



RUMRUNNERS

By H.Charles Beil



A Real Buried Treasure Adventure

Smugglers of the Thousand Islands

It was not long after the first taxes on alcoholic beverages that someone began to smuggle them. The British government had "revenue cutters" in place to stop smugglers as early as the 16th century. Pirates often made extra money running rum to heavily taxed colonies. There were times when the sale of alcohol was limited for other purposes, such as laws against sales to American Indians in the Old West, Canada West, or local prohibitions like the one on Prince Edward Island between 1901 and 1948.

One of the most famous periods of rum-running began in the United States with the 18th Amendment (ratified January 16, 1919) and the Volstead Act (passed October 28, 1919). Prohibition began on January 16, 1920, when the Eighteenth Amendment went into effect. This period lasted until the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed with ratification of the Twenty-first Amendment, on December 5, 1933. For thirteen years the United States was a dry country.....sort of!

Rum Row



With liquor illegal on US territory, the next logical step was to take the party elsewhere. For bootleggers who looked to the seas to move their liquor, that meant Rum Row. Legally, the US government had no control over the seas about 5 kilometers (3 mi) out, so rumrunners and bootleggers would simply park their ships just off the East Coast and let word-of-mouth do the rest. Ships were bringing rum in from the

Caribbean and liquor from Europe and Canada and as long as they stayed beyond the 3-mile mark, no one could do anything about it.

Law enforcement didn't like rumrunners giving them the completely legal middle finger, though, so they renegotiated the distance in 1924. After that, they would have control over the waters outside the country's land for 19 kilometers (12 mi), making it much more difficult for bootleggers to hold their parties. These prudes were real party poopers!

The ships of Rum Row had to be well-stocked for patrons, and that meant they were also prime targets. Those that owned and ran the boats were notoriously well-armed, but that didn't deter many pirates. There are few recorded accounts, but there is one record of a French ship plundered for \$800,000 worth of liquor over the course of 10 days. Other ships were simply found stripped and floating, without a crew.

A particularly resourceful group of pirates disguised their ship as a Coast Guard vessel, and boarded rumrunners dressed as US military. The ships of rumrunners were also very vulnerable, as the strip of sea where most set up camp was plagued by dense fog and unpredictable waves, leading to many crashing on the shores of New York and New Jersey.



During the years of Prohibition, police enforced the ban on making, transporting and selling alcoholic beverages. In this image, we see a police raid at Elk Lake, Canada, during 1925.

Johnny Torrio was right when he saw Prohibition as a lucrative opportunity for organized crime.

Before the "Noble Experiment" (so called by President Hoover) failed miserably, after just thirteen years, organized crime made staggering amounts of money from the liquor business.

By far the biggest Rum Row was in the New York/Philadelphia area off the New Jersey coast, where as many as 60 ships were seen at one time. One of the most notable New Jersey rum runners was Habana Joe, who could be seen at night running into remote areas in Raritan Bay with his flat-bottom skiff for running up on the beach, making his delivery, and speeding away.

The term *rum-running* is more commonly applied to smuggling over water while *bootlegging* is applied to smuggling over land.

Since the rum-running business was so good, an enterprising Captain McCoy soon bought a Gloucester knockabout schooner named *Arethusa* at auction and renamed her *Tomoka*. He installed a larger auxiliary engine, mounted a concealed machine gun on her deck and refitted the fish pens below to accommodate as much contraband as she could hold. She became one of the most famous of the rum-runners, along with his two other ships hauling mostly Irish and Canadian whiskey, as well as other fine liquors and wines.

As prohibition wore on, the stakes got higher and the ships became more specialized. These high-speed boats were often luxury yachts, commuter boats and brilliant mahogany speedboats fitted with powerful Liberty aircraft engines, machine guns, and armor plating. Often, builders of rum-runners' ships also supplied Coast Guard vessels such as *Fred* and *Mirto* Scopinich's Freeport Point Shipyard. Rum-runners often kept cans of used engine oil handy to pour on hot exhaust manifolds, in case a smoke screen was needed to escape the revenue ships. Stories of daring escapes and shoot outs were common at this time.

The rum-runners were definitely faster and more maneuverable. Add to that the fact that a rum-running captain could make several hundred thousand dollars a year. In comparison, the Commandant of the Coast Guard made just \$6,000 annually, and seamen made \$30/week. These huge rewards meant the rum-runners were willing to take big risks. They ran without lights at night and in fog, risking life and limb. Often, the shores were littered with bottles from a rum-runner who had hit a sandbar or a reef in the dark at high speed and sunk.

It was not uncommon for rum-runners' ships to be sold at auction shortly after a trial — often right back to the original owners. Some ships were captured three or four times before they were finally sunk or retired.

Bootlegging operations went on everywhere, but many who took the risks were forced to give their profits to corrupt city officials; most of them were on the dol. After a new Bureau of Prohibition was created in 1927, the feds conducted sting operations that had little effect on the business despite how Elliot Ness and the untouchables are portrayed in Hollywood!

By example, their investigation of a case in Washington state was lengthy, and thorough, designed to catch as many people as possible. When the net was finally set, many people were caught in it - including police officials and the mayor of Tacoma. The corruption ran deep and included many of the Federal officials themselves.

It was actually easy to get around Prohibition. People ignored the laws that were designed to keep them from making, transporting, selling and consuming alcohol. Even athletic clubs became "rum dives."

Throughout the country, police often protected the illegal buying and selling of liquor.

In Atlantic City, home of the famous Boardwalk - where Enoch L. Johnson, better known as "Nucky Johnson" was "The Boss," Babette's was a favorite hangout and African-Americans were an integral part of the city's life - law enforcement officials routinely "looked the other way."

New York gangsters, like Lucky Luciano, felt at home in a place like Atlantic City.

Wives wrote letters to federal agents, or police officers, stating their husbands bought liquor from bootleggers and spent money that was "needed for household expenses."

One woman wrote a letter to complain that her husband was buying a quart every other day. Another came to see "The Boss" himself, whereupon Nucky Johnson gave her more back than her husband had lost.

The Thousand Island Rum Runners

Smuggling has taken place in the Thousand Islands since there were borders between the Colonies and Canada. The Horse Thief Trail took horses south and beef north during the war of 1812 and remains of it can be walked on Hill Island. Counterfeiters like the gang that the outlaw David Lewis belonged to in 1815 regularly crossed the border to elude the law. Today cigarettes are smuggled to avoid paying the state and federal taxes on them.

During the Prohibition years, fast runabouts with names like Miss Behave and Legendary Lady stowed bottles of good Canadian Whiskey in secret compartments for the short trip across the St. Lawrence Seaway. These same types of boats can be seen as pleasure craft on the river today and in the Clayton Antique Boat Museum in NY. The boats had hollow places under the floorboards to hide liquor. Naturally, if the boat was stopped, bottles would fly over the side. The cottage on Mink Island has a cement closet with a vault door as well as a secret room under the dining table accessed through a trap door under the rug. I was privileged once to find a sub-basement in a "speakeasy" in the Manchester district of Pittsburgh where illicit alcohol was stored. Smuggling in the Thousand Islands continues to the present and everyone in the area has their own tales of night runs and vices in the woods that say things like, "Just move along, son".

Stretching down from the north-east corner of Lake Ontario, the picturesque Thousand Islands region spans an incredible 50 miles, snaking along the Saint Lawrence River along the border of the United States and Canada. Something of a misnomer, the Thousand Islands are actually made up of an incredible 1,864 islands, constituting one of the American continent's largest archipelagos. It's also one of the most beautiful areas in America.

Once home to all of the movers and shakers of the American entertainment and business scenes; the 1000 Islands was very much a millionaire's playground. As prominent businessmen rushed to snap up the most beautiful islands, a series of incredible houses and mansions were erected, including the magnificent Singer Castle and Boldt Castle; created by the director of the Singer Sewing Company and the GM of the NYC Waldorf-Astoria Hotel respectively.

Once home to pirates, bootleggers and a whole lot of high society high jinks, the history of the Thousand Islands is a lot murkier than the calm waters of the St. Lawrence River suggest.

Bootlegging is the subject of a few of my history sessions; partially because I've restored a number of the classic mahogany runabouts that perhaps in earlier years were used to outrun the revenue men. These sessions often ran way over time, as one person or another remembered the strange things that happened during those long ago days. Whether it's stories of Capone, Kennedy or Rooney's moonshine operations in Chicago, New England, Pittsburgh or those of the people who live in Clayton who are descendants of those daring young men who made sure that there was whiskey to be found, if you knew where to look, the conversation inevitably comes up. Of course, it was illegal and carried heavy fines if you were caught, but it also was very hard and dangerous work, and bootleggers were considered heroes by many people. Their lives were romanticized, and I believe more upstanding citizens were inclined to sympathize

with the bootleggers, rather than the law. More recently I've learned of "Little Chicago" or Johnsonburg and Keating in the hills of North Central Pennsylvania that were havens for bootleggers during prohibition.

In the 1800s whiskey was plentiful and readily available all over the country. Stills were everywhere and whiskey was cheap. Too available and too cheap for many tired wives who carried the burden of trying to raise a family and do all the work while husbands often got the habit of spending their paychecks on whiskey and mistreating their families. Soon the women got together and tried to make the sale of whiskey illegal. It was also the time Eugenics; a dark period in American history that's pushed into the closet; out of sight and out of mind. Many battles were fought with the law and with the public, since of course, there was money to be made and alcohol was about the only form of recreation there was at that time. Prohibition did about as much to stop the consumption of whiskey as the war on drugs has done to stop drug use. That is to say that laws had very little effect on the public's desire to drink and demand for alcohol.

In 1917 President Woodrow Wilson put a ban on the sale of whiskey, citing the need for grain to feed the troops and a starving public. He introduced a bill in 1918 and in 1919 the 18th amendment was enacted into law, banning the manufacture or sale of whiskey in the United States. This brought about the era of the "Speakeasies, the hidden stills, Moonshine Whiskey and Bathtub Gin." The era of the household distillery was born. It was soon realized that there would be whiskey available for those who knew where to find it, but the government was losing the tax money which was involved in the sale of whiskey. Also the giant Mobsters were making a fortune and paying no tax on whiskey. It was rumored that Al Capone made 60 million dollars a year from the sale of untaxed whiskey. Also many jobs were lost, when legal whiskey was banned; the men turning instead to the backwoods production or illegal importation of the liquid devil.

In the Thousand Islands, illegal activity in the region was not new. In the early years it was known as bootlegging. During the period where the United States had banned alcohol production, many in the United States went to great lengths to get access to "the drink". Those who are old enough to remember the years of Prohibition will remember the stories of the "rumrunners" who risked their lives crossing the St. Lawrence River in the midst of the night. Some unfortunate participants met their fate on the river from gunshots, some of whom were never found. However, for many families in the North Country and Canada, great riches were had through this enterprise.

After Prohibition was repealed and passed into the annals of our memory, the modern age of the Seaway has become a water freeway for other illegal enterprises. While liquor was the main focus many years ago, immigration, cigarettes, marijuana, and other contraband have made a whole new definition of international commerce between Canada and the United States. Some of the region's residents have seen the television news this year revealing that this activity is quite alive and well.

In the last three years, many of those in the region's law enforcement agencies have been involved with marijuana smuggling that has become prevalent in the area.

When the American government threw their lot in with the Temperance Movement and started the ill-fated experiment that was Prohibition, it started a weird period in America's history where the criminal element gained something of a favorable notoriety—especially the bootleggers, rumrunners, and moonshiners. The heroes of Prohibition, they kept a dry country from getting thirsty, and their methods make for some good stories. It was the era that spawned auto racing and the famous boat races of the Liberty Cup and Gold Cup racers. To be in this business one needed fast cars and faster boats. There was

a romanticism and thrill surrounding bootlegging and men were secretly initiated into the business through friends. And the money was good at a time when money was scarce.

A Bootleggers story

One night about six or seven months after prohibition I went home as usual. But about three minutes after I had entered the apartment, the bell rang and a little fellow who looked like a jockey was standing there. He said he had followed me all the way from the restaurant so that we could have a quiet talk in my apartment. I asked him who he was, but he just laughed and said one of my very good friends had sent him to see me.

Well, what he wanted to say was this. He asked me if there were not a lot of my old customers who were anxious to buy something to drink. I had to confess that this was true. He said he thought so, and that he was ready to help me give it to them. I told him I would get in trouble trying to sell liquor at the restaurant, and he laughed again. That wasn't the way it would work, he said. I didn't know much in those days.

He went on to say that a friend of his had a large supply of liquors available, very choice stuff, and that he wanted some arrangement for letting the men who could afford to pay for it know about it. With that he stood up quickly and said he would be leaving. After he was gone, I found an envelope on the table with \$200 in it, and a card with an address on Forty-sixth Street. On the card was written, "Jean, drop around tomorrow."

So the next day I went to the address. I had a long talk with a quiet fellow who said his name was Dolan. And the result of it was that I agreed to get the addresses of all my friends who came to Sherry's, then quit my job and call on them at their homes.

I visited during the next week about fifteen or twenty young men. And every one of them offered to take as much as I could bring them. It was fine stuff, and the prices were high. I received \$150 a case for Scotch whisky. Fifty dollars a case of that was my profit. But I had to have an automobile to deliver it, and so I conversed with my wife about selling the beauty shop. She wouldn't do it, but she agreed to get me an automobile, and the next day we went out together and bought one.

