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### Oral History Interview: William Allen Cross

William Allen Cross

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W. Allen Cross

TO: . . . lived in the prohibition era in West Virginia and Huntington, etc. Mr. Cross what was your first reaction to prohibition?

WAC: I, uh, Timothy the first reaction to prohibition was, the law stood out in all sincerity I guess as one of the most unpopular laws in the American History. The law stood as the Prohibition Law, uh, at the time seem to be necessary to, uh, the Puritan type the religious type the, uh, the type that, uh, were interested, uh, primarily in the better life of people in general and that conception was accepted, uh, as to, uh, bootlegging. Bootlegging's been here even before we had a country. Before there ever was a West Virginia, uh, in the New England states, uh, uh, whiskey was a primary, uh, product, uh, which was, uh, one of the primary ingredients such as ale and the, uh, lighter beverages (laughs) and the, uh, whiskey itself was considered in the pattern to the New England states and the first 13 colonies, uh, as an antidote not as a beverage.

TO: What are the beverages made around here?

WAC: The beverages around here were, uh, was, uh, corn whiskey.

TO: Is that the only one?

WAC: Well they made beer in the sense, they raised hopps and malt in the yeast and they called that home brew.

TO: During prohibition was beer popular as WAC: What?, was beer as popular as whiskey then?

WAC: Well Timothy the, uh, conception of that was ridiculous. You could make home brew which was beer. You could buy a stone crock in the stores, you could buy malt and hopps in cans, you could buy the bottles, you could buy the caps and you could even buy a capper. Now this was within the law, but now beer itself as home brew was illegal. But the hypocrisy of the whole thing was to get all these ingredients in the store where the beer

itself was illegal or the home brew.

TO: What did they sell around here?

WAC: Well they sold this home brew the same place they sold liquor, where they sold moonshine as they called it and white lightning, / TO: Moonshine. . . / they had different names for it like, uh, "sheep dip," and "hog wash," "boot black," and, you know, but, uh, it was all different types of it. It was made up in the hollars and up in the canyons and up on the hillsides and the, uh, people that made it, uh, their big primary interest was to keep the feds off of um, the revenueurs as they called it and the people up there that they was doing business with was generally officiated with the law department, uh, the county law.

TO: Did they take "rake offs?"

WAC: Oh, everybody was taking "rake offs" that was part of the game.

TO: The county officials was taking "rake offs?"

WAC: Yeah, sure.

TO: Alright, was it possible for people who have stills to pay revenueurs not to tear um down, protection money?

WAC: Well the, the federal people, the federal revenue people were rather hard to, uh, touch because, uh, of their, uh, status quo and because they was federal people and because they was making better salaries generally than the sheriff of the county. Uh, a man could, uh, drink moonshine and they drank it as a social connection, uh, something interesting to me. In those days women didn't drink, Timothy, it was a sacrilege for a woman, the liquor, the lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine, you know, the little ballad things, you know. Uh, it was a put-down because alot of men, the same thing happens now in different catagories where there's dope and booze or, uh, anything that takes the revenue from the family and takes the food and clothes is a

type man that overindulges , this has always been going on, you know, the damn gluttons, uh, to where it might be necessary to steer a lady. Well this, this thing has been going on for centuries, this hasn't happened since the law stood out but, uh, uh, women that had been drinking wasn't promiscuous in those days, generally it was a man's thing. Now alot of women drank moonshine, don't misunderstand me, alot of younger people. Now for instance we go to a dance and you left your jug out in the car, out in the old T-Model Ford so you hid um out in the alley, you'd slip out there take a drink, you know. And your girlfriend would go out and take a couple of snorts out of a Mason jar you had in the car. But you didn't bring it inside where the chaperones would see it or some of the other people / TO: Right. / . Otherwords it was hid.

TO: So these bottles were improper then, informal?

WAC: Well they some called "horse quarts," which is a 32 ounce medicine bottle and they called um "horse quarts," you buy um in a drugstore. But, uh, moonshiners didn't bottle it for you, you know, the least a moonshiner would sell you was a quart, uh, a Mason jar, a half a gallon or a gallon.

TO: Um, mmm. Was a gallon the most you could buy if you wanted to buy . . .

WAC: Oh, you could buy 50 gallon if you wanted to but nobody wanted that much, you know, and it, the stuff tasted like, uh, God forgotten nothing and, uh, it was hideous.

TO: But that would get you drunk, right?

