



# *THE BLUE STORE*

*Country Ranch Writer*

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# CHAPTER I

## MOONSHINE AND BLUEGRASS

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**O**N ANY GIVEN WEEKEND you could find the folks from the mountains all around gathered here to play their music. The Blue store here was deep down in the hollow along the creek. Roads weren't much in the way of being passible at times. Especially during the rainy season. It had a reputation for being the local hangout for all those who liked Bluegrass Music and Shine.

You came dressed as you are and no fancy cover charge to ever worry about like in the big cities. It was place for one and all, families and children included.

The area around here is rugged and remote so everyone here traveled mostly by foot. Those lucky enough to own a car or pickup trucks were considered fortunate. Many of the cars found here were shine hauling cars and the fastest on the mountains. They were equipped not only to go fast but to haul the biggest loads of shine available. They used their cars in races to find out who had the faster car in the mountains. On weekends you could see the shiners racing for pink slips and arguing who had the best cars.

Later down the road, it would be the beginning of the race car era with many moonshiners like Junior Johnson and others

involved. Their racing started with them arguing over who was the better runner with the fastest car. Junior Johnson has played a big part in the moonshine business. Junior was overheard one day saying to another bootlegger; I was only 12 when I was hauling booze.” The other bootlegger Cal said, ” was a hauler and said, “back then we didn’t need a drivers license. If we got caught we’d just hop out and run.” Johnson says with much pride to his friend; that he never lost ‘A race,” to the law.

Many banjo pickers and players have been known to sing and play for their supper a time or two while traveling through down at the Blue Store.

Bluegrass music and moonshiners went hand and hand back in the day making a living doing what they do best.

While the music was playing the shine was selling out the backhand over fist. Surprisingly no one ever got caught. The Blue Store held dances and bbq’s every weekend and a good time was had by all. I guess that is why they say they are picking and grinning like on Hee Haw!

I remember my Grandpa used to like to play his banjo when he’d bring us down to the Blue Store. My Great Grandpa Benjamin never cottoned to it and said, “it was nothing but tomfoolery!” But, yet again, if you looked down at his foot it would be tapping away to the music. This is one thing Great Grandpa Benjamin didn’t get around to teaching Grandpa.

Grandpa could play mandolin, guitar, and banjo, his most favorite instrument was the mandolin. Great Grandma Gwendolyn loved to hear Grandpa play and he always made sure he played her favorite songs. Grandma was partial to the guitar and she and Grandpa would sing while she did her knitting. She said it soothed her nerves and took away the worries of the day.

The Blue Store I learned last time I visited had been sold over the years and the new owner said, “He found it a delightful undertaking. The property had a history which he intended to preserve and there was ample room for expansion. He said he wanted to recreate the feeling the place had many year ago.”

Progress still has not caught up with the area and remains untouched to the naked eye but we all know it has changed by the way people have moved on with their lives and the deaths that

have taken place over the years gone by. Most of the older folks have passed on leaving their legacy to their kinfolks to carry on.

With the passing of time moonshining has now become old school and outdated. With the help of the old moonshiners shutting down their operations and going legal it has come a long way in keeping folks out of the jails.

Back in the day moonshine was made to keep the family fed due to lack of income in the farming community. They had all that extra corn to deal with so why not make something profitable to sell. For them, it was the making of moonshine.

Moonshine for them was really easy to make they just had to figure out how to out-smart the Feds and they became very good at it. You see the sugar and corn sales were suddenly monitored by the Feds to see who was using more than they were allowed by the government. It was the era of the depression so everyone was on rations back then. They came up with bartering amongst themselves for what they needed in exchange for the sugar and corn.

Coming back to visit was on my bucket list I just hadn't been back because life got in the way in one way or another. Now there will only be the memories of growing up and all the escapades my family has managed to mull through over the years. Great Grandpa Benjamin was known to be a very rough man cut from a different cloth from my Grandpa. My Grandpa was a sweet caring man and was a dear to me. He never stood in judgment and stood by me when I chose to ride horses over moonshining! Yes, hard as it is to believe girls do make and sell moonshine and used to run their own stills just like the men. That is for another time with the folks.

Some of these quaint small towns began as post-revolutionary war settlements. The Blue Ridge Mountains is dotted with small towns and cities that have been officially designated a Historic site.

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