

Midnight Moonshine Rendezvous
by Dr. Stony Merriman
Story by Luke Alexander Denny
Chapter 1
Personal History

Luke Alexander Denny, the legendary Middle Tennessee moonshine runner opened his life by saying, "I was born near Buffalo Valley in Putnam County, Tennessee, November 20 or 21, 1917. I have always considered November 21 as my birthday. In fact, that date is on my discharge certificate from the U.S. Army. My birth certificate, however, states I arrived at 5 p.m., on the 20th which was on a cold Tuesday. The temperature was around 10 degrees below zero, according to my Uncle Floyd Huddleston, who I'm told had a photographic memory," Denny explained.

"My Great Uncle Jessie Huddleston told me many times it was the coldest winter he had ever experienced. According to my father Hugh Toi Denny, the weather turned cold around November 3. It started snowing, but the temperature was so low there wasn't much accumulation. All that fell remained on the ground. It snowed off and on all of November, and up through December. Several of the old timers from Rock Spring (the community where I was born) said the snow didn't melt until sometime in early spring. In the far reaches on North Hill some snow could be seen as late as April 10. Mr. Earl McCallum, also told me the Tennessee River froze over throughout southern Tennessee and northern Alabama. Earl lived in Savannah, Tennessee, at the time.

"As I said, my dad was Hugh Toi Denny. Dad was born in 1882. He was a 35-year-old farmer when I was born. Martha Ann (Huddleston) Denny was my beloved mother and the hardest working housewife I've ever seen. She was 33 when I came into this world. Mom also taught school for a short time. I was the second of three children. My brother John Henry Denny is the oldest, then came my younger and only sister Helen Denny.

"When I went to school, head start and all the other preschool programs were unheard of. Then, the normal age to start school was six. I started my 'book learnin' as it was referred to in those days, in 1922. I believe school started July 26. My mother may have taught at the school, before I started. My first school was a one-room schoolhouse in Rock Spring, in the lower end of Putnam County. My first teacher was Mrs. Sadie Amonett; a dedicated tutor if there ever was one. I will always remember her special humanitarianism traits. An example of this was Mrs. Amonett shared her lunch with some poor students behind a big oak at the southside of the school yard many times. One day three little girls and a little boy ate nearly all of her lunch. I remember they were crying. They brought their lunch in a lard bucket. My bucket was blue and white. *For more stories about Luke going to school, see Schoolyard Tales.*

“Back then the sheriffs did not receive a regular salary. They were paid on commission. A few fee grabbing sheriffs deputized many, many men to help them make enough to get by on. Some sheriffs even got fairly wealthy because of the fee grabbing system. For example, if a drunk was found guilty or ‘submitted’ (paid off) the arresting officer would get about \$2 when the drunk paid it to the clerk.

“Also, Justices of the Peace (JPs) received court costs when presiding over cases. Many times the JPs owned a country store and held court there on Saturdays. These trials were gathering places for the young and old alike. It was the farmers entertainment in the 20s and 30s. Usually the store owner made a good profit during the Saturday cases. I loved these trials and attended them nearly every weekend.

“One such trial—held at T.D. Alcorns’ Buffalo Valley Store—sticks out in my memory. It was around 1927, as I was about 10 year old. A local middle aged man was arrested and charged with public drunkenness. Again, we can’t use his real name since he’s dead and his family wouldn’t give us permission, so we’ll call him Tom Bales. Ol ‘Tom drank white whiskey and did get drunk form time to time. In fact, it could be stated he was a chronic offender and paid out a goodly amount to the fee grabbers. Finally, he stopped paying and started going to court. On two consecutive Saturdays Tom, with the aide of his mouthpiece Buck Jones of Silver Point, had beaten the drunk and disorderly charges. Jones, a crafty, rather large attorney, had no formal legal education, he nevertheless proved several times to be a capable lawyer.