For about a year I stayed in this business, just delivering Dolan's stuff among my customers for a nice profit. The police never bothered me and never seemed to bother Dolan. I did not know the source of his supply. But in those early days there were not many bootleggers and the police did not seem to bother much about them. I made good money.

As time went on, Dolan reduced his prices. He said it was foolish just to go after wealthy men. He said everybody wanted liquor and if the prices were brought down everybody would buy it and the business increase. But it seemed to me that the quality of his goods began to deteriorate, and I was afraid to lower the prices to my customers for fear they would suspect something. As long as they were paying higher prices for their liquors than their friends, I knew they would think they were getting better stuff. And why not let them enjoy a little boasting? Anyway, I was not dealing in any poisonous hooch. It was real Scotch, just a little watered.

On my profits, I opened a little restaurant of my own about a year and a half after prohibition. I put a couple of barrels of wine in the cellar and sold it to my customers. I couldn't see any harm in that, and my wife said it was ridiculous to think that was breaking any law. But by now the police were getting on to bootlegging. The cop on the beat found out about my wine and started coming in for a bottle every night.

That was all right, but when he started bringing all of his friends and going up to the cash register as if it was his place and taking out a ten or twenty dollar bill whenever he felt like it, I got tired of it. I told him to cease doing that. And he said he would put me in jail if I resisted him.

But I did not intend to give all of my profits to the police and their friends, so about six months later I just closed up the restaurant.

About this time I decided to branch out and go after a larger trade. I heard that a man named Immerman—he is dead now—was getting a lot of stuff from Rum Row and Cuba, good Scotch and high-priced cordials which were very rare.

I went to see him with a man who took me to a room over a garage in Brooklyn. In the garage I could see trucks piled up with all sorts of high-class goods in cases. But Immerman told me that he was only running his goods in for a firm and could not do any business with me. I would have to see the firm in Times Square.

I went to this office and met the man who was introduced to me as the president. He would not talk until I told him to call up ———, a famous Broadway spender that he knew would be all right. This man told him I was entirely reliable.

The president—I prefer not to mention his name—took me entirely into his confidence. And he made me feel like a piker sure enough when he told me what his company was doing. He said they had dozens of men like myself working on commission, or rather as agents, and that I could make a million dollars if I would help them with the disposal of their goods. He said their big problem was distribution.

He told me the firm could supply me with any kind of liquor that I needed for my trade in any quantity. He would guarantee me protection. And also, he said, he would show me how to expand my business so that I would only have to direct it and let other men do the work. I paid him one thousand dollars, which he said was a partnership fee and went into the lawyers' fund. It was my first step toward really big business in the bootlegging industry.

II—BIG BUSINESS

After I paid the president of the big liquor distributing syndicate my thousand dollars for the lawyer's fund, he gave me a long talk about selling liquor. He said that rum peddling was a piker's business and that his organization had developed a scientific system just like any other organization with goods to sell, such as the Standard Oil Company or the Uneda Baking Company, for example. The firm had a small quantity of fine liquor, he said, that came in steadily through Canada and through boats from the West Indies. But this was only for sample purposes and was not used for actual deliveries.

He said: "Of course, we are not delivering genuine Scotch liquor or genuine anything else. We cannot get that stuff any longer. We have fifteen or twenty big plants which are converting alcohol into whisky and wine and cordials and I had just as soon drink it as the real stuff. I will guarantee that it would not harm a child. But, of course, the customer does not like that idea. He likes to think that he is getting the real goods. And as long as the stuff we sell does not hurt him, it helps business to make him think so. So the main job is to make him think he is getting the real goods. He just enjoys it that much more."

Of course, he was not telling me anything that I did not already know. But he put it in a very interesting way and I could see that he was entirely right. Then he went on to tell me of the system that I was to use.

I told him I had \$20,000 capital to work with and he said this was enough to make a good start. He told me to hire several fellows as my assistants and to rent an office in whatever section I wanted to work in. I told him that my main trade was in Wall Street and that I would get an office there.

He talked to me a long time, giving me suggestions. The most important thing, he kept saying, is to make your customers believe they are getting the real thing. He gave me a chart with the names of various brands of soap on it, and opposite the name of each brand was the name of some liquor. For instance, Ivory was Scotch whisky, Octagon was gin, and so on. Whenever I wished to take a delivery from one of the Brooklyn warehouses, he said, I should call the Times Square office and place my order for so many cases of soap, and see that everything was all right. He said they would always tell me over the phone where to go for the goods, as it was not kept in one place very long.

