

Walter "Furry" Lewis, b. 3/6/93, Greenwood, MS - d. 9/14/81, Memphis, TN

Booker T. Washington "Bukka" White, b. 11/12/06, Houston MS - d. 2/26/77, Memphis, TN

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I was fortunate to have spent time with both of them a number of times ... Bukka once played for my wife and I, just the three of us in the room ... for a couple of hours.

Here are a couple of quick memories of those two memorable blues greats/'characters':

Bukka and Furry Lewis were old friends/neighbors in Memphis ... and one time I saw them do a two hour workshop in Berkeley, around 1971 ... Furry broke a string on the first song, and Bukka commented, "I bet he ain't got another string" ... and sure enough, Furry didn't have a spare string ... so ... sharing just the one guitar of Bukka's between them ... and one pint on peach brandy ... Bukka would play a song and Furry would drink ... and Bukka, seeing this, would cut his tune short and hand Furry the guitar and take the bottle ... then Furry would start to play a song ... and Bukka would hit the bottle ... and Furry would look over his shoulder and see the liquor disappearing ... and cut his song short and hand Bukka the guitar ... and take the bottle ... back and forth like this for the entire time ... they certainly finished the pint in due time ... but neither of them finished an entire song during the session

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My late good friend John Jackson reminded me, a few years before his death in 2002, about a very funny experience we shared ... it was the time he and his wife, and I were sitting at a blues music forum with about 100 other blues fans and some blues musicians, I think it was in 1970, or so ... and Furry Lewis was sitting in the row and seat directly in front of us ... and suddenly the older woman, probably in her late 60s, seated next to Furry, stood up and bashed Furry, quite hard, across the head with her purse and stormed out of the room, not to return. John, his wife, and I were horrified and amused as Furry rubbed and shook his head at the same time, then straightened out his glasses and adjusted his rumbled sports coat and shrugged his shoulders as if nothing of consequence had happened ... only John Jackson, his wife, and I knew why the woman had 'assaulted' Furry ... the rest of the folks in the room who, sort of, witnessed this drama (everyone definitely heard the loud smack that was created by the black leather purse briskly coming in contact with Mr. Lewis' skull) did not have a clue why or what had happened ... ya see, before the concert ... all the musicians, audience, and university mucky-mucks were socializing in large meeting room, chatting and having snacks and beverages ... no alcohol was allowed because we were on a university campus (Cal Berkeley) ... but word spread amongst the musicians that one middle-aged gal with a large black purse had a bottle of whiskey, and was pouring the contents into anyone's drink who ambled up beside her ... she was gladly spiking all our drinks ... unbeknownst to the university 'authorities' ... Furry ambled over to have his drink 'improved' a few times during this pre-concert gathering ... when we all went in to sit down for the concert, Furry sat in a chair directly in front of John, his wife, and I ... Furry was sitting next to an older woman with a large black purse on the floor under her seat ... Furry assumed this was the same woman and purse from which he had gotten alcohol ... once the music started, Furry reached under her chair and started rummaging around in her purse with one hand, while trying to sit up straight in his chair and not draw attention to himself ... he couldn't find the bottle ... pulled his hand back numerous times ... would look under her chair at the purse ... re-gauge how far he'd have to reach to find the bottle ... and start rummaging around in her purse again ... and again ... he did this more than a few times ... finally the woman noticed what he was doing ... she was NOT the same woman who had the black purse containing the whiskey from the pre-concert

gathering ... but Furry didn't know this ... he was intent on another drink ... the woman saw Furry with his hand in her purse ... she didn't have a clue who Furry was, and it probably didn't matter ... she snatched up her purse from the floor ... stood up ... took a huge backswing with her purse ... and brought it crashing into the side of Furry's head with a loud thud ... and she stomped out of the room ... everyone heard the loud smack and turned around ... only to see Furry rubbing his head and the lady stomping out of the room. John Jackson, his wife, and I ... could barely contain our laughter ... we were the only one's in the room who saw the entire thing ... and knew what/why/how it all happened ... I don't think even Furry knew what happened.

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Furry Lewis:



Bukka White:



Furry Lewis & Bukka White:

