

## TO TOUCH A REDWOOD

By John F. Hall

In a previous story, I wrote about an old oak tree that came crashing down during 3 severe thunder storm. It fell across and blocked a narrow, muddy, shallow creek below



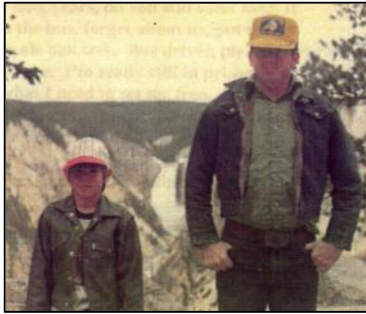
my house. It also completely blocked a one-lane farm dirt road. Many tree branches fell onto the far southwest corner of my one acre lot. Once the hot weather cools down, I will use an electric chainsaw to cut those branches off my lot. The massive tree trunk will require a dozer to remove it from blocking the creek and blocking the dirt road. Like many things in this life, removing the downed tree is beyond my control. The oak tree belongs to the widow woman that owns the farm. And to quote the most popular passage from the Bible that Christ is in charge of our lives, I will quote Philippians, Chapter 4, Verse 6-7: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Dursey Burnette wrote the song “(There is a) Tall Oak Tree.” These are his lyrics: “There was a tall oak tree that loved a babblin brook, and the babblin brook loved the mountain high, and the mountain high loved the sky above. The creator looked down and saw everything was love, love, love. Now He took a bone and a piece of mud - He made a man and a woman to be flesh and blood. And then along came the devil up out of the ground - he tempted the woman, and that spread sin all around, all around. Now if she’d left that apple on that apple tree, there’d be no tears or sorrow, we’d live eternally. And then along came man and chopped the oak tree down. And now the babblin brook is solid ground. And now the mountain high don’t stand so high, and there’s a cloud of smoke that covers up the clear blue sky. ‘ There was a tall oak tree, there was a tall oak tree, there was a tall oak tree.”

Many years ago, when soldiers were returning home from Army service overseas, some family members and friends would tie a yellow ribbon on a tree to welcome them home. Irwin Lavine and Russel Brown wrote the song “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round The Ole Oak Tree.” These are some of their lyrics: “I’m coming home, I’ve done my time. Now I’ve got to know what is and isn’t mine. If you received my letter telling you I’d soon be free, then you’ll know just what to do, if you still want me, if you still want me. ‘Whoa, tie a yellow ribbon ‘round the old oak tree. It’s been three long years, do you still want me? If I don’t see a ribbon round the ole oak tree, I’ll stay on the bus, forget about us, put the blame on me. If I don’t see a yellow ribbon ‘round the ole oak tree. Bus driver, please look for me. ‘Cause I couldn’t bear to see what I might see. I’m really still in prison and my love, she holds the key. A simple yellow ribbon’s what I need to set me free. And I wrote and told her please. Now the whole...bus is cheerin’ and I cannot believe what I see, a hundred yellow ribbons round the ole oak tree. I’m coming home...”

Reaching back into the memory pages of my mind, when I was in law enforcement, I decided to take a camping trip to California.

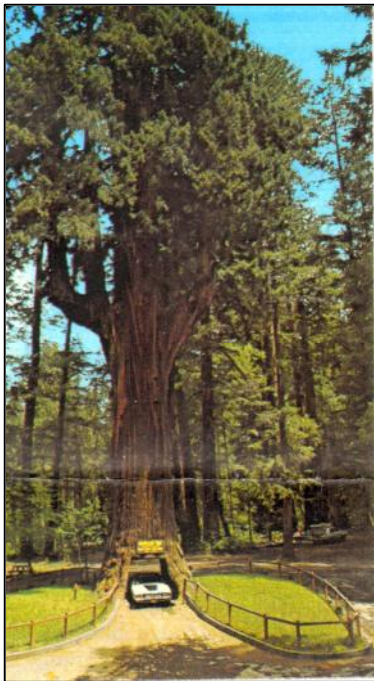
I remember visiting the Calaveras Big Trees State Park in California. My wife, Paula and my son, John were with me. He was nine years old at the time. I was in a Ford pickup truck and pulling a pop-up Starcraft camper. We strapped my son's bicycle onto the back of the camper. When we stayed at KOA Campgrounds, my son would tell us that he was going to find a friend. He would drive around the campgrounds, on his bike, until he found a boy his age and he would bring him back to our camper. Those were different times when people could do that.



I told my son, John, who was 9 at the time, that we would camp at the Snake River in Idaho on June 5, 1976, and do some trout fishing. But we spent an extra day at Paula's friend's house in Evansville and we would not arrive until June 6<sup>th</sup>. Had we been there on the 5<sup>th</sup>, we would have been killed. The exact place where we intended to camp was wiped out when the earthen Teton Dam in eastern Idaho failed. It resulted in massive flooding and \$2 billion in damage. Eleven people and 13,000 head of cattle were

killed. I tend to believe that Christ did not want us to die that day.

In the Big Trees State Park, we did something that no one can do today. I drove the pickup truck and camper through the tunnel cut into the Pioneer Cabin redwood tree.



They cut the tunnel into the redwood tree as a tourist attraction. Cam Ochs, Anders Mouridens, and Tyler Johnson wrote the song: "Redwood Tree." These are some of their lyrics: "Oh, redwood tree, don't you recognize me? No, it's not much time for you, it's been decades for me. Oh, redwood tree, sorry, I had to leave. An eager mind and a teenage heart can get hooked on a dream. I saw the world, you saw my parents grow old. You got your roots, and I've got the wind. The wind in my soul. Oooh, don't know what you had when you were young. Oooh, but you'll know what you had when it's gone. You'll know what you had. Oh, redwood tree, now it's just you and me. Back then it was hard to stay and easy to leave. In the soft summer breeze it's so simple to see. That time kept tickin' back home when I was livin' for me. ..".

I remember driving through the tree. I reached out and touched that redwood tree. Just as the massive old oak tree, near the back of my lot, was blown over recently in a severe thunderstorm: the majestic redwood tree would suffer a similar fate. On January 8, 2017, the same month and day that my son was born, the strongest storm to hit the redwood grove, in over a decade, hit the redwood forest. The Pioneer Cabin Tree was blown over. The flooding, combined with the shallow root system of that redwood tree, likely caused it to be blown over. The Pioneer Cabin redwood tree was estimated to be

over 1,000 years old before it was blown over. One reason the redwood tree last so long is that its roots reach out in all directions. The roots get tangled and intertwined with roots from the other redwood trees in the grove. This creates a stabilizing root bed that helps each tree stand. A single redwood tree growing by itself won't last long.

There is a brief song written by John Goodison and Tony Hiller called "United We Stand." These are just a few of their lyrics: "There's nowhere in the world that I would rather be than with you my love. And there's nothing in the world that I would rather see than your smile my love. For united we stand and divided we fall...And if the world about you falls apart my love, then I'll still be here. And if the going gets too hard along the way, just call, I'll hear...". I'll end this story with Ephesians, Chapter 3, Verses 17-18: "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.: The lesson of the redwood tree is that long term faith survives best when together with all the Lord's holy people.

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