

## A PRAYER FOR SOMEONE

By John F. Hall

This is my first story for the new year. It began as the year 2022 was coming to an end. I had conversations with two men. The first man, Ken works at Hancocks Neighborhood Market in Cadiz. I talked to him on Tuesday morning, December 27th. He told me that he will retire on the last day in December. I said to Ken: "I guess you will start the new year spending time at home with your family." Ken looked at me with his rather sad eyes and said: "I don't have a family, it's just me." Two cashiers were listening to our conversation. The grocery store just opened at 7:30 am. The banks in Cadiz were closed on December 26th. I had about \$25 dollars in quarters that I wanted to exchange for dollars. I asked one of the cashiers if she would not mind exchanging my quarters for dollars. She was delighted because they needed quarters. She counted them out and told me that I had \$26 dollars in quarters and one nickel. I said to Ken: "You might consider just taking two weeks off. You can always change your mind and come back to work."



The reason that I was in that grocery store, so early, is that I was driving my wife, Paula to Ascension Saint Thomas Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee for her annual cancer check-up. We usually get off Interstate-24 at Exit 8 in Tennessee to get me a crescent egg and sausage, and Paula a crescent bacon and cheese for breakfast. I did not want to pay for the breakfast with quarters. Back on the interstate, the traffic was heavy. I received a phone call reminder, earlier, that only the patient would be allowed in the cancer center on December 27th. I drove Paula to the nearest elevator in the hospital's parking garage. I told her that I would be in the hospital's cafeteria after I parked our SUV.

It is a long walking distance, from where I parked in the hospital's garage, to the hospital cafeteria. I have a very injured foot that was operated on twice. Both surgeries failed after six months. My very talented surgeon, Dr. Jeffery Herring, a former team physician for the Tennessee Titans football team, wanted to operate for a third time. This time he wanted to break four toes in my right foot and insert a six-inch stainless steel pin in each toe. I told him that I had endured enough torture. I settled for the second option of having custom orthopedic shoe inserts made. The inserts allow me to walk without much pain. But walking for more that 20 minutes, at a time, will put me down. My right foot ankle started to cause me pain. My wife, Paula asked me what I wanted for Christmas. I told her that it was about time for me to get a walker with wheels that has a seat that will help me walk and allow me to sit down no matter where I was at the time.

The walker with wheels became one of my Christmas presents. It folds up and fits nicely into the back of my SUV. I injured my right foot when I was a teenage paratrooper in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division back in 1963. My Active Army medical records were destroyed in a fire in a records holding area in Saint Louis, Missouri, many decades ago. Having to take the Army physical fitness test's, two mile run, from 1979 to 2005, in the Kentucky National Guard and the Army Reserve, caused further injury to my right foot. My "Band

of Brothers” in the 101<sup>st</sup>, that witnessed my parachute fall injuries in 1963 and 1964, were killed in Vietnam.

I began to establish medical documentation with the surgeries to my right foot. I went to see Dr, Bennie Fulbright in Benton, Kentucky. He wrote a good opinion about the injuries to my right foot. I then filed a disability claim with the Veterans Administration (VA), that had denied my previous claims. The VA then lost some of the documentation that I provided. I filed again, and they sent me see one of their contract doctors. She asked me some questions, and reviewed all the documentation that I provided. I really did not expect the VA to do anything. Perhaps, because I'm 77, they thought that I was on borrowed time anyway. I am currently drawing a 10 percent disability due to hearing damage to my ears caused when I was an M-60 machine gunner.

It was very cold in the hospital parking garage as I took my new wheeler walker out of my SUV. I was breaking it in as I headed for the cafeteria. I got on the garage elevator and got off at the sky bridge that connects the parking garage to the hospital. I walked across the enclosed sky bridge. I came to a check point that had a sign with the words: “Masks are mandatory. If you don't wear one, you will be asked to leave.” There was a table with a pile of the masks, free for the taking. I asked one of the hospital staff when the cafeteria closed. I was told that it would close in ten minutes. I had five minutes to spare when I made it to the self-service coffee dispenser. I usually don't drink coffee, but it was very cold in the parking garage and my blood thinner only added to the chill that I was feeling. I was the last customer to pay the cashier. I had a container of coffee and a candy bar. I paid \$4.25. I assume the cost of the candy bar was \$1.25 and the cost of the regular coffee was \$3.00. Inflation is really starting to impact people. The cashier opened and held the door to the seating area. As soon as I was walked pass her, she locked the doors. They would be unlocked in two hours when the cafeteria opened to serve lunch. It seemed rather strange to be in an empty cafeteria, listening to the sounds of silence.

I put the hot coffee container on the walker seat and pushed it until I found a table with two chairs. I sat at a small table in the deserted eating area and picked up the hot coffee container. It felt good to- my hands. My fingers have lingering frost bite from my days in the Army. I put my gloves, ear muffs and black Stetson hat on the walker seat. I could see the cafeteria's small Christmas tree with a gold star on top. Small red socks and large plastic snow flakes decorated the lighted tree that was placed on a cafeteria table. Above the tree, on the wall, was a clock. It captured the time, 10:07. The last time-that I was patient at this hospital was in 2016. I arrived by ambulance and I was immediately admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU). I had suffered four minor strokes. The traveling neurologist on duty came to my bed. He looked over my medical chart and said: “Mr. Hall, your prognosis is rather grim.” The nurse assigned to me said they gave me the “million dollar treatment.” I don't know what all that entailed. I remember getting five injections in my stomach. The traveling neurologist might have anticipated that my 5<sup>th</sup> stroke would be the big and fatal one. He might have been disappointed that I did not die. I do know that he had rotten bed-side manner. You don't tell a patient that their prognosis is grim, even if it is. Patients need hope that they can overcome adversity. It was very

humbling to fall to the floor and have one side of my body become temporarily paralyzed.

