

Democrat Writer Tells Of War Waged By Sheriff On Liquor

By CLARK COX

Some of the activities of Watauga County Sheriff Dallas Cheek and his deputies seem to go beyond the call of duty, even for law-enforcement officers. I referred to their all-out, no-holds-barred war against "moonshiners" and bootleggers.

I got my first inkling of how difficult this phase of their work is when Deputy Smith Brown phoned me last Friday. "We're going after a whiskey still we discovered the other day," he told me. "A couple of Alcohol Tax Unit agents are going along, and we thought you might like to go, too, to get a picture of the still before we blow it up."

To get to the still, we went about four miles out of Boone on the Blowing Rock Road, turned left on the Parkway, and then turned left twice more on tortuous dirt roads. Then followed four miles of the greatest monstrosity that ever passed for a road.

Sampson Road is about seven feet wide, with roadbanks looming up on both sides that invite collision. Branches from these banks scrape the sides of vehicles. The road is strewn with rocks and matted with fallen leaves, and the grades are unbelievably steep. A half-dozen times you are forced to cross the meanderings of a single stream, without benefit of a bridge.

Driving at breakneck pace, we averaged about five miles an hour on Sampson Road. But finally the ATU car ahead stopped and the driver indicated that we had reached our destination.

Well, almost. The still was accessible only by wading upstream through the woods for another quarter of a mile.

An ATU agent soon reported via walkie-talkie that no one was around the still at that time, but that bran had been strewn around the site to indicate to the operators whether anyone had been there during their absence. Working with extreme caution, the investigator discovered also that the three mash boxes had just been filled with about 750 gallons of mash, but that it would not be ready to run until about Monday morning, depending on the weather.

Monday morning and try to catch the operators?" ATU agent Jim Saunders asked Sheriff Cheek. "It's up to you."

Cheek had a difficult decision. If he decided to liquidate the still, then and there, the moonshiners would be free to set up other stills and continue in their unlawful acts. On the other hand, the still might be gone by Monday, since hunting season would open Tuesday and hunters might stumble onto it. And if the lawmen arrived too late Monday morning to establish their waiting positions before the lawbreakers themselves arrived, they could be walking into a dangerous trap.

"I'm all for capturing some of the men if we can," Cheek said. "Let's meet in front of my office at four o'clock Monday morning."

So I didn't get my picture. Furthermore, I would now have to get up at three a. m. Monday, and go through the whole mess again, having to lie behind a laurel bush somewhere for hours with temperatures approaching the freezing point, if I wanted a picture at all. And I began to have nightmares about being chased by little bearded men with squirrel rifles.

I decided to oversleep Monday.

But Sheriff Cheek and his hard-working cohorts didn't oversleep. Deputies Brown and Harmon, ATU agents Saunders and Sam Cabe, and myself left Boone at 3:55 a. m. Cheek told me later, "reaching the still at 5 o'clock. I stationed myself at a point slightly below the still, and Saunders and the deputies took positions up the hill, where anybody that might see me would have to run. Cabe hid where he could watch the road."

"At 6:30, a subject started carrying gallon jugs up the stream—forty cases of them. He also brought in three new mash boxes, apparently with no idea of ceasing operations during hunting season, and several bags of coal to fire the still with."

"We had no idea how many men were helping him unload the stuff, but it soon became apparent that we weren't going to catch all of them in there together. I stepped out of hiding and started walking

toward the one man, I was almost close enough to grab him when he turned around and saw me, let out a yell, and ran up the hill right into the arms of the deputies.

"After they caught him, he let out three warning yells to let the others know what had happened."

Things happened pretty fast after that. Saunders returned to the road just in time to see three other men drive off in a blue Chevrolet pickup. Sheriff Cheek and his men later sighted the three men on foot; but without the truck in their possession there was no basis for making an arrest.

Meantime, Cabe was busy too. Stopping a black Ford pickup, he began asking questions of the driver, when the man suddenly slammed the truck into reverse and went tearing up the narrow road backwards, careening from roadbank to roadbank with great noise and dislodging dirt and rocks from the banks. Somewhere, he located a place to turn around and then continued madly up the hill.

Cabe returned to his car and pursued the truck, but it had disappeared by the time he reached the Parkway.

The captured man was identified as Rodney A. Penley, 32, of Patterson, N. C. He was taken to North Wilkesboro and placed under bond for his appearance in Federal Court next May.

