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The Oral Folk History Surrounding the Life of William Bernard "Big Six" Henderson

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THE ORAL FOLK HISTORY SURROUNDING THE LIFE
OF WILLIAM BERNARD "BIG SIX" HENDERSON

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Folk Studies
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Peggy Bradley Boaz
April 1976
THE ORAL FOLK HISTORY SURROUNDING THE LIFE
OF WILLIAM BERNARD "BIG SIX" HENDERSON

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The oral folk history of William Bernard "Big Six" Henderson is unique in that Henderson himself has been a contributing factor in keeping the tales of his moonshining experiences in the oral traditions of distinct areas of Kentucky, especially Cumberland County. Interviewing Henderson and apprehended and non-apprehended moonshiners allowed speculation into the concept that Henderson was indeed a folk hero. Using Dixon Wector's requirements for heroes, the hero performing unselfish service, acquiring a nickname, obtaining sympathy for handicaps, struggles, and failures, and reaching hero status after death, and providing examples of Henderson's encounters with moonshiners, verifies Henderson's hero status, except Henderson is a hero prior to his death. Mody Boatright's additional characteristics of combat with individuals, boasting, a pride in weapons, women, and animals, a remarkable birth, and becoming a hero after a tragic and supernatural death gives concrete support for Henderson being raised to the level of folk hero. Again, Henderson qualifies as a folk hero, disregarding his future demise.

This paper is divided into the following parts: (1) an introduction which gives reasons for a study of this type; (2) the background and careers of Henderson; (3) the tales involving
Henderson and various moonshiners; (4) Henderson's status as a folk hero; (5) conclusions and suggestions for future studies of this nature; and (6) a brief sketch of the informants.
INTRODUCTION

Growing up in a political-and sports-oriented area in central Kentucky, I first became aware of William Bernard "Big Six" Henderson during the gubernatorial race of 1967. Big Six was campaigning for Marlow Cook and I was introduced to both men in Beaver Dam, Kentucky. After polite introductions, my father, who also was campaigning for Marlow Cook, began to recount stories of Big Six catching moonshiners in southcentral Kentucky and how Big Six at one time was a well-known athlete. I can recall Big Six smiling at my father's comments and, slapping him on the back, saying, "Now, Bud, you'll give me a big head." A small crowd had gathered by that time, and all those present laughed at Big Six's response. Inevitably, someone asked how he had acquired the nickname Big Six. After briefly relating the reason, Big Six smiled and said, "Now you all be sure and vote for Senator Cook." Everyone cheered as Big Six and Senator Cook walked away. Later in the day, I encountered Big Six at the voting polls. Again people had gathered around

1For simplification, the quotation marks normally used to indicate a nickname will be used only when referring to Henderson's full name—William Bernard "Big Six" Henderson. When referring to Big Six the quotation marks will not be used.
him. The crowd appeared to be waiting for Henderson to relate tales of his moonshining encounters, and he did not disappoint them.

I was prompted to research the life of Big Six Henderson after meeting him in 1967. After hearing examples of how he and his agents had apprehended moonshiners in various Kentucky counties, I wondered if there was an oral tradition of moonshiner-revenue tales connected with Henderson's career and life. At this point I contacted law officials in southcentral Kentucky, and, indeed, many of the lawmen had heard of Big Six. However, even though these officials knew of Henderson, they were unable to give me examples of those tales which Henderson associated with his career. One county sheriff stated that he always enjoyed hearing Big Six recount his adventures, but, since Henderson related so many "stories," the sheriff was unable to remember even one incident.

Still convinced that these fragments of tales must have a main source, I decided to contact Henderson personally. In the fall of 1973 Henderson agreed to let me interview him and to help me contact those law officials and moonshiners with whom he had worked. After a few months, it became quite clear that it was Henderson himself who kept these moonshining tales fresh in others' minds. I attended various public meetings with him to tape record his experiences of apprehending moonshiners; it was evident that he would relate only the adventures which made him appear as the hero in the tales.
Arranging an interview with him was not difficult; he was now a United States Federal Marshal and was constantly traveling to Bowling Green, Kentucky, where I resided, to attend court. Seven tape recorded interviews were held between 23 September 1973, and 31 January 1974, with numerous non-tape recorded interviews occurring over a span of twelve months. I attended a meeting of the South Central Historical Society in Glasgow, Kentucky, on 25 April 1974, and a meeting of the Women's Club in Bowling Green, Kentucky, on 12 December 1973. Big Six had maintained correspondence and personal contact with me and on 3 August 1974, I received pertinent information regarding his background in a letter.

Big Six was allowed to edit the transcripts of the first seven interviews and, therefore, some material expurgated by him will not be included in this study. Deleted or edited materials are concerned with racial comments, the name of an apprehended moonshiner, two tales about moonshiners, grammatical errors, dates and places of arrests, and general comments which Big Six did not want publicized. Single brackets indicate his editing; double brackets were used by me when additional clarification was needed.

Other informants were interviewed in Cumberland County, Kentucky, where the bulk of Big Six's tale telling repertoire begins. Two tales were given to me by the present Circuit Court Judge, James C. Carter, Jr., and a former sheriff, "Doc" Keen, of Burkesville, Kentucky, at the Cumberland County court house on 26 March 1974. While interviewing these men, an anonymous
informant also related a tale. Unable to tape record the tales, I wrote down key words and thoughts, and later reconstructed the tales as best I could.

On 23 February 1974, in Peytonsburg, Kentucky, I interviewed two men who had had dealings with Big Six. Both men had made moonshine; however, Informant B had not been apprehended by Big Six. Informant B's discussion was not recorded as I was talking with him in his woodshed. Again, I wrote down key words and completed his tale immediately upon leaving his residence. A first cousin of Informant B was present during the interview. Both men enjoyed the tale as Big Six had not had enough evidence to arrest Informant B for processing and selling moonshine. Informant B smiled and laughed while recounting this episode and, upon finishing the tale, slapped his cousin on the back as both men roared with laughter.

Another possible informant, also a first cousin of Informant B and a resident of southern Cumberland County, had been apprehended at a moonshine still by Big Six. After receiving directions to Informant C's home, I lost my way and stopped to ask

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2This anonymous informant will be known as Informant A. Informant A, for some unexplained reason, did not want to be identified.

3Informant B is a resident of southern Cumberland County.
directions. The men with whom I was speaking demanded to know who I was and what I wanted with Informant C. To my surprise one of the men asked if I wanted to buy a pint of moonshine. I did not make the purchase but I did receive directions. When I arrived at Informant C's house, his wife seemed irritated when she found out what I wanted. Informant C reluctantly related his story of being apprehended by Big Six. He wept during the latter part of the tape recorded interview and told of his conversion from a sinner to a Christian. After I had completed the interview, one of the men who had initially given me directions appeared and I was told he was Informant C's son-in-law. The man smiled and listened while Informant C told of his premonitions that he would be caught at the still. Informant C's wife did not smile or comment during my stay, and she seemed relieved when I left.

