

5 Cowboy Jack

In the March edition of *Texas Monthly*, the feature article focused on the new breed of wildcatters in the Texas petroleum industry. On the cover, in caricature, was Jack Whitte, riding a bull with several other prominent oilmen running behind. Jack was in control of the bull with cowboy hat in hand and the caption splashed across the glossy cover said *Cowboy Jack Tames the West*.

When Jack had gained control of the independent Whitte Oil & Gas, he had utilized proprietary technology led by a measurement while drilling, or MWD, device that allowed safe, quick targeting of reservoirs. With the use of an adjustable slant rig, a wellbore could be started at a thirty-three degree angle and adjusted up or down. The MWD device allowed the directional driller to steer the down-hole motor almost as effectively as steering a car. Using their new technology, WO&G could begin drilling and hit the geologist's target in half the time of conventional drilling. Because the rig was small and hit the targets fast, environmental impact was almost negligible. While nothing could ever satiate obsessive environmentalist's demands, in reality, this system could safely find and extract fossil fuels without harming the environment.

The whole problem was that the name Cowboy Jack stuck.

At the end of the meeting between Mo and Jack, Jack implored his friend to come out and finish the job of getting drunk. Mo begged off so Whitte left Boucher's office and began to walk toward Sixth Street, capitol to the Texas music scene. He stumbled along

until he found a seedy looking place that blew out the sultry, *twangy* sound of Texas music played right. The seating area was sterile and smokeless—the goddamned do-gooders ruining Texas with their anti-smoking decrees—and the girl who was singing didn't live up to her sweet voice. On top of that, she looked like a cow. He asked a passing barmaid where the hell he could smoke and she pointed to a scarred wooden door at the back of the lounge. When he emerged onto an outdoor patio he found a small bar to the right with rickety bar stools and a sitting area to the left with wrought iron tables and chairs. It wasn't the most inviting of atmospheres and it was hot and sweaty with a lone floor fan pushing around putrid air but it suited what he was looking for.

The bartender was fat with reddish orange hair and a wispy goatee. There was a small TV in the corner above the bar and it was silently spewing the news of the day. Whitte sat and motioned to the uninterested host.

“Corona with a tequila chaser.”

“Any tequila?”

“Most expensive.”

“You're Cowboy Jack Whitte, aren't you?”

Whitte grimaced and shook his head. There had been a front-page *Wall Street Journal* article, spurred by the *Texas Monthly* article, on the new oil rush, complete with the customary dot-matrix picture of him with a caption, Cowboy Jack Whitte, beside the article. He was trying like hell to keep the name from sticking.

“I'm a business major at UT. You're my hero. You don't take shit from no one. Can I shake your hand?” The bartender rushed through his elucidation.

Whitte laughed and held out his hand. “And your name?”

“I’m Joe.”

“Glad to meet you Joe.” Whitte looked up at the screen above and there was some obnoxious fat woman talking head on HLN. “Can you turn that damned thing to another channel? Maybe the baseball game?”

“Yeah, Cowboy Jack.”

“Look Joe, I hate that name. Call me Jack, okay.”

“Okay, Jack.”

“Joe, I just want to sit here and drink tonight. I’m just a regular customer, got it?”

“Can I get your autograph?”

“Why?”

“Dunno. Just think it’ll be cool to tell everyone on Monday that I served Cowboy Jack Whitte some drinks.”

“Sure,” he said, signing a cocktail napkin. “Now, listen up Joe. I’m going to sit here for a couple of hours, watch a little baseball, and drink some. I might have an appetizer or something. Do you want to make a hundred bucks?”

“Sure!”

“Okay,” Jack took a hundred dollar bill from his wallet and tore it in half, handing half to the bartender. “I’ll give you the other half when you put me in a cab around one. I’m at the Marriott down the street. Can you remember that?”

“Yeah, sure. I would have done it for free, you know.”

“You married, Joe?”

“Nah. I go to school and I live with a chick. No marriage for me till I make my first million.”

“Good man and you need the money. Just keep the drinks coming, okay?”

“No problem Jack. It’s cool.”

Joe changed the channel to the baseball game. It was the Astros and the Dodgers. It was in the fourth with the score tied at four. This would be a good distraction. Whitte pounded down the smooth, ice-cold tequila and then took a good guzzle of the beer with lime. There were women in the joint, some skanky as hell and others pretty damned beautiful, and he figured the skanky ones would take on goddess-like stature as the night wore on. “Joe?”

“Yeah, Jack,” answered the bartender as he was shaking some concoction.

“You see that table of girls over there,” Whitte said pointing to the women that he thought were less than appealing. “If I try and start up a conversation with any of those girls or any others that look that way, you grab me right then and there and shove me in a cab and remind me that I owe you another couple of hundred because if that happens I’ll be too drunk to know any better.”

Joe started laughing and then pointed to a table where a knock-dead brunette with long legs, tight jeans and tight black tube top sat talking to another rather attractive blonde woman who had her back to him. “What about them?”

“If you put me in a cab with them, I’ll give you five hundred bucks.”

Whitte had another drink and glanced over at the brunette. She made eye contact a couple of times, a little smile, a little tug at the corner of her eyes. Even a small tongue

across the corner of her mouth. She was beautiful and with each drink he decided that she was secretly urging him to come and pick her up. “One more for courage,” with which Joe complied.

Whitte sauntered toward her table with two beers in hand. He placed one in front of each woman. The blond was definitely a babe and with large breasts to boot.

“You girls looked like you were thirsty. I took the liberty of bringing you over your favorite brand of beer.”

The brunette smiled. “Why, how did you know I might not want a margarita or red wine instead?”

“Well, if you’re a smart drinker, you don’t mix one with the other. It’s usually a good idea to pick one drink and stay with it all night long.”

“I noticed you were taking shots with your beer.”

“Well, I’m kind of a stupid drinker and I really can’t make up my mind. For instance, sometimes I like dark,” he said, looking at the brunette, “and sometimes I like light,” he said looking to the blonde.

“Do you like to have both sometimes?”

“Yes. This is true. I’ve been known to partake with two in my day.” He sat down with the two women and signaled for Joe. “Joe, can I get another round for me and please, keep this tab open for these wonderful women. I’ll take care of it.”

Joe smiled. “My opinion of you just went through the roof, Jack. You’re going to owe me five hundred dollars and them, probably two thousand a piece.”

“You mean I just picked up a couple of women who are, shall we say, non-

discriminating in their tastes for men?"

The blond giggled. The brunette glanced at Joe and he nodded, smiling, telling her with his eyes that he's okay; he's not a cop.

"The legislature's out of session, Jack," Joe informed him. "The poor girls are starving."

"Well, hell," Cowboy Jack beamed, "we can't have that. Don't want you girls going on welfare." He turned to Joe. "Damn. This is going to be an expensive proposition, but a necessary evil. Keep the booze flowing, Joe."

Joe laughed. "Cowboy Jack, you are my hero."

If only...