

Big Six Henderson recalls his 27½ years as 'dreaded revenuer'

By John Davidson

(Editor's note: This is the second in a series of stories the Department of Public Information is presenting on colorful or influential Kentuckians personalities.)

LOUISVILLE—Kentucky folklore is full of tales about illegal homemade whiskey and moonshine stills hidden away in hollows, mountainsides and creek beds. And depending upon one's perspective, either the hero or the villain was that often but, often caused a federal law man—the revenuer.

These popular characters would come sneaking through the woods to distill many families' sole means of income and cart most of the male members (and sometimes female) off to prison for manufacturing their home-made brew.

But one of these dreaded lawmen, through 27½ years of tracking down moonshine stills, kept the respect and admiration of many of those he pursued. Described by many as a combination John Wayne-Mat Dillon, William B. "Big Six" Henderson just recently hung up his guns as a U.S. marshal for Western Kentucky, following a long and colorful career as the most successful revenuer in Kentucky for the Internal Revenue

Service's division of alcohol, tobacco and firearms.

Breaking up some 5,000 stills in his career, Big Six Henderson claims to have put more than 5,000 Kentuckians behind bars. But his easy-going joking manner put the moonshiners at ease and helped maintain their respect for him, even to this day.

"Now 73 years old, Big Six Henderson has retired to his home in Louisville. But his retirement is not a passive one. The big white-faced gentleman with his gun and bottle collections to look after peaches and lemons trees and grape vines, Henderson remembered. "Back when I was chasing down moonshiners, I sent this guy to Terre Haute federal prison so many times I think they probably put his name on a cell door. The first time I raked him he ran from me, but from then on he just stood there and smiled and yelled, 'Hi, Big Six. Where you been keeping yourself?' You know, I think he had a little cooler going down on his property."

Henderson's exploits on Oak Ridge, in Cumberland county, are legendary and that he used the still for just recently hung up his guns as a U.S. marshal for Western Kentucky.

His retirement also includes plans to write a book on his experiences. A wall full of pictures of the many stills he

raked, drewings and films fill of his daily records from 27½ years of hunting and a fascinating memory of the not-so-ordinary incidents he encountered make Henderson believe he may have to write the book in volumes to fill a hill.

Big Six Henderson explained that his nickname stemmed from the days when he picked semi-pro baseball. "I said many moonshiners changed it though. 'Six Gun,' because of the big gun he wore on his hip. Proudly stated that no moonshiner ever escaped. "Track coach at the four-minute mile as something special," he related. "But I knew at least a dozen moonshiners who could do it."

"When they got out running I'd yell at them to stop or I'd blow their head off. That stopped a lot of them. They didn't know I wouldn't have shot them," he laughed.

But a lot of raked moonshiners would still take for the hills and Henderson acted astonished, saying, "No, I still don't understand how I could outrun those boys." Claiming to have never smoked "and I only drank a little," Henderson said that his fitness and endurance could have come from a fright he encountered when he was a kid.

"Lightning struck our schoolhouse when I was 12. It just scared me out of my mind. From then on, I'd not be out playing ball and I'd form up, I'd stop and run and run and run and run for my safety," the retired lawman remembered. "It had quite a few storms when I was a boy, so I made a lot of sprint home."

One of Henderson's fabled memories is of a moonshiner's high reputation that had arrested four or five times. "Every time we raked this guy, we sent his whiskey off for analysis. It would cost about \$100 more than it was worth just had a knack for making good whiskey," Henderson said.

Once after sending the whiskey-maker to prison for two years, he got a request for the man's parole. Henderson cleared the request through his boss, then drove to a Kentucky distillery to see what he could do. "It was a black snake and they really didn't have any openings. But then the owner told me, 'Big Six, if you are enough about a moonshiner to drive 150 miles to get him a job, we'll create a job for him.'"

Henderson proudly stated that the man worked for the distillery for six or seven years, saved his money and bought a farm.