WAC: Get you crocked! Uh, an interesting thing happened to me up at the state theater about, oh I guess it was about 1929 during the Depression. This man lived in a place up here on the hill called Merritts Creek and, uh, his name was Cyrus, Lee Cyrus, wonderful

man, great man. And he had a registered medicinal still, it was registered by the government, uh, by which he could make 52 gallons a year, classified for medicinal purposes. Now this had been handed down from his great-grandfather to his father to him see there's 3 different, 3 generations. The only thing that was required that he had to pick up federal taxes on every gallon or quart that he sold, uh, the tax varied at times, the tax would vary from whatever the, the uh, going price was of the whiskey see. Uh, so far as the, the Falsted Act was concerned that was an act of Congress. But the act, uh, in the Constitution, alcoholic beverages was never restricted. There was an amendment to the Constitution which was the Falsted Act that did away with alcoholic beverages. Uh, Lee would make 52 gallons and register that 52 gallon with the Department of Internal Revenue see on, on that form, / TO: Um, mmm. / and then the only time he would sell some why you have to list it on your tax fee.

TO: They have to list who bought it?

WAC: Oh yes, and the man had to sign who bought it for medicinal purposes. Uh, also doctor's prescription see.

TO: Oh, I see they had to have a valid reason.

WAC: Yeah, had to be valid and had to pay the tax. Plus they had to pay Lee what his price was as a retailer you see, course he was a retailer-producer.

TO: Even during prohibition?

WAC: Oh yes, yes cause this wasn't promiscuous, you know, this wasn't one in every corner and there wasn't one every place. This was up in the mountains, why these, uh, certificates, uh, uh, distillery, uh, medicinal distillers was handed down from generation to generation they wasn't that many of um / TO: Hum. / . Maybe there'd be one in a section, you know, / TO: Yeah. / or maybe

one or two or three in county.

TO: You couldn't very well take their rights away.

WAC: Yeah, so you could go up the other side of the hill and buy a gallon of whiskey half of what Cyrus would sell it for you, see, but Cyrus was a hell of a nice guy he'd run off 52 gallons for the feds then he'd run off 52 gallons for Lee, see.

TO: Yeah I see.

WAC: Uh, during that Depression period he come down, uh, come down to the old State Theater, he had his mother and father in the wagon, couple of rocking chairs and he'd have 4, 5 of those kids of his, and he and his wife in an old "john wagon," you know what a "john wagon" is, an old rail wagon where the bottoms pop up, you know, where you load um with manure and dirt or something they called um "john wagons." And 2 old salty looking mules on the front of it and park in front of the State Theater and unload the family then he'd take the mules back down to the B&O depot and tie um up, / TO: That's down here where the. . . / yeah, where the old B&O depot was, yeah. And in the meantime though, when he unload the kids and all he'd bring me in maybe a side of pork chop or a loin and some potatoes and some beets or turnips and a quart of the best moonshine you ever put in your mouth.

TO: Was it as good as registered stuff, was it as good as bottled whiskey?

WAC: Oh it was, he made it for his own purpose, you know, a man didn't make sheep dip and drink it, he made sheep dip to sell. When he made drinking whiskey he, he made as a personal, like a man cooking / TO: Um, mmm. /, you know, / TO: He had pride in it. / why sure. He isn't going to eat something that he, uh, going to hurt him and he don't drink anything that hurts him. The only thing with moonshine it was raw and it'd eat the guts off, it'd beat the hair off your body, and uh, for instance, uh, Lee brought me down a batch what they call, they called it a batch, they'd run off

a batch see. They'd make this, uh, mash out of corn and it would ferment. They put yeast in it sometimes they'd put raisins in it, you know, and it would make a mash. And then after it'd set and form and then as you call coming off then they'd run it through the still that's bout the only other processing of, of whiskey. Uh, the difference in the brands of whiskey is sometimes how old they are, you know, you get 5 year old, 10 year stuff it's the ingredients like a cake or anything else that you bake, you know, it's cheaper whether it's well done. And so, so Lee would make this stuff. Anyhow he brought me down one fresh batch he run off early in the fall. You see when the corn's cut and it's funny too bout corn, uh, roasting ears, you know what they are, the white corn makes better sour mash whiskey, that's the sour mash than, uh, feed corn, that's that yellow grain corn see now it's the same thing, you know, whether you selling, uh, what kind of meats you selling, you selling hamburger or T-bone steaks and that's the way they made whiskey. Uh, course with sour mash whiskey, uh, processed longer and had to be handled longer and had to be whipped different.

TO: He wasn't your chief supply, was he?

WAC: At that time he was because I just come back, I just come to Huntington, you know, / TO: Um, mmm. / and I didn't know too many people.

TO: He was the best.

WAC: Al-, he was the best that I ever run into and another story. I gave a friend of mine from Marshall College up here, at that time Marshall College was not a university, and he was a professor in the chemical, uh, chemistry, chemical, the chemistry department. His name was Pollard, Joe Pollard, Professor Pollard and he liked that "slick," he called it. He really went after them corn drippins and he was originally from, uh, I thought Massachusettes and a graduate of MIT. So he come down here and I give him some of that, uh, "sheep dip," and, uh, god damn he smacked

around on it, gulped, you know, teeth didn't fall out pretty good stuff (laughter). So he wanted some of it to run a test on it, he was worrying bout the proof of it / TO: Um, mmm. / . So I gave him some, he run a test on it, in a couple of days when my mail came in I opened it. There was a note in there from the professor and the note read, "Dear Friend, very sorry that your horse has blight disease, proof 105."

