

WINTER DAYS ON DYERS HILL

By John F. Hall

This is a story about some Winter days on Dyers Hill. It happens around this time every year. The dangerous and hostile cold air comes roaring down from the frigid north. Katherine Matheney wrote a short piece called, "Winter." These are her words: "It is



Sunday morn and overcast, the season wintertime; it could be rain or snow today, the weather's in its prime. The squirrels are frolicking today out in my neighbor's yard, anticipating food, and so, the Winter could be hard. And don't forget our feathered friends who sing a song of cheer, that brave the cold, and snow, and wind and choose to stay right here. God's creatures are a special lot, let's throw a little seed, and help them to survive the cold. Let's do a kindly deed. It doesn't take an awful lot of effort on our part; they give us back abundantly of song, and, from the heart. And for our little friends, the squirrels, let's place beneath a tree, black walnuts or some hickory nuts and watch the jubilee."

The long range forecast for Monday, January 15, 2024, has the weatherman calling for a high of 15 degrees and a low of two degrees. These are bone chilling temperatures for this 78 year old writer to endure. The weatherman put out this storm advisory: "We are watching a potential winter storm. Mostly cloudy with snow showers developing in the afternoon. High around 15 degrees f (Fahrenheit). Winds NNW at 10 to 15 MPH (miles per hour). Chance of snow 40 %. Snow accumulations less than one inch. Snow showers before midnight. Becoming cloudy later, two degrees Fahrenheit. Winds NNW at 10 to 15 MPH." The expected low temperature of two degrees Fahrenheit, with a wind speed of 15 miles per hour, will produce a wind chill temperature of «~19 degrees Fahrenheit. Under those conditions, exposed skin can freeze in 30 minutes. I don't put much credence in every weather forecast. Back in the day, when I was in law enforcement, a weather forecast called for snow flurries. I found myself digging my police cruiser out of those "trace amounts of precipitation."

On January 10th, I needed postage stamps, so I drove to the Cadiz Post Office. I told the clerk that I am buying extra stamps for her pension. She smiled and said that she appreciated me doing that. After leaving the Post Office, I drove out of Cadiz and got on Interstate-24, for my monthly trip to the Town Center Pharmacy on Fort Campbell. The traffic was heavy, as usual, on that Interstate highway. I arrived in the Pharmacy parking lot. I used my cane to steady my balance as I walked from my car to inside the Pharmacy. My cardiologist told me to use my cane or my rollator, to help keep me from losing my balance and falling. The single line, for those that had called in their prescriptions, was long and backed up to the front door. The Pharmacy had single chairs along the wall, for those standing in line. I sat in one of those chairs, and, as the line moved forward, I would get up, walk four or five feet, and sit down in the next chair. The person, in the line ahead of me, turned around and said to me: "I see that you are playing musical chairs." After receiving two medications for Paula, and one for me, I started to leave the Pharmacy.

Before going out the Pharmacy door, I noticed a man wearing a baseball type hat with the letters: "C I D." It stands for Criminal Investigations Division." I stopped by where he was sitting and I asked him this question: "What year did you retire?" He smiled, and then he answered: "Let's see, I was in the C I D from 1978 to 1988. I shared this story with him: "In 1990, I was mobilized as the Liaison Officer on Fort Knox, Kentucky. I would authorize all Army Reserve and National Guard units, being mobilized for Desert Storm, to come on Post. I had to give the Division Commander a daily briefing. One day, the C I D unit on Post packed up, and turned the keys, to the buildings they were using, to one of the Military Police soldiers manning the main gate to Fort Knox. The C I D unit did not tell anyone that they were leaving or even where they were going. I can't recall who told me that they had departed the Post. The previous week, I was promoted to the rank of Major in the Army Reserve. My wife, Paula and my son, John came up from Cadiz, for the promotion ceremony.

The C I D retired soldier listened to the rest of my story. I told him that the Division Commander was sitting in his usual front row seat, in the briefing room. The General turned around and said to me: "Major Hall! Why did no one give me advance notice that the C I D unit was leaving Fort Knox?" I answered back: "Sir! That unit is not under your command. It only reports to its higher headquarters in Quantico, Virginia." The Commanding General was not too happy with my answer. But at least I did not have to say: "I don't know sir." The C I D retired soldier continued his story. He said: "Now the C I D is under the Army Provost Marshal. And Special Agent Gregory Ford assumed responsibility as the Director of the Army Criminal Investigative Command in September 2021. He is the first civilian director in its history, and all the investigators are now civilians." I wished the retired soldier a good day, and I left the Pharmacy.

