

REFLECTIONS OF MY LIFE

By John F. Hall

I enjoy writing and being of service to those that I love and to those that love this old writer of stories. Being old is a blessing as so many of my peers have long since departed this earth. At this state of my life, the majority of my trips off Dyers Hill, with my wife, Paula, are to see those physicians who are doing their best to keep us alive and well. I thanked our family physician, Dr. Daniel Butler, for keeping me alive. He said: "God keeps you alive, I just do some tinkering."

Why is it that old people like me talk about what ails them? Every three months, Paula and I travel down to Nashville to see my dermatologist, Dr. Natalie Curcio. Her surgical skills are another reason that I am still alive and not just another name in the obituary section of the Hopkinsville New Era newspaper. Several years ago, she used Mohs surgery to remove a cancerous tumor on my forehead. She cut down to my skull and removed a section of skin the size of a half dollar. Dr. David Gilpin, a brilliant plastic surgeon, repaired the wound without having to use a skin graft and without leaving any scars. Dr. Gilpin asked me if I would give him permission to use pictures of his work on my forehead in his advertising. I told him that I was very happy with his plastic surgery and to use whatever pictures of me that he wanted to use.



Dr. Curcio, before she did the surgery on my forehead, did a biopsy and sent the tissue to a laboratory for an examination under a microscope by a pathologist. This reminded me of Paula's first job after we first married. She went to work and was trained by a pathologist at Jennie Stuart Hospital in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. And they also went to the Army hospital at Fort Campbell. Paula became a histologist. She learned to freeze the tissue and keep it frozen while she made a "frozen section." This required making a very thin, high quality slice of tissue that she mounted on two glass slides and stained to demonstrate normal and abnormal structures.-

In the reflections of my life, I was always driving and traveling, mainly in law enforcement. But I racked up the miles traveling to the Hopkinsville Community College, Fort Campbell, and Murray State University. For 26 years, I drove to Army Reserve drill in the 100th Training Division in Louisville, Kentucky. For three years, I drove to Army Reserve drill in the 85th Division in Arlington Heights, north of Chicago, Illinois. For 22 days, I commuted to Nashville for radiation treatments on my forehead. They say, and correctly so, that radiation treatments are painless. What they don't say, is that those treatments will speed up the loss of your teeth.

Ira F. Stamphill wrote the hymn "Follow Me." These are just a few of his lyrics: "I traveled on a lonely road and no one seemed to care. The burdened on my weary back had bowed me to despair; I oft complained to Jesus how folks were treating me, and then I heard Him say so tenderly, my feet were also weary, upon the Calvary road; the cross

became so heavy, I fell beneath the load, be faithful weary pilgrim the morning I can see, just lift your cross and follow Me...”.

The message in that hymn is that no matter how badly a person is treated in this life, and no matter how much pain they are in, Jesus endured more and was mistreated more.

On my return trip from seeing Dr. Curcio in Nashville, and just before I took the off ramp from Interstate-24 to travel onto Highway 68/80 in Cadiz, a semi-tractor passed me. On the back of the trailer, in big letters, I saw the words: “Don’t Follow Me. Follow Jesus.” That trucker, in his own way, was witnessing for Christ. It’s what I try to do in my stories. In John, Chapter 8, Verse 12 are these words: Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Who ever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

In previous stories I mentioned Shakespeare’s play “As You Like It.” The words in that play describe the 7 ages of man. The song writer, Verlene Schermer wrote the song “Life Stages.” These are some of her lyrics: “We’re young and full of hope and we can’t wait to be full grown. We try to prove our worth, and be the best the world has known. And all the while the little child in us starts to fade. We step out into the spotlight onto another stage. We take a bow and bask in all the glory of the show. We’re riding high at last and feeling strong in this new role. But once again the seasons spin into another year. We leave behind the upward climb, retirement is here. The body will betray us but we’ll do the best we can. To honor all life stages, accepting where we stand. And in a while recall the child that never left the heart. Who in a way, has always played the most 5 important part. Life has many stages, we travel through each one. While time keeps turning pages until the stories done. Each year and every age is just as precious as the last, and it goes by so fast...”.

I wanted to use the lyrics to one more song to end this story. Shakespeare’s seven ages of man, more than likely, has me in the sixth age. Johanna Hall and John Hall (no relation to me) wrote the song “Time Passes On.” I can relate to one lyric in that song: “Time passes on like a river that must always run...”. In Ephesians, Chapter 5, Verses 15-16 are these words: “Look carefully then as you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”

There is still that kid in me that says a prayer at the start of every day. Prayer is always needed for family, friends, and those in need. Prayers help in these uncertain times when things are not normal. And prayer gives us some stability in these anxious times.

Looking back at the reflections of my life, that kid in me, before I go to sleep at night, has me pray a prayer from my childhood: “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my Soul to keep; if I should die before I ‘wake, I pray the Lord my Soul to take.”

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