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E. ALECK HANEY: JULY 2, 1909:
CHAPTER 10

“I gave Luke Denny his nickname, ‘Ditty-Wa-Ditty’, and our Jackson County moonshining friend Willie Lane continued that handle,” Aleck Haney, 80, said and laughed from the Haney back porch in No-Man’s Land of Jackson County, on Highway 56, May 7, 1988.

“Remember, this interview concerns only the years between 1930 and 1960. We don’t discuss the years after 1960. Understand?” Haney ordered, as his beautiful peacock spread its wings and Haney’s six month old dog Rusty ran from the bird to his master’s side.

His old friend Luke Denny started laughing and Aleck stopped talking. “Have you got your tickle box turned over Ditty-Wa-Ditty?” While ginning to himself.

“You will not believe what I just thought about,” Denny explained. “Eating.”

“That’s nothin’ new,” Haney laughed hardily, “When you came to my place to pick up whiskey you were hungry every dang time. I mean every time.”

I never wanted to stop when I was loaded or unloaded so while Aleck’s men were loading my car I would pay him and eat,” Denny added. “And, I would eat anything he had beans, spuds, corn bread...anything. It was always good, country cookin’.

“Aleck, when did you start makin’ mountain dew?” his friend the whiskey hauler questioned.

“Oh, it was back in ’28 or early ’29. We started brewin’ moonshine with corn, back then. Then we switched to sugar whiskey. Many people don’t realize I could cook 75 gallons of sugar whiskey while I’d make 25 gallons of corn ‘shine. You need to run corn through the cooker twice.

“I had lots of work hands ‘round the stills,” Haney continued, “and most of those years I had at least two stills boilin’ at all times. I usually had 135 gallon copper pots. Ol’

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Luke picked up my stuff in the late 30s and he would haul only a lit’ dab at a time, before the war. About 1940 he really started hauling the whiskey. It seemed he stayed here.”

“Back in the 30s all I could haul was 25 to 30 gallons at a time because I didn’t have the bucks to pay for it. Plus my cars could only hold a small amount,” Denny explained. “But, I really got rollin’ about 1940 and probably loaded 100 gallons a week, here.

Sometimes I would haul every day, but that was rare. Aleck charged me \$1 a gallon for his booze, then. It's gone up many many times since those good old days.

"When I bought my new '40 Ford I recall makin' three runs in one night. I picked up 100, 100, and 75 gallons. Do you 'member what I asked you after the last load, just before daylight?"

Haney added, "It was something smart like, 'How much more ya got?' And I came back with a silly answer like, 'I got more than you can pay for.'" Both men cracked up with laughter.

"This man taught me one way to tell if the whiskey was scorched," Denny said while holding both hands together, in front of his chest. He rubbed them together and brought them up to his nose. "If I suspected the whiskey was burnt this was one sure fire way to check it. If it had that good ol' mountain dew aroma it wasn't scorched, but if it smelled like burnt toast, look out. Scorched whiskey was hard to get rid of, too. Some moonshiner tried to pawn off the scorched shine. It was so badly burnt it looked yellow. We called it smoked whiskey. There was no way I could sell that stuff. Boy that smoked crap stuck so bad my car carried that foul odor for weeks. Aleck always had top notch whiskey.

"I can see myself," Denny recalled, "rollin' behind your house, the one that burned, in the middle of the night and saying, 'Aleck are you awake?' I knew damn well you was asleep, but I needed to get a load in a hurry. Aleck would say, 'Is that you Ditty-Wa-Ditty?' I would then back in one of the two garages where he kept the whiskey and 20 to 25 minutes later I had paid him and was on my way, loaded."

"You forgot on dam little detail, Luke," Haney added with a big grin, "your belly was full, too."

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"Always," Denny said while rubbing his mid-section. "I would guess and say I probably hauled 50 percent after WWII. Although I did buy a lot of your whiskey in 1948 and '49. My last big load from you was in 1950. If I had to put a figure on how many gallons I bought I would say about 30,000 gallons. Wouldn't you say that would be a fair estimate, Aleck?"

"My, my," the Jackson County moonshiner said while scratching his head. After thinking for a minute or maybe even two he said, 'Ya know it could have been nearly double that. More than likely it was 50,000 or 60,000 gallons. See, I usually sold to Luke in jacket cans.'" After another pause Haney offered, "Luke, did you ever get caught for anything but DUI? They never did catch you haulin' any shine did they?"

"No," Denny proudly remarked, "but they nailed me when I was empty with Drinking Under the Influence. Back in those days the law could get away with that charge easier

than they can today. It would make them made when they checked me and I was bone dry. You went to the pen a few times, didn't you Aleck?"

"Oh yes, Sicy (Silas Anderson, federal revenue agent) shut me down three times, and sent me to the federal pen in Montgomery. I ran off from the still each time, but he'd yell and 'swore' at me one time," Aleck recalled. (Swore is a term used by Silas Anderson. According to the moonshine makers, when the revenuer spotted wildcatters at the still he was not required to physically catch them. "Swearing" held up in court.) "Sicy ran us all off from the still and we had 90 gallons setting there for him and Paul Knowles (Knowles was Silas Anderson's partner).

"The biggest raid I had wasn't by Sicy, but by Joe Sanford of the (Tennessee) Highway Patrol. Back then the Troopers got involved much more in illegal whiskey than they do today. Joe chopped the lock off my door in the old house. I had 600 gallons taken in that bust. It really cost me, that one. I had it in barrels and jacket cans and they poured it out and carried some to court for evidence."

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"Wait a minute," Denny interrupted. "I just thought of another time that was funny. Remember when all hell broke loose in the late 40s. The law was everywhere, and I mean everywhere and every possible type of lawman seemed to comb every hollow in every county. They were out to stop whiskey makin', haulin' and sellin'...for good. My bootlegger were out of booze and cryin' for me to get all I could. Many stills were busted up. I drove all over the place to find some. You told me I could have 50 gallons and that was all I could buy, because the rest of your whiskey was already contracted. I needed at least another 25 gallons. I told your loaders to keep loadin' and they did. I loaded out 75 gallons and paid you for it. Do you recall that night?"

Aleck Haney answered his friend with a sour look, "Oh yes. You had that big Pontiac in '48. I had just finished cookin' it, too."

"Wait a minute. Wait a minute," Denny chimed back in to the conversation, "member what kind of car you came drivin' up in? It was a old A-model and it was the most beat up car I have ever seen, but you drove that bomber everywhere...day and night."

"Now that car was a beauty," Haney whispered, and both men laughed so hard Luke started coughing. "Man, I drove that old car over stumps, rocks, up and down the hollers. It was a mess, but it hauled many a sack of sugar to the stills."

A visitor ended the conversation and it was time to conclude yet another chapter about the life and times of the old whiskey runner; Luke Alexander Denny. Before leaving the two moonshining buddies showed how they tested mountain dew to see if it was scorched, for the camera.