Halfway through fall from skyscraper, the optimist says, 'so far, so good'

America's Heartland

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A country boy known for his extreme optimism was touring New York City when he slipped and fell from the Empire State Building.

As he passed the 17th floor, someone standing on the balcony asked him: "How's it going?"

"So far, so good," he responded.

I almost hate to admit that I chuckled at that old joke when a co-worker shared it a couple weeks ago. There's just something cartoonish about some fellow with such an optimistic view in a dire situation that certainly wasn't going to end well.

Believers have every reason to maintain positive attitudes when facing life's difficulties. That's because they understand that, no matter what they face, they don't face it alone. They have a friend who sticks closer that a brother. That friend is Jesus.

"When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles" (Psalms 34:17).

Believers realize the Lord can steer them around troubles, take them through troubles, or deliver them out of troubles. Sometimes, that deliverance is to escape the bonds of this life and enter into the next, an eternal life in heaven.

The chorus of one of my favorite songs says: "I'm a winner either way, if I go or if I stay, for I'll still have my Jesus each passing day. I'll have my healing here below or life forever if I go. Oh, praise the Lord, I'm a winner either way."

The Bible is clear that the greatest win is to go to heaven, a place of eternal happiness. No more pain. No more dying. No more disease. No more wheelchairs. No more suffering. No more hospitals. No more funeral homes. No more cemeteries. And no more crying. Think of that, no more need for Kleenex.

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 21:4).

With all that in mind, the optimistic country boy who slipped and fell from the Empire State Building may not be as clueless as that old joke suggests. Perhaps such a one would understand that he's not long for this world, but that a better world awaits.

Perhaps he understood that he's a winner either way.

Roger Alford offers words of encouragement to residents of America's heartland. Reach him at **rogeralford1@gmail.**

ESTILL LIBRARY BOOKMOBILE SCHEDULE

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MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
No Bookmobile Service	Race Track Rd. Harris Ferry Cressy Stacy Lane	Wisemantown Station Camp Red Lick Crooked Creek	No WI Pickup	No Bookmobile Service

"Mommie & Me" and Storytime Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m. & Fridays, 10:30 a.m.

Breakfast & Lunch Menus for Estill County Schools

Monday, Dec. 18

South Irvine Elementary

Breakfast: Toast, Cheerios, Pears, and Milk.

Lunch: Pizza, Corn, Fruit, and Milk.

Estill Springs Elementary

Breakfast; Toast, Cocoa Puffs, Pears, Assorted Juice, and Milk.

Lunch: Chicken Nuggets, Roll, Green Beans, Mashed Potatoes, Apple, BBQ Sauce, Ketchup, and Milk.

West Irvine Intermediate

Breakfast: Breakfast Pizza or Cinnamon Toast Crunch/Graham Snacks, Pineapple Tidbits, Juice, and Milk.

Lunch: Grilled Cheese Sandwich, Pork and Beans, Fresh Broccoli, Applesauce, Dill Spears, Chips, and Milk.

Estill Co. Middle School

Breakfast: Breakfast Pizza, Fruit Loops, Pop Tart, Apples, Assorted Juice, and Milk.

Lunch: Chicken Nuggets, Texas Toast, Mashed Potatoes, California Blend, Apples, Tropical Fruit, Milk/Juice.

Estill Co. High School

Breakfast: Cereal, Pop Tarts, Yogurt, Oranges, Apples, Juice, and Milk.

Lunch: Hamburger on Bun, Mini Corn Dogs, Lettuce, Tomato, Pickles, Potato Wedges, Baked Beans, Grapes, Tropical Fruit, and Milk/Juice.

Tuesday, Dec. 19

South Irvine Elementary

Breakfast: Pancake Porky, Apples, and Milk.

Lunch: Ham, Roll, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans, Cooked Apples, Ice Cream, and Milk.

Estill Springs Elementary

Breakfast: Pancake Porky/Syrup or Cinnamon Toast Crunch/Graham Snacks, Applesauce, Assorted Juice, and Milk.

Lunch: Fiestada Pizza, Corn, Baby Carrots/Dip, Pineapple, Milk.

West Irvine Intermediate

Breakfast: Mini Pancakes or Yogurt, Cheese, Crackers, or Cocoa Puffs, Apple, Milk, and Syrup.

Lunch: Fiestada Pizza, Corn, Carrots/Dip, Side Kick, and Milk.

