

## THE UNKNOWN AND WINDING ROAD

By John F. Hall

I've spent a good part of my life patrolling and traveling the highways and byways of Kentucky. After driving over one million miles, I retired from law enforcement and the military. I was in the waiting room to see my rheumatologist, Dr. Cara Hammonds, in Benton, Kentucky. Her office is in Building 3 at the Marshall County Hospital. Last December, a tornado slammed into several houses located west of the hospital. The houses were heavily damaged. They were bulldozed down and the debris was buried. The houses were not rebuilt. The hospital received minor wind damage to one exterior door, and one of the HVAC units on the roof was shifted a few inches. '



While patiently sitting in the waiting room, I observed a painting that shows overhanging trees on both sides of a dirt road. I got up and walked over to the painting. There was no



signature on the painting. Standing there, an old song from the 1970's. came to mind. Paul McCartney and John Lennon wrote the song called, "The Long and Winding Road." These are their lyrics: "The long and winding road, that leads to your door, will never disappear. I've seen that road before, it always leads me here, lead me to your door. The wild and windy night, that the rain washed away, has left a pool of tears: crying for the day, why leave me standing here? Let me know the way. Many times I've been alone, and

many times I've cried. Anyway, you'll never know, the many ways I've tried. And still they lead me back, to the long winding road. You left me standing there, a long time ago. Don't leave me waiting here, lead me to your door. But still they lead me back, to the long winding road. You left me standing here, a long, long time ago. Don't keep me waiting here, lead me to your door. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah."

Staring at that painting takes me back to the time when I was an 18 year old soldier. I had taken a Greyhound bus from Fort Campbell to see a concert in Nashville. I spent the bus fare money to take me back to the Fort. I thumbed a ride north, but got on the wrong highway. The farmer that gave me a lift, told me that to get on the right road to the Fort, that I needed to go down a one-lane road, for ten miles, to reach the right road. It was getting very dark that night, and not a single car came down that unknown and winding road. Somehow, after walking fast and running, and thanks to God's good grace, I made it to the right road, and I made it back to the Fort on time, thanks to a soldier who gave me a ride. The painting reminds me of the fact that we don't know when and where we will go down an unknown and winding road.

I live in a house that was built in 1860. I am intrigued by songs and stories about that distant period when my house was built. A man named Edwin Hatch wrote a hymn in 1878, called, "Breathe On Me, Breath of God." These are his lyrics: "Breathe on me, breath of God, fill me with life anew, that I may love the way You love, and do what You do. Breathe on me, breath of God, until my heart is pure, until my will is one with Yours, to do and endure. Breathe on me, breath of God, so shall I never die, but live with You the perfect life for all eternity." Edwin Hatch wrote only one hymn, and it was published posthumously, one year after his death.

The man that built my old house, John J. Dyer, was the sheriff of Trigg County during the Civil War. His picture is on the wall of the Trigg County Sheriff's office to this very day. He diverted county taxes to help support the Confederacy. After the war, his wife had to sell her farm in Graves County to replace the diverted funds and to keep John J. Dyer out of jail. Dyer kept some of his personal papers, and letters, in a tin box. This was to protect them from mice. My friend, Tom Vinson inherited the metal box. He let me read Dyer's letters and other documents. This was how I was able to determine the age of my old house. I looked at receipts for lumber and other building materials that were shipped up from Nashville on the Cumberland River. I read one letter where his son, William, at the age of 16, ran away from home and joined the Confederacy. He was wounded at the Battle of Shiloh on April 7, 1862. Sheriff Dyer only lived in my old house for eight years. He died on a return trip from New Orleans.

Norm MacDonald wrote: "The only thing that an old man can tell a young man is that it goes fast, real fast, and if you're not careful it's too late. Of course the young man will never know the truth." Maybe, Norm was talking about life, or love, or opportunity? Bruce Johnston wrote the song, "I write The Songs." He is best known as a member of The Beach Boys rock and roll band. That song reached number one on the Billboard pop chart 40 years ago. Johnston said the song is about the general notion of where music comes from. He said that music comes from God.

I went to the wedding of Skyler Crisp to Kendall Lancaster in Hopkinsville on October 22, 2022. Skyler was in kindergarten at Heritage Christian Academy (HCA) with my grandson, John-John. Because their dad, Jason was deployed to Iraq, I assumed the role of grandfather to Skyler and her sister, Lexie, as I was a volunteer in the HCA lunchroom. I am also in the role of grandfather to Jades Hakes. She use to go to my church until her family moved to Russellville, Kentucky. The wedding planner did an excellent job with the reception. The MC that played the music, Rachel Crick, also played her violin. He mother was a teacher at HCA. I was very fond of Rachael's mother. Sadly, she died at an early age. I told Rachel that I write stories. She said that she would like to read them. She got married a year ago, and her husband is in the National Guard in Tennessee where they live. As for the girls, Lexie is a freshman at Georgetown College. Skyler told me that she is going back to finish her degree at Murray State University. Jade is a freshman Western Kentucky University.

I've said it before, Christ puts people in our life for His reasons. I began mailing my stories to Audrey Lambert after she helped me with a story. I told her to share my stories.

She puts them on her web page: [ajlambert.com](http://ajlambert.com). Audrey and Mike are on a return trip from Memphis, Tennessee. They live in Sterling Heights, Michigan. I will be taking them to lunch at the Lake Barkley State Resort Park west of Cadiz, Kentucky. Things have a way of going full circle. I have been able to write nonfiction stories only because of Christ's grace and His inspiration. We only get to keep, in eternity, what we give away in this life.

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<http://www.ajlambert.com>