On December 28th, I drove to the Cadiz Post Office to mail a certified letter. The mail clerk was a substitute that I had not seen before. When I came to the window, I jokingly said: "If you had not answered your phone, they would not have put you to work." He said, "I don't mind, but I don't care about the drive from Clarksville. I paid the clerk to mail the certified letter and I purchased two books of stamps. I left the Post Office and I drove home. I checked the mail box in front of my house. There was a letter from the VA that informed me that my disability rating was increased from 10 percent to 30 percent. There was a VA disability insurance form that had to be postmarked before December 31, 2022. So I decided to mail that form the next day by certified mail.

On December 29, 2022, I drove to the Cadiz Post Office. The same substitute mail clerk was working the window. I asked him if he was given mileage to drive to Cadiz from Clarksville, Tennessee. He said: "Yes, but it's not worth it. I don't get paid for the drive time to get here." For some reason, the mail clerk asked: "Did you work at the Post Office in Oak Grove?" I said: "No. But I was a Postal Assistant, many decades ago, when I was a college student. I worked at the Fort Campbell Post Office. I would unload the semi-truck at 4:30 am, and sort the mail for four hours, then I would drive to the community college in Hopkinsville. I had to work because the GI Bill, at that time, only paid for my tuition and books. I was married and we had a one year old baby."

I was the only customer in the Cadiz Post Office as the substitute mail clerk talked about his postal job. I said: "Well, at least you don't have to work New Year's day, and you can spend that time with your family." The mail clerk replied: "No, things have changed. We even work on Sunday delivering packages. I'm a bachelor. I'm not married. I don't have children. I had a dog. He was 16 years old. I wanted to be there when the veterinarian had to put him down. But the Post Office would not let me take off from work." I could tell from his voice that he was still grieving the death of his dog.

There are four things, in my opinion, that make life worth living. Those things are faith, family, friends, and good health. There is a song that I like called, "The Prayer" It was written by David Foster, Carol Bayer, Alberto Testa, and Tony Reno's. These are their lyrics: "I pray You'll be our our eyes, and watch us where we go. And help us to be wise in times that we don't know. Let this be our prayer, when we lose our way. Lead us to the place, guide us with Your grace to a place where we'll be safe. I pray we'll find Your light and hold it in our hearts. Reminding us when stars go out each night. That in my prayer, You are the everlasting star. Let this be our prayer, there's so much faith when shadows fill our day. Lead us to a place, guide us with Your grace, give us faith so we'll be safe. We dream of a world with no more violence. A world of justice and hope. Grasp your neighbor's hand as a symbol of peace and brotherhood. The strength that You give us: we ask that life be kind, is the wish. And watch us from above, that everyone may find love. We hope each soul will find, in and around himself, another soul to love. Let this be our prayer. Just like every child, need to find a place, guide us with Your grace. Give us faith so we'll be safe. And the faith that You've lit inside us, I feel it will save us."

I selected a few pieces about prayer to use in this story. The first piece is called, 'Everybody Needs Prayer.' It was written by Steven Schumacher. These are his words: "Truly, everyone needs prayer, yes, no matter who they are. It's a balm for the spirit, and a comfort to the heart. When life gets rough and rocky, heavy is the weight of grief; prayer will lift the burden and provide healing and relief. The load will be much lighter, after placing all those cares into the hands of the Lord --- Because everyone needs prayer."

The second piece is called, "Prayer." It was written by Josephine Miller. These are her words: "Prayer is a powerful force. It will change a life's course for it goes to the very source of things over which we have no recourse. Lord, You inhabit prayer and praise when our voices to You are raised; whether for glory or supplication, we merge in communication. Almighty, Omnipotent Power, we can come to You at any hour reaching out in fervent prayer, of Your presence so aware. In prayer, we become one heart, You, Lord, the divine part. In this unity, You lift us up to share with You the divine cup."

I'll end this story with the third piece called, "My Humble Prayer." It was written by Shirley Powell. These are her words: "Oh Lord, I beg You lend an ear, while I pray on bended knees. Grant only what is best for me as You listen to my humble pleas. Please remember that I am human; if, perhaps, I shall pray for wealth, as I know I should be thanking Thee for family, friends and good health. Perhaps You will send me wisdom and teach me to always share, and, also, the strength to handle the burdens that I must bear. Lord, most of all, I beg You to forgive my sins against Thee. Please give me the grace needed to be the Christian that I should be. Dear Lord, please hear my praises, as I sing them at close of day, and guard and keep this grateful heart. Please don't ever let it stray.

Ken at the grocery store, and the substitute mail clerk at the Cadiz Post office, both said they have no family, no one. That is not true. We are all God's children. He is our Father in heaven. We are His family for all eternity.

John F. Hall

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