TO: (Laughs) boy!

WAC: Now that was "white lightning." And, and see it was real clear, you know, it was just like water.

TO: Was it a filter?

WAC: Oh yes, yes, that's where the, uh, that's where the, uh, extra work and time came, / TO: Oh. / and then they had some they called charcoal filters. They run it through charcoal and that took all the crap out of it, took all the buggies, buggies, you know, / TO: Yeah. / and, uh, sometimes if you go up there in the country someplace, up in Wayne County or Lincoln County back in the mountain or over in Ohio a place called Scotstown they have a bunch of abandoned mines over there and the tunnels in there those guys gets back in there and put stills in there and make loot over in Scotstown, see it's about 15 miles back of Chesapeake / TO: Oh. / and, uh, . .

TO: Are there, any of those stills now?

WAC: Oh no, it's not, you know, hell you can't make it now for what you can buy it, you know,

TO: Are those people still around though, I mean could we interview them?

WAC: I don't know whether you could or not. If you could I don't know whether or not they willing to talk about it, yeah, Cyrus is dead now this guy, my favorite bootlegger. And he didn't consider himself a bootlegger.



TO: He was a professional then?

WAC: No, he just thought it was a way of life, I think the difference's there you know. Uh, then when, uh, prohibition went out, you know, uh, then they called it store bought red whiskey, you know, some people called it this manufactured, you know, they called it red whiskey. And, uh, then some people said, "I don't like this store bought whiskey," like they buying store bought clothes, you know, didn't like that store bought whiskey. And they come down here from up in the mountains said, "you got any red whiskey," White whiskey was the moonshine and the red whiskey, uh, sometimes the guy would make, get oak kegs, get old coca-cola kegs see and they get the 5 gallon ones and they would put it in, uh, moonshine in these kegs, now they would make oak kegs and bar um up, now this is work, you see, this / TO: Um, mmm. / is the difference. And, uh, bury it, dig a hole and line it with horse manure or cow manure and plant it. Let it stay in the ground for a couple of years and it'd come out bout color of, uh, cow manure, you know, it'd look like that (laughter) and taste like that (laughter). A horrible taste, I mean you drink some of this stuff and it just make your ears pounce you know and you hair go back up on your neck and say, "damn that's good, that's the best I've had in a long time." Now we didn't know what store bought whiskey was or red whiskey you know and home brew was, you know, had home brew taste.

TO: At parties was this respectable?

WAC: Nothing was respectable in those days but the Baptist Church and the First Huntington Bank (laughter) and a good life / TO: I see. / . That was respectability.

TO: Did they have these . . .

WAC: Cigarettes was out, women didn't smoke cigarettes, you must understand this was another age in another area where these things weren't accepted. Uh, where you sold whiskey you had prostitution, where you had

prostitution you had gambling and these things was never accepted, it was against the law, I mean all these things are unlawful, / TO: Against society. / but, but, yeah against society, yeah, and society was a dominating factor.

TO: Christian Temperance Union.

WAC: Uh, WCTU was one of the strongest organizations the world's ever known. That's to keep my man sober and keep him where he belongs, and bring his paycheck home and kiss ass.

TO: (Laughs) well they, they, uh, really did the job around here then?

WAC: They tried to do their job, it was a joke, you know, nobody paid any attention to it, uh, some guy over here bootlegging, uh, and selling home brew and as long as he took care of people with what they called the "rip-off," and the "pay-off," why certain class of people went to that place see.

TO: They didn't say anything?

WAC: Yeah, uh, and then along bout that area they started making bathtub gin, they make this synthetic gin out of alcohol see, / TO: Um, mmm. / and that replaced the moonshine, that's another field there of bootlegging because you had the middle class that was drinking the bathtub gin. And, uh, that was shipped in, uh, into here in 5 gallon cans and was called molasses and all that other different damn things.

TO: So it competed with moonshine?

WAC: Yeah, but, uh, it was more expensive than moonshine see because of something on terms of a ethyl alcohol.

TO: Was that sold in the, uh, town in buying places too?

WAC: Oh yeah, yeah, you could buy it.

TO: So you could get anything, [ WAC: Yeah.] women and cigarettes and . . .

WAC: Yeah, women, whiskey, cigarettes, prostitution.

TO: Marijuana too?

WAC: No marijuana, marijuana wasn't heard of.

TO: Hum.

WAC: Uh, such things as, uh, course it was dope in those days that was surprising. Phenobarbital, yellow jackets, and things you could buy in a drugstore, I mean you didn't . . .

TO: Oh, I see you didn't have to worry bout it.

WAC: No, no, nobody used it though cause everybody was afraid of it see cause it was taboo, it was ignorance, it was the same damn thing with the Falsted Act with nothing but ignorance, you can't control a man's appetite by a law.