Interviews were planned in Cumberland County with Everett "Fuzzy" Anders, Ray Anders, Ed Ooten, Mrs. Stanley Spears, and Edwin "Rooster" Murley. Various excuses were given by them to avoid being interviewed. One did not have the time. A former sheriff told me another was still bootlegging and did not want to be apprehended. Another was in his eighties and "did not remember" any of his moonshining incidents, Stanley Spears was dead and his wife did not want to recall unpleasant memories, and "Rooster" Murley was working in his tobacco crop. After each person cancelled the initial interview, other sessions were scheduled but were always cancelled.
Of the thirty-three tales collected from six informants for
this study, twenty-eight tales were recounted by Big Six himself.
Five tales were related by the remaining five informants. Thirteen
of the twenty-eight tales collected from Big Six are found in
Esther Kellner's *Moonshine: Its History and Folklore*. The
unusual note is the striking similarity in form and structure
between those collected by me from Henderson and those recorded
in her book. The thirteen tales are grammatically and structurally
the same, except in one instance. (In one tale Kellner has a
different last name for the fastest moonshiner in Kentucky.) As Big
Six developed his tale telling repertoire, he polished these tales
to the point of perfection. By this I mean that he has repeated
these incidents so often that he oftentimes recounts them in
virtually identical manner. Many tales were recorded a minimum
of five times during the twelve months period of interviewing and
research.

This study is divided into three chapters. Chapter I, "Big
Six Henderson: The Man," consists solely of biographical materials
given to me by Big Six. It includes family background and the
academic and professional careers of Big Six. Chapter II, "Big
Six Henderson: The Tales," includes all tales related to me
by Big Six, Judge James C. Carter, Jr., "Doc" Keen, and Infor-
mants A, B, and C. The tales are annotated to other sources when
possible. Chapter III, "Big Six Henderson: Folk Hero," offers a
rationale of how and why Big Six became a Kentucky folk hero.
CHAPTER I

BIG SIX HENDERSON: THE MAN

In 1774 Colonel Richard Henderson, great grandfather of Big Six, and his brother, Samuel Henderson, migrated from North Carolina to Kentucky. Simon Kenton and Daniel Boone were also included in the migrating party.1 After Colonel Henderson arrived in Kentucky he married Elizabeth Calloway. She was captured by Indians but, with the help of Daniel Boone and Samuel Henderson, Colonel Henderson rescued her.2

John Henderson, grandfather of Big Six, was born on 4 April 1817, in Grayson County, Kentucky. He married Mary Hatfield who was born in 1829. Mary Hatfield Henderson died in 1893 and John Henderson died in 1898. To John and Mary Henderson was born one son, George Washington Henderson, in Big Clifty, Kentucky, on 8 October 1841.3


2William Bernard Henderson, interview held in Bowling Green, Kentucky, 28 December 1973. Elizabeth and Richard Henderson had at least one male child, but no information could be provided by Big Six Henderson.

3Henderson, Letter.
On 10 October 1861, George Washington Henderson and . . . four other boys slipped through the Confederate lines over here around Hartford and Beaver Dam, Kentucky. The Union volunteers had gathered over there at Camp Underwood. A Colonel Pennybaker was in charge. [[George Washington Henderson]] trained with the Union forces at Munfordsville [[sic]], Kentucky, during the winter of 1861. They moved out of there the spring of 1862 with General Mitchell and on 3 March 1862, George Washington Henderson was made sergeant of Company A. Colonel James B. Speed was the adjunt [[sic]] of Company A and he went with General Mitchell to Bowling Green, Kentucky.  

General Johnson [[a Confederate]] was camped . . . in Bowling Green, Kentucky. That was the headquarters of the Confederate Army in Kentucky . . . [[and]] . . . they were there several days and there was a battle . . . and . . . maybe a few shots fired, but not very many. My father with General Mitchell's army . . . raised the American flag on Reservoir Hill [[in Bowling Green, Kentucky,]] on 12 March 1862. Finally, Johnson retreated from . . . Bowling Green. And they followed him all the way to Fentress County, Tennessee. There never were any real battles, just skirmishes. And there they [[were]] mounted. My father was an infantry man and they mounted there. And they went from there, Fentress County, Tennessee, down through Tennessee and . . . into Georgia and was [sic] in Lookout at the Battle of Kinshaw [[sic]] Mountain, Lookout Mountain, and part of Atlanta.  

Before arriving in Atlanta, . . . "the 27th Kentucky Infantry was mounted and sent to join General Burnside . . ." in September, 1863. The 27th Infantry followed the Confederate forces from east Tennessee to Knoxville, Tennessee.


5Henderson, Letter.

6Ibid.
Dad's outfit later returned to Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, where he remounted with Colonel Ward. [[They]] . . . went to join General Sherman's army at Pumpkin Vine Creek, Virginia. Sherman was beginning his march upon Atlanta.7

... They had [[a]] truce [[after Sherman razed Atlanta]] and were hollering back and forth insultingly, the Confederates, and were making remarks. But they took time out, each one, to pick up their own people and bury them. Well, . . . the next day, on account of reinforcements for General Sherman, Albert Sidney Johnson was killed . . . and both sides withdrew. . . . 8

After the Battle of Atlanta, Sergeant Henderson

... ended up over in Virginia . . . and . . . they started for Richmond. He was captured at Leesburg, Virginia. Behind Confederate Lines, he and fourteen or fifteen . . . soldiers volunteered to [[go]] behind Confederate lines and spot a cannon. And . . . they were captured . . . and the Confederates killed nine of them and captured the other six.9

Sergeant Henderson and the other fourteen men were attempting to sabotage the guns of General Lee's artillery. Sergeant Henderson was captured on 10 June 1864.10

Sergeant Henderson was imprisoned in Libby, Virginia, and was transferred to Andersonville, Georgia, in a wooden box.

On his way . . . he tried to cut out. He and one of his buddies [Riley Paris Hatfield] tried to cut out of these wooden box cars, pine box cars, [that] they were shipping them [[in]]. They didn't know where they were going to drop out. And he had a razor, one these old

7 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Henderson, Letter.
time [straight] razors . . . and his buddy had a pocket knife. They didn't get a hole big enough completed when they were in route. They didn't know where they were going. Of course, they had these guards with them but they weren't around them at night. It came daylight before they had a hole big enough to get out of. So when the guards came around, . . . they [the guards] made them move out from the walls of the box cars . . . and they saw the hole in the wall. Dad had slipped the razor down in his boot. And the other man had thrown his knife out the hole in the wall. And so they found the razor in my Dad’s boot with the nicks in it. And they asked him if he did it and, of course, he had to say, 'yes.' And they had him to take the boot off. And they strapped the [bayonet] to his mouth and trussed him up. And that's how he [[arrived]] in Andersonville.11

The first month he was there over fifty-seven percent of 20,000 men died from yellow fever and starvation. It was [[a]] living hell. And Dad stayed in there until he was exchanged with Confederate prisoners in December, 1864. He was exchanged as a prisoner . . . close to Louisville.12

After resting a few weeks, Sergeant Henderson returned to his unit and in 1865 was honorably discharged from the Union Army.13

After the Civil War, George Washington Henderson returned to Grayson County, Kentucky. There he married his childhood sweetheart, Sallie O'Connor, who was from Rineyville, Kentucky. They settled on a farm near St. John's Kentucky, in Hardin County. No children were born to George and Sallie Henderson.14

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13Ibid.
14Henderson, Letter.
Sometime after George Washington Henderson married Sally O'Connor, General George Custer was stationed for two years at Elizabethtown, Kentucky. During the late 1860s, "Dad played poker with him. He tried to persuade Dad to re-enlist in the Union Army, but Dad refused. Custer was killed at Little Big Horn about six months after leaving Elizabethtown."\(^{15}\)

Sallie O'Connor Henderson died and sixty year old George Henderson married eighteen year old Sienna Catherine Calvert in October, 1900. Sienna Calvert was born on 21 June 1882 at St. John's, Kentucky. Honor Calbert Wise, Sienna Calvert's grandmother, lived in Big Springs, Kentucky. Honor Wise was born in 1812 and lived to the age of 104. She died in 1916.

