

## THE OLD MAN AND HIS RETIREMENT WATCH

By John F. Hall

The month of July, 2022 is almost over. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, my wife, Paula and I drove to Nashville, Tennessee for my quarterly appointment with my dermatologist, Dr. Natalie Curcio. My appointment time was 11:00 am. It was 93 degrees and the humidity was 87%. We were not able to park in front of the Curcio Clinic. The city water department was blocking the clinic parking lot. I found a place to park about a hundred or so feet from the clinic. As we were walking, I went over and asked one of the city workers what they were doing? He was standing by a trailer that had a small pumper tank. He said they were cleaning out the sewers.



We put on our face masks before we went into the clinic. Dr. Curcio is one reason why this old man is still alive. The skin cancer on my forehead had gotten down to my skull. I told Dr. Curcio that she saved my life. She nonchalantly said, without stopping what she was doing, "I know." So I call her, "my angel." She said that I remind her of her grandfather who spoiled her. She had just returned, with her husband and oldest daughter, from a wedding and a conference in Spain. She told me that she has lived in Nashville for 20 years, and the air quality is the worst that she has ever experienced.



Ananth Patri wrote the poem, "Oh! It's a Hot Summer Day." I changed one word to make it current. These are her words: "Oh it's a hot summer day, when the temperatures are high, yes, this is the month of July, all man and animals cry. Oh! It's a hot summer day, no one dares to come out, they all like to stay, in their cool homes and shout. Oh! It's a hot summer day, and till the sun shrinks, it's not at all cool, no way, then they would like to think. Oh! It was a hot summer day, even the temperatures won't fall, and people on their beds just lay, now everyone would like to call. Oh! It's still the hot summer day."

Back in Cadiz, I looked out my front living room window at the suction temperature gauge attached to the outside storm window. The outside temperature is 105 degrees and the heat index is closer to 110 degrees. Looking out at the no-till crop of soybeans, sprouting up in the fields that once produced the amber waves of wheat, I wondered if the crops would survive the brutal heat.

My son, John and his wife Lori came over. They were grilling hamburgers at their house and they call ahead to borrow some sweet onions. My wife, Paula gave them several Vidalia onions. They gave her a bag of Bing cherries. My son asked if I had any antifreeze. I purchased a gallon two weeks ago. I put it on my carport. I told him to use what ever he needed.

His wife's car was running hot. He poured about a third of a gallon into her car's antifreeze reservoir. They invited us to come over and look at the quails that they just started to raise. A Preacher in Lyon County, who raises quail to sell their eggs, sold my son several eggs. My son decided that he would raise quails to eat and to freeze their eggs for later consumption. At this point in time, my son has one small quail incubator, that he built. He uses a heat lamp to keep the quail warm. I give him my Hopkinsville New Era newspapers, after I read them, to put in the incubators to catch the quail poop.

The Lyon County Preacher sells his quail eggs to a buyer in Clarksville, Tennessee. That person pickles the quail eggs and sells them. It takes three quail eggs to equal the size of a regular chicken egg. The quail egg sells for \$.25 cents and is excellent for people with cholesterol problems and diabetes. The Preacher owns 20 acres of land. He built quail cages and mounted them on tobacco wagons that he can move around as the quail poop fertilize the ground. My son has an extra lot next to his house lot. He built two large dog pens at the far side of the lot away from his house. I helped him fence in the entire lot. When the last dog died, the dog pens remained empty.

My son constructed a 500-capacity quail cage. I gave him the metal to put over the top of



the quail cage. At this time, he is only using the bottom rack that holds 250 quails. He will build a poop rack to collect the quail poop from the bottom rack. The rack will be made from ALUCOBOND. It consists of two smooth .020" aluminum facers thereobonded to polyethylene about 3mm. Then he will build a poop rack for the top quail rack. The poop will be

collected, put in thick plastic bags and picked up. My son then plans to build a 500-capacity quail egg hatchery. As the quail lay their eggs, the slanted floor in the hatchery cage will allow the eggs to roll into a pipe catcher for easier retrieval. I never thought my son would want to be a quail farmer. Even the Preacher liked my son's quail cages.

My son is still working on the house in Marshall County that he wants to flip. He showed me the long boards for the 30-foot LVL top beam that he will construct. He intends to sell the house once he constructs the garage. He told me that he was contacted by a former high school friend to do some plumbing work at a closed pharmacy building that was purchased by the Trigg County Hospital in Cadiz, Kentucky. The facility needs another bathroom. I asked if he was going to jack-hammer through concrete to do the plumbing addition. He said the pharmacy has a basement, which means that he can work in the cool and not have to deal with the smoking hot summer sun. I asked to look at the blue prints. There was no state approved plumbing schematic. My son will draw a schematic that shows the location of the new drains and vents.