TO: That's true.

WAC: They've never been able to control any of these things by a law and to, uh, moonshine and home brew and phenobarbs and some of that other stuff that the younger people used why the older generation was just crap, you know, But, uh, here's a, uh, hardshell theologian that's maybe, uh, big shot in, uh, Sunday school class and he's got a jug here out in the damn garage, you know, under alot of crap, you know, maybe a half gallon of moonshine he's going back there and taking a swig every once in a while. And being so, uh, contemptuous to the reaction of it he says, "this is for medication." "My doctor sug-," you know, and they make this homemade wine the same way, Timothy.

TO: I was going to ask about wine.

WAC: Yeah, they make all kinds of wine they, uh, bottle it up and they bootleg the wine too. Generally a person who

sells home brew doesn't sell anything but home brew but, uh, generally that's too much of a route but if they was selling moonshine, you see, then the Feds would come in but the Feds didn't hardly say anything, it was the local people that got on about the home brew see. And everybody made their own wine, Timothy. Was thought nothing of, when the berry season come in that blackberry wine, why hell strawberry wine. Uh, / TO: So you didn't have to buy . . . / peach brandy, my god I mean, you know, and they use to distilling peaches, you know, it was always corn, wasn't always corn, peaches, you know, and apple brandy's something else. Up in Ashford County where my family's originally from they made apple brandy up there, instead of using corn they used apples. They'd make apple cidar and let it go get hard, let it set and then they run it through these copper stills and make apple jack out of it and it'd knock your jack right back, boy, I mean, whee, that stuff was strong (laughter). But you see nobody put it down like that, the men drank it we wouldn't have thought it was deplorable and thought, it was alot of crap and the women was responsible for the Falsted Act. Because they weren't for a man drinking, he said, "Hell, I ain't going to pay any attention, they can't do nothing about it," first thing you know blam, they knocked him. And then finally the country had to wise up to the fact that it wasn't necessary. And if you're going to drink it you're going to pay the tax on it, / TO: How many . . . / you couldn't enforce the law that's for sure.

TO: How many of these alley places and store places were there?

WAC: Well generally in the nigro sections you'd find one of these alley places / TO: Oh. / and then in the, uh, . . .

TO: Was it dangerous to go to these places?

WAC: Not, uh, too much.

TO: Was it socially disasterous to go?

WAC: Uh, the girls didn't go.

TO: Then the only women was [ WAC: Of course the . . . ]  
prostitutes mostly?

WAC: Yeah, mostly prostitutes and, uh, the type of camp  
followers you'd find around a place like that.

TO: They have any . . .

WAC: It was socially, drinking was socially taboo.

TO: Did Marshall students go?

WAC: Yeah, quite a few of um do, the boys, the men, you know.

TO: Did they go over to the nigro section and get . . .

WAC: Yeah, and then the white section too, you know, there  
was alot of white places but they, uh, . . .

TO: In Guyandotte maybe?

WAC: Well downtown here, this area here between 10th and 11th  
street used to be called the strip. And right next door  
here where this bank building, this theater been here for  
90 years was the old Palisades and from here down about,  
almost where the State Theater was upstairs was a bunch  
of apartment houses and over here, use to be an apartment  
house over here right back of that place there all this  
was an apartment house here. And then they was another  
one here and they was, uh, houses, prostitution, you  
know, and uh . . .

TO: Here on 4th avenue?

WAC: Yeah, this use to be the strip, uh, a poolroom was  
in there.

TO: How long ago was this, bout 30 or 40 years ago?

WAC: Uh, 30 years ago, yeah, [ TO: Must have been . . . ]  
fore the war, in fact the war appeared I'd say, oh

from about 1925 to about 1945, You'd get anything in there you wanted. You could, now this place over here now that was a gambling joint, you know.

TO: Still?

WAC: Yeah and there was one on this side of the street in Kressen Pool Room and then they's another one down-stairs here and they's whore'houses all lined up around here and they was a, a bootlegging joint over the State Theater. Yeah, an apartment up there / TO: Hum. / and this next door place here they's 3 or 4 in that that's why they called this the strip. Now you go on down 3rd avenue, down on 2nd avenue they's whore houses and bootlegging joints down in there.

TO: That's why all those down through warehouses.

WAC: Yeah, but after, uh, after prohibition went out why, uh, it knocked the hustlers out you see / TO: Uh, huh. / and knocked the cons out, uh, a man go to the liquor store and get him a jug didn't have to go in these joints here. And if he wanted to play cards he'd join the Elks or the, uh, some of the other social clubs around here, you know, if he wanted to play poker, shoot craps. Uh, the Scoreboard out here and another one out here on 9th street and there's another place down on 4th avenue, you see, (break in tape).

TO: Bout how much did moonshine cost then?

WAC: Well, uh, course when you went in a joint and just buy a drink and, uh, it would run anywhere from 15¢ to 25¢ a drink.