“Since Tom had beaten his cases the previous weeks he became a little careless with his answers, during questioning by the state’s lawyers. As Attorney Jones thundered objections to J.P. Thurmond Alcorn, Tom kept answering the state’s questions. Buck Jones became very angry at his client. The state, meanwhile, became very aggressive and began firing questions right and left, hoping to come away with a guilty verdict after two straight losses. Tom continued answering. Buck continued objecting. The state continued firing questions. It was a three ring circus. “Finally Buck Jones stood up and shouted, ‘I object. I object, your honor. The question is irrelevant. It has no bearing on this case.’ He then turned to his client and said, “Tom! Tom! Your convicting yourself!’ The spectators were amused and roared with laughter at Buck’s convicting-yourself remarks. Tom dropped his head. He looked like a child caught red-handed with his hand in the cookie jar.

“Attorney Buck Jones very cunningly suggested a short recess, which was granted. The adults and most of us kids knew what those breaks were for. Nearly all adults headed out back for a drink of whiskey. Just a short distance from court was a water pump, housed in concrete blocks. One could look from

the store and see the Kerr Mason jars protruding up and down from behind the pump house.

“After the break everyone seemed refreshed and relaxed. Tom, now, was much more deliberate with his responses. He waited for an objection from Jones before answering. He became a very good witness for his own trial. Buck asked Tom if he had a drink before his arrest. Tom said, ‘Just a taste ‘bout a spoon full. I reckon I drank it ‘bout four hours before I was arrested.’ Tom had already admitted to drinking during the earlier fiery questioning by the state. But the state failed to draw out of him how much he drank and when.

“Attorney Jones asked his client, ‘Alright now Tom, were you drunk when you were arrested that Saturday night on such and such a date?’

“Tom answered, ‘Naw sir I wasn’t drunk.’

“I’ve already told ye, ‘bout a tablespoon full I reckon,’ Tom revealed, again.

“Buck looked at his client and said. ‘That is all. You and I know you told the truth.’

“He then turned to the state’s lawyers and in a low, rich voice asked if they wished to cross examine the witness. The state seemed to know they had lost the case. They questioned him thoroughly, but were unable to shake his testimony.

“In Buck Jones’ summation he pointed out to the state’s lawyers and lawmen, “My poor client has indeed been harassed by you, the law. You have picked him up on numerous occasions and slammed him in jail for no reason ‘atall’. You fee grabbers have locked my poor client up like a helpless mule. You should be ashamed of yourselves.’

“Then he turned toward the J.P. and continued, ‘Your honor, you know that a tablespoon of whiskey won’t make a 12 year old kid drunk, let alone a grown man. I know your honor will render a just and not guilty verdict in this case. Thank you again, your honor, for listening so close to the proof that has been offered here today. I know, that you know, the state has failed to prove this man guilty of any wrong doing. I’ve known you, your honor, ever since you were a little boy and I have known your daddy a long time. We grew up and played together. We seem just like one big family. I know all of you are honest and God fearing folks and I am not a bit uneasy about your verdict. I am positive it will be one favorable to my client. With this in mind the defense rests.

“Buck sat down looking very pleased. He then placed his hand reassuringly on Tom’s shoulder. The state made their summation, but their heart wasn’t in it. They knew they had lost.

“Justice of the Peace Thurmond Alcorn stood up, cleared his throat and announced the verdict, ‘While the arresting officer, under oath, has sworn Tom was staggering and cussing and reeked noticeably of liquor, the defendant denies this claiming he only had taken a small drink about a ‘tablespoon’ full were Tom’s words. The court know, you know, and I know this would not create and stage of intoxication. The law officer swore he was drunk. Tom, swore he wasn’t. The defendant is allowed the benefit of the doubt. It is therefore my opinion Mr. Tom Bales in NOT GUILTY on this particular charge of drunkenness.’

“In celebration Tom attempted to get up. Buck, seeing Tom was bleary-eyed knew instantly he had taken one too many swigs of mountain dew during the break, told him to sit still for a minute or two till the crowd scattered.

“Following Rock Spring’s Grade School. I attended High School at Baxter Seminary, in Putnam County. I had a lousy time with math and had difficulty in making passing grades. In other subjects I did very well. English was right down my alley. For example, I had the second highest grade in class behind Ora Mai Bean.