\(^{15}\)Ibid. A discrepancy should be noted here. According to Elwood L. Nye, Marching With Custer (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1964) p. 29, General Custer was killed on 25 June 1876. Therefore, Sergeant Henderson could not have played poker with Custer in the late 1860s, six months before being killed.

\(^{16}\)Henderson, 28 December 1973.
Big Six recalled his great-grandmother as being "... a tall, slender, and big woman. She was a remarkable woman." 17 Honor Calvert Wise recounted stories of the Indians coming through the Big Clifty area in the 1800s, but never in any big groups. Big Six also remembered fragments of stories his great-grandmother would relate concerning her second husband and his profession of blacksmithing.

Sienna Calvert's mother died of tuberculosis when Sienna was thirty years old. Eighty year old Honor Calvert Wise reared five children. Sienna Calvert, one of the five, was thirteen months old.

My father was married at that time [to Sallie O'Connor] and my mother [was] ... just thirteen months old. My father and his wife were good friends of my great-grandparents and they wanted to adopt my mother. But my great-grandfather wouldn't hear of it. And my great-grandmother raised all six children. 18

Sallie O'Connor Henderson became ill and in 1899 Sienna Calvert went to care for her. After Sallie Henderson's death, George Henderson married Sienna Calvert.

To George and Sienna Henderson were born three children, one of which was William Bernard Henderson, on 2 September 1903, in St. John's, Kentucky. However, "... they had twins ahead of me, but my mother was thrown from a horse. She had a high-spirited horse and a dog caused the horse to shy and, of course, the girls were

17Ibid.

18Ibid.

After George Henderson's death, Sienna Henderson sent Big Six to school in Jasper, Indiana in 1909. There he attended elementary school at a boarding school, and high school at Jasper Academy. In 1920 he entered and in 1923 graduated from Jasper College. There he studied law, accounting, Latin, English, Greek, history, botany, and mathematics. After graduating from Jasper College, he entered Jefferson Law School, a college in the University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky. In 1925 he graduated from the University of Louisville and practiced law with the Interstate Judgement Bureau.

While in school in 1923, Big Six played semi-professional baseball.

I was a baseball pitcher back when I was a young fellow. And, of course, Christy Mathieson's nickname was "Big Six." He was the one who was the New York Giant's all-time Hall of Fame pitcher. Goldbert Tailor and Rowe was the big concern I was pitching for, a clothing manufacturer. These fellows thought up the ideas I was about the size of Christy Mathieson [but], of course, I wasn't the pitcher he was. So I picked up the nickname Big Six fifty years ago and it stuck.

Big Six also played baseball for "L & N Pan Americans, Lees Tires, Minaweb, Bardstown, New Haven, Kentucky, and Jasper, Indiana."
However, Big Six was also involved in basketball, football, tennis, bowling, and golf during the 1920s and 1930s in Louisville.

During the time Big Six was going to school at the University of Louisville, he worked for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad as a rate clerk. Big Six was approached by the House of David, a well-known Louisville basketball team. He earned twenty-five dollars for playing basketball one night with the House of David. Yet, the next day he returned to his job at the L & N Railroad. He retired after twenty years of service in 1941.²³

In 1941 Big Six Henderson became a Treasury Investigator in the Department of Alcohol, Tax Unit. From 1941 to March, 1970, Big Six Henderson was known to every person who processed and transported illegal moonshine whiskey. It was a dangerous profession. The settlement of Coe Ridge in Cumberland County, Kentucky, involved the most danger.

There's a settlement over here called Coe Ridge. [[It's]] close to the Kentucky-Tennessee line where a group of people came in after slavery. They were part Indian and part black. A couple of white women came in there in later years and took up with them, and they were a mixture of white, black, and Indian. Their profession was making moonshine whiskey.²⁴

According to one printed source:

White women came to live among the Coe Negroes from 1885 to 1920, the turbulent middle years of the colony's history. Their presence coincides


²⁴Ibid.
roughly with the days of feuding, and with the early years of moonshining and bootlegging when murder and violence gripped the colony and produced the genesis of the colony's internal sickness and ultimate extinction. These white girls were young and pretty, so it is said, and under normal circumstances could have easily found suitable mates in their own society.25

"My first trip over there was on 12 March 1942," Henderson recalled. [We] caught seven moonshine stills that day and destroyed about three hundred gallons of illicit whiskey. So it fascinated me to ... catch these fellows. And ... in the twenty-three or twenty-four years I was here, I caught practically everyone over there that could walk or run or crawl. But I didn't mistreat them and it became a game with me. And I go back over there now and I see a few of them that I sent to the penitentiary. They'll holler at me cause I treated them like I wanted to be treated. And the men knew it. The gun play was out over in there. When I first went in, we had a lot of shooting and all after Prohibition. I think they finally found out that you can't win against the federal government.26

We had an unwritten law. A man by the name of [[Isom]] Williams was a former school teacher in Monroe County, Kentucky. He told me when I came here, 'Big Six, you won't find it in any memorandum or any orders from Washington, D.C., but we have an unwritten law where if anyone shoots you or kills you, I'll never take 'em in. I'm gonna ask you the same request.' So that was my Bible the twenty-eight years I was in there—that I would never take one moonshiner in that deliberately killed a man performing his duty.27


27Ibid., p. 4. Mody Boatright, Folk Laughter on the American Frontier (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 114, states that "... the code of the West was the 'unwritten law' ... which made a distinction between a murder and a killing ... ." In the old West "... crimes against life and property might be privately avenged. ..."
In 1954 or 1955, Big Six and his agents confiscated 224 stills; however, ten years later "we went for months without catching a still, hearing a word of one. That's how much it slacked off." Big Six found a total of 304 moonshine stills in Cumberland County. This was more captures than any other county in Kentucky in twenty-five years.

After serving twenty-nine years as an agent for the Department of Alcohol, Tax Unit, President Richard M. Nixon requested the Senate to appoint Big Six as a United States Marshal for the Western District of Kentucky. In April, 1970, Big Six was confirmed by the Senate and was stationed in Louisville, Kentucky.

The criminals Big Six now dealt with were more dangerous, and the unwritten guidelines his men followed were strict.

