

THE RACE AGAINST TIME

By John F. Hall

It was my wife, Paula's appointment to see our family physician, Dr. Daniel Butler, and I came with her. In his office, he could tell that there was something wrong with me. He took my vital signs and he told Paula to immediately get me to the Murray/Galloway



Hospital Emergency Room. He said that he would call ahead and tell them that I was on the way. Just as we arrived at the hospital, a security officer stopped us. A helicopter was to land with a critically injured patient. The security officer told Paula that she would have to wait. I had a roller in the car, so I got out and walked into the emergency room. I was told to take a seat until I was called. My daughter-in-law, Lori Hall is a respiratory therapist at that hospital. Paula called her and she came to the emergency room. I was not aware that was in a slow death spiral.

The previous week, Dr. Butler was not available, and I went to see a PA to treat me for a chronic sinus infection. The first medication prescribed did not work, and the PA prescribed the antibiotic, Levaquin. That should never be given to patients over the age of 70. The following day, I was sitting in my easy recliner, and I slid off and onto the floor. But I did not have the strength to pull myself up. Paula called her sister, Marsha Garner. She lives next door, and she came over with her husband, Roger. They got me up and Paula drove me to the Trigg County Hospital Emergency Room. The doctor on call treated me and did not agree that I should be taking Levaquin. He told me to cut the dosage in half. I was very dehydrated and I was given IV fluids. After four hours, I was released and sent home. I cut the dosage of Levaquin down to one-fourth, and then stopped taking it. I told Paula that, when she had her appointment with Doctor Butler, that I would go with her and have him see me.

In the Murray Calloway Hospital, the emergency room physician realized that in addition to my kidney failure, which was falling from 19 percent; that I was also suffering from congestive heart failure. The oxygen percentage in my blood was getting very low, so he put me on oxygen. There was fluid on my lungs. The doctor checked with Lourdes Hospital to see if they had a nephrologist on staff. They did not, so the physician recommended that I go to Baptist Health Hospital in Paducah, Kentucky. The nephrologists on staff at Baptist Health Hospital is Dr. Ali Shankat. Five years earlier, I had kidney stones, and I became one of his patients. The emergency room physician ordered an ambulance to transport me to Baptist Health Hospital. The problem was the lack of an available ambulance. The hospital has two ambulances. One ambulance was on a run taking a patient to a hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. The other ambulance, by hospital rules, could not drive a patient out of the county, and leave the hospital with out an ambulance. So I had to wait until the other ambulance returned from Lexington.

The weather turned bad with high winds and heavy rain when the ambulance pulled out of the Murray Galloway Hospital Emergency Room. All the way to Paducah, it rained as I looked out of the ambulance's back window.

The EMT checked to be sure that I was securely fastened to the gurney, and that the oxygen tube was properly in my nose. In our conversation, he mentioned that he would be getting married in May. This was my second ride in an ambulance. In 2016, I had suffered four minor-strokes in a row, and I was transported to Saint Thomas West Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. The traveling neurologist on duty that night told me that my prognosis looked grim. I guess that he thought that if I had another stroke, that it would be fatal. The rain on the ambulance, as I taken to Paducah, got very heavy. I heard the ambulance driver talking on the radio to someone at Baptist Health Hospital. He was told not to take me to their emergency room. Because of my serious condition, I was to be taken directly to the Critical Care Unit (CCU) in the hospital, and to bypass the emergency room.

Baptist Health Hospital treats about 200,000 patients a year, from four states. They use a four-doctor team to treat me. Dr. John Hancock, a hospital medicine/hospitalist was my care team leader. The other members of my care team are Dr. Ali Shankat, nephrologist; Dr. Sanjay Bose, cardiologist, and Dr. Sugata Sensarma, pulmonologist. I lost count of the numbers of nurses, respiratory therapist, physical therapist, lab technicians, and other hospital staff involved in my care at Baptist Health Hospital. I do remember that Dr. Griffin Bicking, a vascular surgeon, inserted the port in my chest for the three dialysis treatments. One specific thing that impressed me about Dr. Hancock is the statement that he made to me. He said: "We will get you well and back on your feet." He was good about making random checks to see how I was doing. Dr. Ali kept checking on me. I would see him once a year at the Cadiz Dialysis Center, until he became a staff member at Baptist Health.

On my second day in Baptist Health Hospital, the National Weather Service, at Paducah, issued a rare High Wind Warning. The hospital expected to be hit by a tornado. The 2020 tornado that caused great damage to the city of Mayfield was still fresh on people's minds. They moved the CCU patients out of their rooms and into the hallways, away from any windows. I was put in a wheel chair, with my IV fluid pole in two. After spending two hours in the hallway, they gave the all-clear and we returned to our rooms. There was significant damage to trees, power lines, and some homes in the Paducah area. My wife, Paula spent the entire time with me, except when I had to be taken to have chest scans, heart scans, and dialysis treatments. My son, John and his wife, Lori, a respiratory therapist at the Murray Galloway Hospital, came often. I had a visit from my Pastor, Greg Trawick, and another Pastor from Paducah, and one of my Christian Fraternity brothers, Chuck Spurr.

One of the night male nurses, had kin folks who once lived in Golden Pond, Kentucky came by my room. He had a book about Golden Pond that had a 1964 picture that I took of Paula standing under the Golden Pond Highway sign. I was dating Paula, the former Paula Andree Oakley of Golden Pond. She lived across the road from the Sunset Inn Restaurant. He was working on another floor, but the next day, he brought the book to my room. He asked Paula to sign her name under her picture.

On my last day in the hospital, the discharge nurse came into my room. She pulled a chair over to my bedside. We had talked on previous occasions. She is a traveling nurse from Madisonville, Kentucky. She had several discharged papers in her hands. She looked at me and said: "Mr. Hall, you almost died. If you had not gotten to the emergency room in Murray, within an hour, you would be dead." She was not telling me something that I did not already know. I knew that I was in a race against time, and so did Dr. Butler. In the past, I would thank him for keeping me alive. He would say: "God keeps you alive. I just do some tinkering." This time, his quick thinking, kept me alive.

I try to give Christ recognition in my stories, something that my granddaughter, Andrea says that I do. Even in the hospital, I kept trying to write stories, just using one finger on an old iPhone-6. It's getting close to Thanksgiving Day. An unknown author wrote a short poem called, "Thanksgiving Observance." I thank Christ for His grace and His inspiration, and for His breath of life. These are that unknown author's words: "Count your blessings instead of your crosses; count your gains instead of your losses. Count your joys instead of your woes; count your friends instead of your foes. Count your smiles instead of your tears; count your courage instead of your fears. Count your full years instead of your lean; count your kind deeds instead of your mean. Count your health instead of your wealth; count on God instead of yourself."

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