“After a year I dropped out of school and farmed for a while. In fact, I worked like hell and didn’t make any money, my family had land and plenty to eat, but no money. In 1933 or ’34, when I was 16 or 17 years old, I had \$20 in my pocket, probably from my tobacco crop. I used this money to buy some moonshine whiskey with. This friend of mine told me if I would furnish him the liquor he would peddle it and give me half the profit. Since I didn’t have a car I asked a good friend from Buffalo Valley to drive. He drove me to pickup five gallons, free of charge, but told me it was the last time he would haul whiskey for me. We picked up this little dab at Boma and carried it to Buffalo Valley. He wasn’t a drinking man and didn’t want the Valley folks to think of him as a whiskey man.

“This first five gallons was sold extremely fast. So I bummed another ride to get the next batch. This five gallons went as rapidly as the first. I purchased a ‘whooping’ 20 gallons the third trip and convinced the moonshiner and his runner to deliver it to me on the fourth load. That’s how I started the illegal whiskey career.

“During this period I was also working on the family farm in Rock Spring. We raised tobacco, corn, hogs, cattle and wheat. I hated farm work from day-one. It seemed the more I worked the more I thought about hauling whiskey. Every chance I got I would do something concerning whiskey running. I even rode shotgun for free and helped load and unload, too. By doing this I learned where the stills were, who was selling and drinking the mountain dew. I was a moonshining intern you might say,” Denny said with a smile. “I continued this until I was 19 years old. All I could think of was, ‘How are you going to get away

from this back-breaking farm work?' Wheels (a car) was the only answer. Not too many folks had a car back then.

"So, during the late spring of '38, probably May," Denny recalled, "I sold every single hog that was mine and put a down payment on my first car; a 1933 black Plymouth from Carlen Motors in Cookeville, TN.

"A few days later I stopped at R.L. Maxwell's General Store in Buffalo Valley. One of my older friends gently took me by the arm and motioned with his head for me to follow him to a water pump. He whispered, 'Your hoss (Luke's car) needs shoeing (his tires were bald), plus the fellers are thirsty (for whiskey). 'I explained to him that I would go get the moonshine and bring it back to the store but I didn't have the cash to pay for it. He gave me the money for 30 gallons. A lady moonshiner sold me the whiskey for one dollar a gallon from her still in No Man's land in Jackson County. My profit was 27 bucks. That was a hell'va lot back then I remember spreading the entire \$27 out on the hood of the car. I looked at all that money for less than one day's work. That's all she wrote. I was totally and completely hooked on moonshining. Remember too, gasoline was only 18 cents a gallon.

"Locally, the word of my whiskey hauling spread like wildfire. A long time friend Jimbo Medley told me of dozens of farmer who wanted whiskey. I contacted all of them. Probably half signed up for weekly deliveries. I was on my way off the farm. A local bootlegger in the St. Mary's Community wasn't pleased with his hauler. I told him I would be on time, with the quantity he wanted. The price was right. We shook hands for 25 gallons twice a month. He was my first full-fledged retailer. After four or five loads he told me about another bootlegger who was dissatisfied with his runner.

"I saved about a pint of Willie Lane's best whiskey and drove to the Peeled Chestnut area near Sparta to make a sale. That's in White County, Tennessee. My St. Mary's bootlegger had written him a letter of introduction for me. After the bootlegger read the note I handed him a sample of Lane's finest. Once the price was fixed he said, 'I'll take 45 gallons tomorrow night.' Again I was on my way. Somewhere about midnight, the next evening, the Peeled Chestnut delivery was made. I was happy as could be, as I pulled away from his place. Down the road a piece two lawmen, a trooper and a deputy, pulled me over. They searched the car and naturally found the five empty (5 gallon) jacket cans and a 20-gallon keg. The trooper said in an angry, but fatherly manner, "Son, you should be in school?' I said no and then he asked, 'How old are you?' When I said 19 he laughed then added, "You're to damned young to be hauling rot gut whiskey and I'm going to check these vessels and if they have enough liquor in them I'm going to seize this car.'

"Sure, they knew I had been hauling whiskey but they couldn't prove it. The law even tried to pour out leftovers to get enough evidence to present to the judge.