TO: How much was in a drink?

WAC: Oh, bout a 2 ounce shot was usually a snort and, uh, you could buy it by the pint and the practical way to do it was to buy it by horse quart and that's a 32 ounce quart.

- TO: Um, mmm.
- WAC: And then they'd have a 16 ounce pints and they'd have what they call a "little boy," / TO: "Little boy." / was a half pint see. But mostly the bootleggers didn't want to be bothered with half pints, you know, because it was too much trouble to carry um around, you know, and they had um in their automobiles stashed around in an alley someplace, you know.
- TO: Did the bootleggers come in here and bring um to one supplier and then he distributed it to all the places?
- WAC: Well yeah that's the, uh, the, uh, manufacturer he didn't, uh, he, the people in town that was the sellers have their own clientele and they'd have it, they'd have it in their automobiles or they'd be around the poolrooms around here someplace. They'd have it stashed out, uh, maybe they'd have a cheap apartment around town someplace for a month or so and the word would get out where they were, you know.
- TO: Then they'd change addresses?
- WAC: Yeah, then they'd move out of that area. They'd have it in trucks the, uh, big business like it is now was generally on Fridays and Saturdays.
- TO: Bootlegging today.
- WAC: Yeah. Well then.
- TO: Oh.
- WAC: Uh, I think now they sell their whiskey on Fridays and Saturdays maybe Mondays for the hangovers. But, uh, uh, this is about the same reactry, you know, you'd buy a "horse quart," or you would, uh, if you knew one of the suppliers like I did, you know, the man bring you in a gallon.
- TO: How many suppliers were there?

WAC: Oh, I don't know I didn't, uh, . .

TO: Were they in the hundreds?

WAC: Had to be because as much as they was consuming, you know.

TO: The same people that supplied Huntington supplied Ashland and Ironton too?

WAC: No, not necessarily.

TO: Was transportation to . . .

WAC: Somebody would come in here from Kentucky why if they find out that a guy was coming in here from out Kentucky and selling whiskey why the, uh, people that was buying it, uh, uh, would set up a deal because, uh, maybe they was underselling the people that was bringing in to West Virginia from in out outlying area.

TO: Was there alot of cut throat competition among moonshiners?

WAC: Well they was but there was such a things as now don't you go into my territory and I won't go into yours, you see, / TO: Um, mmm. / and, uh, maybe some of these people bringing this stuff in from Kentucky and it was a bad batch and making somebody sick around here see and that's when somebody hollered feds you see / TO: Yeah. / . Now if you're bringing it across the state line then you're also involved in that which that makes it / TO: Yeah, interstate. . . / double indemnity against the law see that's illegal traffic.

TO: So it wasn't worth their while to cross the state line then.

WAC: No but, uh, then that would be another federal offense see so, uh, generally they would do business in their own district like in Ohio and alot of the time we would



go over across into Ohio and go over there to Scottown because they had some pretty good stuff up there,

∕ TO: In the mountains? ∕ yeah. And then when you bring it back and, uh, I know you're not a drinking man but can you imagine going over to Scottown, about 5 or 6 guys and getting a gallon of that stuff say, uh, on Saturday evening and the bootleggers were sometimes scared to death because they didn't know who was in there or who wasn't. And they'd have these horns like a cow horn that, uh, that the people in the alps and up in the regions would blow on for their dog and cattle and the cows and cattle, the dogs would hear this horn and would come to the house you didn't have to go get them. So these horns sounded like fog horns (imitates horn) who-o-o-o-o-o-o, they could do tunes on um and some of the people in the mountains in the past communicated that way, you know, because like an alphabet. Certain tones and certain things for certain, like, uh, emergency, SOS and ∕ TO: Um, mmm. ∕ here comes the man, you know, water's coming down on ya, and all types of communication signals like a telephone ∕ TO: Um, mmm. ∕ . And this is the way they communicated with these, uh, ram's horn type of thing, you know. Sometimes they sound like a mating call (laughs) ∕ TO: And then he . . . ∕, huh?

TO: These horns would warn people also if there was a . . .

WAC: Yeah, here comes the revenuers, you know, but nobody wanted to mess with the revenuers because, uh, that was a federal offense and they would send enough of them people in there with sidearms that'd blow you out of there.

TO: Well when the revenuers came snooping around what did they usually do, did they try and hide the still or did they move?

WAC: Yeah, but uh, there was, uh, uh, you're caught by association. There's the still, that's illegal see. There's the mash that's illegal, there's the finished product that's illegal, what, it was set up in such a way that the whole damn process was illegal. Uh,

if you would say I didn't know that was on my property well you're an accessory to the fact. And you better know what's on your property and everybody knew what was on their property and you couldn't back off and say well I didn't know anything bout that so them people had a bad habit of informing on each other because the federal government would give you (break\_in tape). Picking up, uh, informers money, you know, / TO: Um, mmm. / there's no difference now than there was then, they'd cut your damn throat for \$1.45, you know, that's irrelevant, uh, here's some woman maybe she's president of the WCTU someplace and she's got 4 or 5 woman in the neighborhood or in the district or in the county and they're informers. Because they believe in what they're doing and also they're believing in informers money / TO: Yeah. / see this is blood money.