I told the boys in the Marshal Services when I became Marshal, I said, 'If you let one of your prisoners escape, don't come in and tell me about it. Lay your badge on my desk. Uncle Sam will pay you off.'

Henderson's absolute refusal to accept as a Deputy Marshal a man who was the double cousin of Louie Nunn, the governor of Kentucky,

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28 William Bernard Henderson, interview held in Bowling Green, Kentucky, 2 October 1973. Officials of the Division of Alcohol and Tobacco in Bowling Green stated that their office had only statewide figures of the moonshine stills confiscated, thus could not verify Henderson's claim nor corroborate the year.


created a breach between Marshal Henderson and Attorney General John Mitchell and the Director, Wayne Colburn, a former police inspector from San Diego, who was the protege of Bebe Rebozo, Nixon's rich buddy.\textsuperscript{31}

Big Six served as United States Marshal for over five years in the Western District of Kentucky, but, with the death of his good friend, Judge Mac Swinford, in February 1975, and with school busing

\ldots becoming a major political, social, and economic factor in Louisville, Kentucky, I decided to retire. Also with Federal intervention becoming imminent, I decided to retire as United States Marshal rather than instruct my Deputy Marshals to enforce a regulation that I considered ludicrous and unjust—forced school busing.\textsuperscript{32}

On 31 July 1975, Big Six Henderson retired and ended a career of law enforcement which he had respected so much. Bitter feelings endured even in his retirement as he received letters of appreciation from various branches of the government, except from the President.

\textsuperscript{31}William Bernard Henderson, 19 December 1975.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid.
CHAPTER II

BIG SIX HENDERSON: THE TALES

During a span of thirty-three years, beginning in 1941 when he was assigned to the area of Golden Pond, Kentucky, and continuing until 1975, numerous moonshining tales recounted by Big Six Henderson personally, and by federal, state, county and local law officials, moonshiners and interested parties have sprung into existence. These tales appear to be in the oral tradition of those people from Kentucky counties which were involved in the distilling and selling of illegal alcohol. One such area was the Coe Ridge colony in Cumberland County, Kentucky.

During the 1940s and 1950s the Coe Ridge settlement was noted for its role in the manufacturing of moonshine.

One time back when Big Six was workin' this area he was out on the Ridge [Coe Ridge]. Well, these two men had a still. Their names were Homer Spears and Press Scott. This real old fella, Jim Shack Short, came walkin' down this holler with two ears of corn in his pocket. Well, Big Six had to take them all to Bowling Green [Kentucky] for court. Jim kept tellin' Big Six that he was out there lookin' for his cow, but Big Six said he'd still have to go to court. Well, the judge let him off cause he was an old man, but Big Six told him to keep his damn cow at home.¹

¹Judge James C. Carter, Jr., interview held in Burkesville, Kentucky, 26 March 1974.
Another character in Coe Ridge moonshining legends, and a lifelong resident of the Ridge was Fuzzy Anders. Apprehended by Big Six several times, Fuzzy seemed relentless in his efforts to outsmart Big Six.

I was over there [[Coe Ridge]] with [Isom] Williams and [[a]] couple of deputies one morning and we found this still just about daylight. So Williams and I got up on the hill and we were gonna come down . . . . It was on a ravine where we could run almost into a chute. And we had Sheriff Brown and a couple of his deputies with us . . . . Williams and I were gonna divide up and come down the Ridge on 'em and slip up and catch 'em.

So it was about, just a few minutes after daylight. And about thirty minutes, here comes these three black boys down to the still. And they were about twenty, twenty-two years old youngsters and makin' a lot of noise.

And so they went to work about settina up the still . . . . And we had been there for about twenty or thirty minutes when we looked up and here came this old boy with a white beard about two or three inches [long]. And he had a cane, a crutch, takin' his time comin' down from the Ridge. He spent fifteen [[or]] twenty minutes workin' his way down.

Williams was right there beside me and he nudged me and said, 'I'll catch him.' I said, 'You would pick on a cripple.' So we waited till he got down and he sat down on around the still. So we started slippin' down to the still. We divided and I started about halfway down there and this old boy locked up and saw us. And he let out a yell and dropped that . . . . crutch and took off. We caught the other three. He's the only one that got away from us. That was old Fuzzy . . . . [We picked him up a short time later.]

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2Henderson, 12 December 1973. The episode of Fuzzy Anders running from Big Six on crutches is also found in Montell, p. 182; Esther Kellner, *Moonshine: Its History and Folklore*, p. 181; a similar tale is found in the D.K. Wilgus Miscellaneous Collection, Western Kentucky University Archive of Folklore and Folklife.
Another time Big Six caught Fuzzy while Fuzzy was working on a new still; however, this still was made out of wooden boxes and not barrels.

One of the times I caught Fuzzy Anders I knew I was in for him . . . . He was in there mixin' up the mash. He had it in [[a]] box. They had [no] barrels, but they made their own boxes—gum lumber. The hardest thing to drive a nail into and the hardest thing to tear up . . . . But they made and had a big 200-gallon box to ferment . . . mash . . . .

I went over there . . . and he was over there inside with his overalls . . . . And had his pants rolled up . . . and about size twelve or thirteen foot . . . . And these other two [Negroes], Van Coe was one of them . . . and . . . the other one [[was]] Homer, I believe.

Anyway they was carrying the water and mixin' the mash . . . . He's [[Fuzzy]] in there mixin' it with his feet, while they [were] pourin' it in. He was jumpin' around there. I went up . . . and caught him before he could get out of the box. If he got out of the box, he would probably give you a hell of a run. And he might get away from you. But he didn't think that was fair. He cried about halfway, 'Mr. Henderson, you cheated me! That wasn't fair!' I said, 'What do you mean? I'm just here to arrest you. Wasn't any question of playing games with you.' But he thought I should let him get out and take off, I guess.3

Another tale, related by Doc Keen, former sheriff of Cumberland County, involved Big Six and Fuzzy Anders. While recounting this tale, Doc, Judge James C. Carter, Jr., and Informant A smiled or laughed.

It seemed as though Big Six had a difficult time apprehending Fuzzy and these three informants apparently enjoyed that idea immensely.

There were a lot of moonshiners out on the Ridge, Coe Ridge. This one fella, Fuzzy Anders, use to give Six hell. Fuzz always had a still goin'. He never wore shoes so when Six would go out to catch him, Fuzz would run like hell. One time Six had to run him,

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I know, two miles to catch him.\textsuperscript{4}

After finishing the tale, the author asked if Doc knew any other tales relating to Big Six, but Doc smiled and said that he did not know many tales about Six. During a later interview with Big Six, he was questioned about this fragment of a tale. Big Six replied that there were several incidents involving himself and Fuzzy, but he did not remember this one in particular.

One man who made and transported illegal whiskey was Joe Coe, a former resident of Coe Ridge. He was apprehended by Big Six Henderson several times, but Joe Coe, like Fuzzy Anders, was always trying to outwit the law.