I hired three fellows and bought each of them a sailor's cap. This was partly my idea and partly the president's. I told them to call on all of my old customers and tell them that I had gone out of business, but had sent them to the customers because they were stewards on ocean liners and were smuggling in fine stuff. I became a silent partner, and never did see any of my customers personally again.

I made up cases out of regular suitcases for each of my men. Each suitcase had twelve compartments to hold twelve bottles, and my men would carry these around as sample cases. They would take orders on the basis of the samples and guarantee that if the goods did not come up to expectations the money would be refunded. I never have had to refund a nickel. People seem to have lost their taste, as far as liquor is concerned. They can't tell the genuine article from a good imitation any time.

I did a lot of business. I bought three Buick coupés and fixed up the back seat to handle liquor. I took out the cushion entirely and then made a papier-mâché imitation which I covered with the tapestry so that it looked exactly like the regular cushion seat, except that it was entirely hollow underneath. My men could carry ten cases of liquor easily under that imitation cushion.

There were a lot more tricks that I used. I prepared speeches for each of my men. They would say to a customer that they had been furnishing liquor to important people ever since prohibition, and they would mention a lot of rich men's names. Most of the time I stayed at my office, making up the orders that my men brought in and calling the Times Square headquarters to learn where I would procure the goods. At first I used a rented truck to carry the goods to a little garage where I would unload it into the coupés for delivery. But later I was able to buy my own truck.

At my wife's beauty parlor, she told me, women were always asking her where they could buy something to drink. Most of them wanted wine, and I could get it for them from headquarters. So I had my wife give them the number of my office, if they were old customers that she could trust, and sold quite a lot of wine that way. The majority of the wine is mixed stuff. That is, we get in a small quantity of real wine from Canada and mix it with California wine. The real wine gives the flavor, or rather the aroma, and the California wine makes up the body. I used to know wines well in the days at Sherry's. But nowadays they all seem to taste alike. But they do not taste bad. And even if they are not quite what the bottle says they are, there is nothing in them to hurt anybody.

The president told me that if my men were ever held up on a delivery by the police, they should mention the name of a man that he gave me. I had never heard of this man before. You never see his name in the papers. But he is a big politician, and is very much respected by every cop I ever met. I cannot tell you who he is.

I only had to use his name twice. One day I was in my office when one of my men called up to say that he had been stopped in front of a customer's house in East Sixty-ninth Street. He said he had forgotten the name he was to mention, and I told it to him. A little while later he called me up again and said everything was all right.

There was one other time when I had to use this man's name. It was some time later, and doesn't really belong in this part of the story. It was last year, when I had begun running in my own stuff and not depending on the syndicate. I went one night with a big Packard touring car to Montauk Point and loaded up with Scotch whisky. I bought it from the captain of a river boat, who said he had just come in from Rum Row. I think he was lying and that his stuff came from Brooklyn, but it did not make much difference. I tasted it, and it wasn't poison.

It is a long drive from Montauk Point and I was running very fast through the Island. Just after I passed — two men in uniform stepped into the road and waved me down. They asked me where I thought I was going in such a hurry. Then one of them said, "What have you got in there?"

I answered that it was liquor.

They seemed very much surprised that I was so open about it, and made me turn around and head back to —. But before I started along the road I said, "Did you ever hear of So-and-So?" and mentioned the name I have been speaking about.

"Hell" said one of the men. "Why didn't you say you were working for him in the first place?" They walked away from the car, and I turned around and came on toward New York. But at the next town there were two men who stopped me and leaned into the car. They warned me not to go too fast or I was likely to be picked up by some cop who would not understand. I knew then that the two policemen who had stopped me at — had telephoned to New York to verify my identity, and then telephoned to the next town ahead. If they had not received their O.K. from New York the next officers would have arrested me.

III—METHODS

Toward the beginning of 1925, my business was so big that it nearly ran itself. My Wall Street office was full of clerks who knew their jobs, and never bothered me. And my street men—about ten of them, each with an automobile—knew their jobs too. So there wasn't much for me to do. All I did was furnish the capital, and deliver instructions, and make the prices on all the goods we sold. I didn't like this much. I never was a business man. Being a waiter at Sherry's got me in the habit of dealing with people, especially rich people, and I began to miss it. So I moved my desk out of the Wall Street office and set up a little personal office in Times Square. Just for my own amusement I wanted to build up a small, select trade, which I could attend to myself.