He is a Master Plumber and it's no big deal. He will have to drive to Paducah, Kentucky to have the state Plumbing Inspector approve his plumbing schematic. There is something

on the blueprint that caught my attention. On the bottom right side, that identifies the blueprint, are three words: "TRIGG COVID CLINIC." Possibly, the hospital has COVID funds to use or lose. The pharmacy will be renovated to have four exam rooms, a reception room, an office, and a waiting room. I render a guess that it might become an infusion center.

I was in Nashville the second week in July for my epidural that I receive every four months for my spinal stenosis. It is administered in the Vanderbilt Pain Management Center that is on the second floor of the 100 Oaks Mall. Vanderbilt uses the entire second floor. I have to walk by their Infusion Center. I have never observed, in the three years that I have been going there, the number of patients waiting to get into the Infusion Center. The infusion keeps patients who have COVID-19, from having to be hospitalized. A lady that goes to the church that I attend, told me that she has received the two COVID vaccines, and the two COVID booster shots. And she still got COVID-19. To repeat what my family physician, Dr. Daniel Butler, told me and that I religiously follow: "Wear a mask when you go into a public building."

In all of my stories, I give Christ the honor and the glory for all the grace upon grace and inspiration that he has given to me to write. I do this with hymn lyrics, and scripture. I use country and pop song lyrics to enhance the theme of my stories. In this smoking hot summer story, I continue to use that combination, first with pop lyrics. Paul Simon wrote the song, "Slip Slidin' Away." These are just a few of his lyrics: "God only knows, God makes his plans. The information's unavailable to the mortal man. We work our jobs, collect our pay. Believe we're gliding down the highway, when in fact we're slip slidin' away... Slip slidin' away. Slip slidin' away. You know the nearer your destination, the more you're slip slidin' away...".

I looked out my front porch window, as I was drinking an ice cold glass of lemonade.



The temperature on the front porch was 110 degrees. It is too scorching hot to sit on my front porch swing. The red dinner bell, in the front yard, will burn the finger if it is touched. The red rose bush flowers have long since wilted and their petals litter the ground. It has been 34 years since I last took off my Kentucky State Police (KSP) badge. When I retired, the KSP enclosed my badge in blue, clear plastic, along with my name tag, and gave it back to me. I turned in my 357 Magnum revolver. The KSP asked me if I wanted to buy it. I said that I did. The KSP re-blued it, engraved it with my unit number (413), and put it in a felt lined fancy wooden box.

The KSP gave me a Bolivia Quartz gold retirement watch. It has the KSP emblem on the face of the watch. The back of the watch is engraved with my unit number, my initials (JFH), the date I was hired and the date that I retired. The watch's battery died many years ago. I was not sure if the watch even worked. I took it to Todd's Jewelry in Hopkinsville. Todd has been in the jewelry business for 40 years. He was not in the store



at that time, so his wife put in a new battery and it worked. I decided to wear the watch again, after all these years.

Stephen Pennell wrote the poem, "Granddad's Gift." These are his words: "It's only a wrist watch with a faded leather strap. With its gold numbers a precious possession that's kept in a box. Shown to the grand kids his pride and joy. 'But grand dad, it's only a watch!' It is only a watch!, but look what does it say? 45 years of service to the railway. My life is engraved on the back of this watch. I gave of all my sweat and blood. See my gray hair and calloused hands. These are the things I got with this watch. When I pass on, this watch will be yours. Hold it close to your heart, as I will be gone."

I'll use some of the words from James, Chapter 1, Verse 11: "For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed..."

I'll end this story with a short piece by Jeanette Martino Land called, "When Prayer Presides." These are her words: "In the midst of work and worry when you're always in a hurry, and your time is spent in giving, reaffirm that life's worth living! But if temptation comes your way, let prayer preside and guide your day. When your joints are stiff and aching and your heart is breaking, in the midst of joy or sadness, always praise the Lord with gladness! For nothing takes your peace away, when prayer presides and guides your day. In a world engulfed in madness, be the candle in the darkness, share the love that you've been given. Proclaim Jesus, now arisen! With joy-filled heart, prepare the way, as prayer presides and guides your day."

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