Joe Coe was one of the leaders over there \textsuperscript{[on]} \textsuperscript{[Coe Ridge]}. [I] caught him so many times and brought him down here \textsuperscript{[to Bowling Green, Kentucky]}. I think Judge Milliken was the judge that was trying to represent him in court. So Judge asked him, he said, "Joe, what kind of record do you have?" He said, "Judge, my record is perfect." He said, "What do you mean 'perfect'?" He said, "I been down here eight times, and they sent me to the penitentiary eight times."\textsuperscript{5}

Joe \textsuperscript{[[Coe]]} was haulin' whiskey to, out to Willie Porter Short, out there, I'd heard. I'd had that report. So I got over here early one morning and had Mann Groce \textsuperscript{[[a former law official]]} with me, and,

\textsuperscript{4}Maurice Clifton "Doc" Keen, interview held in Burkesville, Kentucky, 26 March 1974. In a 4 October 1973 interview held by Lynwood Montell with Big Six, Montell collected the same tale. In Montell's version, Fuzzy lost one shoe instead of both shoes.

\textsuperscript{5}Henderson, 12 December 1973. Joe Coe's perfect record of moonshining and prison is also in Montell, pp. 185-186, and Kellner, p. 154.
ah, one of the other agents. And we were gonna drive out there, out that road that leads off the highway, down there, to, go on down to Coe Ridge, and catch 'em as they come out there. But we didn't get over there.

Before we got there, I met Joe. And he saw me as he was comin' out. Well, I whipped around and started after him. And . . . I turned the siren on and he was ignoring it. And . . . I bumped into him. And he come to a hault [sic] pretty fast. And we got out and he said, "I haven't got anything."

So we went back there and, of course, we found six gallons . . . in the back. He'd gone on past Willie Porter Short's. He didn't stop. He was heading on down to Tennessee. We got this whiskey out of the back end and he had these corn cob stoppers in it, and the whiskey was still hot. And we knew he had just run it off. So I told Mann Groce to take Joe and take him on back . . . to Burkesville and put him in jail. I'd pick him up later. We went on down there later, down below his house, and this still was still hot. There wasn't anybody there. We waited around, but, of course, they didn't come in.6

Another time Big Six Henderson tried to apprehend Joe Coe, he was not successful. Joe Coe had the last laugh on Big Six this time.

One time he [[Joe Coe]] had a team [[of mules]] down there [[Coe Ridge.]] I slipped down on him one day and he was comin' up here and he had a wagon. I was expecting to see a still over there. And . . . he had this flat bed wagon with a couple of mules drivin' up there, and I come out on him. I said, "What do you got there, Joe?" He said, "Got some water." And I thought it was moonshine cause it, . . . I checked the jugs. It was water . . . . I thought sure I had him with about twenty- or thirty-gallons of moonshine. . . . I thought maybe he was pullin' a trick on me, had part of 'em whiskey and part of 'em water. But they were all water. Haulin' water up to the house.7

6William Bernard Henderson, interview held in Burkesville, Kentucky, 4 October 1973.

7Ibid.
In this tale Big Six did not realize that Joe Coe had indeed "pulled a trick" on him by hauling water instead of moonshine.

"Fire in the hole" was a warning system developed by the Coes to notify moonshiners of nearby lawmen. According to one source:

... the Coe Negroes developed a warning system as a means of notifying each other when the law was at hand. The first of the moonshiners to see an officer would throw back his head and yell, "Fi-i-i-re in the hole." The yell was strangely like a yodel in which the long vowels were accented. The last syllable was long and was held on a high note. Like an echo, the yell was repeated by another still farther along the ridge, then another, and so on until the call had reached the deepest ravine occupied by a moonshine still.8

This warning system was used in one instance while Henderson was trying to capture Ernest and David Anders, two brothers who lived on Coe Ridge.

... we'd located this still ... and I was gonna wait till these two Coe Ridge boys, David Marshall Anders ... and Ernest Anders ... were comin'. We waited there. They had hung their jackets up on a tree limb, over there on the side of the still, ... [[they]] had gone ... to lunch. They'd been down there just gettin' everything set up to make. So we came in and located. I'd had already found them several days before ... .

They came down the path ... and was down on the other side. I was just waitin'. I motioned for the other two officers to remain quiet. I was waiting for their arrival at the still site when I heard this voice. I didn't see him, but I heard this voice. I heard him holler, "Fire in the hole!" And when he did, they [[David and Ernest]] stopped, you know. And I knew they were gonna take off. So I jumped up and started runnin' them. Run them right

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back up the path. And when they did this Anders, he gave out. He just slid down. I saw who he was. And [II] kept after David Marshal . . . . But anyway he ran right around by his house. He didn't even stop. He didn't go in the house, he kept on runnin'. We were right beside of him. I run him on down there and finally he dropped before I did. He looked up and said, "Mr. Henderson, I'm not gonna run." I said, "I know damn well you're not! Cause I'm gonna hold on to you." So I got him by the belt and marched him right on back down to the still. I didn't turn loose of him. But he was just about seventeen years old. I tell you, that boy could blow the dust! 9

In this instance, the warning system was given by one man and was not repeated for other moonshiners.

On 27 January 1954, a massive raid occurred on Coe Ridge. Big Six Henderson and other law officials apprehended seven stills, and

... in the raiding party were seven cars which carried revenue agents, local officials, and state policemen. It was prearranged that the lead car would stop at the first Negro house, the second car at the second house, and so on until all seven houses on the ridge were entered and searched. Seven arrests were made. Three offenders were sent to prison, while the other four were placed on probation on their promises to leave Kentucky. 10

The following tale is a part of the total big raid.

... I got two undercover men and I brought them in here [[Coe Ridge]]. I brought them in after dark, and I went over on the Ridge and pointed out

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9Henderson, 4 October 1973. The alarm system used by moonshiners, "Fire in the hole" is also found in Montell, p. 176; Kellner, p. 176. A variant of concern for alarm systems for moonshiners is also found in Wilma Dykeman, The French Broad, p. 302.

10Ibid., p. 186.
the places where I knew they had reports. They were bootleggin' and foolin' with whiskey.

And . . . so we went on down to the lake and we went down to Holly Creek down in Tennessee. And I stayed down there. They were to go back in the night. So the next night they come on over there to make a buy. They . . . pretend [[ed]] that they were fishermen down by the lake. One of them was a fellow from Bowling Green, and he had a red nose. He looked like . . . one of these whiskey men anyway. A drunkard, you might say. The other fella, a little fella, was a [[n]] agent out of Indianapolis, . . . . He didn't look like an officer and they don't even get questioned hardly. They told 'em they were fishin' down on the lake and they went over and they bought from everybody, nearly, over there. And . . . we spent three or four days over there. I never will forget this one, Ollie Pruitt. . . . Ollie was sellin' whiskey at the time. They went in, and, I think, it was five-gallons they bought from him. So they came on back and we finished up that week. We went on out to Bowling Green. We came back the next week and I told them to go over and get another buy. They went over and got another buy from Ollie there at the store. And . . . it was right at the time this candle egg law came in, the federal government was involved in. You know, and eggs had to be candled before they were sold.

