

THE BLOCK HOUSE

By John F. Hall

I remember a coach telling a group of high school students: "Bloom where you are." It's another way of saying to do your best where you live." Sometimes the grass is not always greener in another location. My wife, Paula, and I own a very old farm house, and one acre of land, in the middle of a 150-acre farm. Our house sits on the top of a hill, at the end of Dyers Hill Road, about five miles west of Cadiz, Kentucky. Our Antebellum house was built in 1861. In 1919, the Flood family removed the four grand columns supporting the portico. They built a front porch across the front of the house, to catch more rain water, into a cistern by the front porch.



Johnny Downs purchased the old house and ISO-acre farm from the Flood family in the mid 1940's. He built a 20 by 18-foot block house over a well that went down 160 feet. The block house has one door and two windows. There is a four by six feet concrete covered slab in front of the block house door. On that concrete slab is the date of April 23, 1947, and below that date are the names of the Down's family. Johnny Down's wife, Floria, scratched her name and put her hand print when the concrete was soft.



Johnny's son, Burick and his wife, Merle, moved into the block house when they married. At that time, the block house was heated by a potbellied stove. One can compare the space in the block house to a motel room. They just slept there, as all of the cooking and washing was done in the old farm house.

The electricity to run the submersible pump, and the lights in the block house, came from the panel box in the house. The well water was sent to the kitchen sink. It was the only plumbing in the house. Everyone living in the main house and in the block house, had to use the wooden house out back to go to the bathroom. It was not until 1965, that Paula's grandmother, Ivy Oakley, who purchased the house and farm, from Johnny Downs, had a bathroom installed in the Antebellum house. Inside the block house is a five feet by five feet section that is four feet below the concrete floor. It was constructed to keep the water holding tank from freezing during the winter months.

Across the field from the block house is Averette Lumber Mill. It has not been in operation for several years. The stacks of unused lumber, in my opinion, polluted the underground water. Several years ago, I connected to the Trigg County water system. I still kept the well water system operational, in the event of a fire. In 1990, Paula wanted a larger kitchen. At that time, our old house had a very narrow kitchen. It was only five feet wide by 18 feet long. There was a kitchen porch, porch steps, and a cistern. I removed the porch, and porch steps.

I had an 18 feet by 20 feet kitchen built, and one-car carport constructed. I saved the old kitchen cabinets and mounted them in the block house. My son and I decided to build a

two-car garage and mount it to the north side of the block house. My son drilled a hole through one of the blocks, and ran an electrical wire from the breaker panel, in the block house, to the garage. This provided power to operate the electric garage door opener, for garage ceiling lights, and for electric outlets in the garage.

Two years ago, my son and I decided to build a large storage area, and mount it to the south side of the garage. He needed a much larger place to store all of his plumbing fixtures, pipes, and tools. We felt that the two inoperable freezers and refrigerator, in the block house, were taking up too much space, even though they were filled with plumbing fixtures. So we removed them from the block house, and sold them to Green Earth Salvage in Hopkinsville. We set poles in the ground to begin the construction of the storage building. We filled the sides around the poles with concrete. My son had so many plumbing jobs that almost nothing was done for almost two years. Then we decided to do additional work on the storage building. I drove to Legacy Metal in Hopkinsville and ordered the metal for the top and sides of the storage building.



The metal was delivered on a flat metal carrying trailer. It is designed to allow the metal to just slide off the back of the trailer. The difficulty we faced was to put the 20 feet long by three feet wide sections, on the storage building, without a crane, and with out bending the metal. My son constructed a simple 2 inch x 4-inch by 8- foot wide brace. Both sides of the u-shaped brace were braced to the ground. He attached a 2 inch x 6-inch by 12-foot board that he attached to the building frame. He then attached a 2 inch x 6-inch 12-foot board, to the u-shaped brace, and secured to the ground. My son slid the metal the metal up the 2 inch x 6-inch board to the storage building. He pushed the metal onto the roof. A helper on the roof pulled the metal the rest of the way onto the roof. Section by section, the metal was screwed to the roof rafters. The metal for the sides of the storage building was screwed to the wall studs. We put in a window and an outside metal door.

Our old home place was once home to the Dyer's, the Jackson's, the flood's, the Calhoun's, the Oakley's, and now the Hall's. We are trying to leave the old house better than we found it. I'm hanging in there from when I fractured my T12. A year ago, I suffered congestive heart failure, kidney failure, and pulmonary fibrosis. My pulmonologist has me on two inhalers, and he just prescribed an emergency inhaler. As long as Christ gives me breath, I'll continue to write my stories and share my life on this old hill.

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