Estill Co. Middle School

Breakfast: Sausage and Biscuit, Lucky Charms, Pop Tart, Pineapples, Assorted Juice, and Milk.

Lunch: Pepperoni Pizza, Taco Snax, Garden Salad, Corn, Pineapples, Side Kicks, Milk and Juices.

Estill Co. High School

Breakfast: Sausage Biscuit, Cereal, Pop Tarts, Yogurt, Oranges, Apples, Juice, and Milk.

Lunch: Hot Ham and Cheese, Grilled Chicken on Bun, Lettuce, Tomato, Pickles, Carrot Sticks, Baby Bakers, Side Kicks, Applesauce, Milk, and Juice.

The first Snow

Times Remembered

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The first snowfall of the season came in as a clipper and created some slick areas on Saturday night. With the snowfall brought thoughts of my sleigh riding days on the farm.

I'll never forget the excitement of speeding downhill on my sturdy, Flexible Flyer sled, taking the bumps belly first and swooshing triumphantly down the hills and across the straight away. In a high tech world, low-tech sleds still offer a matchless thrill that captures the essence of childhood delight.

Oh! I had my share of sledding accidents, like the time I ran under the barbed wire fence in the garden. That accident took an "L" shape chunk out of my ring finger on my left hand. But that didn't stop me. I ran into the house and Mom bandaged it and I was good as new. I proceeded back outside and hit the hills again.

Even after sleds have been retired from active duty, they have an irresistible appeal. Often colorful, they always evoke the clean, cold days of winter and the simple joys of snow and speed. They are too beautiful to hide in the attic or the barn, a vintage sled can be used a centerpiece of a holiday decorating scheme or can be year around as priceless folk art.

Sleds also make a great focal point leaning upright next to a fireplace or on a porch, especially displayed at Christmas with a huge red bow and greenery. I have my Flexible Flyer on the front porch leaning up against the log wall. A large sled can also be used as a coffee table or a low side table.

Sleds have a wonderful history. Most were handcrafted with care in the early years. Sleds were a practical necessity in snowy climates where the only means of transportation for many months of the year. Horse-drawn sleighs and ox-drawn sledges carried passengers and large goods; while smaller sleds were used to haul firewood and supplies across the snow. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, children had appropriated the sled for their own use, and gaily colored sleds with sleek runners were being made just for fun.

The first commercial factory devoted exclusively to children's sleds was founded in 1861 by Henry F. Morton of South Paris, Maine. Sleds marked with "P/M/C" trademarked logo are still among the most prized by collectors. Paris sleds, the early ones are made entirely of wood, and including the runners were a family affair: Henry's wife, Lucilla, individually hand-painted the decorations on each sled.

Girls followed their brothers down the snowy hills but were expected to ride more sedately on special girls sleds. Boys' sleds were given names like "Racer" and "Rocket" and were heavier and low slung for speed. Girls' sleds were often decorated with flowers or birds, were lighter, shorter, and smaller, with high runners turned up in decorative curlicues in the front. For as little as 60 cents, a boy or a girl could have a spiffy factory made sled. The two main types were the cutter, on wide ski-like runners and the speedier clipper, on slender runners that would last for a childhood's worth of winters.

The famous Flexible Flyer came into being. For generations of children's sleds went in only one direction. Then on Valentine's Day in 1889, a Jersey farmer named Samuel L. Allen patented a sled with a steering mechanism. The prototype was built from spare parts of farm machinery. Allen called his invention the Flexible Flyer.

From the first the Flexible Flyer, which featured a front yoke that could be pushed back and forth to change the angle of the runners was a hit. Its familiar slatted design and the "Eagle" logo remain an icon of childhood.

By the turn of the century, the demand for sleds, fueled partly by the popularity of the steering mechanism, was so high that labor-intensive detail such as hand-painted decorations, had to be changed to mass produced stenciling.

The best place to find old sleds is antique shows, especially those that specialize in folk art and old toys. It is not unusual to find a good sled priced in the hundreds, with painted ones even more. Some are quite valuable!

Make sure your holiday is merry, bright and *SAFE*.

When hanging holiday lights and decorations remember these safety tips -

- Before hanging holiday lights outside, look out for overhead power lines.
- Inspect all the lights you plan on using. Make sure the wires and sockets are in good condition.
- Check that all light strands are certified and rated for the conditions in wich they'll be used.
- Turn holiday lights off before going to sleep or leaving the house.

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