

(pg. 156)

CAPTAIN L.A. (BLACKIE) MAYFIELD: MARCH 20, 1908:
CHAPTER 11

“Boy we got after ol’ Luke (Denny) here back in the ol’ days, but as far as I know, no one ever caught him haulin’ that white whiskey, the pesky runner was always empty when the law pulled him over,” said Captian Lawrence A. (L.A.) (Blackie) Mayfield, 80, retired Tennessee Highway Patrolman, at his home in McMinnville, Tennessee, July 30, 1988.

“Now don’t get me wrong,” the highly decorated Trooper continued, “we set up road blocks many a time, sometimes with Sicy’s (Silas Anderson, Federal Revenue Officer) help. After a while I could tell about Luke. If he was empty we’d see him just about anywhere. But if he was loaded it would be at night, usually and he would be rollin’ along and always ready for a chase. One thing for sure, when we got after him he was ready to roll on down the road. Luke always drove fast, anyway, and he knew the hills and the backroads like a bloodhound. He knew just about every person along the road, too.”

The retired lawman stopped, adjust his glasses, and looked out of one corner of his right eye while closing the other and cocking his head, said, “See, ol’ Luke here was a ladies man and always laughin’ and carryin’ on with somethin’ silly. He was a personable fellow, one might say; during the daytime or when he was empty.”

Denny entered the conversation with, “Blackie was a ladies man too, back in the ol’ days before meeting Frances. In fact, “Luke paused for a brief moment, looked at his former foe and said, “we might as well lay it all out on the road...we went with the same girl!”

They both stared at each other in a different way for a few seconds and as to say, “Oh, that was many decades ago, when we were single.” They both smiled and the lawman said in a softer tone, “Those were the days when we were both sparkin’, if you know what that means. This girl was cut as a button and she liked both of us. But, she would make us made at each other. She would tell something on the other one, just

(pg. 157)

to get something started. If I was there Luke would drive back and forth - - up and down - - the road, and I must admit I did the same thing when he was there. Laughter ricocheted off the walls of the Trooper’s living room.

Denny said in a jovial tone, “Did you know she had five lovely children?”

“No, I sure didn’t,” the lawman answered with a surprised look and in a sheepish grin added, “She was a good looker, but we better not mention her name in this book. Her hubby would kill us both. That was puppy love anyway.

“Luke, we’re getting away from the one time we just nearly caught your rump,” the former highway patrolman with 32 years combined service, of which 26 years were active with the THP (1937-1962), forcefully said, “It was early in 1940, as I recall, probably late March. I hadn’t been on the patrol but about three years. Sergeant Joe Sanford, my supervisor, he’s dead now, God rest his soul, had a report, probably from Sicy, that two cars, one running interference - - and we didn’t know which one had the whiskey - - was headed west, down Highway 70 from Seven Knobs in Jackson County, to Carthage. Joe’s plan was to set up a road block about midnight at Elmwood (5 miles east of South Carthage) with the Smith County Sheriff and catch’em.

“Sometime after midnight we arrived and made ready. Then the waiting began. We were waiting and waiting and nothing come through which fit the descriptions. I think we set up the blockade in front of Red Petty’s Restaurant and Cabins. It might have been called Caney Fork Station Cabins and Court, but it was owned by Red Petty. Then, just about 2:30 (a.m.) we were getting ready to shut down the operation and call it quits, when here comes the lead car and Luke crusin’ right BEHIND US! But, for the life of me I can’t figure out why you came through the road block, BACKWARDS,” the erect sitting lawman questioned his former adversary.

Denny answered, “We loaded out early for some reason and had already come through, before you and Joe set up. I don’t know to this day why I asked this other fellow to run with me that night, but I did. Then he picked up a young man along the way, just for a joy ride. I didn’t like that one bit, but it

(pg. 158)

happened so fast. I wanted to get a head start with the 110 gallons of moonshine that I broke one of my Cardinal Rules; Never, ever pick up a hitchhiker...business is business.