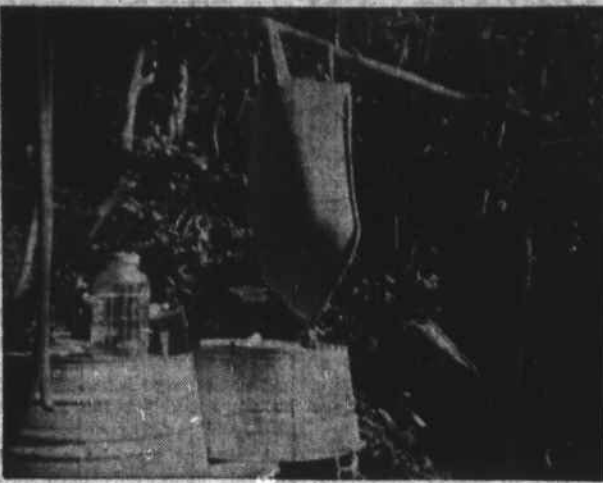
It took 11 sticks of dynamite to demolish the 80-gallon still, Cheek stated, as well as some diligent work with an axe to break all the jugs. But at least it warmed the chilled officers to a bearable point. "That was the most enjoyable part of the job," Cheek said.

But a more enjoyable activity remained. It seems that the operators of the still had also carried in some groceries to sustain them through the day. The lawmen spread out the feast and enjoyed a long-delayed breakfast.

The breakfast, all will agree, was well deserved by the diligent Cheek and his staff.

I missed it. While the sheriff's department and the ATU agents were turning in half a day's hard work, I was sleeping.

And I never did get that picture.



Sheriff's Deputy Smith Brown took this photograph of a part of the still which was captured last Monday by Sheriff Dallas Cheek, Deputy Ed Harmon, and ATU men Jim Saunders and Sam Cabe.

Halloween Carnival At Blowing Rock

The annual Halloween Car-tauga Savings & Loan Association, Boone Supply Co., Greene Furniture Store, Church's, Coffey's Building Supply, Builders Super Market, Norris Furniture Mart, Varsity Shop, Dixie Music Shop, Carolina Pharmacy, Carolina Business Machines, Stallings Jewelry, Farmers Hardware, Watauga FCX, Flowers Photo Shop, Federal Land Bank, Trailway Cleaners, Mountain Oil Co., Crest Store, Hunt's Dept. Store, Jay Grocery & Service Station, Greene Bros. Body Shop.

The annual Halloween Carnival will be held at the Blowing Rock School Saturday evening October 26, at 8 o'clock. Door prizes will be given, and sandwiches will be available at the food booth. The public is invited. Merchants and other business men of Boone, whose contributions are appreciated, are as follows: McClung's Five and Ten, Swofford's, Modern Appliance Co., Boone Drug Co., Southern Agricultural Insecticides, Burgess Furniture Store, Smithy's, Watauga Democrat, Western Auto, Winkler Motor Co., Belk's, Caudill's, Walker Jewelry, Parkway Co., Newton's, Boone Loan & Gun Shop, Watauga Insurance Agency, Wa-

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State Board Of Higher Education Makes Biennial Visit To ASTC

The State Board of Higher Education Friday gave final approval to the establishment of a two-year college center at Seymour-Johnson Air Force Base near Goldsboro.

It also approved construction of self-liquidating projects at Winston-Salem State College and Charlotte College which had been authorized by the 1963 General Assembly.

The AF base center will be established by East Carolina College at Greenville, N. C. The board had given the proposal tentative approval at its meeting

last December. After that the project was appraised by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

The board's actions were among those taken during the board's biennial visit to Appalachian State Teachers College at Boone. The business session also constituted the board's regular meeting for October.

The two years of work at Seymour Johnson will be available to either civilian or military personnel.

Winston-Salem will build a dormitory for 215 men, and Charlotte an addition to the Student Union building. Winston-Salem and Fayetteville State Colleges have before the board requests for granting both the B. A. and B. S. degrees (Winston-Salem State gives on the B. S. now.)

The board said yesterday that a team of educators will be on the campus of Winston-Salem State College on November 3 and 4 for evaluations which are to be made before the request can receive final action. Similar visits are to be paid to Fayetteville State College later.

It was announced that the board has reactivated its Advisory Committee on Nursing.

Among those attending the conference at Appalachian were Dr. Oliver Carmichael of Asheville, chairman of the board; William A. Deas, Jr., of Goldsboro, vice chairman; Mrs. Har-

ry B. Stein of Fayetteville, secretary; Joseph W. Grier, Jr., of Charlotte and Allen H. Gwyn, Jr., of Reidsville, members; Dr. Howard R. Boozler, assistant board director; and Mrs. Eleanor S. Parker, educational research analyst, both of Raleigh.

