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ALVIN C. (RED) JARED: OCTOBER 31, 1919:  
CHAPTER 24

“If my new patrol car hadn’t been so light back in 1948 I might have been the only person ever to catch the elusive moonshine runner,” Alvin C. (Red) Jared said during his interview on Center Hill Lake, February 20, 1988.

Lieutenant Red Jared, a retired Tennessee Highway Patrolman, added, “What happened in ’48 was we had word Luke Denny had been bringing shine into Cookeville from Jackson County and I was hidden on the southeast side of the intersection at Double Springs (now Highway 70-N, west of Cookeville) waiting for him to come through. We had been given the description of his blue Pontiac.”

Denny chimed in, “I had loaded in the Seven Knobs Community of Jackson County and was headed for Cookeville. When I stopped at the Double Springs intersection and started to turn left I saw the front of a trooper’s car, barely. Immediately I turned right and headed west. I knew I had a better chance of getting away on the back roads in Jackson County than on the blacktop going into Cookeville. Plus, the city police could have caught me.

“I threw the juice to that Pontiac and took off. The big Chiefton had 80 gallons of moonshine in the trunk and I knew if the trooper stopped me I would have lost my new car and the whiskey and would have served time,” the 73-year-old moonshine runner continued.

Trooper Jared returned to the conversation, “I was staying with him, even after he tuned north on Highway 56 toward Gainesboro. I was about 300 yards behind him and could see his taillights real clear. At this time I’d say my new ’48 Ford was traveling about 85 to 90 miles an hour and that was fast for those cars and roads. Luke’s blue car had a bigger motor and was heavier, plus he had all that booze to hold him down on the road.

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“I thought I was gaining on him, but he was simply slowing down to make the turn past Mrs. Avo Pauk’s store. Just when I was getting ready to catch him, he made a hard right turn and skidded onto the gravels toward the Bullet Hole Community,” the retired trooper of 28 years revealed.

“Oh, I was mad when he made the turn because I started sliding and when I finally came to a stop Luke was long gone. I quickly turned around and went about a mile down the Bullet Hole road, to see if he had wrecked. I knew I would never be able to catch him once he got on those old back roads. I stopped and got out of the patrol car and saw his track,” Jared explained.

“That was around September. I remember it was about that time of year because we picked up our new trooper cars in July and I had the Ford a few months. Shortly, after that, probably around Thanksgiving, Joe Sanford, I think he was a sergeant at the time (he retired a captain of the THP), radioed me from Carthage saying, ‘Luke Denny is loaded and is headed your way in that blue Pontiac.’ I waited for him in the Gentry Community, but Luke never came through so I called Joe and told him, ‘Luke gave us the slip, again. We’ll get him one of these days,’ but that day never came did it Luke?”

“I was simply lucky,” the whiskey hauler responded. “I am not sure which time this was because I was doing a lot of running back and forth from Jackson County to Smith County around the end of 1948.”

“Luke was one of the cleverest whiskey runners I ever came in contact with,” Red Jared revealed. “Many people today have stereotyped these whiskey haulers. They think of a whiskey runner wearing overalls, combat boots without socks, an old felt or straw hat, with six shooters hanging out of his pockets. Luke was none of these. He was concerned, first and foremost about not getting caught. Luke was well dressed and extremely careful about which route he took or did not take. Yes, it was a cat and mouse game.

“And, believe you me I have ‘cuffed many a moonshiner, runner, and bootlegger in my day,” the old trooper said with a proud look. “After I retired from the troopers (1943-1970) I was the Chief of Police in McMinnville, Tennessee for one year.

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Then I served as the Chief Deputy in Selma, Alabama (1971 to 1981) and finally I rounded out my law enforcement career as Algood, Tennessee’s Chief of Police (1981-1983).

“If you have a minute or two let me tell you about some of Luke’s friends whom I put behind bars. It was between 1952 and 1953, as I recall,” the retired lawman said, “we had received word from an informant, who was the local constable, of the whereabouts of a still near Monterey Lake in Putnam County. Silas Anderson, the local federal revenue officer took the lead as he did most of the time when it came to seizing the illegal alcohol, explained how this operation was to be conducted. I was to come down through the woods and block off any avenue the moonshiners had to escape near me. I surprised this man whom I thought was a lookout and I remember telling him, as I handcuffed his hands behind a tree, ‘I’ll wind you up if you holler.’

“Then I left him and heard Silas yell for us to come on in and help him tear up the still and load the moonshiners in his vehicle. After the moonshiners were taken to jail in Cookeville, Silas kept yelling, for someone to come on down from the hill. Silence. No one came down. Silas said something must have happened to our informat. Then it hit me like a ton of bricks, I had handcuffed the constable up to the tree and he was too

scared to say anything. When I told the crew about our informat handcuffed to that tree we all had a good laugh as we climbed the hill after him.”

Denny questioned the retired lawman, “Red, wasn’t it about this same time you arrested one of the Burk’s brothers over in Turkeytown?”

