My Remembers
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Run for Cover

I don't remember the exact way to make home brew, which is a beer. The only ingredients I remember were yeast, mash, and water. Put in a crock and let it set for a number of days before you bottle and cap it. The longer it cure the stronger it get. My baby sister and I would steal us a drink of it from time to time. Ruth would smell it and then go tell it.

I don't think I will ever forget the time I got drunk. During the raining cold days whin we were not clearing and cleaning up bottom and fence row, cutting or chopping wood, we would hunt and gather scrap iron. At one time or nother during winter month we would hall it to Dallas and sell pig iron or what you call short iron. Would bring pretty good money and the money come in handy in winter.

My cousin and Dad drink beer. My uncle drink any thing we make. My uncle bought a gallon of wine that was called Sweet Lucy. On our way back home my Dad told me I could have a sip, but my uncle keep giving me sips. By the time we got back to the house I could not walk. Some one put me to bed. For three day I could not get up. I vomit and mess my bed up. Mother would clean and change bed and keep praying. In three days I came to my senses and whin I did my mother were standing over the bed and look down on me and said, Don't you feel ashamed of your self?

I felt so bad about the whole thing I could not say any thing. I felt like crawling in a hole. I no my mother was very concern about me. I think I was about twenty year old before I drink anything else to excess. I never got that drunk again but have had some good feeling.

In 1950–52 during my station in New Orleans there was not much to do but play penny poker and drink. One pay day I lost all my money and could not buy no wine. I sober up and
take a shower. I smell my skin and it stunk like wine. And to this day I've never drunk any more wine ever. During all the years I drink enough to build a lake but no wine and very little beer. Only whiskey and vodka. And I haven't taken a drink of that since 1986, nor do I smoke. I do chew a little.

Boot legging was common in my growing up days. And all most every body made ther own beer during the thirties and part of forties. Some people made it to sell. Others made it for home use. My Dad made brew for home and people who would visit. He also peddled it on a small scale. Every time he left home he would put a few bottles in the trunk of his car or under the back seat.

Most of the real boot leggers had some kind of juke joint. They made whiskey and beer or go to Dallas and buy it to sell, and they got away pretty good. They would pay off the law or keep a look out who let them know whin there were a raid so they had time to hide it. Whin the state police or the county sheriff begin to crack down, they did a lot of house to house searching. Mr. Ray would all way let his farm famleys no whin the police were coming.

Mr. Ray say to my dad, Pete, you got any booze down ther you got to get rid of it. They going to do some house to house search in a day or so. My dad would gather up his beer and beer making material and hide it up the branch. Ray also tell my cousin, Fat, you'd better stay home Saturday night. They going to raid that joint. Then Tank would say to me, June, I guess we better go some place else Saturday. Frisco is going to be too hot with the Good Old Boys.

We call the police the Good Old Boys or the Do Right Boys. But whin we be in the field along Hiway 289 and see the state troopers go by in ther black and white car, some body would say, Ther go the Skonk or Pole Cat. I think the Good Old Boys get ther name because on one Saturday or Friday night they
would go by the juke joint and be just like every body else playing the juke box and wouldn't say a word about the drinking or gambling, and the next week night come by and hall you off to jail. This was whin the Skonk and Good Old Boys turn up together and be mean as hell, scaring, punching and swanging that billie club, herding you into the cattle trailer.

There were a lot of women in boot legging. This one woman sold food and whiskey. The people would drive up to her house, hold up ther finger to indicate how many bottle of liquer they want. No word were never pass, only hello, goodby. This lady had a husband who love to gamble, spend every penny he got his hand on. So he would steal his wife whiskey and sell it. He would stand outside the house and wait until some one would drive up, hold up ther hand, collect the money, go across the street, and gamble it away. The wife would get angry, cuss him out and keep telling him, I'm going to brake you up from stealing my whiskey. He pay no attention.

Word got out that she was going to stop this mess. One day she was frying chickin. Some one come for a bottle. The husband went in the house for the whiskey and started out. His wife slap him upside the head with a frying pan of hot grease and chickin. He broke the front door and screen door down and had a chickin leg stuck upside his head. Almost kill him. And he had the mark for the rest of his life.

