

Chapter Four Moonshine Mafia

We had more fun on our fishing trip over to the Black Warrior River than I thought possible. You remember me telling you it was thirty or forty miles depending on where we were going. It was a lot further than that.

Uncle Elrod knows some moon shiners over in Winston County who told him where some good fishing was and you talk about way back in the sticks, buddy, Uncle Elrod knows the way and he got lost about three times.

Uncle Elrod had some bright yellow flags that we had to hold real high out of the window. When we asked him why we had to show the flags he said to keep from getting shot. Now I ain't going into great detail on what color flag you had to show on what day. I'll just say that what I just said is enough said. I'm just a kid so I don't know much about the "Moonshine Mafia" and if I was grown up I wouldn't want to know anything about them.

So for the record, I don't know what county we were fishing in or even if we were still in Alabama. I ain't saying no more, no sir-ree, not one more word.

One time before those guys got to know Uncle Elrod he went back up in that country with a fairly decent pick-up truck to look at a stand of timber. They started shooting at him and before he could get turned around and headed back out of there he had 67 bullet holes in that truck.

That tells me a couple of things about those folks; one, they did not intend to kill him 'cause they hit what they are shooting at and two, they were not wanting company on that particular day!

They tell around here if a High Sheriff gets in good with those folks he can retire after a four year term. I don't know anything about it myself but that's what they say and I believe it. From time to time I might say a few words about them folks but I ain't going to say very much. No sir-ree, not very much.

But even having to go through all that we still had a wonderful time on this trip. Us three boys ran the trot lines one time all by ourselves. There was this embankment about ten feet tall and it was very sandy. There was a ledge at the edge of the river about three foot wide. We

had just rebaited a hook and put it back in the water when C.C. yells the most dreaded of all words, "SNAKE"!!!!!!!.

That thing was swimming right in front of us. Doug, dad-blame his hide, picks up this long stick and whaps him across the back. That blow didn't hurt the snake all that bad, but it sure made him mad.

He turns and heads right at us. Me and C.C. are clawing at that sandy bank trying to climb out of there, leaving Doug to fight that battle all by himself. After all he's the one that got the snake's attention. If he had left it alone it would have already be long gone by now.

Anyway, I ain't kidding you. His old head was about six inches out of the water and he was looking right at us like he was about to show us a thing or two. Well, in a couple of seconds he was looking at our backsides and all the sand raining down on him, and Doug, who now was backing up trying to get away from that old snake and trying to hit him with every step he took and doing a little bit of cussing to help his spirits.

One problem old Doug was having was all the sand we were throwing in his eyes. He really fussed at us later about deserting him in his time of need. We told him what he needed was to start doing a little thinking. What he did was not very smart at all. But he finally killed that old snake and rightly so, 'cause that old snake had already determined that one of them had to die. Lucky for us it wasn't Doug.

Anyways, we had another great big fish fry after we got back from the Warrior River. (It's really the Black Warrior River but most folks down our way just say the Warrior or maybe the Warrior River.)

Uncle Elrod said after that second big fish fry that he was ready for some pork chops and turnip greens. Uncle Elrod sure knows about good food. He's well traveled! I told you about him going back and forth between Mississippi and Alabama. That's probably where he learned a lot of it.

One time I was with him in town and he ordered a hamburger. The lady asked him if he wanted cheese and cold slaw on it and he said "Cheese on my burger and put the cold slaw on the side." I mean you got to travel a lot to learn stuff like that. He even asked for his Coca-Cola "in a glass with lots of ice." That lady seemed to be really impressed with Uncle Elrod. I know I sure was.

I always have my Coca-Cola in the bottle so I can see where the bottle is from. One time I got a bottle from Detroit, Michigan. Ain't that something! Somebody brought that bottle all the way from Detroit, Michigan. C.C. got one from Little Rock, Arkansas.

We were always doing that. We never got a Coca-Cola that we did not look at the bottom of it to see where it was from. We would bet

each other whose bottle would be from the longest distance away. Then we would argue about who was right on how far a city was from us, like Nashville, TN. or Atlanta, GA. Sometimes we could find the right maps that would tell us, but most of the time we would have to ask Uncle Elrod. If we asked him in front of the other Uncles, sometimes we would get them to arguing.

Now you tell me, is it further from New Orleans to Montgomery or from Little Rock to Montgomery? Sometimes those little coke bottles could stir up quite the argument. At times some of our uncles would get really detailed. They would say, "As the crow flies or the way you got to come around by the road over the bridges and all. They would point out that you could not cross The Mississippi River just anywhere.

I'm surprised that at least one of my Uncles didn't turn out to be a lawyer the way they like to argue. Many court cases and many crimes have been solved and resolved out under our shade trees.

Thinking about my uncle's just plum keeps me jumping all around what I really want to tell you. We had enough fishing for now so we had been spending our days swimming or messing around doing other things.

One day we got into a corn cob fight. In case you never had a corn cob fight, you have teams and you chunk corn cobs at one another and when you get hit you are out of the game and so on until you have a clear cut winner by having the most players left at the end of the game. One day we were playing, Doug and I on one team and C.C. was teamed up with Cleo (more on him later). Doug saw Cleo pick up a huge cob and he was rubbing it through some very fresh cow manure. Doug did not have very good cover and he went running off down the barn hall to get away from Cleo's throw. As he passed by an old mule we had stabled in the barn, the mule kicked catching Doug in the back of the head and knocked him out cold. Well, that brought the game to a halt while we tried to revive Doug.

In a few minutes Doug came to. He shook his head a couple of times and then he said, "God, what a cob."