So there was this big . . . egg crate settin' full of eggs. And Hendricks was the ABC [[Alcohol Beverage Control]] fella from Bowling Green that I'd brought over here. And . . . he wanted to take some eggs home with him. We were goin' back in a day or two. So he just told him, he said, "We've just about run out of . . . eggs over there over to the lake. How about sellin' me a dozen or two of those eggs?" He said, "Oh, hell, I can't sell you any of those eggs. If I sold you any of those eggs, Uncle Sam would throw me underneath the jail. Not in it!"

They went back the next night, Thursday night. They couldn't buy from anybody. And everybody was closed up tight. They didn't have any to sell. I wondered if anybody had given them the alarm or something. But I found out later that somebody had come down to Holly Creek Inn, and they saw my name on that register. That just shows you how little things, I never thought bein' way down in Tennessee.
Stanley Groce and I got seven of 'em. Got Bully Wilburn and four others at one still. Then, we slipped over after we chased 'em and noise was made, we went back and, and they were working over at another still over at another hollow. And I sent Stanley [[Groce]] over around the hill to come in on 'em, and we got . . . in on 'em, and we got Charlie and Ottlie Coe at that time. And we got Bully Wilburn and the whole bunch of 'em over at the other one still. We, the two of us, I think, end up, just the two of us, we had seven men. We had seven of 'em and two big stills and we must have had sixty-gallons of whiskey. That's the day Bully Wilburn, I was runnin' Bully Wilburn, and he turned his head around and lookin' right straight at me, and runnin' just straight the other way . . . . He turned around and looked at me 'for I ever caught him. I caught him. In fact, I got two of 'em up there. And there was a couple of 'em that got away we picked up. Of course, they all come in. They all pled guilty. There wasn't a question about everyone of 'em.\[11\]

With this raid, moonshining on Coe Ridge and in Cumberland County appeared to subside. "Slowly the law began to take its toll. It became increasingly difficult for the Coes to raise the $150 to $200 needed to get a still back in operation once it was destroyed."\[12\] However, this episode did not bring to an end the tales concerning moonshining in Cumberland County, Kentucky.

One moonshiner from Cumberland County, who was apprehended by Big Six Henderson, was Informant C. A resident of Peytonsburg, Kentucky, Informant C is now a reformed moonshiner who was saved \". . . by the Lord and I've been a worker ever since.\"

I was moonshining one time, and him [[Big Six Henderson]] and Stanley Groce come up on me. They caught me. I was carrying water. I looked up over the hill, I stepped over to get me a bucket of water out of the tub,

\[11\]Henderson, 4 October 1973.

that's what I had the water runnin' in, and I looked up; I aimed to take me some medicine, had asthma pretty bad at that time; I looked up, why I seed 'em. One of them hollered at me. Walked back up to the place, it was all I could do to walk back up. I was caught before by another man. Big Six, though, he was the last 'un.

After I went up and got my time, and stayed about five months, six months and got my parole, come back and, of course, they had a beer tax against me. . . . Seventeen years from that time, why they had a $750 fine against me. That was seventeen years ago.

No, I never drank a drop since then. Never drunk a drop since, . . . I drunk some before I was tried. But I never drunk none since I was tried. I drunk some the day before. The ninth day of November, 1954. Never drunk another drop since. . . . Yeah, it'll be twenty years in April [[1974]] since I got out of prison the first day of April. 13

When asked why he had decided to make moonshine, Informant C gave the following response:

Oh, that time we just growed up. Our forefathers, my Dad he made it. And drunk it. Ans most of the people on the Ridge made it. I think that more so than anything else. That's how. It's just handed on down.

Well, I learned a lot in Pennsylvania. That's why I'd like to go back. I don't know. Other people had the experience I had. But I was sittin' there one night late; I'd made parole. He, the prison official, come and spoke to me. Said, "You know your gonna leave here the first day of April. If you were in hell, you'd never get out." And I think that woke me up. Well, I know it did. I wrote just a few lines home. And I told my woman, if I ever get home, I won't come back [[meaning to Pennsylvania]]. . . . I got home I guess, the second day of April. There's a little church down here. Why, the Lord saved me and I've been a worker ever since. I only have one regret. That I didn't do it a long time ago. 14

13Informant C, interview held in Peytonsburg, Kentucky, 23 February 1974. After the interview, Informant C told that he had a dream that we was apprehended by Big Six the night before he was apprehended.

14Ibid.
During this conversation with Informant C he wept. He kept repeating, "The Lord saved me." In this man's life, religion played a major role, as he seemed to feel he had committed a sin by making moonshine.

Not all of the moonshiners Big Six Henderson dealt with were apprehended. Informant C's cousin, Informant B, was a moonshiner who was as cunning as Big Six Henderson. The only time Informant B dealt with Big Six he was able to escape the law.

One time back when Big Six was workin' this area I had a still back behind the house. I went down and checked it one day and then went over to my father's. Mann Groce and Big Six walked up to the house and set this gallon jug on the porch. I knew what it was. I hadn't been gone from the still but five minutes. I didn't know they was around.

"Well," Big Six said, "Do you know what this is?" I said, "No, can't say's I do." Big Six said, "Do you know whose it is?" I said, "I don't know whose damn jug it is." Big Six said, "Well, we'll take it and get fingerprints." Mann Groce reached down and picked it up. Well, I knew they couldn't take fingerprints after Mann'd picked it up.

A few weeks later, I got a summons from Bowling Green. I ignored it.

Later, I was over at my father's house and Big Six said, "Informant B?" I said, "Yep, that's me." He said, "I've come to take you to Bowling Green." I said, "Well, can I go change my clothes?" He said, "Go ahead."

So I came up to the house and changed my clothes. He took me in and brought me back. A free ride to Bowling Green.15

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15 Informant B, interview held in Peytonsburg, Kentucky, 23 February 1974.
The attitude of Informant B while he was relating this narrative to me was one of mockery. He seemed to enjoy the idea of beating the law. A first cousin of Informant B's was present while the narrative was being recounted. He, too, seemed pleased that Informant B had been able to dupe the law, i.e., after Groce had his fingerprints on the jug, Informant B's fingerprints could not be taken.

Women usually did not become involved with the business affairs of moonshining. Yet, Big Six Henderson received a telephone call from one woman in Burkesville because her son drank too much moonshine.

I had a woman call me from Burkesville over here one day at three o'clock. . . . She's the woman that would call me. Her boy would get tight. I caught him at a damn still one time. She gave me the information on him, and I caught him down there drunk. Of course, he wasn't runnin' it. But he'd drink the drink all the time. She had a boy. And she'd set there, and they'd set there and talk about it, and she'd hear it, and, damn, she'd draw me a map. And she could imagine it, and that map would be just as accurate as anything you ever saw. . . . A still in operation on top of Pea Ridge here. In two hours I left the office and when we got over there they were sacking up the whiskey. They had fourteen-gallons run off and it was corn whiskey.16

Henderson also stated that the boy never knew it was his own mother who had turned him in. Informants' names were never revealed.

Bootlegging, the transporting of alcoholic beverages in a dry county, was another problem with which "Big Six" had to contend. Some bootleggers were careful; yet, some were not and eventually were apprehended.

