that space does not allow in this story. I had the painting from the shop in Saint Thomas matted and framed. I had it mounted in my bedroom. We are all on a journey in this life. No matter how far we travel, Christ is waiting for us when we make our last farewells to those that we love and to those that love us.

Our two granddaughters and my three surrogate granddaughters were not born when Paula and I went on that cruise. If my stories that I share, first with my granddaughters, will stand the test of time, it will be because I love to put them and other members of my family in those stories. Most of them have been on a cruise ship and some went snorkeling, like Paula and I did in the British Virgin Islands. In my previous stories, "The Storm," and "The Old Captain And The Sea," I quoted several excellent Bible verses. In this story I asked my granddaughters to tell me their favorite Bible verses. Granddaughter Andrea's favorite Bible verse is Matthew, chapter 6, verses 33—34, "But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Granddaughter Heather's favorite Bible verse is Colossians, chapter 3, verse 2, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." Granddaughter Skyler's favorite Bible verse is Isaiah 41:10, "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand." Granddaughter Jade's favorite Bible verse is Philippians, chapter 4, verse, 13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Granddaughter Lexie's favorite Bible verse is Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give hope and a future." All these verses from these lovely young ladies give testament to their faith and hope in Christ.

I will end this nautical story with a few lines from a romantic ballad of separation that most people will experience at some time in their lives. The words were written by Ron Webster and the song, "The Last Farewell," became the number two charted British song by folk singer Roger Whittaker in 1971. In John, chapter 13, verse 34 are these words, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." These are a few of Roger Whittaker's lyrics, "There's a ship lies rigged and ready in the harbor. Tomorrow for old England she sails. Far away from your land of

endless sunshine, to my land full of rainy days and gales. And I shall be aboard that ship tomorrow, though my heart is full of tears at this farewell. For you are beautiful, I have love: you dearly, ore dearly than spoken words can tell.

John F. Hall

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

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25th anniversary couple

Hall

Paula and John F. Hall will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary with a cruise to the Virgin Islands.

The couple was married April 17, 1965, by Army chaplain LTC Frank Riley at South Chapel, Fort Campbell.

Mrs. Hall is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Oakley of Cadiz. She serves as the Records Management Officer at the Fort Campbell Army Hospital.

Mr. Hall is the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Charles J. Hall of Edgewater, Florida. He is a retired law enforcement officer, a free-lance writer, college instructor, farmer and a Captain in the Army Reserves.

Their son, John Andrew, of the home, announces that his



Mr., Mrs. John F. Hall

parents request no gifts. Expressions of congratulations in the form of cards are welcome.