

Sun Sets On Bootleggers Day In Paradise

But There Is Still Plenty Of Moonshine



Police booze squad (left to right): Joe Jregits, Harry Buford, Sergeant Frank Murphy and Frank Killian



Police morals squad (left to right): Ben Danbault, sergeant Jim McDonald and Fred Palmieri. These three detective sergeants have done as a daily diet along the trails of bootleggers and moonshiners.

By JOHN E. KENNEBECK. The bootlegger's dream is o'er. His day in the paradise of prohibition is gradually waning just as sure as a government mule will walk in an emergency.

throat gargles, there'll be bootlegging. There's a demand for every kind and any kind of liquor from tiger tears to Haig & Haig, they say. But the game is waning, according to some exponents of prohibition.

Others assert there is as much bootlegging going on today as there was two years ago. These latter say "prohibition" means "prohibition."

U. S. Rohrer, federal prohibition director for Nebraska, probably one of the foremost leaders against the liquor traffic in the middlewest, has this to say of bootlegging:

"I think there is just as much of it going on as ever. It keeps a corps of my men busy after them. The evil is a hard thing to stamp out, but we're getting results. The public doesn't know who the officers are or how they work—that is one reason why the bootlegger is more wary than he was a year ago."

Remember the day you were told "Old Taylor" was worth \$30 a quart? And the next day it was \$20. Then, recall when you could get good tasting embalming fluid for a fifth of a gallon or 50 cents a gup. Of course, all that was done under the head of "bootlegging," but it was a lively market.

Bootlegging is an art. True, it is a crime against morals—good citizenship and all that, we are told, but nevertheless the game has to be played with the wit of a chess artist, the salesmanship of a magazine agent and the disregard of law of a bandit—if played successfully.

It's a good old lively game with your neighbor and the law, they say.

There was a time in the pre-Prohibition days, when bootlegging meant the sale of booze after hours while the copper winked one eye.

When the country was made dry legally bootlegging became a plague. Illicit traffic in liquor was carried on in gangs. It seemed that every third house had a little still. Homebrew became both fascinating in the making and appealing to the palate.

How often one hears this: "Booze? Why, man, you can get it anywhere."

But hold on, neighbor, as long as there is whisky-running from Canada or stills in operation, or formulas for stomach bitters and



"Sure there's bootlegging going on," declares Chief of Police Michael Dempsey, "but there are not so many places selling liquor as there were two years ago."



"Bootlegging is decreasing because people are getting tired of this bootleg stuff," says Mrs. George Covell, U.C.T.U. leader.



U.S. Rohrer, federal prohibition director, declares "there is just as much bootlegging going on as ever."

"Bob" Anderson, group chief of federal liquor officers in Nebraska, wouldn't state that bootlegging had diminished a "whole lot."

"It's hard to tell, but the moonshine game is keeping my men on their toes," he said. "Everyone knows that the prohibition law is not an entirely popular one, therefore, bootlegging will continue. But those in it are having a tough time of it now."

Sheriff Mike Clarke, who directs the meanderings of a squad of deputies in their search for contraband booze in Douglas county, is emphatic in stating that bootlegging has decreased noticeably in the last year.

"Here's one reason," he explained, showing a small bottle containing a blue rascal snake pickled in alcohol.

"See that tall, how it's turned up?" he said. "Well, that's about what this bootleg stuff that's being sold nowadays does to its victims."

"The drinkers are through with the stuff. Of course, there is still some traffic in the better grade of liquors, I hear, but a fellow has to be a young millionaire to get it."

Mrs. George W. Covell, member of the Frances Willard branch of the Women's Christian Temperance union in Omaha, thinks that bootlegging has decreased considerably in this city.

"Conditions are better, it appears," she said, "than they were under the legalized saloon. And today, I think bootlegging has decreased very much, as men won't drink the stuff that sets them crazy, makes them blind and ruins them physically. Persons who took just a little drink two years ago—well, there's nothing but poison now to induce them to drink. It seems the people are getting tired of this bootleg stuff."

