

THE DIPSY DOODLE

Story by John F. Hall

This is a true story about a famous singer/song writer, a newspaper editor, a state trooper, a medical center, two doctors, a restaurant, two married couples and two young ladies. It begins with once upon a time in February 2018:

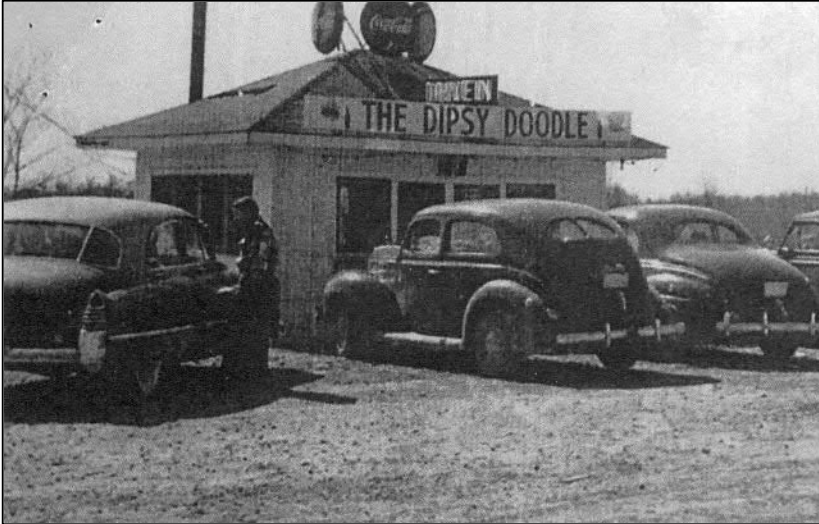
My family doctor, Daniel Butler in Murray, Kentucky was concerned about my latest MRI lumbar results, especially the L2 and the L3. The spinal stenosis at the L3 was getting worse and he felt that I should see a specialist. I decided to accomplish two things. First, I wanted to have a medical opinion from a Mayo Clinic physician with experience in neurological and spinal surgery. Second, I wanted to go to the Mayo Clinic located in Jacksonville, Florida because that would allow me to visit my sister who lives south of Orlando, Florida. My wife, Paula had been treated at the Mayo Clinic several years ago.

Without going into too much history, here are just a few facts about the Mayo Clinic. It is a nonprofit medical practice and medical research group based in Rochester, Minnesota. William Worrall Mayo settled his family in Rochester in 1863 and opened a medical practice that evolved under his sons into Mayo Clinic. In 1889, a tornado struck Rochester. Mother Alfred Moes, of the Sisters of Saint Francis, proposed to build and staff a hospital if Dr. William Worrall Mayo and his sons would provide medical care. Saint Mary's Hospital opened in 1889 with 27 beds. In 2017, Mayo Clinic cared for more than 1.3 million people from all 50 states and 137 countries. Mayo Clinic is the first and largest integrated, not-for-profit medical group practice in the world. Doctors from every medical specialty work together to care for patients, joined by a common philosophy that the needs of the patient come first. 4,590 physicians and scientists and 58,488 allied staff work at Mayo, which has campuses in Rochester, Minn.; Jacksonville, Fla; and Phoenix/Scottsdale, Arizona.

The Mayo Clinic trains doctors in 276 residency and fellowship programs. Its current enrollment is 1,738. I called the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida to see if I could get an appointment to see one of its spine specialist. The scheduling person advised me that the demand for treatment at the Jacksonville clinic exceeds its availability. I then asked if they had any physicians who had Mayo Clinic experience working in Tennessee. The person checked and found one physician, Dr. Joseph A. Jestus at the Rier 1 Institute in Cookeville, Tennessee. I asked if they had any physicians with Mayo experience working in Kentucky. They checked and said no. So I made an appointment to see Dr. Jestus.

On a Thursday, Paula and I left Trigg County for the drive to Cookeville, Tennessee. We stopped at the rest area just across the Kentucky state line on Interstate 24. I picked up a Tennessee map and a tourist information booklet. I looked inside the booklet and saw a picture of Ray Stevens. This Ole Piano Man was amazed. Not only was Ray still alive, he was still singing in Nashville. It rained a lot as we changed highways from Interstate 24, to highway 155 (Briley Parkway) and then to Interstate 40 east to Knoxville. About

30 miles west of Cookeville we made a pit stop at a rest area. I asked the lady on duty if Cookeville was still in the Central Time Zone. She said yes. I stopped at a Shell Minit-Mart to refuel. I went inside and asked the attendant if she knew a good restaurant the served home cooked meals. Paula and I were tired of eating at fast food restaurants. The young lady pondered about my question and wrote the name on a gas receipt. She gave me directions and told me the restaurant was about a mile away.



(Pictured: The Dipsy Doodle Drive-In).

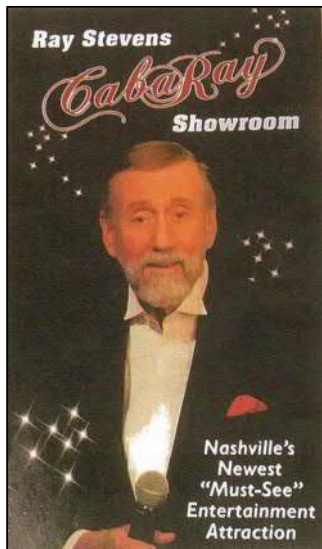
She also said that if we went too fast that we would miss it. I drove slow and went about two miles and did not see any restaurant having that name. I turned around and

pulled into a restaurant called the Iron Kitchen. Paula and I went inside. The place had only two tables. A young man came up to us. Paula told him that we were from Kentucky and we were looking for a restaurant called the Dispey Doodle. The young man smiled and told us that he was from Owensboro, Kentucky. He told us that the restaurant that we were looking for was about two miles further west on Highway 70. Apparently, the restaurant had moved to another location. We found the restaurant and enjoyed eating a home cooked meal. This restaurant does not take credit cards, cash only. I asked the cashier where did the name of the restaurant come from. She did not know.