... This bootlegger did it to me. He transported from Tennessee up here to Kentucky. He'd go ... to the used car spot down there below ... Livingston. I knew who he was. But he'd come in there after dark. And he'd drive a different car every time he'd come in.

... But I finally caught him. But it took me about six months to catch him. Cause we didn't know when he was coming. ... He'd pass me sometimes in the night. And I would be looking for the car he came in the last night. He had a different car.

One night I laid over there till five o'clock in the morning. Gave up looking for him and an hour later he came in. I found him after it was too late. I finally caught on and I finally caught him. He was right over down close to the lake, ... below Celina. Horse Creek Camp, I believe was the name of it. 17

One still was located and raided by Big Six Henderson and Keith Speck, a state trooper from Albany, Kentucky. Though Big Six and his lawmen were not afraid to shoot or to kill the moonshiners, he would try to capture the men or women without any gunplay.

We went over on the Ridge one time. Out at Grider Hill Dock. We had located and knew this still was over there. I slipped over there and found it. He [[Keith Speck]] let me out of the car and I found the still. Then, we started goin' back to it. The only way we could get up there without them seeing us was to go up there in a boat and come up in there. Go in the back and climb this bluff and get up over in there. Go in the back, the still without them seein' us come in. You know, we'd come in the back side.

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And while we were goin' over there there was this old goat that had turned wild. . . . And we didn't bother him. We'd just get up every morning and go on over to the still. We carried that on for about three weeks. Try to find out where they were makin' it. A couple of times they would get in there and make it before we got there. Of course, you know, I had to come all the way from Bowling Green, and it was in the wintertime. And the water was so awful there, we'd go down to the dock manager, we knew him, . . . this Sloanes boy, we knew he had something going on there. We didn't try to advertise it. We hid our guns under our raincoats, . . . our heavy coats. We'd take our shoes off as soon as we'd get in the boat. It was so rough, there wasn't anybody else on that lake but us. We were afraid it would capsize. We'd get up there and we'd have to go up the lake about two miles. Up to Piney Falls and climb that bluff. And we'd generally see that old goat up on the hill looking down on us.

. . . We'd slip back in there and one day I slipped . . . in there to check it. Keith had let me out of the car and went on up there. And I saw these two fellas and they were up there putting thread over the path, black thread so they could find out if we'd came in, see. I was waiting for them to go in and stir up the ashes. They never did. They went down to the still but they never did make any move when I could pick them up. For when Keith came back we still had to go back later and pick them up in the still, at the still. One of them [was killed by Speck]. And, of course, I'd caught this other bird. I'd pulled him out a couple of times and threatened to kill him. But fortunately I didn't have to. But Keith had killed his brother and he'd tried to kill Keith. Or, we thought he did. So I, I told Keith not to kill him unless he had to. But we kept going over there. And we got in there one morning before daylight, a little before. And sure enough little while later he came in, he and this other fellow, came on down to the still. So we caught them. . . . So I got in the boat and went on over to the dock. And when I got over there, Bruce Sloane, who was runnin' the dock, ah, Toby Sloane was runnin' the dock, he said, "Big Six, did you have any luck this morning?" I said, "Yeah, we caught a couple of big ones this morning." He said, "What were they?" I said, "Suckers."18

18William Bernard Henderson, interview held in Bowling Green, Kentucky, 31 January 1974. The narrative of apprehending moonshiners and comparing the moonshiners to fish, specifically "suckers," is also found in Kellner, pp. 193-194.
Cumberland County was not the only Kentucky county which had moonshine still sites. Big Six Henderson and his "revenooers" raided stills and confiscated illicit liquor from numerous other Kentucky counties. With regard only for law and order, Big Six would arrest men and women even if they were his friends.

I was runnin' the clock for Western over here one time. I was workin' . . ..[[that night]]. I had the sheriff over here from Grayson County by the name of Smith. And we found a big still over there on Tar Hill . . ., about eighteen miles the other side of Leitchfield, about five o'clock in the afternoon. It had about 400-gallons of mash and would be ready to run the next morning. The sheriff said, "Well, why don't we just get them now?" I told him it wouldn't be ready to run till the next morning. . . . I'd come back about two o'clock before they get it run off and we'd catch them.

So I . . . drove on back and dropped him off and told him I'd pick him up at one o'clock. . . . Put on my raiding clothes and went over there and it was pitch dark. Went across there in the rain and briars and everything. Had on our coats and waterproof jackets. We got over the hill and saw a little light down there and so I said, "Don't you tackel a tree if anything runs out of there." You see, there was only one entrance. . . . They were pouring this whiskey [into jugs]. . . . Forty gallons of moonshine whiskey. [When we arrived at the entrance one of the moonshiners looked up. I then remarked, "Jack,] this is the second or third time I've caught you," I said. "Hell, Six, it's about the fourth or fifth." I said, "What do you mean makin' whiskey and makin' me come out here in the rain?" He rared back and said, "Hell, Six, I didn't send you no damn invitation. . . .

19Henderson, 23 September 1973. The narrative involving Big Six and the moonshiner in Grayson County and the phrase "Hell, Six, I didn't send you no damn invitation" is also found in Kellner, pp. 171-172.
Jack was not the only moonshiner who was disturbed when Big Six Henderson came to see him in the service of the law.

Another time over here in Grayson County on [Burnt Ridge], I didn't have anyone with me. I had a report there was a still over there on Dog Creek which is now under the lake. And when I got over there, I went over there [in] a pick up . . . truck . . . . And one o'clock and I could see the fellows over at the still. They were working around the still, busy as they could be. I crawled about fifty feet from the still. One guy got up and came over to gather some firewood. They'd been drinking [so] he didn't see me. Why he didn't [I'll never know.] But I was [dressed] green . . . so he couldn't see me.

He picked up some wood . . . and went back over to the still . . . . I [crawled ever near the still] and they had the still goin', and I took pictures. . . . Then, I jumped up there and called them. I had my camera in my hip pocket, and I had this M-1 carbine. . . . [At the still there were ] four of them. They was sitting around watching like crows on the fence.

So this big boy started to run, and I said, "Don't run, or I'll blow your head off." So that stopped him and he came on back. And I knew the four of them, and they helped me tear up the still.

After we tore it up, . . . with these four tough outlaws, or supposed to be, . . . [I] started back walking. It was about two miles, back to the . . . pickup truck I had. . . . We stopped to rest, and one of them looked at me and said, "Big Six, would you really have shot me?" I said, "Would I have shot you? [You know I would.]" He said, "That gun looked bigger than a cannon." Another one looked over at me, "Six, how much longer you got at that job of yours?" I said, "Oh, I got about three or four more years." He looked me right straight in the eye and said, "Damn, your big hide. I hope when I go down to Bowling Green, that judge gives me five years. So when I get out of the penitentiary, you won't be out looking for me. . . ."

So I told the judge what he'd said. The judge said, "Well, Frank, you've been up in front of me quite a few times before. . . . You think you want a little
more time. I'll have to give it to you this time."
So he gave him five years.\textsuperscript{20}

On another Grayson County raid, one of Big Six Henderson's men wanted to wait until the following morning before attempting a raid. Yet, by following a hunch, a moonshiner was apprehended who might have escaped.

