

# The Old Gentleman

*First typed story, prompted by sense of irony and injustice ...*

It was written in the late spring of 1956. I was living in a room that had once been the butler's pantry of a lumber baron's house before it was converted to the Elk's Club then to a duplex. My sister stayed from time to time in the remnant of the dining hall. My father had already moved to West Palm Beach and would send for us later in the summer. His half sister, Aunt Nellie, looked after us. She was a sweet lady who believed that God intended people to eat fish on Friday and ride on trains, not airplanes.

I don't recall exactly how the story got written.

I remember the desk. Constructed from oak flooring at Shelby Millwork in 1952, it sat in corner of my room. The desk now occupies a corner in my daughter's dining room.

I remember the typewriter that sat on the desk. It was an old black Underwood that my father and I got in Charlotte for my mother. That was several years before when we lived in his family home place on the McKinney farm. He bought the typewriter because my mother said she wanted to write children's stories. I don't know if she asked him or he just did it.

Because she told good stories, everyone waited with anticipation when she shut herself in her bedroom and started banging away. She finally read her story, with trepidation and reluctance as I recall. I thought it was good. However, she didn't like it and never wrote anything else.

I also felt a sense of trepidation when I wrote my first story. For one thing, I couldn't type. At that time, most boys didn't know how. Typing the one page took forever. Also, I didn't think of myself as a writer and did not believe that I could write. Larry, my friend who lived up the street could write. When we did papers for school, he could always string together sentences with no apparent effort. Everything I wrote was a struggle.

Later, when I actually wrote a story for the Red Clay Reader, Larry made snide comments and then died of a blood disorder.

Below is the story. I like the structure. Edits and signature appear to have been done with a red crayon.

### The Old Gentleman

A couple~~s~~ days ago as I was walking uptown I noticed a gathering of people on the corner of the street. I paused for a moment to ~~a~~ see what the commotion was about. It seems as though a young man, the center of attention, was being bantered about in a not too friendly ~~by~~ <sup>manor</sup> by two old gentlemen.

The crowd I mentioned was composed of onlookers, such as I. I gathered from the heated words that the younger man had in the process of crossing lanes narrowly missed hitting one of the older men. The argument continues for a few more minutes, then broke up. But during the course of the fracas I had heard one of the elder gentlemen refer repeatedly to irresponsible to teen-age driving and how detrimental they are to society in general. I don't know if these were his exact words but I feel they were the ~~implication~~ <sup>implication</sup> of his words. Of course the old gentlemen were right as ~~with~~ all old gentlemen are supposed to be.

The young man, head bowed and spirit broken, drove off. ~~The~~ The old gentleman strutted back across the street to his ~~car~~.

Our city has a fine system of signal lights. One for every occasion; one to go on, one to be cautious on, and one to stop. Also there is one that tells you that is safe to walk. The walk signal is spelt out in good English and every one who can read knows when to walk. And if you're too young or too illiterate you r mommie or a nice friendly policeman will tell you when to walk. ~~Maybe~~  
Maybe the old gentleman didn't see a policeman or maybe he was lost from his mommie.

