



“Bugs” Teague, Jeddah Bootlegger

Taken from Camel Tails – A Saga of the RSMC

Now here’s one that needs a bit of explanation! The Muslim faith eschews the use of alcoholic beverages, and discourages the use of tobacco. While most Muslims have at one time or another tasted “a drop of the grape,” it is not approved or openly allowed by the religious hierarchy, most especially in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Apparently during the time of Muhammad, most of the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula were not above “wining and wenching” in a fashion that would have made the citizens of the legendary cities of Sodom and Gomorrah blush. Allah’s Greatest and Final Prophet (May Peace be Upon Him!), decided that the image of a sober citizen would reflect greater credit on the new religion, and perhaps prevent drunken brawls, wench poaching, and maybe even result in improved Camel driving safety. Whatever the reasons, the rule was laid down and the (devoutly) faithful were and are required to abstain from alcohol.

Other prohibitions for the faithful require the faces of wenches be covered (or at least “blurred” by wispy veils), as is any exposed (suggestive) display of limbs, to keep licentious Muslims from succumbing to a violation of the “thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife” Commandment. I’m sure that the intent had some merit, and I’ve even read treatises from Muslim Lady converts in the Western World praising the idea. The Muslim convert comments however, were pointed toward the idea of ladies not having to use makeup or indulge in constant dieting... Hummm? I have definitely seen a few non-Muslims ladies in the Western World who could benefit from the “potato sack” routine as a favor to the citizenry at large, but I digress...

As things progressed and the religious Mullahs grew in power and supposed wisdom, they began to interject their own prejudices into the overall scheme of things. Often new products came to light that were not known in Muhammad’s time have similarly been demonized, if not strictly prohibited. Tobacco was deemed to be bad for the health of a Muslim following Sir Walter Raleigh’s return to England from the New World. British influence in trading in the Eastern Hemisphere caused it’s migration to other countries in the normal course of commerce. Hardly anyone would argue that tobacco is good for your health (Muslim and Infidel alike), but despite being frowned on, a goodly portion of the Saudis smoke like chimneys.

The Saudis are extremely strict with regards to the no alcoholic beverage routine within the boundaries of Saudi Arabia proper. If an infidel is caught drinking you are a sure seat-holder

on the next aircraft leaving for the States (or your country of origin). Hushed conversations with some of the older U.S. Special Forces folks in “The Kingdom” claim, (unofficially of course), that they were surreptitiously used to put down an attempted takeover of Mecca during one of the annual Hajj pilgrimages, thus violating the Saudi restriction of having no “infidel” ever set foot in the holy city. Such a takeover would be disastrous for all hands however, so occasionally the rules can be bent. If the Sa’ud Family were overthrown, the entire oil consortium would be in disarray, and a situation similar to the late hate and discontent in Kuwait would be a definite possibility. All this leads to the Saudis keeping the lid on “un-Muslimlike behavior” within the Kingdom proper. It falls within the old adage of being “purer than Caesar’s wife” and serves as a pious front presented to a number of jealous Muslim neighbors. Many other Muslim/Arabic countries would dearly love share in “Allah’s Oil” and to have the prestigious Muslim duty of assuming custodianship of Mecca and Medina.

That having been said, once a Saudi Citizen (with attendant wives) becomes airborne and past the Saudi airspace on a non-Saudi airline, a line forms to the washroom facility on both isles of the aircraft. Saudis, (both men and women), enter dressed in their traditional Arabic garb, and come back looking like an ad out of Brooks Brothers or Ralph Loren. The figurative gloves are off, and appropriate libations are ordered from the flight attendants. The Saudis seem quite at home in the western culture and apparently if not physically hanging their “Gutras and Agals¹” within the confines of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, they are quite content to sample the evils of the decadent West (just to make sure they understand what they are against of course!).

King Fahd himself is said to take occasional trips to a “dry-out facility” rumored to be located in England? Just tales told out of school of course, but who knows? The only LEGAL (drinking) alcohol in country is available in the various Embassy or Consulate Compounds where the grounds constitute (for instance), U.S. sovereign territory and is exempt by diplomatic protocol. Unfortunately, for the more than *occasionally* thirsty individual, trips to the Consulate and/or Embassy, and social occasions are *sometimes* type of things and not available at a moment’s notice. For those inhabiting the Kingdom who enjoy an occasional “nip” on demand, there is only one answer other than the black market. Bootlegging! Shades of Chicago in the 1920s! Such activity, if not flaunted in the official faces of the locals, is simply ignored. When engaged in a bit of grocery shopping in the local Supermarkets, the contents of other westerner’s shopping carts bring about a barely suppressed grin. Obviously western inhabitants in the Kingdom come past with bottles of non-alcoholic grape juice, and their shopping cart baskets are literally overflowing with potentially fermentable fruits, such as oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit. Strangely enough, the average westerner seems to go through prodigious quantities of sugar and yeast – baking lots of bread I suspect!

Some of the more inventive engineers even build passable stills, complete with condensation coils, and mash cooking pots. One lad living in our Condo Complex (rather ominously called “The Twin Towers”), had apparently acquired a key to an unassigned apartment to house his distillery (wouldn’t be terribly intelligent to run a working still in your own quarters of course). The moonshiner was from Montana, and normally wore cowboy boots with his civilian clothes. After a rather spirited sand-storm, the breeze-ways between the apartments were covered with a light coating of sand. The individual in charge of maintenance was checking for any possible damage due to the spirited wind attendant to the storm. He noted several sets of cowboy boot prints tracing a path between our Montana lad’s quarters and the unused (and supposedly unoccupied apartment). A quick turn of the key

found the subject still set up in the kitchen, and obviously in operating order. Our hero could have saved himself a trip home with the use of a broom, and perhaps by wearing a different style of footwear! ...However, Montana beer isn't all that bad when it comes right down to it.