Mrs. C. J. Roberts, another member of the W. C. T. U., says that the manufacture and sale of intoxicants are going on today though "not as freely as two years ago."

"Results of the prohibition law show that the lack of saloons is a great benefit to the public," she said. "It seems that the officials



Sheriff Clark grants that there is still some traffic in liquor, but that it is in the lower grades of liquor.



Mrs. H.G. Claggett, W.C.T.U. leader, holds that there is less open bootlegging.

just can't put a complete stop to the liquor traffic, though. Boot-

legging is just as common as it was two years ago."

But listen to this—here's meat for an argument: Mrs. H. N. Craig, president of the Frances Willard branch of the W. C. T. U. in Omaha, is declaring that "bootlegging is decreasing."

"The bootleggers are being driven out of the public eye," she said. "The time is coming when stills will be put out of commission just as the breweries were made to quit. Bootlegging has diminished considerably in the last two years. The citizens are getting together in closer harmony in a general campaign against the illicit traffic in liquor as there's an apparent lack of law enforcement against the bootlegger. Officials are not enforcing the prohibition law like they should, but bootlegging is dying of its own curse."

Mrs. Horace Claggett, a leader in the West Side branch of the W. C. T. U., believes there is less open bootlegging than there was when prohibition first went into effect.

"The drinkers won't buy the liquor that's peddled for whisky these days," she said. "However, whether bootlegging has decreased a whole lot, I can't say."

Mrs. T. R. Ward, 2121 Wirt street, an ardent supporter of prohibition, declares that "the public has had enough of bootleg whisky."

"The illicit traffic is fast dying," she said. "Though there are yet some who buy the dope that is being sold as liquor, the game has decreased very much. Persons can't get it at every street corner like a few years ago."

Mrs. W. C. King, a W. C. T. U. worker, says that homebrew is the bootlegger's means of livelihood nowadays.

"There's more homebrew now than there ever was," she said. "It seems bootlegging always will be, in some form or another. The people are getting their liquor somewhere and what we see and hear is enough evidence that bootlegging is still going on full blast."

Now really, bootlegging in Omaha is not as open as all that, is it? Isn't it all talk and jokes and kidding? Hasn't the bootlegger, who nailed victims for \$30 a quart for stuff that Anti-Saloon league members could drink with all loyalty to the tenets of the association, had his day? Isn't he fading? He's certainly having a hard time of it. His pipe dreams of wealth are o'er.

Here's what Chief of Police "Mike" Dempsey, the grand old man of the Omaha police department, has to say on the matter: "Sure there's bootlegging going on, and there will be just as long as there is a demand for it. Nothing under the sun could stop it.

But there's not as much illicit traffic in liquor as there was two years ago, that is, there are not as many places in Omaha selling it as there were at that time. The police department has two squads after the evil constantly, and they have closed up many places.

Here are some records of arrests of bootleggers by police to show that the illicit liquor traffic is not increasing, anyway:

Table with columns: Year, Arrests, Fines. Data for 1920 and 1921.

From observation of the work of both police morals squads under Sergeant Frank Murphy and Sergeant Jim McDonald, bootleggers in Omaha are not as open as they were several years ago.

The ways of the wary traffickers are more tricky and more secret than they practiced in the days the game was so common.

It takes clever boys to catch the clever "leggers." That is why Sergeants McDonald and Murphy have some intrepid understudies working with them. It requires the detective work of a Scotland Yard sleuth and the daring grit of a doughboy to catch the underhanded trafficker in liquor, these officers say.

Instances are known where gun play occurred between the officers and bootleggers.

Captures of stills afford many a harrowing tale of death risks, but it's just the ordinary routine of work for the boys on the morals squads.

Not long ago, a certain concoction of moonshine that had the taste of fish worm oil, the smell of asafetida and the potency of potassium cyanide was going the rounds of drinkers in Omaha. A

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The Married Life of Helen and Warren

A Midnight Call Sends Helen on a Reckless Rescue Expedition.

