

ON TO PADUCAH

By John F. Hall

Several years ago, we wanted to make it easier for my brother-in-law, Bruce Oakley to come into our old Antebellum farm house. He is disabled and in a wheel chair. He is one week younger than me. I suggested to my son, John, that we build an access ramp to the deck, on the east side of my house. I never expected, that I would be needing that ramp, so soon. Tomorrow, my son and my wife, Paula will be taking me to Mercy Health - Lourdes Hospital in Paducah, Kentucky, I'm scheduled to have out-patient spine surgery. My son will be driving my 2016 Ford Escape. I turned it into a mini ambulance, by folding down the rear seats, and custom fitting a six-inch foam pad, to cover the rear area of the SUV. I tie the two back seat belts together, to hold me down. I'm not sure if my surgeon, Dr. Jonathan Couch, will want me to lay in the back, or to sit up, after the surgery.

I decided to write a story before having the surgery, and put it in my mail box, before leaving for Paducah. Christ has given me a talent to write about many things. But I restrict my stories to be nonfiction life stories. If I did not experience or observe it, I don't write about it. Also, I acknowledge that it is because of Christ's grace upon grace upon grace, and His inspiration, that has allowed me to write hundreds of stories. In nearly all of my stories, I try not to forget to praise God, from Whom all blessings flow.

An unknown author wrote a poem called, "Poem of Life." These are those unknown author's words: "Life is just a stopping place, a pause in what's to be, a resting place along the road, to sweet eternity. We all have different journeys, different paths along the way, we were all meant to learn somethings, but never meant to stay.. . Our destination is a place, far greater than we know. For some the journey's quicker, for some the journey's slow. And when the journey finally ends, we'll claim a great reward, and find an everlasting peace, together with the Lord."

In 1978, The Rev. Billy Graham invented a story for a sermon called, "The Tale of Two Wolves." These are his words: "One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside of people. He said, "My son, the battle is between two "wolves" inside us all. One is evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. The is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith." The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: "Which wolf won?" The old Cherokee simply replied: "The one you feed." My wife, the former Paula Andree Oakley of Golden Pond, Kentucky, has some Cherokee blood lineage.

Paula's great grandmother, Nancy Bass, is a full blooded Cherokee Indian. She is buried in the Long Creek Cemetery, just east of the former town of Golden Pond, Kentucky, in the Land Between the Rivers.

My dad, Charles J. Hall wanted me to get a college education, and have a career in the Army. In 1979, I met Glen Campbell while I was in Louisville, on a security detail. He is, perhaps, the most gifted guitar player of our generation. Yet, he could not read sheet music. Jimmy Webb wrote the song, "Galveston." It was a massive hit for Glen Campbell, during the Vietnam War, and I am a Veteran of that war. These are some of Jimmy Webb's lyrics: "Galveston, oh Galveston, I am so afraid of dying. Before I dry the tears she's crying, before I watch your sea birds flying, at Galveston, at Galveston...". My Galveston was Golden Pond, and now that town is gone. And my girl is my wife, Paula. We were just teenagers, young and dumb, when we met in Golden Pond. We really had nothing in common. Her dad, and my dad did not want us to get married. But we defied the odds, and next April, the Good Lord willing, we will celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary. After our son, John Andrew was born, we wanted to have a daughter. We were going to call her Windy, but Paula had medical problems, and she could only have one child.

When I hear the song, "Windy," I some times fantasize what our daughter might have been like. Ruthann Friedman wrote the song, "Windy." In my very old and weather beaten Antebellum farm house, is a stairway. It is the only remaining original part of the house. These are a few of Ruthann Friedman's lyrics: "Who's peekin' out from under a stairway, calling a name that's lighter than air? Who's bending down to give me a rainbow? Everyone knows it's Windy. Who's tripping down the streets of the city smilin' at everybody she sees? Who's reachin' out to capture a moment? Everyone knows it's Windy. And Windy has stormy eyes that flash at the sound of lies. And Windy has wings to fly above the cloud, above the clouds...".

Since I decided to make this a short story, I will just use the lyrics to one more song. There is a verse in the song, "Ol' Man River," that reminds me of myself. The song was written by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein. These are their lyrics: "I gets weary, and sick of trying. I'm tired of livin' but I'm scared of dyin', but ol' man river, he just keeps rollin' along. . .". I plan to mail this story to family, to good friends, and to some of my faithful readers. For friendships and prayers.

John F. Hall

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