

STORIES OF MY ROAD TRIPS TO BOWLING GREEN

By John F. Hall

Over the years, I made hundreds of road trips to Bowling Green, Kentucky. When my son, John had a plumbing construction contract for an Assistant Living Care facility in



Bowling Green, I drove him to and from Cadiz for several months. At that time, I had a high mileage Ford Bronco that I used to pull a single axle trailer. I kept copper and schedule 40 pipes and other plumbing fixtures in the trailer. The Bronco had both two-wheel and four-wheel drive capability. On one road trip, the u-joint on the rear two-wheel drive shaft broke. Something happened as I was driving over the railroad tracks on Highway 68 near Auburn.

The drive shaft hit the pavement. I was able to come to a rolling stop on the shoulder of the highway. I used bailing wire to keep the drive shaft from hitting the road. I engaged the front wheel drive axles and was able to make it to an auto parts store in Bowling Green to purchase a new u-joint. At the Assisted Living Care facility, I crawled under the Bronco to replace the broken u-joint. I like to work on my old vehicles. I could do many trades, but I was not a master of any trade.

One thing surprised me about the Assisted Living care facility that my son was plumbing. Part of the circular drive in front of the facility was constructed over a sink hole. One day, a small section of the circular drive caved in. The contractor over the job site used steel rods and poured concrete to cover over the sink hole. Warren County has lots of sink holes. My son has a Kentucky Master Plumber's license. At that time, I had a Tennessee Plumbing Contractor's license. I would obtain plumbing permits for my son for jobs in Tennessee.

Prior to the start of the Pandemic, I made a trip to Bowling Green to visit my granddaughter, Heather in December of 2019. She was about to graduate from Western Kentucky University (WKU). On my way back to Cadiz, I made a brief stop in Russellville to visit my adopted granddaughter, Jade Hakes and her parents, Maryann and Bill. Jade is a miracle and she only weighted two pounds and four ounces when she was born. Jade use to sit next to me and Trish Cunningham, her godmother, for over ten years, at church services, before her family moved away to Russellville.

My latest road trip to Bowling Green was made on May 29, 2022, to attend Jades graduation from Logan County High School. The graduation ceremony was held on the campus of WKU in the Diddle Arena at 3:00 in the afternoon.



The day before I drove to Jade's graduation, I decided to do something that I held off doing for almost 30 years. About a mile from my house on Dyers Hill Road, is the intersection of old Highway 68 and KY 272. Across the road from that intersection is what I call the Vinson Cemetery. Before Highway 68 was widened into a

four-lane divided highway, the pavement of the westbound lane was three feet from the concrete steps leading up to the cemetery. There are seven steps to climb to enter the cemetery.

Craig Perry, the corporate farmer that rents the farm from the widow woman, where I live, has a son buried in that cemetery. The son's name is Craig Patric Perry II. He is one of the seven Trigg County High School students that were killed with my nephew, Dale Garner, in a car accident on December 15, 1993. Dale lived 50 feet from my house. He came over almost every day. The memory I cherish the most about Dale is the time we were standing in my front yard and looking down the road. His parent's Roger and Marsha were late coming home from work. I told Dale not to worry and I stood with him waiting. Then he saw them driving up the road and he got a smile on his face and he said: "Here they come and he ran back to his house." Dale was 16 years old and forever young.

In front of Patric's tombstone, is a tombstone that belongs to Carey and Mallie Vinson. When Mallie was nine years old, she would walk the mile from her house to my house. She would play with her best friend, Lulu Jackson on the portico that once existed on my~old antebellum farm house. Lulu's parents are Kate and Pete Jackson. Back in the early 1980s, before Mrs. Vinson died, I interviewed her in her kitchen. As we sat at her kitchen table, she told me about her childhood days. She said she felt safe playing on the portico with Lulu because it had strong railings. Mallie said that Lulu's dad was not much of a farmer. The pasture fields were all grown up in sassafras trees.

I recorded my conversation with Mallie Vinson. I gave the cassette tape to Mallie's son, Tom Vinson. Tom and I became good friends when we worked together on the 1985, Volume 1, Trigg County, Kentucky History Book. I felt that Tom would appreciate listening to his departed mother talk about her childhood days. Today, Tom Vinson is 96 years old. His eye sight is nearly gone and so is his hearing. I'm two years older than my dad, Charles J. Hall, when he died at age 75. I try to encourage parents and grandparents to leave stories of their lives for their children and grandchildren. In the scheme of things, our lives are very short.

Back in 2005, prior to my retirement from the Army Reserve, at the age of 60, I went to visit the South Union Shaker Village. It is located 10 miles west of Bowling Green, Kentucky off Highway 68, near Auburn.