“You must be talking about Jesse Burks. Some of the Burks fooled with moonshine right in the corner of Clay, Overton and Jackson counties. It is hilly terrain and stills were all over the place, it seemed. The Burks were real nice folks, but some of them were on the other side of the moonshine law. My sergeant told me to check and see if I could anything around Hickernut (Hickory Nut) Corner or the Tick Community. I stopped at Jesse’s house and asked this lad about 10 or 11 years old, standing on a porch, of Jesse’s whereabouts. He said, ‘Oh, he’s down in the hollar lookin’ for goats.’

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“We talked for awhile and I questioned him with something like, ‘Where did you say Jesse was?’ The youngster pointed in another direction and said, ‘I told you he was down yonder cuttin’ saplin’s.’

“I knew the lad was hiding something and after talking to him for a few minutes he revealed where Jesse and the crew were making the whiskey. It was about 200 to 300 yards away. I was in uniform and walked like I was tiptoeing on eggs. It was unbelievable, but I was able to get within 10 feet of the still. I was hidden behind a tree when I heard Jesse say, ‘That’s runnin’ off good now Doyle,’ after he put a cup under the tap to catch some of the newly made moonshine.

“I said, ‘Give me a drink of that Jesse.’ Without thinking he stuck the tin cup into the liquid and then realized the voice was not one of his men’s. He turned and there I stood. Jesse wasn’t scared at all. He simply said, ‘Oh hell’.

Trooper Jared continued, “All of us kicked over the still and poured out the slop (mash). I told Doyle and Jesse to carry two cases - - one case each - - up the hill for evidence. The cases contained two rows of six half gallon fruit jars. As we started up the hill Jesse said to me, ‘I sure would like to have a drank before I go to jail.’

“I said, ‘I’m up here. I don’t know what’s going on back there.’ Then I heard the leaves as he laid the case down and looked and he turned up a jar and drank it like you would drink milk.”

This brought a chuckle from both Jared and Denny. After the two took a sip of coffee Jared remembered another part of the Jesse Burks episode. “Jesse was setting in the back seat of the patrol car and everytime we came upon a house around his territory I would slowdown and blow the horn and Jesse waved.

“It’s kinda hard to explain about the old days and moonshinin’,” Jared said. “Most of the moonshiners were kind, hard working poor folks. This was their way of making a living. Many of them did not drink the whiskey. It was their cash crop, like tobacco is for many today.”

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The moonshine runner said, “I hauled many loads from that part of Tennessee with the help of Jesse’s brothers Mack and Johnnie Burks and I recall some of the men you caught had to appear in federal court in Nashville.”

“Yes, that’s true, Luke,” the retired officer commented. “As I said before, Silas Anderson normally had jurisdiction during our moonshine still raids. When we went to federal court they paid us 10 cents a mile from Cookeville to Nashville, \$6 a day for meals and \$12 for attending court. That was a lot of money in those days.

“While we’re talking about raids that reminds me when I was working out of the Chattanooga Division about 1949 and the highway patrol had received numerous calls about moonshine in Fentress County, Tennessee. Sooo,” the red haired man said, “Our Chief Dick Webb decided to raid Jamestown and we did. All night long we wrote warrants. We were exhausted. About daylight we drove down Highway 127, about 10 or 12 miles south of Jamestown, not too far from Clarkrange, when the chief hit the brakes. He said to me, ‘Do you see what I see?’

“I said, ‘Yes, it’s an old man, probably in his eighties, pushing a 25 gallon keg in a wheelbarrow. Chief Webb backed up the patrol car and asked the man what was in the barrel. The angry gray haired fellow, still trying to push the wheelbarrow up the rise answered in a strong, upset voice, ‘Whiskey by God?’

“The chief and I looked at each other. He said, while shifting the car into low gear, ‘The old codger doesn’t know it’s against the law, plus I am tired.’ Jared and Denny laughed and after a minute or two the former lawman said, “Luke do you remember the big barn raid in 1959 down in Hermitage Springs?”

“Are you talking about the gold Cadillac of an operation? I read about it in the paper and heard the news on the radio, but I didn’t load, nor unload there,” Denny pointed out.

Jared said, “This was the biggest and most modern still I ever saw. First it was all electric. No light showed out of the barn as it was covered inside with tar paper and the electric lines were underground. The still operated at night and all the

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moonshine was transported to Detroit. They pumped the slop underground to a pond out back and fed the hogs. It had a 1,000 gallon pot and since it was all electric, there was no smoke to give away the cooking process. The man said he could run 400 gallons of

whiskey a day by himself. He also said the still cost \$10,000 to set up. Not only did he lose the electric cooker, but I understand the judge took the farm, stock and all.”

Officer Jared’s guests began to arrive at the lake marina so the two men shook hands. As the moonshine runner opened the door, Red Jared concluded as he waved goodbye, “Don’t forget to stop by when you’re around these parts. I’m sure we would find out I chased you more than once and didn’t know it was you. Gosh I miss the old days, too.”