“I was driving my new ’40 Ford that was hotter than a \$2 pistol and had eight, five gallon jacket cans, filled,” Denny continued. “The second car was a slower, ’36 Chevrolet, but carried 14 cans in the truck, for a total of 110 gallons. This run was a catch-all type run. I hated them, but you had to make those runs every once in a while for spending money. On this run we had to stop at every Tom, Dick and Harry’s bootleg joint to drop off a few gallons. This was a sure fire way of getting caught, I guess that’s why I paid for the other car to run interference for me...and to haul.

“Our first stop was in the hilly community of Elmwood, just before the bewitching hour, not to far from where the officers were setting a few hours later. I was scheduled to unload all my 40 gallons at this bootlegger’s, but his wife came to the door and said he was drunk and she wasn’t about to pay for any illegal white mule. I laughed when she said that, it had a real kicking thud to it,” Denny said and laughed as did the retired lawman.

“Now I was really pissed,” Denny explained. “First, my second car picked up a rider. Then my first big drop off was in a drunken stupor. I had planned to have a safe ride that

evening. At the first stop I would unload and be empty and block for the slower car. As you see, that night had already started off on the wrong foot.

“Anyway, we drove on to Carthage for a few stops, then to this lady’s joint in Hartsville, and onto Lebanon. For some unknown reason, no one wanted to buy the entire load. So, we kept stoppin’ and sellin’, stoppin’ and sellin’ - - a few gallons here and there. We had dropped off 60 gallons; I had two jacket (10 gallons) cans and the lead car had 40 gallons left. We went rollen east, back through South Carthage - - which is a hard place to get away from the law because there are few side roads - - and I thought to myself, ‘We’ve made it.’

“Then the Elmwood backwards blockade. The second I saw the cars I knew we were in trouble, because this was the first run for the other driver and the only signal was for me to

(pg. 159)

hit my dimmer switch twice if the cops rolled in behind me, and that’s just what I did. He took the cue and turned south. I gunned that Ford and kicked every cylinder in the butt. The chase was on. I had illegal liquor in the car and could got to jail and lose my car. I was upset because the whole plan had backfired. I was angry, to put it mildly,” the former whiskey hauler spoke.

Trooper Mayfield reentered the conversation, “Joe (Sgt. Sanford) spun those tires and turned his siren on and took after you while I took after the other car going south. If my memory serves me correctly, Smith County Deputy Sheriff Stanton Robinson was in my car and Acting Sheriff Lillard Yeaman was in his car. I believe Lillard’s mother became sheriff when his dad died and he was Acting. Now, I believe that’s correct.

“Anyway,” the lawman stopped for a moment and continued in the middle of a breath, “boy this bring back memories. Where was I? Oh yes, the chase. Lillard was in front of me and had his siren blaring. After a three or four mile chase down a gravel road the car slid to a halt in a front yard. We felt a little down after discovering the inside of the car was empty, but when we discovered eight, five gallon jacket cans of illegal alcohol in the trunk, we felt our long hours of waiting wasn’t for nothing. I believe Lillard made the arrest, I’m not clear on that point, but I know we drove the two law enforcement cars back to the blockade point to rendezvous with the sergeant. Shortly here he came, empty handed. Upset I guess that we had collared our crooks and he came rolling in with nothing to show for his chase. Sergeant Sanford said, ‘Hell, a greyhound couldn’t catch him,’” the lawman added.

“See,” Denny said, “I knew my car could out run Joe’s anyday. His was just not fixed up like mine. My Ford was touching the 80 and 85 speed dials, around curves, too, on Highway 70. After, about six to ten miles he gave up and turned around and met you boys. I drove on down to my buddy’s home and put those two five gallon jacket cans underneath an apple tree in his front years. Boy was he upset when he saw them the next

morning. Well, there I was. Free and clear and empty. But, I knew my second car was goin' to get caught so I thought

(pg. 160)

I'd take a few belts of government liquor and drive back down to Carthage and get their bond. That was a stupid mistake...to say the least.

