

THE WRITER, HIS STORIES, AND HIS DVD

By John Hall

I've been writing my life stories for the past 48 years. I'd like to be able to continue to write until I reach a half century milestone. I understand that no one is promised a tomorrow. So, I concentrate on doing what I can each day. I like to compare the number of short stories, that I have written, with those written by others. F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote 160 stories during his twenty years as a



writer. Ernest Hemingway wrote 70 short stories during his sixty-seven years as a writer. Jesse Stuart wrote 460 short stories during his sixty-one years as a writer. Nearly all of Stuart's, Hemingway's, and Fitzgerald's short stories are fiction. I only write nonfiction stories, and I've written more than 260 short stories. Jesse Stuart donated all of his stories to Murray State University, in Murray Kentucky.

In this story, I give some details as to why I started to write a book, but changed my mind to put all the information into a DVD. On March 25, 1983, my dad died in his sleep. His physician called me at 5:30 am and said: "John, we lost your dad. He died peacefully in his sleep." I was 900 miles away, and I never got the chance to say goodbye to my dad. At the beginning of the DVD, that I called, "Charles of America," I explained the reason for making the DVD. I used a music video by Chet Adkins called, "I Still Can't Say Goodbye." The song was written by Bob Blinn and Jimmy Moore. These are their lyrics: "You know, every time I look in the mirror I see my dad. I think that's why this song means so much to me. When I was young, my dad would say, "C'mon son, let's go out and play." Sometimes it seems like yesterday. And I'd climb up the closet shelf, when I was all by myself. Grab his hat and fix the brim, pretending I was him. No matter, how hard I tried. No matter, how many years go by. I still can't say goodbye. He always took care of mom and me. We all cut down a Christmas tree. He always had some time for me. Wind blows through the tree. Street lights, they still shine bright. Most things are the same, but I miss my dad tonight. I walked by a Salvation Army store. Saw a hat like my daddy wore. Tried it on when I walked in, still trying to be like him. No matter, how hard I try. No matter, how many years go by. No matter, how many tears I cried. I still can't say goodbye."

Leya Delray wrote this: "It's a lament for the countless stories that are lost, every day, as memories die with the people who lived them. I feel this lament when I walk through a graveyard, when I explore an old house crumbling with age, when I put my hand on a vine-covered old chimney standing all alone where once a home full of life. The history is so close to me, all the details, are lost forever. Lost because no one recorded them. Lost because no one remembers. If only I could write them all."

My dad, Charles J. Hall, was a scientist, and he worked for NASA. He told me, that once our country landed the first man on the moon, there was no further challenge for him. He said our country did not have the technology to land a man on the planet, Mars, in his lifetime. And he was not going to sit behind a desk, and draw a paycheck for doing nothing. He wanted me to do three

things. First, he wanted me to have a career in the Army. Second, he wanted me to get a good college education. Third, he did not want me to get married. He felt that if I got married as a teenager, that I would not be financially able to go to college. I had a military career in the Army (101st Airborne Division), the Kentucky Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve. It began on my 17th birthday, and ended on my 60th birthday. I rose in rank from a Private to a Lieutenant Colonel. I earned an AA, a BS, a MACT and SCT in college teaching. I married a teenage girl named Paula Andree Oakley. When he found out that she played the flute (second chair in concert band in high school), and that being his favorite music, Paula could do no wrong. Paula and I will celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary on April 17th.

My dad retired from NASA in 1969. He lived in a small house in Edgewater, Florida. He told me that he stopped going to visitations, at the local funeral home, because so many of his employee related friends were dying. He said that only the funeral home and the florists benefited when a person died. He made his own funeral arrangements. Paula, my son, John, and I went to Edgewater, Florida. We held a memorial service. I had his remains shipped to Trigg Memory Acres Cemetery in Cadiz, Kentucky. I had a grave side service conducted by my Pastor. I had these words inscribed on his tombstone: "Helped with man's first landing on the moon, Apollo 11, July 20, 1969."

I began working on the "Charles of America" history of the Hall family. It was originally supposed to be a book, but I made it into a DVD, because I taped a live interview with my cousins, Lori Maribito and Janet Howell. I used census documents and state documents, and hundreds of pictures. I interviewed my cousins and two aunts. I used rather crude equipment, but I had an excellent VHS camera. I later converted from VHS to The DVD format.

Looking back, I feel that the preservation of family history is something that future generations will appreciate. I wanted to make the DVD enjoyable to watch. I mention Jesus Christ in my life stories. It is because of His grace upon grace upon grace, and his inspiration, that has allowed to write so many stories. So many people have their life stories go with them, to be lost and forgotten in the silence of their graves. My DVD brings the Hall history to life. It's also my small way to say goodbye to my dad, my "Charles of America."

John F. Hall

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

<http://www.ajlambert.com>