"Well, it's the last night we'll spend gallivanting around after that cat," groused Warren, slamming down his hat and stick.

"It's been three days now," Helen sighed as she switched on the lights. If we don't find her tomorrow—I suppose we'll have to give it up."

"Huh, tramping the streets every night—and you piping 'Kitty, Kitty, Kitty!' Everybody in the neighborhood'll think we're dippy."

"I don't care what they think—if I can get her back," swallowing the lump that had been in her throat for three days.

In spite of repeated warnings, the maid had left open the door, and Pussy Purr-Mew had escaped down the seven flights of stairs to the street.

"Got any new laces?" demanded Warren, untying his shoes on the bedroom seat. "This plagued this broke."

"If I could feel that some one had her," mourned Helen for the 100th time, as she searched for the laces in the chiffonier. "If only she hasn't

crawled in somewhere to starve—too frightened to come out.

"Huh, Pussy Purr-Mew isn't overburdened with brains—but she'd have sense enough to get out and hustle for food. Plenty of garbage cans around."

Helen had passed the stage where she shuddered at the thought of garbage cans. Anything to keep her alive.

"But water!" tensely. "Where can she get water? She's so helpless."

"Cats aren't helpless by a darn sight. Where's that shoe lace?"

"In just a minute, dear," resuming her search. "She's never been out—she can't climb around like a street cat."

"No wonder. You've pampered every normal instinct out of her. Do her good to be on her own for a few days."

"If it's only for a few days! Here's a pair. Do you want them both?"

"Yes, you put 'em in. Jove, I'm tired," as he strode to the bathroom. By the time Helen had put in the fresh laces and taken her own bath, Warren was in bed and asleep.

unused basement, where her faint cries could not be heard?

Here the telephone shrilled through the darkness. With the leaping hope that it might bring news of Pussy Purr-Mew, Helen stumbled into the library.

"Hello! Yes. . . . Has she a collar with her name—and a red ribbon?" excitedly. . . . "It may come off. . . . Is she a Persian—long gray fur? . . . Where are you? . . . Oh, then we'll be right over."

Darting back to the bedroom, she found Warren still asleep. She started to rouse him—then stopped.

He would only grumble and call it a wild goose chase. Why couldn't she go alone? It was so near—just three blocks.

With eager haste she slipped into a negligee and a long coat. Taking some bills from Warren's wallet on the dresser, she thrust them into her handbag and stole softly out, guilty conscious that it was after midnight.

"Some one telephoned they've found Pussy Purr-Mew. It's right near here—so I didn't wake Mr. Curtis," she explained to the elevator boy.

"Yes, ma'am," was his only comment but he looked surprised.

Out into the sultry night, Helen flew down the avenue. At the third corner she turned into a dark narrow street—a neighborhood of cheap apartments

Anxiously she scanned the obscure numbers over the unlighted doorways.

"You the lady that's come for the cat?" A rough, shirt-sleeved man emerged from a shadowy basement.

"Oh, yes—yes. Have you got her?" breathlessly. "Is she all right?"

"Sure, she's all right. Down this way. Mind your step!"

Through the black away into a blacker passage, Helen's heart beating faster. Should she have come here alone? Where was this man leading her? She could barely see his light shirt as he strode ahead.

The damp, evil smell of the basement added to her fears. Not a sound from the street. Even if she should cry out—no one could hear.

"Another step—mind that. There's nothing to be afraid of," as she shrank back against the wall. "My wife's got the cat."

His wife! She caught at that hopefully. But he might be only luring her on. She thought of Warren at home asleep. The realization of her recklessness surged over her.

The papers were filled with ghastly stories of women lured into dark byways and never seen again. If only she had told the elevator boy!

Then suddenly the man threw open a door just ahead. The light flooded out reassuringly. A stout, slovenly woman, seated by a red-clothed din-

ing table, was bending over something in her lap.