That wasn't hard. I knew plenty of rich and discriminating gentlemen and some of these had not lost their taste for good liquor. I got the address of one of them, and sent him a special present. It was a bottle of real Napoleon brandy—Bisquit Dubouché 1804. It cost me \$110, but I thought it would be worth it to give to my friend, Mr. B. Well, it was. I sent it up one afternoon and by dinner time he was calling me up, begging me to get him some more. "I will pay anything you ask for it," he said.

Pretty soon, I was doing a business of almost \$10,000 a year with this man alone. High-class goods, practically all of it genuine stuff. And it was a pleasure to me to spend a week smuggling in a bottle of fine brandy or fine Cointreau from somebody on a ship, or some acquaintance who was coming back from Europe.

Naturally, this Mr. B. began telling his friends about me. In order to hold his friendship, I used to send him something very special about once a week. A case of genuine McCallum's Perfection, say, or a dozen bottles of McDonald and Muir's Highland Queen. He protested at first, saying he didn't want to be under obligations to me. But pretty soon he got to the point where he would hint at the brand he wanted. And naturally, taking so much liquor for nothing he felt it his duty to tell his friends about me. Mr. B. was the best "outside man" I ever had, and he never knew it!

Among his friends, I was not so particular about the stuff I delivered. In the first place, there aren't enough real goods to go around, and in the second place his friends couldn't tell the difference. Even Mr. B., who had a good palate, got royally fooled one night. He came to dinner at my apartment—I have been living on Park Avenue for two years—and after dinner I got out two bottles of Scotch Whisky. One of them was a genuine bottle of Greenlees & Co.'s Old Parr, many years in the wood. The other was some stuff my men had made for me in New Jersey not thirty days before, using a base of smuggled, genuine stuff.

I asked Mr. B. to taste a bit out of each bottle. And he couldn't tell the difference. The Old Parr was a little sweeter, a little thicker to the tongue. But the fake stuff was smooth, too. He thought it was very fine. Now, as a matter of fact, it was all right. It would not hurt anybody to drink it, for my men had made it carefully. They made it so well that I could sell it for \$90 a case, when it cost me about \$16 a case to produce.

This was the stuff I gave Mr. B.'s friends. And it was funny to see them get particular over the various brands. One of them said my Green Stripe was better than my Highland Queen. Same stuff in different bottles. But I can tell a better one than that.

Nearly everybody needs gin, and everybody knows that the so-called Gordon's Gin is fake stuff. You can't get any real Gordon's in this country. But I struck upon the idea of a different package. I put out two packages, calling one of them a London Gin and the other a South American—that is, English manufacture in a South American package, export stuff. I sent a trial case of the London package to the president of a leading New York bank, but in about three days he sent it back. It wasn't real stuff, he said, and he couldn't drink it.

I went down to pay him a personal call, and explained that I thought he was in a hurry and the London stuff was all I had at the moment. If he was willing to wait a week, I told him, a South American ship would be in with a quantity of real London Gin, packed for Brazilian export. The price I gave him on this was much higher than the original sale, but I explained that the South American stuff was really a rare article and cost me a lot. The bank president was very eager, and said he would wait.

Well, in a week I sent him down a case of the South American stuff and took his check. He called me up that night to tell me how fine it was, and that he wanted some more, at any price. Of course, it was exactly the same gin that I had sent him in the London bottles. But he was having a great time fooling himself, the liquor would not hurt him, and he could afford to pay for it.

For this special trade of mine—these ten or twelve friends of Mr. B.—I went to special pains to make my liquor look genuine. I bought my bottles from a firm in the Middle West, in lots of ten thousand, perfect imitations of real Scotch bottles. The liquor was made up from Scotch malt that was landed on the Jersey shore. I got hold of one hundred barrels and cut it into fifteen thousand cases of liquor, using the malt for a base, for flavor and so on, and filling out the body with government alcohol redistilled and water.

I had all of this stuff bottled by hand, of course. Two good men can turn out fifty cases of bottled stuff a day. We used specially stamped corks, and inserted them carefully so they would pop when they were drawn. The metal caps were tested by hand to be sure that they were tight, and the loose ones fixed by twisting a cord rapidly around them, and then releasing it. The tissue wrappers were wound tightly around the bottles, and then the bottles were put in salt solution. After they were thoroughly soaked they were laid on a rack built above the furnace so that the paper tissue would stick to the bottle when the customer tried to unwrap it.