After acquiring the man, and before sending him to the distillery, Henderson and his boss kept him at their house for a few days to let the switch from prison life to society. Henderson said the man who he had never married, and he replied, "Big Six is the cause of that. If he was a black snake and they really didn't have any openings. But then the owner told me, 'Big Six, if you are enough about a moonshiner to drive 150 miles to get him a job, we'll create a job for him.'"

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revenue built the still using the best "home brew" made in the moonshine still on his back porch. The former law breaker?

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Farm and Home

Ten Danger Signals in Buying

1. **Ball and Switch Selling**—Maybe you've inquired about a product advertised at an unbelievably low price—only to have the item degraded by the salesperson, or to be told that it is no longer in stock or "not that good, anyway." Once you have been "baited" by the advertisement, the salesperson tries to "switch" you to a more expensive item. Report this type of selling to the Attorney-General's Division of Consumer Protection.

2. **Get Rich Quick Schemes**—If you are told you can make fabulous earnings, take fast—leave! Don't make any investment until you investigate those earnings claims to discover if they are realistic.

3. **Oral Guarantees**—With guarantees, the seller is legally bound by what a written contract says—not what a salesperson tells you. Don't accept any oral guarantees. Get everything in writing! Be sure you understand what the guarantee means, what is covered by the guarantee, and how long you are protected.

4. **Oral Estimates**—As with guarantees, get estimates in writing. If you have an appliance, radio or TV set taken from your home for repairs, first get a written estimate of the probably repair cost. In addition, get a written assurance that no additional work will be done (or additional charges made) without your consent. Remember, estimates only give you a general idea of what it may cost. If you need a few repairs, and they may be substantially less than the actual cost. To be safe, obtain several estimates and be suspicious of an unusually low estimate.

5. **Golden Opportunity**—Don't allow yourself to be rushed into buying something because it's a "golden opportunity, last chance, or golden opportunity to get on a good thing. You're probably the "last chance" of the

Mrs. Crump hosts Miranda group

The Miranda Homebakers met at the home of Mrs. Virginia Crump at Clay Center, Kentucky, on Wednesday, Sept. 10.

There were 18 members answering roll call.

Mrs. Carl Hargrove gave the devotional. Mrs. Lowell Shaw gave the lesson on borrowed kitchens from the past. Refreshments were served by the hostess.

They will meet at the home of Mrs. Mary Ann Walker on Wednesday, Oct. 10 for a chili supper.

And back including the first print. If you don't understand a contract, take it to someone who does and who will explain it to you before you sign it.



Studying primitive peoples

The Sixth Grade classes at Nicholas County Elementary School have been studying primitive peoples and the way they met their basic needs, food, shelter, and clothing. Shows here are four of the students and the projects representing this unit. They are Mark Taylor, Sherry Fryer, Jackie Keary, and Galen Tulliver. A unit of various maps and their uses has already been studied. Maps of their classroom area were drawn to apply some of the various skills taught in this unit. The students have been studying bacteria and other so-called organisms. Mrs. Charles Rose, Nicholas County Health Nurse, provided the classes with a culture plate on which to grow bacteria. An incubator was made by the class using an aquarium and a lamp in that bacteria could be grown on the culture plate.—Duncea Peay

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INVENTORY	OTHER LIABILITIES
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Citizens benefit from space program

Ford committee says

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Special)—Are the citizens of Nicholas county, like other Kentuckians or other Americans, benefitting from this nation's space program?

Yes.

But do they realize these benefits?

No.

These and other conclusions have been reached after hearings before new Senate subcommittee chaired by Sen. Wendell Ford.

Ford said he decided to investigate the National Aeronautical and Space Administration's Technology Utilization Program in an effort to match technology with national needs.

Recently, Ford was named chairman of the Subcommittee on Aerospace Technology and National Needs, and is now conducting hearings relating to spinoffs from the NASA era of landing men on the moon.

"Even though most people aren't aware of it, thousands of advancements, presently improving their quality of life have come from the space program," Ford said.

He said government had a responsibility to make its technology available to the private sector, especially in view of pressing national needs which can be solved through NASA expertise.

Ford's subcommittee is expected to continue hearings.

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