That didn't work because I had put a match to each can before pulling away from the White County bootlegger. An old Jackson County moonshining man taught me that lit' trick of the trade in the mid-1930s. I had been stopped for the first time.

"As 1938 came to a close I picked up five larger retailers in Smith County. Therefore, Carthage became one of my biggest runs. I changed my wardrobe from work clothes to suits. Wearing a two or three piece suit served three purposes. First, if I was all dressed up the moonshiners wouldn't want me to get my suit dirty and would LOAD. At the bootleggers they wouldn't want me to get dirty so they would UNLOAD. I would take my time eating, talking and exchanging money, too. Secondly, most Tennessee whiskey runners wore overalls. The law knew this. They kept their eyes peeled for those characters. Therefore, I was able to play the part of a day-night chameleon and evade the jailhouse. A well dressed whiskey runner was really unheard of in the late 30s. Thirdly, I was single, in good shape, and had celebrated my twenty first birthday on November 21, 1938. I was on the prowl for ladies and a good time. A well dressed available young man with a car—and money to burn—was hard to find. I was that fellow. I made no bones about it...I was ready for action, anytime day or night. I was not about to settle down, at this time in my life.

"Many have seen the movie "Thunder Road" and honestly believe hauling whiskey is one big fun time occupation. That is far from the truth. Making moonshine is a rugged job. Hauling can be tough at times. For example, in the cold winter of 1939 I had to use the back roads through Cannon and DeKalb counties to evade the law. A dragnet was out along the main hi-ways and even the secondary roads. It had been snowing for two days. Only a few inches had accumulated, but the temperature was below zero. It was about 2:30 in the morning. It was extremely dark. I was alone. My windshield wipers stopped, so I slowed down to a crawl. Sleet began hitting the windows so hard it was impossible to hear the engine running. All of a sudden my heater went on the blink. Within 30 minutes I couldn't feel my toes. I had no gloves. I was LOST!

"Finally, a dim light peaked from the window of a small cabin on the left side of the road. I pulled as close to the door as possible and knocked for a long time, shivering. A middle aged man opened the door and wanted to know what I was doing out in these parts at this time in a sleet storm. I was shaking uncontrollably. He, seeing my teeth chattering state, invited me by the wood stove. As I got too close to the stove he pulled me back and told me to put my hands in my pockets and warm up gradually. I did as he directed. Within a couple of hours I was revived. In my pocket was a pint of moonshine, so I took a drink. When I offered him some, he took a drink. I walked out to the car and brought in a five-gallon jacket can of moonshine and poured him out a quart. Just as I finished pouring his portion fear shot through my soul as I spotted a pistol in a holster and a deputy sheriff's star hanging on a nail by his hat. He saw me starring at it and said, "You need not worry none, all I bother is them fellers

that steal. And, I give 'em holy hell!" I quickly shook hands—before he changed his mind—and bid him ado... and was gone. I've never seen this deputy again. The next morning I had both the windshield wipers and heater repaired. Whiskey running was not all fun and games by no means.

"I was a night owl. A normal day would consist of rollin' out of bed around mid-day. Eat breakfast at home between noon and two. In the late afternoon I'd check on a babe or take a gingerly ride to contract a load of whiskey or just stop and chat with someone. Everywhere I stopped I enjoyed myself. I made as many friends as possible. I had time for people. I listened and I talked to everyone, rich or poor, old or young, white or colored. I wanted everyone to know me and like me. This paid dividends in many, many ways. At dark it was time for this lizard to change his colors. If it was Sunday through Thursday nights I hauled 'shine. Fridays and Saturday nights were too risky to haul. Cops were everywhere, plus drunks and outlaws were always out in force on those two nights. I usually went caddin' around, attending party after party—those two nights. Every once in a while—when I met a good looking honey, I would skip a run. I had a thousand excuses for the moonshiners and the bootleggers, usually it was the law was doing this or that. Yes, the law was one of my favorite reasons why I didn't make a run. If a retailer ran out of moonshine and desperately needed a load I made a run on Friday or Saturday, but these runs were extremely rare. Getting caught was my worse fear.