That just one type of thing that would happen between a husband and wife. Thing were never too good whin ther were whiskey and gambling. Whin I use to go to the juke joint I watch the way the bottles were deliver under cover by women and men. You could tell most men boot legger. They all way wore ducking over alls and a coat too big. The boot legger would buy a quart or half gallon; a quart cost $5. He would break it down into half pints, which were most popular size, and sell for $2.50 or $3. That were good money. So whin they
were caught and hauled off to jail and the magistrate told them their fine, they would reach in there pocket and pull out a roll of bills, pay their fine and walk out the door. An hour later they back in business.

Back to bootlegging. Whin my dad was making booze there were all way some body dropping by to buy a few bottle of beer. He would also take booze with him on week end and to parties every week. He did not keep too much. Whin ever Ray would get word that the sheriff was going to make a check or raid Dad would take his booze some place safe. The big scale boot legger were able to pay off some body and never got caught. Those who did get caught paid ther fine and the next day went and got a new supply.

I remember the juke joint in Frisco. They keep plenty of whiskey and booze and a man or two to look out for the police. If word came the police were coming, the owner would take his booze down in a special place in the corn field. The police and sheriff department were pretty smart. They would show up on a Friday or Saturday. By the way, these places open only on weekend and holidays, but you could all way buy a drink. Now back to the police. As I said, on Friday and Saturday the police would show up and watch the dancing, put nickle in the juke box or the other name for it was the pickelrow machine. Some time one of the women of the night would grab one of the police and tell him, Man you sure look good and drag him out on the floor. However, they would refuse, at least in public.

This would go on for a few week. Then on a good work week and all the cotton picker in town, plenty of money and booze, the police would show up like they all way did with a bus and cattle truck and act like they all way did, but about 10:30 or 11:00 thing change. Police would pop up every where and surround the place. The next thing they would have every body line up collecting gun, knife, straight razor. A lot of women
carried straight razor and could whip it out of ther bosum as fast as a snake could strike and cut you so fast, make you look like shredded cheese. Any way, here come the truck and cattle wagon, load up every body in and around the place and hall them to McKinney Jail. All who could pay there way out did. The rest had to stay in jail. If you were a good worker the boss would get you out of jail. If you did sorry work you stay in jail and work your way out. During this time the county had work farms, like pea patch, onion patch; road work; rock piles where you busted rock into gravel for building roads. There were farms, wooded area and road side to be cleared and clean up. Pea patch was field where you plant, chop and harvest. All who couldn’t pay ther way out and them that the boss did not want back on ther farm went to the pea patch.

One of the most talk about thing and some of the memory I have about the bootlegging and gambling house were the site of police, or word come that the fuzz is coming. The fuzz is known as cop. Soon as the word “cops” come, man, niggers would grab the money and dice and scatter. Jumping out of window, two or three trying to get out the door the same time. Boy, they would be running for cover like a rabbit running for the briar patch whin a dog show up. Ever body would not get away. Those who did, the next week whin they see each other, one would say, Man, did you get away?

Yeah, man! Did you?

You better no I got away! I ain’t ready to go to that pea patch. No way in Hell they were going to catch me once I got out that door.

In some way I associate boot legging and gambling as part of each other because both are illegal, especial during the time I grew up. I witness and look on a lot of diffrent way to gamble. I tryed my hand at dice, card betting, or games like pitching pennies. That was during my army days.
My dad was a boot legger and a gambler. First time I knew this is the gray hound rabbit hunt. There was a number of city and country men had gray hound, and they would breed them just for racing. There use to be a lot of open space and plenty of Jack Rabbit. The fastest of this rabbit were the Blue Side Jack Rabbit. Every week end in the late fall and winter men would gather in a big field, preferable one with no fence. They would chain hold ther dog and walk through a field until they see a rabbit sitting or jump up. The rabbit would jump up and whin it get 50 or 100 yard away some one would say, Turn the dogs aloose. And the men would unsnap the chain and off they go.

The bet would all ready be on. Those who had money would bet pretty good money on their dog. Those who did not have money would put up a bet with beer, whiskey, a puppy out of the winners dog, gun, knife, hog, chickin, just about any thing they had to bet. Probly those who were professional gambler, who did it for a living, would even bet ther wife or girl friend. Even back then the die hard gambler had two or three women working for them as business associate. These women would take care of selling the booze, cook and sell dinner, and sell ther body.