Representatives from other institutions included Dr. C. Robert Benson, president of Gaston Technical Institute; Miss Bonnie E. Cone, president of Charlotte College; Charles Milner, director of extension, University of North Carolina; Ed Ruggles, director of extension, North Carolina State of the University of North Carolina at Raleigh; Dr. David Middleton, director of extension, East Carolina College; Dr. English Jones, president of Pembroke State College; Dr. George T. Kyle, dean of North Carolina College at Durham; Dr. Lewis Dowdy of A&T College, Greensboro; Dr. William Randall, president of Wilmington College; Frank Brown of Western Carolina College; and Dr. W. Archie Blount of Winston-Salem State College.

Boone Man Wins Fishing Award

Myrtle Beach, S. C.—H. E. Poindexter of Boone won an award in the September competition of the Grand Strand Fishing Rodeo in Myrtle Beach and the 50-Mile Grand Strand of South Carolina, according to Walter Hosier, rodeo chairman.

Poindexter entered a first place, 7-pound, 4-ounce Bonito offshore.

The \$10,000 fishing rodeo offers ten dollar fish-shaped checks as first place awards each month. Forty-four fish are eligible in three divisions—pier, surf small boat, and deep sea.

Spaak urges new moves to bolster peace.

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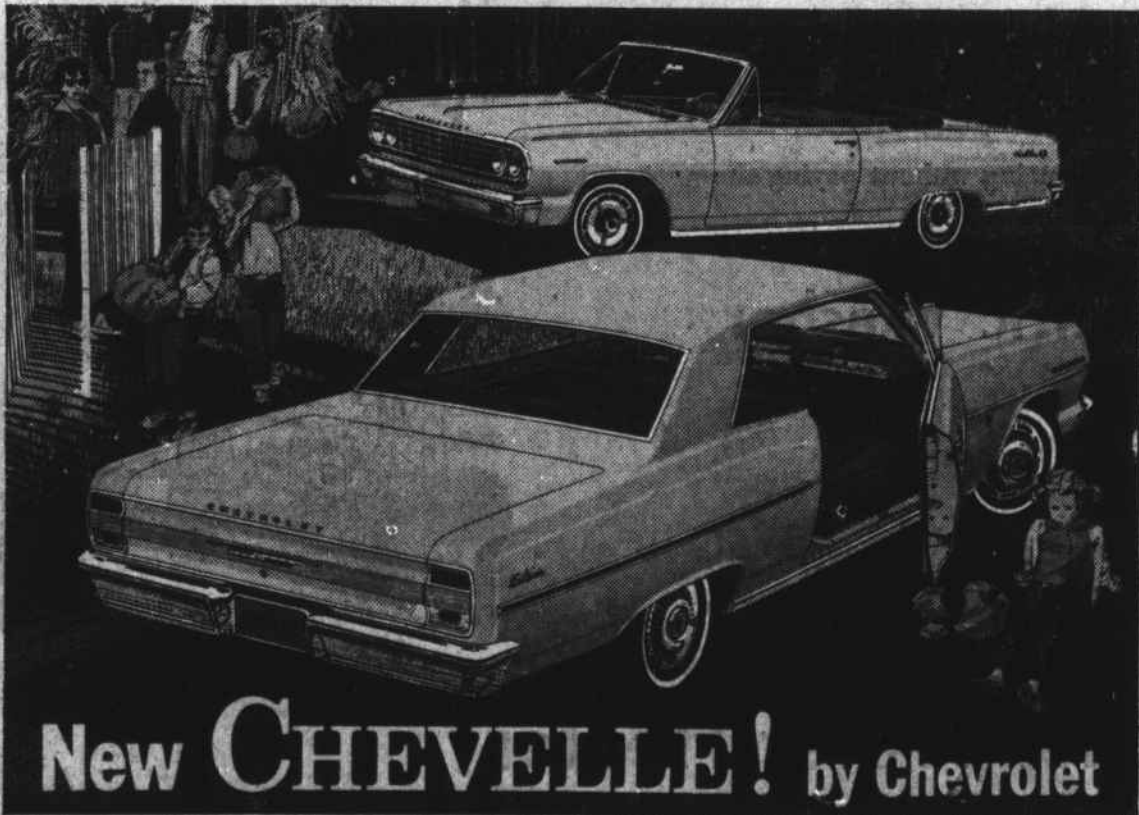
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