"I wore out the '33 Plymouth and a '37 Ford coupe by the time 1940 rolled around. It was time for a brand new 'mochine'. The favorite moonshine haulers car was a '40 Ford. Therefore, a '40 black Ford became my very first new car. It was perfect for hauling moonshine. It was fast, was excellent in the curves and would hold a goodly amount of whiskey.

"Japanese Bomb Pearl Harbor!", was the headline that sent cold chills up and down my spinal column, on December 8, 1941. My draft notice sure put a damper on my whiskey running business. However, I did haul up to and including the last night at home. I took my basic at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. After basic training I came home and guess what I did on leave; hauled whiskey and courted the fillies. The U.S. Army taught me about machine guns in the burning heat of the summer of 1942 down in Columbia, SC. At Fort Jackson they even tried to teach me how to be a driver. That was a laugh.

"I sailed to England in the early part of 1943 on the USS Marine Raven. It took 14 days and I got seasick. I was a member of the, battery 'A', 696th Armored Field Artillery Battalion in England. We trained for three months there, then landed in Le Havre, France. During World War Two I fought in five major campaigns; France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg and finally in Germany. In October 1946 this old lad of 29 left the war zone for home.

“Moonshine was on my mind all the way from Germany to Buffalo Valley, Tennessee. And, the second I got back, transporting that clear mountain mule was the first order of business. After wearing out two used Fords I bought myself a big new beautiful 1947 Pontiac Chiefton. Normally I delivered whiskey to my Middle Tennessee bootleggers, but I did take a load to Louisville and Oklahoma City. I know I took at least two loads to Detroit, Michigan.

“It was at this time (1948) I married my first of three wives,” Denny explained. “Jewell Ray and I went together for a few months and had a wonderful time. We got hitched in Rossville, GA, July 1948. Jewell and I moonshined often. We lived with my mother until she left me and went to Michigan. Jewell fit right into my moonshine daily routine; up late, eat breakfast/dinner at mom and dad’s house, ride around, party, eat out, contract a load, haul a load, drink, party again, make love and sleep. It was a fast, hard life, not made for a married woman, that’s for sure. We stayed married about three or four months, but didn’t divorce for about a year. I didn’t see her for nearly 40 years. She lives in Algood, Tennessee. We remain friends.

“Moving whiskey from the stills in Jackson, Clay and Rutherford counties was my normal job until I got a job selling appliances for Tuley Furniture Company, in Carthage during late 1949. I met Nellie Ora Keathly shortly after that and we were married February 13, 1950. I tried going straight, and did for probably six or eight months. Nellie and I stayed together for 22 years. She divorced me May 11, 1972. She died September 1, 1982. Nellie and I had two lovely children. Charles Lynn Denny and Marilyn Elizabeth Denny.

“Believe it or not we led a fairly normal life for those six to eight months in the early to middle 1950. When I ran out of customers in Smith County I naturally moved my operation back to the old moonshining Jackson County. Then, when the moonshining men wanted to only pay in whiskey – for the stoves, freezers and refrigerators – it was right back to hauling moonshine for this old Tennessean. Much to my surprise the furniture selling business was a perfect front for my hauling. I had pickup trucks with Tuley furniture signs on the back sides. My buddy Dewey (Junior) Bennett helped me construct a wooden box to haul my whiskey in. It was an old Frigidaire refrigerator crate. He reinforced the inside so it would hold 96 gallons. I hauled that crate until it wore out. Probably 1955 was my banner year.

“I worked for Tuley until 1958. I sold appliances a year for John Ligon Electric Company, then sold appliances for Carter-Hackett Hardware the next year. My whiskey hauling was on a downward spiral about this time. While I hauled a few large loads in the early 60s, my nerves were about gone. So, I contracted whiskey – acted as a middle man – for the next few years, but on a much smaller scale as before. About 1960 I took a selling job with Woodard Brothers. I held this job for about the same length of time as Tuley’s (eight or nine years). About 1969 William (Bud) Smith and I owned S&D Battery Sales, near South Carthage.