The next open range betting was chickin fights. My Dad raise chickin. Each had ther own little pens. He would never fight his own with each other, but each week they would meet at some one house or a desenated spot where they think the police would not find them and have chickin fight. They would bet on the chickin before the fight. They would hold them in ther arms and have a blindfold on them. Whin the blind was pull off, they tease each other, making the chickin mad by poking each at the other. Whin the chickin was steam up enough, the men would drop them on the ground and the chickin would fight until one would run or get kill.

There were some pretty prominent peoples who had
fighting chickin. Some chickin even import from Mexico. Regular yard chickin were also use. The big yard rooster against the small game cock to train the game cock. The egg of the game chickin were expensive, maby one dollar each egg to probly five dollar. You could also order eggs or baby chick for setting or train the young. My dad bought chickin. I don’t no how much he paid, but anywhere from twenty-five dollar to who knows. I know these days those who raise fighting cock will go as high as a $1000 dollar or more. I’ve heard that those who is in the business travel a lot just to fight chickin. My dad finely sold all his fighting cocks.

On to the next gambling game. Shooting dice and playing card I guess have cause more hungry famleys and more cutting and shooting as any gambling in the world, especial in the Black Race. Crooked dice slip into a game or card dealer dealing from the bottom, or card put up ther coat sleeve. I’ve seen gamblers on Friday or Saturday get paid and don’t go home, pay a bill, or even buy a loaf of bread. And would not have a potato in the house. And house full of hungry kids.

These poor souls who were sweating and losing their money the most, knowing they was about broke, you could hear them say thing like this:

“Come on Baby 7, make 11.”

“I need this point bad as a dead man need a coffin.”

“Come on 11, kid need some shoes, Momma need some drawers.”

“Snake eyes man, you crap out.”

Back home kids would sing song, “Momma in the kitchin cooking rice. Daddy round the corner shooting dice.”

Usually the places where the games were played there were all way boot leg whiskey. People who gambles usually drink and the professional gambler knows this and would feed the weak gambler this booze just to beat him out of his money. The
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gambler was something to look at if you were like me. The gamblers all way fasinate me as a boy because I wonder where they would get all that money all around the table. Of course, the money would all way wind up in two or three men hand.

I been in places whin I was a kid whin a fight brake out, a gun shooting, a knife cutting, getting tromp on trying to get out of the way. In Dallas down on Elm Street, in Plano and Frisco and some houses in the country, I remember at least once a week as a kid we would meet at another famley house for card
games. Some would play cards “for drink or smell.” The two who win the game got to drink whiskey, the two looser get a smell. All way whiskey. Some would play dominoes, some shooting dice, most of the time for money. It may not be much—penny and nickle games.

There were all way some one to play the turn table victrola record player, or some one to pick a gitar and play the harp. There were one man from Plano would all way go where the party was with his gitar, and white and black saddle shoes for tap dancing, just to pick up a few penny. He was good. He sing and play the harp and gitar. He would teach kid to tap. Any where the kids see him they would beg him to teach them to dance. He would stay a while, because he was all way on the move walking just about every where he go. He was a stepper; he could really walk.

One thing while growing up, my peoples, the Blacks, did not have to have a whole lot of instrument to get rhythm whether it be blues or church songs. Some time those who had any music ability would get together with banjo, gitar, wash board, tub for drum and harp. I look at some of the dances today and I’ve seen those dances whin I was a kid. This brake dance they got now and the funkey dance, I did this whin I was a kid. The funkey roll was a down home blues record or it was call “Put Me in the All Music.” The brake dance today, getting on the floor or the back and spinning around, this dance whin I was a kid was call getting down. They would do the split, get on ther knees and the stomic, on the back and do all kind of butt twisting and rolling.

There were some other dances. They were call the Hen Peck. Two peoples stand in front of each other and work right on down to the floor on ther knees and then back up again. And they would peck at each other with ther neck, just like chickin, stand and peck at each other, one side to the other and face to
face in the same rhythm, like the men hold the chickins priming them for the fight.

Some of the other dances were doing the shimmy, same as shake rattle and roll, shake it to the east, shake it to the west, shake it to the one you love the best. By doing this on a dance floor you could tell pretty well who was going with who. Then there was the turkey hop, two people on the floor hopping round like a chickin with ther head cut off. A lot of time there were fight, whin a woman or man dance with some body else more than ther husband or wife or girl friend or boy friend.

My mother use to show us how to do the Charleston. She were very lite footed.