TO: Did any of the moonshiners inform on each other just out of, uh, rivalry or . . .

WAC: Well I don't know, I imagine so but, uh, generally that was, uh, if they did that, uh, / TO: They get informed too. / somebody cut their damn toes off, you know, see and, uh, the revenuers come up in there, there was alot of wars going on and alot of shooting scrapes. Because some of those people up in the mountains thought it was not illegal and not against the law because generations and generations, generations they'd been making their own whiskey like they'd been making their own clothes and growing their own feed and hogs and, uh, and / TO: No one cared. / hell I mean it was, uh, uh, whiskey was just, uh, a form of, uh, of, uh, an antidote that's all, to relieve pain suffering and carbuncles and boils, you know, and additional pain but they also give ya to help your spirits too, you have to get a little spirit in ya to help your spirit and that's the reason that they didn't think that, uh, was anything wrong. It was the law of the hills and here comes 5 or 6 revenuers up there and they get blowed the hell out of and they blow um back. But the local sheriffs and the local state police which they wasn't too many at

that particular time didn't want any part of it so they put it on the feds see, / TO: Oh./ Now sometimes the sheriff would go up in there and get upset about something he wasn't getting his cut and he would send um to the state pen see on a state charge.

TO: Did you ever run any liquor for anybody else?

WAC: Oh I never, hell I had trouble enough to get enough to drink much less, uh, I mean nobody, uh, very few people liked to be classified as a bootlegger, it was rather degrading, it was something that hustlers did, you know, or, uh, pimps or, uh, you know, but, uh, this friend of mine I was telling you bout while ago this Lee Cyrus he wasn't a bootlegger. He'd bring me in a quart from each jar, he give it to me. In return I give him a couple of tickets to the passes to the show. Otherwords a matter of barter, you know, / TO: Um, mmm./ see, uh, I wouldn't dare offer him money else he'd think I was insulting him. So the thing was done in contacts, uh, that was the reason that there was no respect for the law because it was a social problem with alot of people, economic problem with another class of people see, / TO: Um, mmm, yeah./ and you go out here and make all the "hunky-julips" you could possibly make and nobody paid any attention to it.

TO: "Hunky-julip?"

WAC: Yeah, wine, / TO: Oh./ "hunky-julip", red wine, you know.

TO: I see.

WAC: That's what they called a "hunky-julip" yeah.

TO: Wine and beer and whiskey.

WAC: Yeah.

TO: Nobody bothered to run beer or wine like whiskey

did they?

WAC: Well because / TO: Wasn't profitable, was it? / because they's so many people making home brew and making homemade wine that, uh, if you put um in jail you wouldn't have the stockade big enough to put um in, you'd have to put um out here in the stadium. You'd have 5 or 6,000 people in jail. But the primary issue was moonshine see which made it illegal. And also the fact that some of these moonshiners made it out of zinc and tin, / TO: Yeah. / and, uh, pot ash and was killing people. Course, uh, you know, legal whiskey which we called the store brightened whiskey, this legal whiskey they sell now if you don't think that won't knock you blind try it sometime.

TO: (Laughs) yeah. Did the employees of the Keith-Albee ever have a moonshine party?

WAC: Yeah, we had moonshine parties, we had alot of moonshine parties, / TO: Often? / oh yeah, whenever we could get that much money together because we were poor people. Most of these was during the Depression or before that, you know, / TO: Um, mmm. / and, uh, five bucks for a gallon of moonshine was, uh, you know, we'd make up what we called a train. And 5 of us, you know, and we'd go a buck a piece that we could afford / TO: Um, mmm. / see. And, uh, that was the party system, uh, we had to watch as close as hell because, uh, uh, the, uh, morbid morale situations, you know. You get one of these cute little girls around here all hopped up on that moonshine and later on your ass was grass (laughter). The old man came down on ya with the biggest 45 you ever saw, "what'd you mean boy, what'd you doing to little Nellie," you know, and, uh, so that alone fear, understand. Fear between the law, fear between rot-gut moonshine, fear of getting in trouble with the parents, you know, fear of maybe your boss, maybe your boss was drinking it. He was drinking a better grade of it but he wasn't drinking moonshine, he was drinking alcohol, cut alcohol see, what we call "bathtub gin," / TO: Um, mmm. / One of the funniest things, I think this is, one of my friends they made rubbing alcohol at that time like they do now but now they put something in it that makes you, it guts

ya, / TO: Um, mmm. / you bore it. In those days they was something in it you could drink it, cut it down with water or coca-cola something, but it, uh, must have had something in it like, uh, um make your mouth pucker out, what'd you call it?

TO: Alum?