The Shakers practiced a celibate and communal lifestyle. They did not marry or bear children. They were organized in the United States in the 1780s. They were originally known as the "Shaking Quakers" because of their ecstatic behavior during their worship services. The Shakers are similar to the Amish. Today, there are about 300,000 Amish. There are only a few Shakers left.

I remember a conversation that I had with the manager operating the Shaker Museum. He told me that Oscar Bond, a long ago business man from Louisville, Kentucky, purchased the land making up the South Union Shaker Village. This man desecrated the Shaker's cemetery. He took up all of the Shaker's limestone tombstones and ground them up to

make lime to spread on his farm land. Lime is a soil conditioner and it controls the soil acidity by neutralizes the affects of acids from nitrogen fertilizer. The man also plowed under the metal markers that were over the Shaker graves that had no tombstones. He had no respect for the dead. The museum manager said that the Louisville business man considered the Shakers to be a cult. The Shaker Village is one mile south of Highway 68 on KY - 1466.

I always enjoy taking road trips to Bowling Green, They bring back fond memories. Highway 68 goes by the Jefferson Davis 351-foot tall concrete monument in the town of Fairview, which is several miles east of Hopkinsville, Kentucky. When my grandson, John-John was in the fourth grade at Heritage Christian Academy (HCA), I went on a field trip with his class to the Jefferson Davis state historic site. This Kentucky state park commemorates the birthplace of Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederate States of America. We took the elevator to the top of the monument. My son looked out the window and said to me: "I think I can see Washington DC from here." Skyler Crisp, my adopted granddaughter, was in my grandson's class. She was up in the monument with us and her dad, Jason.

Highway 68 bypasses the towns of Fairview, Elkton, and Auburn. There is a bypass around Russellville. I usually turn off Highway 68 at the intersection of Highway 431, on the west side of Russellville. I travel a few miles south to the intersection of Highway 79. I make a left turn and drive east into the residential section on the Clarksville Road, also known as West 9th Street. I normally refuel at the Shell Market located at the intersection of 9th Street and Nashville Street.

Across from the Shell Market is the Sexton House and the Maple Grove Cemetery. The Sexton House was built in 1870. My antebellum house was built in 1861. The Maple Grove Cemetery caretaker lives in the Sexton House. I have driven by the Sexton House hundreds of times and wondered about that old house.



Some day, I might stop and visit the Sexton House and talk to Kelly Williams, the cemetery sexton. He tells this story: "At the turn of the century, the cemetery sexton, at that time, had a daughter. This young daughter was told by her parents that she could not go to a dance. She defied them and got ready to go; anyway. Allegedly, she was taking a bath in the cupola. A severe thunder storm approached. The girl cursed God for the storm and was struck by lightning. Her imagine was etched into one of the cupola's window pane. The window was made of photographic glass that was used to make photo prints at that time." The cupola's windows are now covered over in white paint. Such is the folklore in Russellville.

Shane MacGowan wrote the song "Lonesome Highway." These are a few of his lyrics: "These are a few of his lyrics: "As I wondered down the long lonesome highway, I met other people on the way. The broken hearted lovers who've been left along the byway, livin' by night and hidin' from the day. The people I meet as I go on my way, they all have a story to tell..."

Kyla Rowland wrote the hymn, "I'll take the Old Highway." These are some of her lyrics: "There are many new roads we see each day, each one claims they are the way, to a life of satisfaction more than we've dreamed. They are lined with things that please the eye, but they cannot satisfy so I've decided to walk the highway with the redeemed. I'll take the old highway, the one called straight... It's very narrow; all the way to the gate. It started at Calvary that's where I got on...It's an old highway paved with grace all the way home. The highway may look to world men like it's a road to a bitter end for we are promised tribulation all along. But the difference is easy to explain for we have everything to gain, so just count me with that number going home..."

What I enjoyed seeing, on my recent road trip to Bowling Green, was driving past field after field of amber waves of grain. I think about those that read my stories and are doing life with me. As I usually end my stories, giving honor and glory to Christ for His grace upon grace upon grace and for His inspiration, I'll use a short piece by Shirley Hile Powell called "Make Every Day Count." These are her words: "God gives us many blessings as we go along life's way. He always walks besides us every moment of every day. His gift of love is awesome; it's meant for us to share. We should give compassion and comfort to show others that we care. He breathes in us the gift of life from the moment of our birth, and in return He expects us to help others while on this earth. Prayer, love, and charity prevail. Make every day count well so when our God calls us home, with Him we'll forever dwell."

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