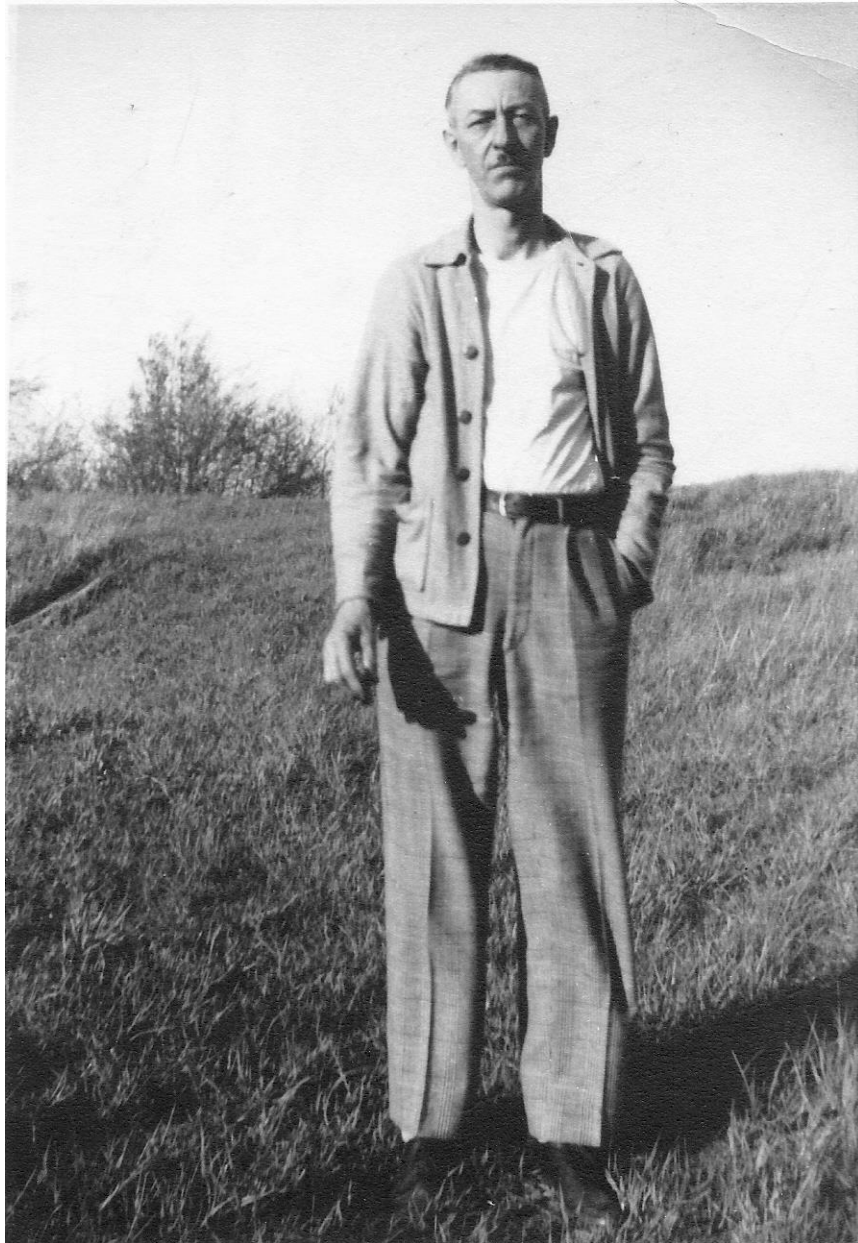


I remember Uncle Junie: Benjamin Garlock 1903 to 1958

Most of those from a generation or two ago would refer to my mother's brother as Junior Garlock. Actually his name was not the same as his father's with a Jr. in it. He was Benjamin O Garlock instead of Benjamin J Garlock. Uncle Junie was one of those people whose stories were remembered far into the future. Sometimes I yet refer to him as my drinking uncle. He liked beer, something my mother and father did not partake of. They were possessed to see that I also did not. Along further in my story I'll tell something of the dark side of this habit. Now I want to reminisce about how fond I was of uncle Junie when I was a boy.