I was on the road selling while Bud was back in the store taking care of the accounting and ordering portion of the business. We went out of business in 1971. I've been retired since.

"I hauled illegal moonshine for more than a quarter century and never got caught transporting it. There are many places where I hauled too and from, with unusual sounding names. In Sumner County there was Buck Lodge and South Tunnel; Rutherford County had Lascassas and Sugar Hill; Macon County sported Bug Tussle, Goose Horn, Webbtown, Walnut Shade and Buffalo; Jackson County spotlighted Bullet Hole; Backbone, Nameless, Philadelphia Ridge, Shake Rag, No-Man's Land, Seven Knobs and Shiloh; DeKalb County carried Pea Ridge, Dowelltown (Do-well-town), Temperance Hall and Liberty; Putnam County highlighted Buffalo Valley, Silver Point, Boma, Pumpkin Center, Bloody Eight (part of DeKalb County); Clay County had Union Hill, Butler's Landing; Penitentiary Branch, Dry Creek, Turkey Town, Hickory Nut Corner and Tick; Overton County had Popular Springs Ridge and Waterloo; White County highlighted Pistol, Little Putnam and Peeled Chestnut; Wilson County had Cedar Creek, Bartons Creek, Caro Bend, Martha and Cedar Forest; Trousdale County had Macey's Hill and Cato; Smith County had St. Mary, Pigeon Roost, Helms (nicknamed Hell's Bend) and Sullivans Bend, Enigma (meaning dark thoughts), Hogtown, Lost Creek, Defeated Creek, Difficult, Pleasant Shadow, Devil's Elbow, Devil's Garden and Sebowishia (meaning swiftwater in the Indian language).

" A childhood friend, Roscoe Ash, was somewhat of a hero to me. Roscoe, who is dead, told me about a bus ride he took some 40 years ago concerning a couple of these unusual sounding names. A nosy lady was sitting next to him. She asked him his name and he said Roscoe. She said what a kind of work do you do and he answered Railroad man with Tennessee Central. She paused to catch her breath and said where are you from? Roscoe answered, "I was born in Devil's Garden and raised in Hell's Bend!" the old gal immediately got up and moved to another seat.

" On November 30, 1974, just after my 57th birthday, Alice Jewell Whitehead and I were married in Woodbury. We had no children. Alice and I lived in her home near Gallatin. She was a nurse at Clover Bottom on old Highway 70 near Nashville. While she worked I stayed at home. Nearly a year later, on November 6, 1975, we also divorced. Alice had five kids by her former husbands, before she died. She, like my other wives, was a good person.

" After our divorce I moved into the Cookeville Government projects until 1980. I lived in the South Carthage projects for 1980 to 1984 and on July 13, 1984 I moved to the Smithville, Tennessee Government project where I now reside.

"I am not in the best health, but I get by. I live alone. If anyone thinks being alone at 73 years old is great, think again. It's no fun. I have a hole in my chest from a bullet wound and virtually no money. How I wish Luke Alexander Denny

would have listened to his dear mother years ago – around 1935 – when she said ‘Leave the whiskey hauling to the devil!’

Luke shot himself with a pistol in the chest back in 1961. He hadn't slept for days. He took two powerful sleeping pills (Red Birds) and washed them down with some Old Crow whiskey, and later some beer. The pills and alcohol had a adverse effect on him. He began to hallucinate. He couldn't remember just what happen next but he remembers taking out his .22 caliber revolver and somehow shooting himself in the chest. He was taken to the hospital and recovered in about two weeks.

Luke Denny owned 15 cars and trucks during and after his moonshine hauling days. Each vehicle has a special story all its own. Throughout the book these cars and trucks play a unique role to disguise the moonshine or out-run the law. Luke owned the following cars and trucks: '33 Plymouth Coupe (first car with lettering); '37 Ford Coupe (first modified for running whiskey); '40 Ford Coupe (first new car); '38 Ford Coupe (Uncle bought, owned by doctor); '46 Ford Coupe (first car owned after WWII); '46 Ford Coach (first and last white car); '47 Pontiac Chiefton (first and last straight 8); '49 Ford Club Coupe (first green car); '52 Chevrolet Pickup (first Ford truck); '55 Chevrolet Pickup (last of the hauling trucks); '62 Chevrolet Pickup (contracting truck, only); '68 Ford Pickup (very little contracting); '69 Ford Pickup (very little contracting); '77 Oldsmobile Cutless (out of business).

