

SUMMER TIMES ON THE DECK

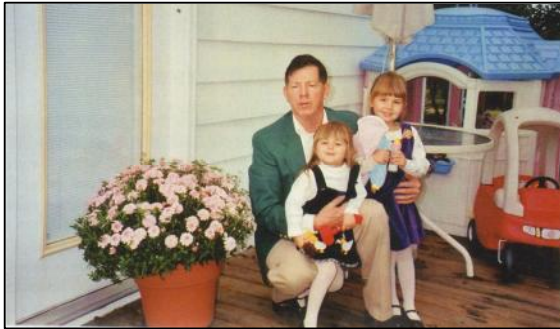
By John F. Hall

As much as I like to sit on my front porch swing and look out at the lush green soybean fields, my View of Dyers Hill Road is obstructed by a line of 56-year old cedar trees going down nearly all of that two-tenths of a mile road. I can recall sitting on the swing with my youngest granddaughter, Andrea when she was about five years old. I would



whistle at the birds high up in the two tall maple trees in my front yard. The birds would sing back at me. No one could make Andrea believe that I was not able to talk to those birds. Nearly 20 years ago, when my grandchildren, Andrea, Heather and John-John were very small, they would stay at our house a lot. Andrea and Heather had their room on the west side of the second floor and John-John had his room on the east side. The girls wanted their room painted purple and they wanted a purple carpet. John-John wanted his room painted blue with a blue carpet. The girl's room has a half bath. Today, the girls room. serves as the guest room. Their two ballerina lamps on their dresser are still there as well as their make-up table. The two windows have purple curtains with colored shaped hearts. Across the entire room is a narrow, decorative strip of wall-covering that matches the window curtains.

In the summer time, when the grandchildren were very small, Paula and I put guardrails,



2x2 inch balusters, and two gates around the deck on the east of the house so they could play safely on the deck. The girls had two large playhouses on the deck. Andrea would look out a window from one of the play houses and pretend that she was a waitress and the plastic house was a drive-in restaurant. She would have a pencil and pad and she would take my order for food. She had plastic dishes, forks and knives, and plastic play food. She would hand them out the window to me. When Andrea and Heather went away to college, they worked part-time as waitresses. They were highly experienced from their pretend days on the deck. When they became adults, they asked me to give away all of their toys on the deck and all their dolls in their room on the second floor of this old farm house. Their childhood treasures had served their intended purpose.



The treated boards on the deck, ravaged by the golden rain tree's leaves, pods and seeds and Mother Nature, had outlived their usefulness. The railing and fence also needed to be replaced. Since the grandchildren were now adults, there was no need to fence in the deck. So I removed the deck boards

and fencing with my son's help. We installed waterproof vinyl deck boards. We built a roof over the deck that Paula helped us paint. My brother-in-law, Bruce Oakley is my age and he is disabled. He is in a wheel chair. So we built a ramp so that he could roll himself up onto the deck. I still need to install side wheel guards on the ramp and one railing on the ramp leading to the door. Paula was given a large round clock and a cedar picnic table with two matching cedar benches from our son, last Christmas. She purchased a large metal star that she put with the clock on the wall supporting the deck roof. She moved the wicker furniture from the front porch to the deck. In the hot summer morning, the heat from the metal roof on the deck, even with the ceiling fan on high, is a little too much for me. So I go back to my front porch swing to draft more short stories.

Eleanor Farjeon and Yusuf Islam wrote the song, "Morning Has Broken." It is what I can see when I get up early and sit on the deck to watch the sun come up. There is a French door leading from our bedroom onto the deck. These are some of their lyrics: "Morning has broken like the first morning. Blackbird has spoken like the first bird. Praise for the singing. Praise for the morning. Praise for them springing fresh from the Word. Sweet from the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven. Like the first dew fall on the first grass. Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden. Sprung in completeness where His feet pass. Mine is the sunlight. Mine is the morning. Born of the One Light Eden saw play. Praise with elation, praise every morning. God's recreation of the new day..." The deck shelters me some what in the fall as the cold wind blows out of the Northwest. One can see the roof of the deck, from a distance, as they come up the hill.

In Matthew, Chapter 5, Verses 14-16, are these words: "You are the light of the world. A city that sits on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and set it under a basket, but put it on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." If what we do in this life, in some way, does not glorify Christ, then what does it merit us?

In the late 1700s, Cherokee Indians hunted on the hill where, in 1859, John J. Dyer began building my old Antebellum home. One of Paula's Oakley ancestors married a Cherokee Indian named Nancy Bass. Sitting on a wicker rocking chair on the deck, my mind drifted back to the time that Paula and I were dating and we came to visit the old farm house in 1964. It was unoccupied and very dilapidated. Yet, in spite of its deplorable condition, there was a kind of enchanting charm in the foyer and the staircase. I will write about the foyer in another story. I moved my mobile home next to the old house in 1972, when I first went into law enforcement because I would be in the Kentucky State Police Academy in Frankfort for about 24 weeks. I moved into the old house with my family in 1978, during the middle of a snow storm. I purchased the old house in 1985 to prevent Farm Credit from foreclosing on my father-in-law's farm. In the process, I had to exchange my acre of land, located down the road, for the acre of land with the house. From my rocking chair on the deck, I have a clear view of Dyers Hill road all the way to the main highway. In the cool of the afternoon, with the sun is shinning down on the other side of the house, the metal roof over the deck in not hot. The fan makes it comfortable to sit on the deck and it creates a nice breeze.

Paula put up decorative color lights under the new deck. They will shine at night for folks coming up the hill to our house. And the Good Lord willing, I shall continue to write stories and mail them to Jade, Skyler, Lexie, Trish, Audrey, Mike and Dr. Butler, and others. They may never be comparable to the quality of the short stories written by Jesse Stuart, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Almost two thousand years ago, the Roman philosopher, Secundus said, "Home is where the heart is." He is right.

John F. Hall

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

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