

THE JUKE BOX

By J W Henson

I had an Uncle who was large and powerfully built. He called everyone 'Neighbor' and often shortened it to 'Nabe'. So it is understandable when the entire community called him 'Nabe'.

He owned a farm up the Georgetown Road north of Ooltewah, Tennessee. One day he took me with him to work on the farm. When it came lunchtime we drove over to a little diner on Highway 58 north of Chattanooga. We each ordered a bowl of soup with either crackers or bread. I was 14 years old and always enjoyed playing one of the top Ten Hits of the day. It was in the days before Rock and Roll and the music wasn't really that bad.

It was quite in the diner so I went to the jute box, dropped in a nickel and made my selection. I went back and took my seat just as the music started. Uncle John (Nabe) looked at me and asked, "Did you put a nickel in that thing? When we get ready to leave here remind me to show you how to beat the jute box out of a nickel!"

We finished eating, paid our bill, and started for the door. Uncle Nabe was in front of me and strolled past the jute box headed for the out-of-doors. I called him back and reminded him of his lunchtime words. I always wanted to learn something new, and this was a rare opportunity. He stepped back to the juke box and asked me for a nickel. I dropped one into his hand. He caught the nickel by the rim with his fingernails and pushed it as far down into the slot as it would go. Pulling it out he dropped it into his own pocket. "Here now". I protested, "that is my nickel!" He returned it to my hand, and I asked, "Will that make the jute box play?" "Well Hell no," he said "but you still have your nickel, haven't you!"

That little lesson has saved me hundreds of dollars. I can now bypass the smiling lips of a slot in most any machine, and know that I still have my 'NICKEL'.