Like Sherlock Holmes, the fictional private detective created by British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, I love to solve a mystery. I called the Cookeville Chamber of Commerce and talked to a young lady named Ayla Whittaker. I asked her if she knew where the name of the restaurant Dispey Doodlo came from. She said she did not know, but she would try and find out. Her grandparents, Glen and Dorris Whittaker met there for the first time. Dorris was with her friends and Glen was with his friends. Perhaps it was love at first sight, but Glen walked over to Dorris and said he wanted to date her. This was back in 1957. I love it when I can write a story within a story. My wife and I met for the first time at the Sunset Inn Restaurant in Golden Pond, Kentucky, back in 1964. I was 19 and she was 18. We married about eight months later. Teenage marriages normally do not last. I guess we were just young and dumb.

If Ayla sends me information about her grandparents, I will write another story. It is interesting to me to go to a town for the first time; to eat at a restaurant several miles outside that town, and to stumble into the lives of complete strangers. Harold Ray Ragsdale is Ray Stevens' real name. He came into my life about 45 years ago. The

Good Lord was not ready to call Ray home when his car hydroplaned and flipped over. Ray Stevens wrote the song, "Everything is Beautiful." It has some very inspirational lyrics as follows, "Everything is beautiful in its own way. Like a starry summer night, or a snow-covered winter's day. Everybody's beautiful in their own way. Under God's



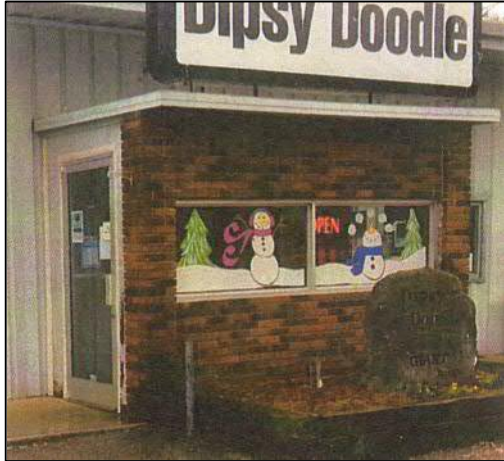
heaven the world's gonna find the way. There is none so blind as he who will not see. We must not close our minds, we must let our thoughts be free. For every hour that passes by, you know the world gets a little bit older. It's time to realize that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. Everything is beautiful in its own way. Like a starry summer night, or a snow-covered winter's day. Ah sing it child. We shouldn't care about the length of his hair, or the color his skin. Don't worry about what shows from without, but the love that lives within. We're gonna get it all together now and everything gonna work out fine. Just take a little time to look on the good side my friend and straighten it out in your mind."

(Pictured: Ray Stevens)

Ray Stevens wrote the song "Everything is Beautiful" in three days. He had a piano in his basement. Perhaps for time, the recording studio cut out Rays last verse to that song, "Jesus died for all the children, all the children of the world; red and yellow, black and white. They are precious in his sight; Jesus rose for all the children, all the children of the world; red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight; Jesus wants all the little children, to be careful what they do; Honor father, mother dear. Keep their hearts so full of cheer; then he'll take them home to glory by and by. Jesus loves all the children, all the children of the world."

Ray Stevens had the number one song in the U.S. in 1970. Three years later, destiny would bring this talent singer/song writer in contact with a rookie Kentucky State Trooper and a newspaper editor in Hopkinsville, Kentucky named Mike Herndon. This is as much Mike Herndon's story as it is mine. We shared that event so many years ago. I was dispatched to a single car accident south of Hopkinsville. Ray Stevens hydroplaned his new Mercedes Benz four door sedan and flipped it upside down off highway 117. His passenger, Don Williams (Andy Williams' brother) was Ray's agent/manager. Ray Stevens real name on his driver's license fooled me at first, I called Mike Herndon early that morning and told him that this man looks like Ray Stevens. I told him this might be newsworthy story. Mike was granted an interview in Rays Stevens' hospital room. You can see Ray Stevens at the CabaraRay showroom in Nashville. You can buy tickets on line at www.raystevenscabaray.com. The cost of the dinner show is \$100. You can Google Ray Stevens' song for free at YouTube. Watch the 1970 video.

What I admire about Ray Stevens' lyrics in "Everything is Beautiful" is the number of times that he mentions Jesus in his song. I cannot motivate. I cannot inspire if Jesus was not a part of my life. Some encounters in life we never forget. On a water covered road, on a chilly, rainy night, over four decades ago, I encountered a singer/song writer. He



(Pictured: The Dipsy Doodle)

was battered and bruised. Unlike his picture, he was covered in mud. Some people meet by fate or chance. What if Glen had not seen Donna at the Dipsy Doodle back when it was a small drive-in? This Ole Piano Man, shown, was not blessed by the Good Lord to play more than one song on the baby grand piano at the Gaylord Resort in Nashville. I believe that I was given a small gift to write stories. We should wonder about the love that lives within each of our souls.

John F. Hall

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

<http://www.ajlambert.com>

*Read about the Dipsy Doodle Restaurant in the History section of Putnam Co., TN in the Baxter section at:

<http://www.ajlambert.com>