All of this leads me to my tale of a noxious brew commonly known as "Jeddah Jin" back in the mid-1980s. Now Pat Teague had preceded me into Saudi by about 6-weeks, and had already gotten oriented and accustomed to the local culture. On our first Saudi Weekend (Saudi weekends are Thursdays and Fridays, with Friday being their holy day roughly equivalent to the Christian Sunday). Patrick suggested that we pile in the company car and go to an apartment out in town a friend of his leased. I couldn't imagine what would be the attraction of leaving our rather comfortable digs, but he just grinned and I followed. We wound around until he found the place, and we took the elevator to one of the upper decks. Once introductions had been made, Pat took me back to look at his mysterious five gallon jug stuffed into a cabinet. "Sniff this," he said proudly, taking the top off a batch of something that seemed to have a life of its own! No question, this stuff was fermenting, and I began to understand hiding his chem lab in a location totally apart from our normal haunts. He scooped out a ladle full of the evil looking (and smelling) liquid and said, "here, give THIS a taste!" (obviously proud of the concoction). Dear Allah! No question about its alcoholic content, but it was faintly reminiscent of drinking the oozing liquid left over from a forgotten batch of fruit in the basement! It was alcoholic enough to preclude being poisoned by imprisoned creepy-crawly critters that may have fallen in, but it was not for the faint of heart. Not only that, it left a distinctly yeast flavored coating on the back of your teeth!

"What the heck was that?" I asked. "**Jeddah Jin**," he says looking proudly at his five-gallon jug! I didn't want to hurt his feelings as this stuff was obviously the source of some pride, but even in a totally dry country, I wasn't anxious to swill great quantities of that particular batch!

"Does it always taste like that?" I asked cautiously.

"Naw, sometimes it doesn't come out so good," he said.

"You mean this is a primo batch?" I said somewhat unbelievably.

"A decent batch, but not a great batch," sez Patrick.

I make a mental note to investigate straining paint thinner through loaves of bread! Whew!

As time progressed of course, Pat got considerably better at his secondary trade, and the stuff became "almost" drinkable (notice the "*almost*"). Seems that the stuff varies considerably with the amount of Grapefruit, Orange and Lemon mixture, and the amount of fermenting time. A true artisté could make the stuff sing I'm told, but I began to romance the Marine Guard at the Consulate² as a way of avoiding the Poison Control Center.

To get a proper appreciation for the process, you must understand that this stuff doesn't have a decent vintage, at least not in the normal sense of the word. There are no "good years" for "JJ" but perhaps a "good week" or even a "good day." True experts could tell a batch by a "good hour" but I never got fond enough of the stuff to work up any expertise in "JJ" tasting. Never could get used to the "bouquet" hee, hee, hee...

For those with an adventuresome spirit, I herewith include the formula for "Jeddah Jin" as I so carefully transcribed it long ago.

So, here's sand in your eye³, and "%\$#@ " (a verb) the whole damned crowd and the

□

Camel(s) they rode in on!

~ SATISFYING AND REFRESHING (Yeah, right!) ~

“JEDDAH JIN” FORMULA

- 2 Grapefruit, Quartered
- 2 Lemons, Quartered
- 2 Potatoes, Quartered
- 6 To 8 Oranges, Quartered
- 5 Pounds Of Sugar Dissolved In Hot Or Boiling Water
- 1 Tablespoon Of Yeast Dissolved In Hot Water (Insure that the yeast has started to work)

The above ingredients are to be placed in a plastic five (5) gallon container filled with water.

The container is to be left open and stored in a cool dry place.

Check daily to insure that the mixture is brewing ...also taste after the ‘third or fourth day.

With “J J,” long brewing can result in a sour batch; normally 5 to 8 days is sufficient.

Transfer the resultant brew to mason jars or bottles that can be sealed.

Make sure that you have some sort of stomach pump available to remedy any miscalculations!

Do ***NOT*** operate any machinery that requires hand-eye coordination following any significant intake of this “witches brew!”

So here’s to “***Bugs Teague***” the notorious Bootlegger of Jeddah (named after “***Bugs Moran***” who ran the North Side Mob in Chicago in the 1920s, a major competitor of Al Capone in the bootlegging wars). Without Pat, I wouldn’t have had nearly so much fun, and my Camel Tails would have been much the poorer and less colorful! Thanks for the memories my good and trusted friend!

RUC

End Notes:

¹ Gutras and Agals are the traditional Arabic headdress including the black rope and the cloth head covering often called irreverently “the table cloth and fanbelt”... The fanbelt (according to legend) was originally a camel hobble, twisted into a loop and placed on the cloth head protection as a convenient method of storage.

² The Marine Guard at the Consulate held monthly parties, often inviting “favored” guests to attend. The Marines had ***many*** “friends” as they had the only legal booze in Jeddah. Since the parties were held on “American Soil” (according to diplomatic convention), beer and hooch were available to the party goers in reasonable quantities. Departing the Consulate in an obviously inebriated condition however could potentially result in Saudi Jail Time!

³ The “*Sand in your eye*” toast, is a take-off on the old gruesome toast from the muddy trenches in France. When they raised their glasses and said “here’s mud in your eye” it alluded to being buried in the muddy terrain on the battlefield and “patted in the face with a spade” in a manner of speaking. The “*intercourse*” the whole damned crowd and the camel(s) they rode in on is of course self explanatory.