The labels came to me by mail from Germany, and were quite expensive, fifty cents for a set of twelve. They were printed in England, on English paper, and were exact duplications of the real thing. For all I know, they were done by the same printer who has the distillery contracts. At one time, I went so far as to import bottle straws, because I noticed that the English straw wrapping is made of smaller straws and is slightly darker in color than the local product. Of course, I didn't believe that any of my customers would notice this. But you see I was enjoying myself by making up the most perfect package I could.

When it was done, I assure you, you couldn't have told my product from the genuine article to save your life. I even went so far as to spread the white of an egg over the cork before putting the metal cap on. This made it look as if the salt water had gotten in there. No, you could not have told the difference. And unless you were a real expert, just come from England, or from a stock of pre-war stuff, you could not have found any difference in the taste, either. On the whole, I was selling pretty pure and smooth liquor, even if it was fake.

I have made a lot of money. My wife handles all the cash, but I believe we have more than \$100,000 invested in safe securities right now. I have never been arrested, and none of my men have ever been arrested except one, and his case never came to trial. I turned it over to the president of the syndicate, the man I have been paying \$3,000 or \$4,000 a year to, for "the legal fund," and one day a lawyer called me to say the case was all over and never would be tried. I don't know how they worked it and I don't care. I've been paying that much a year just to keep from being worried by things like that.

IV—OTHER WAYS

I have about told my own story, but in the last two years I have seen a lot of how the other fellows work. There are a dozen different ways from mine, and they might be interesting.

I have been in every kind of liquor selling place from Kid Mullins' Sawdust Inn on the East Side to the dining rooms of the best hotels. Of course, I don't mean that the hotels themselves sell booze, but you often read that waiters are arrested for selling to customers. And most of the men in the game are so good they can convince all their customers, all the time, that their establishment is the only one in town selling the real stuff.

Like everybody else, I guess, you have done some of your drinking in the speakeasies in the uptown cross streets, east and west of the Avenue. It might interest you to know that these places, most of them, are operated by syndicates. It is necessary to have syndicates to avoid the padlocking danger. If a lone man is running a speakeasy, he is always in danger of being closed up. All he has to do is make a policeman mad, or fail to pay a prohibition agent as much as the agent thinks he deserves. And if he were running his business alone, his livelihood would be cut off.

So the syndicates operate a good many of them. Not all, of course. There are plenty of independent bootleggers. But take a block like Forty— Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. There are, to my knowledge, thirty-two places in this block selling whisky. Some of them are restaurants, too, but most of

them are simply drinking parlors. Well, out of these thirty-two places, twenty-five are owned by one firm. The firm has an office in Times Square, just an ordinary business office, and as far as they are concerned there is nothing unusual about the business they conduct. At each of the places they operate, they keep the rent paid for a year in advance, all the time. They do this so that if the place is padlocked, the landlord will not suffer from it. If one of the places is closed up, the rest keep right on doing business, taking care of the customers who have been turned out of the padlocked place, and nobody loses much.

There are more waiters in the bootlegger's business, I believe, than any other profession. You see, a man with any intelligence is not going to be content with the small profits of a waiter's job nowadays, when he can't sell wine and make his customers give him big tips. But there are plenty of other kinds of people who have come into the business for its easy profits and its quiet life.

I know, for instance, a former doctor who is now running an "apartment barroom" rather far uptown, just off Broadway. This fellow got his medical degree and began practicing in his home town. He was made city physician, and one of his jobs was to make inspections in the segregated district. They caught him one day making illegal operations, and disbarred him from the profession. He went right into bootlegging.

And his system is just about like that of most of these apartment barrooms. He has, in reality, two apartments at the top of a large building. One has its parlor fitted up very expensively, and it is here that he entertains his guests. But he goes pretty far with his system. If three people come in and want a drink, he asks one of them to go with him to the kitchen. There the drinks are poured from a bottle, and the customer pays. You see, there are only two men in the room, and there are no witnesses to the transaction. Also, that one bottle is all the liquor that is in the apartment. The rest is hidden upstairs.

Even if the detectives came crashing in, they would only find a few people sitting around drinking, and a half bottle of liquor in the kitchen. It would be impossible for the agents to get witnesses to a sale, and the bootlegger could only be arrested for possession—not for selling. He could also show that he was entertaining guests in his residence, and could claim that the bottle of liquor was pre-war stock and he was giving his friends a drink. This man keeps a job on the side, though of course he never works at it. Still, in the case of a trial, it would be hard to prove that he is not a law-abiding citizen.