The outside temperature on the Pharmacy parking lot was 39 degrees. I put on my ear muffs and walked to my car. My mind drifted back to 1979. My friend, Lindsey Freeman, and who was the former Executive Officer, in the Army Reserve 100th Division Battalion, in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, was trying to help me get a Direct Commission in the Army Reserve. For two years, it was going no where. Lindsey said that he knew the Battalion Commander in the 198th Military Police Battalion, Kentucky Army National Guard in Louisville, Kentucky. He suggested that I take my packet up to the 198th MP Battalion, and talk to that Commander. I followed his advice and drove up to Louisville. The Commander told me that he was trying to get two of his sergeants Direct Commissions, but he would forward my packet to the National Guard Headquarters in Frankfort. Back when John Y. Brown was running for Kentucky Governor, Billy Gene Wellman was the Adjutant General (AG) of Kentucky. He served from 1977 --~ 1982. For one day, I served as security and driver for the AG. He flew down from Frankfort to meet with John J. Brown, in the Nichols cabin, a mile or so from the Lake Barley State Park. John Y Brown served as the 55th governor of Kentucky from 1979 to 1983. He sold his interest in Kentucky Fried Chicken. (KFC) to Heublein in 1971 for \$284 million dollars. In today's purchasing power, that is equivalent to \$2 billion,\$52 million dollars.

I felt that I needed a sponsor, if I was ever going to get a Direct Commission in the Kentucky Army National Guard. I called The AG's office in Frankfort. His secretary,

Glen Birdwhistle answered the phone. I said: "Sir, I submitted a packet for a Direct Commission in the Kentucky National Guard, but I don't have a sponsor." I'm bad about remembering names, but I remember Glen Birdwhistle's name and what he told me. He said, in these three words: "You do now." I was later told that General Wellman approved and signed my packet the next day. I was told to report to the 198th Military Police Battalion in Louisville, and to appear before a three-man Federal Recognition Board. I reported to the Board, saluted, and said: "Sir! Specialist Hall reporting to the Board, as directed." I stood at attention until I was told to be at ease. I watched as the officers looked over my packet. I was concerned because I was 33 years old, and I would turn 34 in two months. I felt they might tell me that I was too old. One of the officers said to me: "Specialist, do you realize that you will have to complete the Military Police Officer Basic and Officer Advance courses if you are given a Direct Commission? I answered that I did. I was then told to go out of the room and wait until they made their decision. I guess it's the waiting that's the hardest. I was called back into the room. One of the officers said: "Congratulations, Lieutenant Hall."

Paula gave me a list of items that she needed after I left the Pharmacy. I drove to the Oak Grove Walmart. I needed to get an over the counter item and I walked up to the pharmacy consultation window. The Pharmacist said that she would take me to the product that I needed. As we were walking back to her window, she said: "I'm an old time pharmacist. I like to do more than just fill out prescriptions. I like to help people." I heard a fire truck and an ambulance siren as I came out of Walmart. I drove up Highway 41A to the Interstate 24 on ramp. The eastbound lanes of the Interstate were blocked all the way to the Tennessee state line. I was going westbound to Cadiz. That night, I had a meeting with my Christian Fraternity Brothers in Hopkinsville. At the meeting, I give my Fraternity Brothers a five-minute presentation on reflections. I ended my presentation with a message made by the actress, Suzanne Summers. She would give a card to her fans and friends. On that card, she wrote the following words: "The message on this card memorializes a voice I heard, as clear as day, when I was in the hospital about ten years ago. It said, 'It's not who you are, It's not what you have. It's not what you do. It's only about who you love and who loves you.'" This is one reason why I share my stories with those that I love, and with those who love me.

I had to make another trip to the Town Center on January 17th. The Pharmacy computer failed to put on file an important medication that Paula needed. Before leaving Cadiz, I drove to the Post Office to have them hand stamp letters to James (Jim) Etheridge, Daniel & Maria Bruzewski, and Mrs. Teresa Kent. They are members of the small church that I attend. This will keep the letters in Cadiz, and not have to be sent to the distribution center in Nashville. I thank Jesus Christ for His grace, His inspiration, and for the talent, that He has given to me, to write this story. It's a bitter cold night on Dyers Hill. The security light is shining down on the antique red bell in my front yard.

John F. Hall

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

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