“When I got to Red Petty’s place there sat Joe, Lillard and you Blackie, with the other car and the other two men. I said to myself, ‘Hell, they don’t have anything on me, why not stop and see if I can clear this little mess up. Boy was I wrong. After you and Joe searched my car and found it empty, you, Lillard, and Stanton escorted the other car and the two haulers to the Carthage jail. I smarted off to the sergeant a few minutes later and hit him a lick. But, buddy that was all I got in. He wore me out. Back then I thought I was tough, but found out that night I wasn’t as rough as I thought I was.

“Joe took me to jail and booked us all. On April 4, 1940, Judge John Mitchell fined me \$50 and court cost, I believe that’s correct. Joe, I believe, or it could have been Lillard, charged me with ‘Reckless Driving’ and ‘Aiding and Abiding in the Transportation of Illegal Whiskey’. I beat the Reckless Driving charge, but Judge Mitchell made me spend 15 days in jail on Aiding,” the moonshine hauler stopped and said to Captain Mayfield, “I wonder why the courthouse records in Carthage have my records as ‘Transporting’ instead of ‘Aiding and Abiding’? I could have beaten the ‘Transporting’ charge. That’s not right.”

Officer Mayfield instantly insisted, “if the records have it as ‘Transporting’ then it’s wrong, simple as that. You were NOT caught with any moonshine that nigh, but you should not have been able to beat the Reckless Driving charge, either. You were guilty of that and more.”

“You’re right Blackie,” Denny agreed. “I should have been sent to the jailhouse for more than 15 days.”

A hush fell over the room when Denny mentioned, “I remember my bond was \$1,500 and I didn’t get out of the calaboose until noon. Baxter Key Sr. was the District Attorney. Lillard, Stanton and Joe got that hitchhiker to tell them every place we stopped. I can just hear Mr. Baxter Senior, reading the names on the warrants of the bootleggers to be arrested - - while looking sternly over his glasses - - as I sat in my cell, helplessly fuming. It must’ha been a dozen names in a dozen

(pg. 161)

different locations. Oh my, it sounded like a school teacher calling the roll. More than 600 gallons of moonshine and other booze was taken during a massive simultaneous raid, that very afternoon by State and Federal lawmen from three or four counties. We better

not mention all those names, some are still alive and quit their illegal doings and have done rather well for themselves. They are better for it, too.”

The neatly dressed lawman, now a regular churchman, recalled yet another run in with Luke. He said, “I can’t remember when this next one happened, but it was in the summer at Chestnut Mound in Smith County. Joe and I pulled you over and you were suited up and cocky as always, but you and Joe didn’t see eye-to-eye.”

“Yep, Joe Sanford and I just couldn’t get along. Sometimes it was so-so, but other times he and I would fuss. You were different Blackie, always trying to reform me and get me to quit. I finally took your good advice, but to many years to late. Anyhow,” the light haired, blond and graying moonshine runner noted, “I was about half drunk that day and honestly had forgotten where I put my trunk key. When Joe was searching the inside of the car I purposely turned up the radio loudly as Brother Dave Macon was singing, ‘There is Moonshine in the Cannon County Hills’ and that made the sergeant mad. I shouldn’t have done it, but I did.

“Then when I couldn’t remember what I did with the trunk key he was livid. Finally, I stumbled around and I can’t remember how nor where I came up with them but,” Trooper Mayfield noted with his tongue in his cheek, “The reason you don’t remember that is because I found them on a knob on the dashboard, swinging on a chain.”

Denny’s eyes got big as saucers as he recalled in a louder tone of voice, “That’s right. That’s right. How time fades memories. Well, when Joe opened the trunk and found I had already unloaded and all I had was empty jacket cans, he was perturbed. Sergeant Sanford backed up from the trunk of the car, put his hands on his hips and I’ll never forget what he said.”

(pg. 162)

“Neither will I,” Trooper Mayfield enjoined. “Joe said in a sharp, direct, straight voice, ‘You’re as arrogant as a Prussian General and when I catch you with some white lightnin’ I’m going to turn you over to the Feds.’ Luke spouted back quickly and sharply, ‘Hell, I would come near beaten it in Federal Court than I would the State.’ Isn’t that close to what Joe and you said,” the trooper asked?