Benjamin O Garlock 1903 to 1958

It seemed everybody like him. Sometimes it is strange what a small boy will remember. When uncle would tell this small boy to do this or that the resulting question would be: "What for Uncle Junie?" His reply would be "Cat fur to make kitten britches." At this point in this story I must go back long before my birth in 1930. Benjamin O Garlock was born in 1903. He was a farm boy living on a small family farm near Marshville, N.Y. His folks had left the farm and returned. The subject of this story had an advantage few small farm boys had. He went to the agricultural college, I believe at Cobleskill. By the time he got out World War I was ended and only a few years would usher in the Great Depression. Benjamin O secured a job with International Harvester Co. at Rutland, Vermont. About that time he was married and had a daughter. That would make her about my age. I'm not sure when the separation took place but it was then that what I earlier referred to as the dark side became reality.

I believe I was very young when news came that Uncle Junie had been in a tragic auto accident near Rutland. A girl was killed and Benjamin O had a fractured leg. There was another couple with them. I'm only including this rather morbid story to bring back my own recollection as a very small boy. Uncle Junie came home to Marshville with his leg in a cast. Mother was a nurse and was sure the cast had been on too long. So mother, the patient and I went to a doctor near Richfield Springs. His opinion was that the cast must come off or the patient would not be able to walk. The statement was: "Doctor, take the cast off." Doctors had rules and he said: "Another doctor put it on and I can't take it off."

Now the patient was in trouble with the law in Vermont and had no intention to return to a doctor in that state. What I'm trying to lead up to is what transpired then. My mother was a nurse and father was an engineer. Uncle Junie ended up on the kitchen table and my father took the cast off with the hacksaw and tin shears. This happening ushered in years of amusing remembrances for me. Benjamin O was back in Marshville to stay for many years. He was always short of money for beer or anything else. For several years he drove the Canajoharie taxi, including taking the two or three country school students to high school. I was one of them. When my mother would ask him for help on some little job he would say: "Hurry up and I will help you;" not a popular attitude with mother.

Some of my most amusing memories were in relation to hunting and fishing trips near home. My father was a dedicated hunter also. In those depression days wild game was a welcome addition to the family larder. Father and Uncle Junie hunted together. That is when dad could spare the time from a demanding job at Beech Nut. Uncle Junie was always cooking up some scheme to get a few dollars. As dad told the story they encountered a raccoon which ran up a small tree. Should they shoot it? Oh, no. Uncle knew a man who would give him five dollars for a live coon. A canvas was put under the tree. Junie shimmied up and dislodged the coon. It was wrapped up in the canvas for transport a few miles home. At this point I entered the story. Junie would just put on leather gloves, seize the coon and place it into a box. That five dollars was almost in pocket. Those gloves did not give any protection from the coon's sharp teeth. It ran under the car, then up the corner post of the garage. I do believe it was finally captured. Did Uncle ever get the five dollars? I do not know. It may have gone up in smoke like many of his schemes.

At this stage of the story I must usher in Uncle's second wife Evelyn Riley Garlock (1904 to 1992). Of all the people I've known in 84 years I never encountered anyone who mastered the trait of accepting life

as it was, good or bad, as well as Aunt Evelyn. I watched out for her until the end of her days and cherished the task.

They never had very much but stuck together. Later in life when both were alive they went to Florida and helped some motel owner. I remember as if it was yesterday December 10, 1958, when my wife and I were visiting my parents and Grandpa Garlock at Marshville. Grandpa was 84. The phone rang and my father answered it. It was for Grandpa, sending news via Aunt Evelyn that his son Ben O had died. Could he send money enough to have his body sent back home to Canajoharie? What at that moment did Grandpa think about? Was it his oft told story that he could burn the firewood faster than his son could split it? I will always remember what he said when the telephone was hung up. It was just: "I have always wondered what would happen to him. Now I know."

Skip Barshied, Stone Arabia, December 11, 2014