WAC: Alum, yeah. Had a certain amount of alum in it that give it distasteful taste, you know, That didn't have a damn thing to do with the alcoholic content so we would go out and get some medicine bottles, you know, and, uh, buy this rubbing alcohol and get some juniper juice, juniper berry juice and some distilled water and cut it down and make "bathtub gin" out of it.

TO: Was it good?

WAC: Oh it'd help ya, everybody thought it was fine, you know, / TO: It tasted like. . . / when you mix it up, yeah, / TO: Tasted a little like moonshine. / . Yeah, we could buy this rubbing alcohol and if we knew the druggist we'd put on an extra buck on him so see.

TO: Cause he could get legal.

WAC: Well he could get at us, yes, see we take it back and dope it up, you know, we'd mix it up with distilled water and the juniper juice and plug it. Then we'd go out and hide it someplace, in the garbage cans out in the alley and we'd take one of um to the, to the dance, you know, we'd make up a train. This stuff's a dollar a pint and we'd get four quarters and then my buddy would go out and get it, you know, and bring it in. They'd all take a drink and hell we want some more so we make up another train and let 3 guys make up the train and we put in a quarter / TO: Um, mmm. / and the guy that goes gets it he gets a drink out of it for going and getting it see. Jesus we had a hatful of quarters for the damn thing's over. See nobody knew what we were doing / TO: And you could . . . / . And he fell out on us one day though, / TO: Oh. / somebody saw us in the drugstore and snooped around and got around

and found out what we were paying (makes loud noise).

TO: What happened?

WAC: Well that was bootlegging.

TO: Oh, oh, did they turn you in?

WAC: No-o-o, what they going to turn you in for, you can't turn a man in for something you're doing yourself. The man that's drinking is just as guilty as the man who does it you see.

TO: I see.

WAC: You asked me if I'd ever bootlegged I . . .

TO: You couldn't make your quarters any more.

WAC: We didn't try it any more, you know, we lost our size, it was a big put-down, it wasn't funny. In otherwords we was commercializing on our friends in bootlegging, / TO: Um, mmm. / which was wrong. (Telephone rings) this only happened once / TO: Okay to . . . / we had, we tried it more or less as a joke (telephone rings).

TO: Your friends did?

WAC: Yeah.

TO: In otherwords it was okay to drink it but it wasn't okay to sell it?

WAC: Oh no, it was not okay to have any participation in the manufacturing or distribution of it see, / TO: Oh I see. / cause that classified you as a bootlegger, uh, and, uh, that was out, I mean nobody wanted to be / TO: Social stigma. / the social stigma was very bad, also the commercial stigma was very bad too because everybody participated but nobody wanted to be classified. Now you'd classify as a drunk that was something else see, an aristocratic drunk or a

broken-down bootlegger.

TO: Oh I see. Were there many aristocratic drunks around here?

WAC: Oh yeah, quite a few.

TO: What did they do for kicks, did they show up at good clubs drunk all the time?

WAC: Well it wasn't that much, uh, if anybody got on a big jag like that, what we called "big jags" why you didn't do it in public see. You went to a cheap hotel and got you a "horse quart" and a broad and another guy he got him a broad with joining double rooms or you'd go out here in the country on the riverbank and everybody get drunk and go skinny-dipping and nude bathing parties out in the weeds someplace, you know, in that vicinity. Or after a dance we'd all go to a dance and everybody'd be nice and polite and dance then after the dance they'd cut out for this, uh, bunch of this crap and, uh, out in the weeds someplace or if it was in the wintertime why everybody got in their damn cars and go out in Ritter Park and get up there on 8th street hill goo-gawking. But the, the, uh, the possibilities of getting got outweighed the possibilities of the good time you had so you did it in a quiet manner you, you had to hide someplace, you know, you didn't come out in the open with it because that would chop you up.

TO: Well money didn't talk that, that living then, money didn't, money talked for protection but it didn't talk for the Christian Temperance Union and the . . .

WAC: Oh no because the Christian Temperance Union was made up of all classifications of women. Big women, little women, professional women which was / TO: They weren't broads. / housewives, yeah, mothers see / TO: Uh, huh. / sweethearts that type of thing. Oh the broad drink right along with ya, a broad was a broad just the same as, but uh, drinking was more, uh, alcohol today is, to me is the biggest, bigger

problem than dope ever thought of being or ever was.

TO: Yeah.

WAC: The purification of the human soul is only going to come through the mind, it's not going to come through the body, I don't know where that come from either as far as I m concerned. But there's one thing about alcoholism, uh, you get so, uh, degraded and generated on it, you feel so bad physically that something tells you to quit it. If you want to live. Chronic alcoholism is a disease, / TO: Alot of these people . . . / bootlegging is, uh, you put it in it's context of modern drinking, you know. There wasn't so much actual drinking in the bootlegging days as there is today because it wasn't as easy to get / TO: I see. / and it didn't have the stigma / TO: Um, mmm. / . Modern day drinking is social occasion, in the bootlegging days it was an escape thing, you know, / TO: Um, mmm. / that you did for kicks. And you didn't drink it like you do this store boughtened whiskey today.

