

(pg. 194)

FLOYD CORDELL (HULL) BROWN: APRIL 12, 1908:

CHAPTER 20:

“I’ll always remember the time you knocked on my Carthage door in the late 50s and handed me that revenue officer’s not, Luke Denny said to his lifelong friend Floyd Cordell (Hull) Brown, during the interview January 14, 1988 in Brown’s Baxter, Tennessee home.

Denny continued, “I can see you standing there holding that piece of paper. Your face was pale, like a dead man’s. You had a bewildered, perplexed look plastered all over you face. I can tell you exactly what the note said. Do you recall what the note said, Hull?”

Without hesitation Brown replied, “Do I recall what the note said, man I know just what was printed on that small crumpled piece of notebook paper. That message is tattooed on my brain in bright Chinese red. It said, ‘Luke Denny was down on Morrison’s Creek in Jackson County loading a bunch of whiskey in a Frigidaire (refrigerator) crate day before yesterday.’

“Come to think of it. I don’t remember telling you how I come on the note, Luke,” Floyd Brown, 80, added as he adjusted his glasses.

“Didn’t you tell me a few years later you found it in a federal officer’s coat pocket? But, I can’t remember anything other than that,” Denny said. “All I know is, it saved this old boy’s hide and kept me out of jail.”

Brown said, “Here’s what happened. I lived just below Baxter on 70 highway and Paul Knowles, a revenue agent who lived close by, used my chevy pickup to haul some hogs. Paul left his car and I saw a piece of paper sticking out of his coat pocket. When I saw your name Luke, cold chills ran up and down my back and I got goose bumps at the same time. Knowles didn’t know you and I had grown up together in Buffalo Valley.

“I drove all the way to your home on East Heights in Carthage and it was a Sunday. And, this was the first and last time I was able to help you,” Brown pointed out.

(pg. 195)

Denny returned, “Knowles was out of the Cookeville office and I heard he was out to get me. I also heard he had staked out my regular bootleggers. And, when you came to the door with the note I was concerned...to say the least.”

“Concerned! Hell, you looked as scared as I felt inside,” Brown revealed as his voice crackled. “Oh yes, I remember asking you, before I handed you the note, ‘Have you ever hauled liquor in a Frigidaire crate and don’t tell me a damn lie.’”

“Yep, I won’t deny the note se me back a step or two,” Denny commented. “So, instead of taking that moonshine to my normal bootlegger I went a different way and sold it to a man in Lebanon.”

Brown walked over to the corner of the room and picked up a single barrel shotgun and broke it down for Luke. Then Luke paid his respects to Brown’s wife who was in the kitchen visiting with a relative and the three of us met by my truck. Hull handed his childhood playmate a bottle and said, Luke, smell this and see if you think it is double sugar?”

Denny shook the pint bottle and explained, “See the bead of bubbles. This is one way of telling good moonshine, the color is another and the smell is yet another. But, probably the taste is the telltale clue to good, average or bad moonshine.”

After the old friends took a swig of the Tennessee moonshine for old times sake - - it was time to locate the next person who knew of Luke Alexander Denny’s exploits. Before pulling away the two shook hands and Luke lowered his window and revealed, “You might not believe this Brownie, but I didn’t know your real name was Floyd Cordell Brown. Everyone called you Cordell Hull Brown.”

“Yeah, they all call me that, but I want to make damn sure we get it right in the book,” Brown said with a smile as we pulled away.