

MY THOUGHTS ABOUT GOLDEN POND AND PAULA

By John F. Hall

In November of 1964, I was dating my future wife, the former Paula Andree Oakley of Golden Pond, Kentucky. We liked to walk the woods, north and above the Post Office. From that vantage point, we can look down and see all buildings in the town. I had a small, inexpensive 35mm camera and I liked to take pictures of Paula. One of my pictures of Paula was taken on the west side of the town. She was standing next to the highway 68/80 road sign. I never realized how significant that picture would become. It was first used in George Bleidt's "Lest We Forget, Between The Rivers, A Pictorial History. It was then used in Jim Wallace's "Lest We Forget Between The Rivers, Trigg County, Kentucky, The Golden Pond Area." And Finally, The Trigg County Historical & Preservation Society's Volume 1, Trigg County, Kentucky, The Past 100 Years, 1885-1985.

Paula and I did not build Golden Pond, but we love each other, and we loved this town, and the people who lived here. We wanted to do something so that people will not forget our town. The TVA had destroyed everything in Golden Pond. The LBL Director told me, that he would not allow, a Kentucky Historical Marker for Golden Pond. He said: "That is the name of our Headquarters." Thanks to great help from Christ, I discovered that the TVA was never deeded the title to Highway 68/80, or its right of way. It remained Kentucky property. The flower garden is in the heart of Golden Pond, is on Highway 68/80 right-of-way. The TVA could not stop me from obtaining a Kentucky Historical Marker for Golden Pond, and putting it in the flower garden. I built a miniature coffin, that Paula held, while I placed a noose, symbolic of the "unjust death" of Golden Pond. I buried the coffin at the base of the Historical Marker.

The late Johnny Horton wrote the song, "All For the Love Of A girl." The chorus in that song kind of sums up why I had to take on the TVA. These are Johnny Horton's lyrics: "And it's all. for the love of a dear little girl. All for the love that sets your heart in a whirl. I'm a man who' give his life, and the joys of this world, all for the love of a girl..". On July 1, 2023, Jimmie Smith AKA Jim Bob opened the Golden Pond Distilleries in Canton, across from the Dollar General store. I stopped by to wish him success. I gave him one of my stories, and a DVD of a documentary that I made about Golden Pond moonshine. Someone took a picture of me with Jim Bob and his dad. Jim Bob asked me if I had any good pictures of Golden Pond. I had a picture that I took of Paula in 1964, on my cellphone. He looked at it and said: "I sure would like a copy of that picture." I told him that I would do more than just make him a copy, I will have it enlarge and framed. He put the picture on the wall at his check-out register.

It had been about 14 months since I last saw Jim Bob. I had two spinal surgeries in 2024, but I was well enough to drive to his business to see how he was doing. I live about four miles from Jim Bob's distilleries, so I. drove over to give him a copy of a movie, that I made three decades ago, and a recent story. I got out of my car, with my walking cane, and walked to the front door. Jim Bob said it was awhile since the last time we saw each other. There were no customers in the retail store, and I asked if his DVD player was still

working. He had to plug it up. He had several chairs in front of the television, so I gave him the DVD called, "The Boy and The Moonshiners." I used three moonshines: Billy Joe Hooks, Arvel Birdsong, and Boyce Birdsong. The boy was played by my nephew, Dale Gardner. He was ten years old at the time. Sadly, he was killed with six other Trigg County high school students, when he was 16. They were coming back from a break at Hilltop Market. The small car that they were in, was hit head on by a pickup truck. Dale lived about 30 feet from my house. He came over to my house, almost everyday. I wrote a story called, "The Boy And The Moonshines."



(Pictured: Jimmie "Jim Bob" Smith 2024)

I'm glad I made the movie when I did. Jim Bob said he was related to one of the boys. We sat there, watching the movie that I made. WPSD TV Channel 6, gave me the interview that it made with Billy Joe Hooks. I put that on the DVD. Jim Bob said that Billy Joe would aggregate him when he was a kid.

Paula and I lived with her parents, Andrew and Pauline Oakley, in Golden Pond for over a year. Our son, John Andrew, spent the first six weeks of his life living in that house. The TVA purchased Andrew's house. They gave it back to him. He had a choice. He could move it, or they would demolish it. I used a three-pound hammer and a chisel to knock off all of the brick, all around the house. He paid a mover to put it on wheels. They drove it to the Cumberland River, and put it on a barge. They took it off the barge at the Canton landing, and transported it to his mother's farm, five miles west of Cadiz. Paula's grandmother, Miss Iva Lee Oakley, lived in a two story house next to her son's house. It was too old, and too tall to move. I salvaged an expensive mental and the front door. George Bleidt, the last Postmaster of Golden Pond, asked if he could have the front door. Miss Iva and Andrew said he could. I drove it to his new house in Cadiz.

Every time that Paula and I have appointments to see our doctors in Benton, Murray, or Paducah, we drive by the former site of Golden Pond. The Golden Pond Historical Marker is the only reminder the town even existed. In my stories, I try to be a good witness for Christ, as I remind my readers, that they alone are responsible for their own salvation. I believe, that if a person does not love Christ, and does not give Him some of their time, and show a love for His Words; that they are just wasting their time, here on earth, and, are needlessly wasting their chances for eternal happiness with Christ

Country music singer Alan Jackson wrote these words: "I know Jesus, and I talk to God." As for me, I'm just a writer of simple, nonfiction life stories. I try to mentor my young adult readers, and I try to enlighten my older readers. I was never trained to be a writer, so I make my share of grammatical mistakes. Quite frankly, if it was not for the grace and inspiration from Christ, I would not have been able to write the hundreds of stories that I have written. I'll end this story with Alan Jackson's own words: "And I remember this from when I was young. Faith, hope, and love are some good things that He gave us. And the greatest is love." It was in Golden Pond that I fell in love with Paula.

John F. Hall

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