

OLD TOPPER

My Mom's mom used to call me Old Topper when I was a boy visiting her in Susanville. She used that name when I pleased her & she was feeling affectionate. No one else ever called me that. Grandma lived to be 93 & was a staunch Republican until Jack Kennedy shook both her hands. She didn't call me anything her last 12 years. I'd become a stranger like everyone else.

ERNIE'S WISH

When I was 11 my granddad tried to coax me into shooting his 250 Savage (he wanted me to hunt deer with him) but I begged off. I was afraid of the rifle's kick & its report hurt my ears. I loved Granddad & knew I'd let him down. He never said so but I believed he thought I was a coward. He died the next year before I could make it up to him. When I turned 15 I shot a beautiful three-point buck with his rifle. This should have healed me, but when I reached the dying deer & read the terror in its fading eyes the joyful pride I felt left me.

NO JOKE

Perry manages a U-Haul center in the south area. It's been strong armed twice in last three months. Perry had to go to court to identify one of the holdup men. Perry saw the man's face before he pulled a stocking over his head. A few days ago the guy walked into the center with a couple of other dudes, strutting & acting like trouble couldn't touch him.

ADDICT

He's given up booze but now craves seductive food (which is mostly unhealthy) & clothes to make himself over & toys (some dangerous) to entertain himself. He's drawing that & that & that out there in to himself to satisfy a raging hunger that gives him no peace.