

SNOWBOUND

By John F. Hall

This is the first time in over 40 years that deer have come up to the front of my house in search of food. They nearly stripped all the leaves off the common boxwood shrubs in front of my porch swing. For ten days in February, ice and snow prevented me from



backing out of my driveway. The frigid temperatures did not abate until the start of the 11th day. During this time, I received a sad email that my friend, Gerald “Jerry” Corbey, from my church, died. He was 85 years old and he had lived a good life. He would always smile when he saw me. I knew that he was not in good health. It seems that it is twice as hard to accept, when you cannot say goodbye to a family member or a friend, before they unexpectedly die. I had not seen Jerry in more than a year. I had not been to in-person church service for nearly a year due to my age, my compromised immune system, and the Pandemic. I mailed his wife, Maxine a sympathy card, It hurts when you lose people that you care about.

The freezing rain, that began on a Thursday, had quickly turned to ice. I slowly made my way to the mail box in front of my old house. I was walking on ice covered grass and I could hear the breaking sound as my feet crushed the frozen grass. The road in front of the mail box was solid ice, so I stayed on the grass behind the mail box. I noticed that it was covered over in ice. The mail box door would not open. Decades ago, I leaned an old horseshoe, that I found in the stable next to my house, at the base of mail box’s wooden post. It was ice covered, but I was able to pry it loose from the post. I began beating on the top and on the sides of the mail box to break off the ice. After several knocks, I was finally able to open the mail box door and retrieve the mail. I put the horseshoe back against the base of the post and hoped that I would never need it again.

I heard a hanging noise coming from the front porch. I looked out the living room window and noticed the front porch swing. So many of my stories were composed, during the summer months, as I sat on that swing. The frigid cold wind was pushing it into the tall wooden decoration given to me by Jade’s mother, Maryann. I put on a jacket, ear muffs, gloves, and my black Stetson hat and walked out the kitchen door. The side steps to the front porch were covered over in ice. So I walked on the frozen grass to the front of the porch swing. I straightened out a metal coat hanger and attached one end to the porch swing chain and the other end to the bi-metal porch support column.

After securing the front porch swing. The frigid air started to sting my exposed face. I looked around at the ice and snow covered fields in front of the house. I recalled what W. C. Fields, a comic actor, said: “It ain’t a fit night out for man or beast.” The gloves that I had on were not rated for below freezing weather. I had suffered some freeze bite of my fingers when I was a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division. I could feel my fingers starting to hurt, so I carefully made my way back into the kitchen. W. C. Fields was spot on that the frigid weather was not fit for man or beast. Brendan Milburn and Valerie

Vigoda wrote: "Snow Song (It's Coming Down.) These are their lyrics: "Snowflakes fall like velvet from iron colored shies. Some how I can't help it, I feel my spirits rise..."

"Time to take it slow, it's coming down. Crystal branches glisten like diamonds over me. Frozen in position, a silent sympathy. Sidewalks white and clean perfect and pristine. It's coming down. It's coming down and all my blues disappear. And this old town is young again-roll back the years. Because the world looks like new, or at least that's the View from here. It's cold by the river but I don't feel it much. The moon's a silver spoon, close enough to touch. Storm clouds drift away, a star comes out to play. And it's coming down."

I listened to the Weather Channel and the announcer gave some tips in the event of power outages. One tip was to put a blanket over the window and just gather in one room. I could hear the wind slamming into the front of the house. The foyer in my old house is about 29 feet from the ceiling to the floor. It has four-window lights on both sides of the front door. These small windows are made of blue-leaded glass that is over 160 years old. They have no thermal insulation value. I put a large blanket over the door and the window lights. There was a story going around when I first moved into the house with my wife, Paula and my son, John. The story was that when you opened the front door, on a windy winter's day, it would blow out the fire in the downstairs fireplaces.

I've tried to write one story a week and mail it to Jade, Lexie, Skyler, Trish, Audrey, Mike, and Dr. Butler. The girls put my stories in their "memory boxes." Trish keeps them in a basket. Audrey puts them in protective covers to make a book. Dr. Butler puts them in a file. The main purpose for my writing these stories is to give them to my oldest granddaughter, Andrea, to read when I am gone. I never planned to write so many stories, but the girls like to receive them. Timothy Dudley-Smith wrote the hymn "Safe in the Shadow of the Lord." Walking out to my mailbox, when snow filled clouds block my shadow on the ground, I'm reminded that his hymn is based Psalm 91. These are some of his lyrics: "Safe in the shadow of the lord beneath His hand and power, my fortress and my tower. My hope is set on God alone though Satan spreads his snare,, From fears and phantoms of the night, from foes about my way, by darkness and by day. His holy angels keep my feet secure from every stone; and unafraid to go on. Strong in the everlasting Name, and in my Father's care, who hears and answers prayers. Safe in the shadow of the Lord possessed by love divine, I trust in Him, I trust in Him, and meet His love with mine..."

In 2009, a very devastating ice and snow storm resulted in power outages on the hill where I live. The sheer weight of the ice on the power lines snapped utility poles leading up to my house. The microwave tower's generators ran out of fuel and cell service stopped working. I have a telephone landline that is buried until it comes out of the ground and up an AT&T utility pole near my house. I had the only phone service on my hill. In spite of having a cell phone, I kept my landline. As more and more home owners replaced their phone lines for cell phones, I notice a steady up-tick in scam and nuisance calls to my house. I have caller ID. The same numbers kept calling. I purchased a CPR Call Blocker and that blocked all those calls. The silence is golden when I'm snowbound.

John F. Hall

*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at:
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