TO: How did you drink it, did you ever mix it?

WAC: Social, we drank it social. We didn't, oh like you didn't mix it, good god no way of mixing, only once in a while, Christmas we'd make what they called these "Tom and Jerry's," you know, with, uh, that, uh, milk sauce, you know, and, uh, hot water and cinnamon.

TO: Did you ever cut it with water or coke or anything?

WAC: Oh, uh, yeah, you can, you'd shoot it down ya, you'd take a shot of it and follow it with pop, you know, / TO: Chase it. / chaser, yeah, generally was lemon pop or strawberry pop, that's what we drank in those days, uh, coca-cola, we called that dope, cokes was called dope in them days. Get you a bottle of dope and, and, for other kicks we'd put aspirin in dope, you know, in cokes, you know.

TO: Did that get you high?



WAC: Oh no, you can imagine what aspirin would do to you,  
/ TO: I mean. . . / we thought it was, it's a mental  
thing / TO: Oh, oh I see. / . You can pick your high  
just as quick in alcohol as you can in milk. You know  
that, you know . . .

TO: So you didn't always . . .

WAC: Adrenalin gets to going you're high.

TO: So it wasn't always getting drunk on the alcohol it  
was, uh, sort of the romance of drinking it.

WAC: Yeah, it was the idea it was against the law and it  
was the idea that you was pulling a fast one on the  
older generation, you know, and the idea that that  
was the manly thing to do, you know, sort of a man's  
thing, you know, / TO: Um, mmm. / . Course you get  
the little girls to take a little snop or two just  
to be mischievous as hell, uh, it was the thing back. . .

TO: Did a respectable girl ever just, you know, did they  
ever . . .

WAC: What is a respectable girl.

TO: Yeah, did, did any of the Christian publicspirit  
types ever, / WAC: Oh no, no, god no. / not ever?

WAC: No whiskey, the lips that touch whiskey shall never  
touch mine, you know, I told you that before. But, uh,  
it was, uh, standard procedure that you didn't touch,  
taste, nor handle, fight Miss McGravel (laughs).  
Touch, taste, nor handle, fight Miss McGravel, but  
there's another word for that, four-letter word.  
Touch, taste, nor handle or gamble / TO: Uh, huh. /  
That's the temperance fee.

TO: The temperance fee.

WAC: That's one Joe telling another Joe what he should do  
and what he shouldn't do.

TO: Where did the, did they have parades like I heard?

WAC: Oh yeah. Uh, before that they was a suffrage league, you know, and the woman first got to vote see, then the Falsted Act was a hang-over from that (laughs).

TO: Hang-over, no pun intended.

WAC: Yeah. I think, uh, woman suffrage is, uh, here to stay, uh, the same as I believe that alcoholic beverage is here to stay. Man has to learn to control the whiskey and women and money [ TO: Men voted . . . ]. A man has to learn to control women, whiskey and money before he's a success.

TO: I know the people, uh, heckled women suffrage acts but did they heckle the Christian Temperance Union too?

WAC: Oh yes, they put that on, you know, they, the opposition for instance, the distillers association they had regular campaigns all over the country on it, you know. And they'd get up and heckle these women and the women turned on um and just beat the hell out of um.

TO: Physical violence, [ WAC: Oh yes. ] in this town?

WAC: I don't know any of it in this town, uh, I think this town was a 100, in fact West Virginia was one of the first states to sign the, uh, the state amendment to the Falsted Act. West Virginia was one of the first states, [ TO: Um, mmm. ] but of course the cities are more populated than the rural areas and those, uh, those guys out there, those moonshiners out there they don't know what the hell's going on.

TO: They were virtually untouched, right?

WAC: They didn't know what was going on. The cities like Huntington, Parkersburg, Charleston we aren't even the center of population, this one man one vote thing the hell with that, you know. So the, uh, the Protestant, Anglo-Sacon hypocrisy was permanent, you know, in other-words you're going to vote against whiskey but you're going down to the corner and dig down in there in that

nigger joint down there and get you some. If you want it for yourself, now your neighbors, huh, uh, no. You know, that was the hypocrisy of it. Don't do as I do, do as I tell ya or do as I command. And this thing's been going on for centuries, nothing new about this, uh, as I said before it was one of the most unpopular laws that the world's ever known. Uh, today. . .

TO: But it was a noble experiment.

WAC: Well it was a noble experiment I don't, uh, say that it wasn't but it was so impractical / TO: Yeah. /  
Uh, just like gambling, you don't have to be an alcoholic to have a compulsion to do things that's unlawful. But the revenue wasn't getting . . .

TO: That was one of the main reasons they had it made.

WAC: Yeah.

TO: Thank you very much Mr. Cross.