

## Lion Tamer (2015)

Houston Hodges, for Writer's Corner, WLRH Radio Huntsville, AL USA

I've got proof of this one: a yellowed clipping, from page 1 of the Temple, Texas *Daily Telegram*, dated in 1960, with a photo of ME, holding the lion that was left on our front porch. The headline reads, "Come Back, Little Simba."

It's true that it was a baby lion, the size of a largish housecat, but decidedly leonine.

I'd gotten a phone call: "Reverend Hodges?"

"Yes."

"I know you're going to find this hard to believe, but we've left a lion in a box on your front porch."

I said, "We've had a kangaroo or two, but never a lion."

The voice said, "Will you go out and look?"

"Sure," I said, and I headed out in my bathrobe and slippers, to see what one of our friends had left on our porch ... an unwanted kitten, perhaps, or maybe a stuffed toy for one of the boys.

—Cardboard box? —Right. Open box? —Right. Baby lion in box.

I went back inside directly to the phone. I don't throw my title around needlessly, but this was the time: "Police? This is the Reverend Houston Hodges, and someone has left baby lion in a box on our front porch."

The patrol car arrived expeditiously. The two officers did not have their guns drawn, but they were within easy reach.

Seems the lion had been cub-napped from a Dallas facility by a disgruntled employee; they'd mistakenly given it cow's milk to drink, which had upset its tummy, and they had a miserable, cranky, and unhappy brat on their hands. They'd looked up clergy in the phone book, and picked one close to the highway to unload. The lion spent the rest of the night in custody in the local police station.

Our three boys were asleep when this took place, but I told them the

story the next morning in full detail. They listened attentively, and then Christopher, who was four, nodded sagely and said, “And what did YOU dream about, Mommy?”

True story. Photo to prove it.