*To read the rest of Luke Alexander Denny's Moonshine Running Adventures: 1930-1960's you will have to read the 284 page book written by Dr. Stony Merriman – Midnight Moonshine Rendezvous – M.Stone Publishing – P.O. Box 275-N – Smithville, TN 37166. My copy is falling apart, it was my father's. My father is Tim Denny – Luke Alexander Denny's cousin. Tim bought one of Luke's cars that Luke used to use to deliver moonshine. The local police chased Tim one day when he was driving that car, thinking it was Luke transporting moonshine. * See Tim Denny's Story. Tim remembers Luke and his moonshining days. I, Audrey June (Denny) Lambert met Luke a few times. The last time was at my Grandmother Audra Camilla (Anderson) Denny's funeral in Tennessee. TN. His nephew Hugh Wayne Denny told me, April 2000 that Luke was alive but suffered from crippling arthritis, but his mind was exceptionally clear. Later that year Luke fell and broke some bones. Luke died 6 August 2000. The verse on his tombstone, located in Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville TN reads:*



*I would not sit in the scorner's seat
nor hurl the cynic's ban
Let me live in a house
by the side of the road
and be a friend to man
b. 21 November 1917
d. 6 August 2000*



Jared, Joseph Jackson

b. 2 January 1760, Loudoun Co., VA

d. 4 March 1835, Jackson Co., TN – (now Putnam Co., TN)

s/o John & Hannah (Whitacre) Jared

Buried – Joseph Jared Cemetery – Hwy 70N at Low Gap, W. of Gentry, TN

Revolutionary War Soldier – Continental Army

md - Agnes Beard – “Aggie”- “Martha” – 23 October 1780, Bedford, VA

...Naomi Jared – 17 September 1797, Bedford Co., VA – April 1881

md Joseph H. Carr or (Kerr) – ca. 1809

...Betsy Elizabeth Jared Carr – November 1820, Jackson, TN – ca. 1903, TN

md ca. 1848 - Isaac Alexander Huddleston – b. 14 May 1804

s/o Charles and Elizabeth (Lollar) Huddleston

...Henry Carr Huddleston – 28 August 1856 – 3 May 1920

md Tennie Sexton – b. 5 March 1865

...Martha Anne Huddleston - b. 29 February 1884 – d. 27 March 1958

md Hugh Toi Denny – b.16 May 1879, Rock Springs, TN –

16 June 1972 - Both Buried -Rock Springs Cemetery, TN

...Luke Alexander Denny - b. 21 November 1917, TN –

d. 6 August 2000, TN

md July 1948 Jewell Ray Koonce

md February 13, 1950, Nellie Ora Keathly -

...Charles Lynn Denny

...Marilyn Elizabeth Denny

md November 30, 1974 Alice Jewell Whitehead

Moonshine still on Display at the Museum - 2004

The Trace, Newsletter of the Jackson Co., TN Historical Society



Luke Alexander Denny & the Tidwells' captured still, page 80, Midnight Moonshine Rendezvous by Dr. Stoney Merriman.

One of the more interesting exhibits at the Museum is a still which was used for making whiskey in Jackson County, TN. Along with the still is a photograph of four gentlemen who are “working” the still to produce this whiskey. Mentioning was a fact of life for many residents of Jackson County for many years, and many news articles are found in the archives of the Jackson County Sentinel detailing raids, trials, and punishment meted out to the persons making, selling and transporting whiskey.

Tales of the mentioning exploits in Jackson County and the surrounding area are found in Midnight Moonshine Rendezvous by Stoney Merriman. This book recounts the experiences of Luke Alexander Denny who delivered the illegal beverage from 1930 until the early 1960's. Many of his trips were dangerous, some were amusing, and most were filled with names of the makers and sellers who provided Mr. Denny with his cargo. This book can be found in the Jackson County Library.