Of course, there are all varieties of secrecy. This doctor's system is one of the most elaborate, and I don't believe he pays a cent to anybody for protection. On the other hand, you can go to some places, further downtown, and walk right in from the street, put your foot on the brass rail, and order a highball. They are pretty wide open, these places. And they pay for the privilege, too, believe me. As far as I can decide, from asking questions here and there, it costs the proprietor of the average drinking place \$150 a week for protection from arrest. I am not saying whether he pays this to the police, or the prohibition agents, or the politicians, or legal syndicates—who are really nothing more than politicians themselves.

Of course, you get all kinds of liquor, going about from place to place. There is not much inducement to the average bootlegger to sell good stuff. He has to pay big prices for it, and his customers don't know the difference. But I don't believe there is any really poisonous liquor being sold in New York at all. I know that I never struck any. By poisonous, I mean really deadly stuff that would kill a man. Of course, some of it isn't very good for the digestion, over a long time.

In the clubs, that is among the clubmen of New York, a new game has just started up. Most of the men who practice it are young and pleasant foreigners, well educated young English or Frenchmen. One will make a few friends, because Americans have a failing for foreigners, and one night he will announce that one of his acquaintances, an old aristocratic gentleman, is in financial difficulties and has thought up the scheme of selling his cellar. It is a wonderful cellar, the young gentleman will say, worth about \$70,000.

Most of the stuff in it came from the cellar of some big restaurant when it closed up shop after prohibition came. But the aristocratic friend is extremely afraid of being suspected, or caught, and he doesn't quite know what to do about it.

Before he knows it, the friend of this young foreigner has put his name down for thirty or forty cases, and suggested that the young man meet him at the club next day, where other gentlemen might be interested. The next day, you may be sure, the young foreigner will show up, and the friends of his friend will cluster about him.

"But I don't like this," he will say in an embarrassed way. "I don't like to make a barroom out of your club."

They will quiet him, and all of them together will order seventy-five or a hundred cases. He will tell them that to avoid suspicion he can only deliver five or six cases at a time, and they will agree. And this gives the young English or Frenchman time to get his supply together, and saves his credit with the wholesalers, who would not let him have a hundred cases at once without cash in hand, but will give him five or ten a day and collect the cash after he has made his delivery, and gotten his own check.

That's the way it goes. Your best friend might be a bootlegger and you never would know it. There are all kinds and classes in the business, but I am always glad that I started off my business on a high-class plane, getting good customers and charging them high prices. If my stuff isn't real, nobody is hurt unless he finds it out, and then it only hurts his pride. It doesn't hurt his body. And some of the stuff I sell is the genuine article. I have gotten rich, but I have made a lot of people happy. I have never run across a man in my life who refused to take a drink because it was against the law, and I have never met a man who thought I was a crook, just because I am a bootlegger and proud of it.

A monologue of the time illustrates, in part, how the twenties became "the lawless years." Performing "Donnie Donahue, on Prohibition," William Cahill expressed the mood of many in 1921:

When we need a bottle they take it away from us!

Because the perceived need was great, the bootlegging trade flourished and led directly to "the lawless decade" of the 1920s. It wasn't just homemade alcohol, made with a moonshine still, that police tried shut down.

Smugglers, called "rumrunners," worked both coasts, illegally importing the banned substance from Canada and Mexico, among other places. The Thousand Islands was a "smuggler's paradise."

One story I found fascinating involved some statues on the US side. During Prohibition, according to our guide, whether or not the statues' eyes were lit up let bootleggers on the Canadian side of the river know whether or not it was safe to bring over their booze.

The smuggling of alcohol has not ended with the repeal of prohibition. Due to tax avoidance activities, boot-legging still exists in the United States. The state of Virginia has reported that it loses up to \$20 million from illegal whiskey smuggling.

The Government of the United Kingdom fails to collect an estimated £900 million in taxes due to alcohol smuggling activities.

Absinthe was smuggled into the United States until it was legalized in 2007. Incidentally it tastes like black licorice!

Just for Fun

Time to sit back and reminisce about the good 'ole days of prohibition with a taste of the contraband liquer!

RUM RUNNER

RUM RUNNER with Captain Morgan® Original Spiced Rum

RECIPE:

0.5 oz Captain Morgan® Original Spiced Rum
0.75 oz Captain Morgan® Grapefruit Rum
0.5 oz banana liqueur
0.5 oz grenadine
0.5 oz orange juice
0.5 oz pineapple juice
0.5 oz lime juice

Glass: Hurricane Glass

1. Add Captain Morgan® Original Spiced Rum, Captain Morgan® Grapefruit Rum, banana liqueur, grenadine, orange juice, pineapple juice and lime juice into a shaker.
2. Shake with ice and strain into a hurricane glass.
3. Garnish with orange slice.