

## GREAT UNCLE GEORGE

He wasn't really a Great Uncle, in fact he wasn't even an uncle but you know how it is; When you are young they tell you that every man who appears regularly in your house is your "uncle" and it sticks.

Although by now, I was technically speaking, a man myself, the family still called my Aunt Daisy's friend "Uncle George". She was still single, aged about 60; he was a widower and a very old friend of the family. George lived in Hollywood, within walking distance of my aunt's house. He did odd jobs for her and, because my mother was a widow, he often came to our house in Cherryvalley to do odd jobs there when I was too young to tackle decorating, plumbing leaks and loose floorboards.

George was well known for his reply when asked by anyone if he could fix something; he would say instantly "Och! Sure five minutes will do it." I had witnessed George doing many jobs in my youth but I certainly don't remember any of them being done in less than five hours or even 5 days with spaces in between!

I often visited my Aunt Daisy on my motorbike as she had always been around in times of trouble especially after my father died; she was his sister and very special to me. One such day I popped in and, during the conversation she told me:

"George is going to put a light in the upper landing for me soon."

"How soon?" I asked meaningfully

"Oh this week I think, he said five minutes would do it but you know George!"

"I didn't know he knew anything about electricity."

Daisy looked offended; "George can fix anything." The matter was clearly closed to further discussion.

A couple of weeks later I popped down to Hollywood again and Aunt Daisy immediately informed me that George had indeed put in a light in her landing.

"Is it working?" I blurted it out before I could stop myself.

"Yes." The one second's hesitation in my aunt's reply spoke volumes to me; I persisted:

"Does it light?" I tried again.

"Yes, look for yourself." There was still a slight hesitation, something not right!

Climbing the stairs two at a time, I reached the upper landing and saw a new light fitting on the ceiling and a new switch on the wall; I flicked it and the light came on. Still unconvinced for some reason, I opened the door of the toilet adjacent to the landing and switched on the toilet light. It came on with a dull glow. At first I thought my aunt must have put a low wattage bulb in it but then a different light dawned, this one inside my head! I reached out to the new landing light switch and turned it off. Immediately the toilet light glowed brightly as it always did before. Bingo! I turned each switch on and off in every combination and got the results that I was now expecting. Either light worked normally on its own but switched on together, both lights went to half-glow.

In triumph, I bounded down the stairs two at a time. Aunt Daisy was busying herself pouring tea. "It's alright isn't it?" she asked doubtfully.

"Not really Aunt Daisy, one light should not go dim when the other one is switched on." I could hardly contain my recently acquired knowledge, "I can fix it for you though. You see, I've just been learning about electricity at the technical college. George has wired both lights in series."

"Will that be a big job?" she was looking a bit miffed.

"Not for me Aunt Daisy, five minutes will do it!"

Denis Gilpin  
North Down and Ards U3A  
Creative Writing Group