"Milly, here's the lady for the cat." Her fear now dispelled, Helen darted eagerly forward.

On the woman's soiled checked apron lay an ordinary gray cat basking in the luxury of unaccustomed attention.

"Oh—oh—that's not Pussy Purr-Mew! I'm just sorry it isn't Pussy Purr-Mew. She's been gone now three days—and I'm almost sick."

"Maybe you'll find her yet," sympathized the woman. "Mrs. Brown upstairs, her cat was gone a whole week. And my sister had a dog—"

Though anxious to get back, Helen had to listen to a lengthy recital. Back through the musty hall and she gave 50 cents to the disappointed janitor, begging him to still keep on the lookout for Pussy Purr-Mew.

Hurrying homeward, at the corner church, she paused. She had searched every nook of that yard, but she would try once more.

"Kitty, Kitty, Kitty," she called,

crossing the grass to the court at the side. Emboldened by her recent groundless fears, she stole down the steps to a dungeonly passage.

"Kitty, Kitty!" A faint, but unmistakable mew. Her heart stood still. Another mew—from a grated window further on.

The next second Helen was at the grating, calling hysterically. Again that faint cry. Then the feel of warm fur against her hand thrust through the iron bars. She was half sobbing with joy and relief.

But her thrilled exultation was fleeting. It was not Pussy Purr-Mew's long, silky fur. It was only a kitten. She drew it out—a pathetic, tiny, half-starved kitten.

"You poor little thing," her compassion surmounting her disappointment.

What could she do with it? She could not leave it here to starve. It was rubbing against her pitifully.

Picking it up, she hurried back up the stone steps across the churchyard, and out the heavy iron gate.

How long had she been gone? It must be after 11. What if Warren had awakened? He would be furious.

Footsteps behind her! Sinister pursuing footsteps! She started to run—they followed faster.

"Hold on there!" came a thick, throaty voice.

She flew on with desperate speed

—but the steps were gaining on her. A heavy hand gripped her arm. She was whirled around to confront an irate policeman.

"What were you doing in that churchyard? Whatcha got there?"

Indignation replacing fear, she showed him the clinging kitten and told him of her mission.

"Better let me walk home with you. Where do you live?"

"In the next block Oh, there's my husband now!" recognizing Warren in the tall figure striding toward them.

She ran ahead to meet him, but the officer interrupted her breathless explanation with a gruff—

"It's all right to look for a cat—but you'd better not let your wife go picking around dark churchyards at this time of night."

"I quite agree with you, officer. It'll not happen again." There was a steely note in Warren's voice.

Grimly he took Helen by the arm, dismissing her escort with a fat cigar.

"Dear, I didn't think I'd be so long! But a man called up—it was so near—and I thought he had Pussy Purr-Mew. I didn't want to wake—"

"Now we won't discuss this in the elevator," sternly, as they entered the car where the boy waited, all curiosity in their own hall, switching on

the light, Helen darted out to the kitchen to feed the starving kitten. Warren's scolding could wait.

Filling Pussy Purr-Mew's saucer for three days unused, she watched the wretched little animal lap the milk with famished eagerness.

"Now just what does this mean?" Warren had swung through the pantry door.

"Dear, I told you! I thought he had Pussy Purr-Mew—and I knew you'd only grumble if I woke you up."

"So you went out after midnight on a call like that? Where are your brains? Haven't you a grain of sense? Do I have to be told by a policeman how to take care of my wife?"

"Dear, don't scold—I'm so tired. And look at this poor little thing! Perhaps if I care for it some one will take care of Pussy Purr-Mew," sentimentally. "Maybe that's why I was sent out—just to rescue this kitten."

"You're hopeless!" with a snort. "Well, get through stuffing that little beast and come to bed. But I'll tell you right now—I'm pretty well fed up with this cat-hunting business. If she's gone—she's gone. And you're not going to keep on making a fool of us both!"

Next Week—They Sail for Italy.

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