

## Whatever Happened to Sam Bone?

*by Marilyn Reeves*

Hey, Hank. How's it goin'?

Hey, John. The usual?

Yeah. Just a draft. Heard Sheriff Toliver come by awhile ago. Trying to bust up them high stakes poker games you got goin' on in the back room?

Hank crossed his beefy arms and leaned against the bar. Naw, damndest thing. Said he found a skeleton out by the railroad tracks at the bend in the river. You know the place where the hobos hang out where they can hop the train?

You don't say? A skeleton?

Well, a bunch a bones, really. Whatever the animals didn't make off with.

I'll be damned. Hey, speakin' of bones, whatever happened to ol' Sam Bone? He usta hang out there, didn't he? After his wife left him?

Yeah that don't surprise me. Her leavin' him. Pretty little thing with all that long red hair. Looked like a Homecoming Queen. What did she ever see in ol' Sam, anyway? He was such a scrawny runt of a guy. Never had much goin' for him that I could see.

Who knows what the hell women see?

He usta have a union job out at the mill, but when it closed down he started drinkin'. He usta come in here every night and order the same thing. A shot and a pitcher. A shot and a pitcher. That's all he ever drank. Sat down at the end of the bar there and didn't talk to nobody. Just drank his shot and his beer and then took off. But after *she* took off, he started nursing a bottle of his own, day and night. Quit comin' in here, but you'd see him out there staggerin' down the middle of the street. Took up residence half the time in the county jail where the Sheriff would haul him in to sleep it off.

And come to think of it, I did stumble across him a time or two down by the bend when I was out fishin'. Drunk as a skunk. Give up eatin' and took up drinkin' full time, looked like.

Yeah, he was just skin and bone. Rightly named, ol' Sam Bone. Warn't it that fancy-pants man that drove the big black Cadillac she run off with?

Yeah, kinda looked like Elvis, 'cept he wore them cowboy clothes. He'd strut around town in them black and white lizard boots smiling at all the women like he was some kinda celebrity. Sang over there at the Lone Tree. Even sounded a bit like Elvis, 'ceptin' he sang Country-Western. And between songs, him and Sam's wife would be out there doin' the slow dance. Guess she liked her Cadillac Cowboy better than ol' Sam.

That ain't too much of a stretch. Well, hell, do you suppose those are Sam Bone's bones lying down there by the river?

Could be. Sure as heck could be. Guess I oughta pass that along to Sheriff Toliver. Kinda curious to know whatever happened to ol' Sam Bone.