“You can’t get any closer than that. I was thinking of exactly the same words as you were saying them,” the moonshine runner commented.

“Then Joe stepped back like a drill instructor and marched straight for his car and took off. I didn’t say a word either. Luke you must admit, back in those days you were a mixed person. In the daytime you were good natured, personable, care free, friendly, kind and cheerful to everyone, but when night came you turned into a whiskey running, smart-alecky, women chasing, wise guy. Wouldn’t you agree?”

“As bad as I hate to say it Blackie, you hit the nail right square on the head. I was that and probably more. And, I’m finally not proud of that fact. It’s taken me a long time to grow up and get this far, but I still have a ways to go. Say Blackie, did you ever catch that old man down in Dixon Springs (near the Smith County/Trousdale County border, on Highway 25) with the trick sink?” Denny asked.

“No, I didn’t,” Officer Mayfield recalled. “I believe it was the County, maybe Lillard, who got him, but he used that device a long time I understand. Make sure I’m correct on this, Luke. It looked like a regular sink, but had a switch under the cabinet so when he was being raided he would simply turn the lever and pour the whiskey down a special drain and out it went. Is that correct?”

“Yes. The moonshine would run down, under the wooden floor and into a underground pipe and then into wooden 55 gallons barrels, hidden down behind the house in the woods. He finally got nabbed, I understand. But, I still don’t recall when. He didn’t buy from me. Maybe a small dab once,” Denny said.

(pg. 163)

“I don’t believe Sicy caught him. But ol’ Sic’ was one of the best I’ve sever seen at catchin’ moonshiners and bootleggers, and he was a gentleman to work with, too. Speaking of Sicy,” the quick thinking retired lawman continued, “I remember one night in Putnam County when Sicy and I had three different moonshine cases. First, Highway Patrolman Brown Minor and I stopped one car with moonshine near Double Springs and when I went to call Sicy we caught number two. What is unique about this catch is, on the way back from the service station, I saw the first car sliding over a bluff. I jumped into the car and slammed the brake pedal to the floor and held on until help came.

“Wait, there’s still another one. On the way to the Cookeville Jail, Sicy saw an elderly colored man slowly walking across the road carrying a gallon in his hand. Silas asked me to stop the car while he called the man back, took the moonshine and told him to come to his office on such and such date. I never heard about the third case, but I’ll guess and say ol’ Sic’ give the man a good tongue lashing and it was forgotten. Some criminals, be it petty or hardened, can be treated this way and will reform. While incarnation is the only answer for many others, I’m sorry to say.”

Denny stood up and said, “Before we go I want to know where you got the nickname ‘Doc’? Every so often I would hear Troopers referring to you as Doc, then they would laugh.”

“Sit back down Luke,” Mayfield motioned. “This is a quick version. You remember Trooper Fletcher Smith Senior? Zip was his nickname. He and I were on a speed detail around Lebanon on Highway 70 during World War Two. You remember, they were having maneuvers back then. Anyway, this car came flying through our speed trap - - that’s what everyone else called them. Zip and I took off after it. The driver kept driving faster and faster. It seems he was motioning us to pass him. We pulled next to him, at a

high rate of speed. He screamed, 'My wife is having a baby! I'm taking her to St. Thomas (Hospital in Nashville).' We pulled in front and gave them a trooper escort straight to Music City. We were cranking the RPM's., let me tell ya.

(pg. 164)

“When we got to the emergency entrance I ran around and opened the door. The lady was having her baby right in front of my very eyes - - on the front seat! In a second it popped out. Bloop. I caught it! Within a very few moments a doctor from the hospital came around the door and saw me holding the baby and I'll never forget what he said, “Glad you were on the scene. Good job Doc.’ Zip had the biggest time telling the other Troopers about my doctoring.”

After looking at old photographs and yellowed newspaper clippings, from Captain Mayfield's worn scrapbook, the two reflected for a moment and shook hands. Yes, they may have been on the opposite side of the illegal whiskey law books in a begone era, but today, these two made their peace and are friends.