

True Stories
Achievement
Stories

Portland Advocate

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Human Interest
Features

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Pictures in the Illustrated Feature Section were posed and do not depict principals unless so captioned. BEN DAVIS, Jr., Feature Editor.

"JOE" PLAYS HIDE AND SEEK WITH BOOTLEGGERS

A True Story of the Thrilling and Remarkable Experiences of A Negro Prohibition Agent.

By ANTHONY WAYNE
Correspondent and Special Writer.

Names of Principals are Concealed for Obvious Reasons.

HELLO. Yes, this is the prohibition unit. A still, you say? Sure about it are you? Well, all right. Tell us where it is and we'll have a look. Undertaker? That's good! All right, we've got it. Now who is this speaking?"

But the connection was broken at the other end, purposely. It was not an unusual procedure. Many people are willing to tell what they know, or think they know, but they stipulate that they shall not be brought into the case. "Perhaps it is just as well," said the chief in charge of the force, "there is sometimes trouble if it is discovered who tipped us off."

The chief, in this instance, called in Joe Jackson. Now "Joe Jackson" is not his baptismal name, but it is close to it. For, while many know him, and some suspect his fearless investigations, there is no need of advertising him to his personal danger and inconvenience. Besides there are regulations that forbid the exploitation of individuals because the unit operates as quietly as possible under the circumstances. Joe, however, is an ace. He operates among the Negro populations of several large cities, moving about as ordered. He is a quiet fellow, large, good looking, intelligent. He has won a reputation for honesty and integrity and fair dealing under many trying circumstances. There is no question as to his bravery either.

The chief talked with Joe over his expanse of mahogany. The telephoned tip had in the meantime been typewritten. Joe read it through as his chief talked. He smiled. He knew the section. But let him tell his own story:

"First I went to the files and found out that there had been previous complaints, mostly anonymous concerning this place. Investigation had always been fruitless though, and no action had been taken for it was conviction which the chief sought and not just raids without purpose," Joe explained.

"Taking along an assistant, we slipped off to make a call on our undertaker. This time I thought best to make a direct attack. It seemed to be the last thing that would be expected and so perhaps, I reasoned, the very way that might succeed."

"I frankly told the 'undertaker' on errand. He lived in a prosperous neighborhood and had his office at his residence. He gave us permission to search his home from cellar to garret. He was very polite about it and most accommodating. In fact, he was too much so. It made me suspicious. But try our best, we could not find a single drop of the stuff anywhere. "Then we got together for a few minutes where we could not be overheard and I talked the situation over with my assistant. Apparently every place in the house had been thoroughly covered. Then I remembered the slip which the chief had given to me referred to the fact that there was a hearse. None of us had seen a hearse about, and if we had we would probably not have immediately examined it any more than the inside of the piano."

"But I determined to ask about the hearse. The owner when approached—he was never far away—said that he had a hearse and that he rented it out for funerals. When asked where it was then, he said it was in his garage. The garage in turn was on the back of the lot and well overgrown with vines. There was no prominence to it,

"Nothing seemed out of the way until I determined to have a look inside the hearse. Of all the places for a still! We opened it up and found a fully equipped, ten-gallon still, which apparently had just completed its task of turning out corn whiskey."

Eighteen thousand barrels of beer were ordered destroyed by the Assistant United States Attorney near the end of Long Bridge, Va. Photo shows the federal agents assisted by colored laborers, destroying the beer.

Asked for the Keys

"Give us the keys to the garage," I bluntly asked the fellow.

"But you can see inside of the garage from the windows? You surely don't need to bother about going in," he answered.

"I detected a note of real anxiety in his voice."

"Do we want the keys?" I asked of the young fellow with me, at the same time winking to suggest his answer.

"Sure we do," he answered. "All right, Boss, sorry, but guess we'll have to have those keys," I said.

"Though very reluctantly, they were eventually forthcoming."

"Inside the garage everything appeared as it should. There was even a faint odor of formaldehyde. Nothing seemed out of the way until I determined to have a look inside of the hearse."

"Of all the places for a still! We opened it up and found a fully equipped, ten-gallon still which apparently had just completed its work of turning out corn whiskey." Later Jackson observed that the putting of the still in the hearse was most fitting, judging from the chemist's analysis. "There should have been labels marked with skull



Photo shows an analysis of poison whiskey showing the sample of poison liquor in one tube and the results after adding a little plain water to the same mixture in another tube. Samples of liquor confiscated by prohibition agents in their raids are sent to the chemical section, where they are examined and placed on file.



Five thousand cases and three hundred barrels of choice liquor seized by the Customs guards on the rum ship, Bulko, going up in smoke at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. The liquor was valued at \$600,000. It has often been Joe's duty to set fire to whiskey valued at many thousands of dollars.

and crossbones on the bottles," he said with a weary smile.

Speaking of a still in a hearse suggests Jackson's recent experience as a grave digger. This was in order to get certain necessary evidence.

Joe had, in this instance, taken a day off to attend the funeral of an old friend. The trip to the cemetery was a long one, extending to the outskirts of the city.

From force of habit, perhaps, or from hard training, Joe watched the houses along the road. Nothing seemed out of place; everything was quiet until he observed two men in back of a house that was close to the cemetery. In fact, the yard

of the house adjoined the cemetery at one side. As the funeral procession went by, the men glanced furtively about as if they were afraid of being seen.

Noticing that, and the location, and sensing rather than knowing anything more, Joe began to weigh his obligations to the government and to the dead friend. The very quality that had made him an ace in the unit commanded him to make a telephone call. So he stopped at the cemetery gate for the purpose. Then he sauntered back a few hundred feet toward the house that he had observed, for another look.

There was nothing to verify his

suspicious except a peculiar dank smell, slightly reminiscent of the musty odor behind swinging doors in bygone days, but no one but an amateur would feel justified to make a raid merely because of an odor. There had to be conclusive evidence of manufacture or sale. Such evidence is frequently very difficult to obtain.

The suspicious appearing men at the suspected house were evidently located advantageously. There was no place of concealment nearby except possibly some tombstones. Spending a night among tombstones during the fall months did not have much appeal, but it seem-

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