One night we got a report they were tunnin' a still over here in Grayson County. I wanted to go, but he Isom Williams didn't want to go until the next morning. He said, "Oh, they can't run it off. Let's wait until the morning." I went home and I couldn't sleep. And I said to hell with that. And I told my wife that I was gonna call him. I'm goin' on.

So I called him and he said he'd come on over in the morning. I went on over there by myself. I went on over there and this still was over by the hog pen, out from his house. And about seven o'clock he came on in over there. And he started fixin' it up, ... but I didn't wait until he got it runnin'. I got up and went and got a hold of him and arrested him. And it wasn't fifteen minutes til Williams came in. I didn't figure on him runnin' so early but I could just see him runnin' it. I went to bed and I could see him carrying that mash and stuff. I never did, I never could sleep.\textsuperscript{21}

Women were occasionally dealing in making moonshine. Yet, in Grayson County, Kentucky, Big Six apprehended a woman that he thought was a man.

\textit{I've never had but one fella that treated me that way except for a fellow over in Grayson County, Kentucky. I caught this fellow and his wife over at the still one day. And she was dressed up like a man. And she took off from that still. And she looked up}

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Henderson, 2 October 1973.}
and saw me, and she dropped her bucket and the only word she said was, "Somebody!" And she passed him like he was tied.

And he was about 25, 26 years old. And she was about 20, but she didn't look it. She had on a toboggan and a pair of pants and a sweater. And I took off after her cause she was out running him. And when she jumped a rail fence her hair came from down under her cap. And I saw it was a woman and it scared me to death. I thought, "If I don't catch her, I'll keep on runnin' because I couldn't face them letting her get away." I ran her through that field till I caught her. And, ah, a broom sage field, and I caught her and brought her back to the still and she kept smilin'. And I said, "Don't you run again. I don't want to have to hurt you." But I was afraid she might get away. She could really run.22

One of the largest stills which was raided by Big Six was located in Edmonson County. Although the moonshiner, the still and the liquor were confiscated, "Big Six and his men lost eight to ten days of work watching the moonshiner "run" his illegal operation.

... The government put through, enacted this law, where people sold sugar. ... The government had a sell-and-tell deal where they had to report their sales of sugar. Any large suspicious quantities of sugar. If you see where they are selling five hundred or six hundred pounds of sugar at a little country store, out here along in December, you knew darn well they weren't making peach preserves. ... They were lettin' these moonshiners have it. ...

Well, when I saw this report that this wholesale liquor, wholesale company had sold this, sold twelve thousands pounds of sugar to this little grocery over here at Peonia, Kentucky, I knew something was going on.

22Henderson, 28 December 1973. The narrative of Big Six chasing a woman dressed as a man is also found in Kellner, p. 164.
So I got a call one afternoon about four o'clock, and the wholesaler said he'd had an order for ten thousand pounds of sugar to be delivered over there that night. So I didn't do a thing but go home and get changed into my raiding clothes. I knew he was a big operator, but I had no idea it was him [[Gilly Jones]].

Well, I got on the bridge at Brownsville and I met this sheriff from Edmonson County, Clyde Webb. And I stopped him on the bridge, and I said, "Clyde, I need your help." So he took his car, unmarked car, and I took mine. And we went on down the road. It was before dark. We saw this big two-ton truck down in the creek. So, I was driving at the time, so I swung around and drove on down there. When I did, this fella raised up and I saw it was Gilbert Jones. I'd caught him before and he didn't recognize me. And I pretended to be halfway drunk. And I said, "Pardner, we was fixin' to take a drink out here." And I backed up and got the hell out of there. I knew who it was. I could see these fellas, so I could tell who they were. See 'em loading that sugar and everything. They had corn meal. I could see three working up there. This man was loading this sugar, hundred pound sacks, into the truck.

Hodges lived over there behind the hills. So we got behind him. Followed him for about five miles. Then, he begun to get suspicious and we drove on by him. We knew he was goin' up on to his house. So at quarter of six when he arose and lit a fire in the stove in the house, he went out to the barn to get the car and drove it up on the big hill. He'd backed his truck up to two big slides there at the barn. He had 1500 pounds of corn meal and 10,000 pounds of sugar.

We watched and followed him, and he went and stopped up at this little store. His brother got out up there at Ashley's Grocery Store. Ashley knew about it evidently. We got back in there when he loaded up. We checked the big truck up there. And over at the side was his still. I'd heard of this still. Black fella over at Bowling Green had told me about a year before, he said, "Mister Six, they's a still over there, over there in Edmonson County." Said, "Big enough you can get in it and hide."
said, "Oh, you been drinking too much of that, of that white lightin' there."

I didn't believe his story. But when I looked over by the side of this truck, he had set the still up, here was this big thousand-gallon copper still. So we knew they had to set it up. So then we just got out of there.

. . . We watched the still site everyday until the mash was ready to run. Then, I called several state officers and federal investigators who wanted to go on the raid. . . . We would go back every morning before daylight and come in the back way. We'd check and see what he'd been workin' on, how much work he'd been doin' that day. We watched him bring in a load of rock and seam the thing. And then we saw him bring in that and we watched him build these big hogsheads. He had six 800-gallon hogsheads over there. He built that to put the mash in. We watched him put that mash in there. But we got him in [a few days afterwards].

Big Six always faced the possibility of death when he raided a still. A brush with death occurred in Edmonson County and his calm manner was replaced for an instant with the emotions of fear and hate.

. . . Back about [[nineteen]] forty-three, I think it was, we went over there [[Edmonson County]] and seized this still with three moonshiners there. . . . When this fella that owned it heard the noise down there, and he was about two-thirds drunk, and he hollered down there. And I answered him and told him that I was Red. I had Red under control. He said, "By God, it'd better be Red when I get down there." And he come down that path with that shotgun. And I could see him comin', and I was laying out there in the open. I couldn't leave . . . my men. He was comin' down there with this shotgun. And I had my forty-four there, and I remember I had my hand on it. I was waiting until he got within range; I was gonna get him before he would get down there, whether to get him in the head or shoot him in the stomach.

I decided I was gonna try to hit his heart. . . . And I had that in my mind. I had the hammer back on that forty-four. I was waitin'. He had to cross a creek before he got to me. When he made that step across that creek, I was gonna blow him apart. But before he got there, one of our agents, Liley, came out and took from out behind a tree. I didn't know where he came from. I didn't know where they were. They just came out. He said, "Drop it, or I'll blow your head off." So he dropped the shotgun and I raced down there. Williams came in too. I turned around to Williams and said, "Here, take my gun." He said, "What are you gonna do?" I said, "I'm gonna beat him." I said, "Don't tell me. I'm gonna kill that so-and-so." But I didn't.

Golden Pond, Kentucky, was another noted area for moonshine distilling and selling. Supposedly, Al Capone bought the illegal alcohol and had it flown to Chicago during Prohibition. The first "out in the wood" raid in which Big Six participated was at Golden Pond, Kentucky in Trigg County. Though he had helped raid "a couple of stills in Louisville," this was to be his first "experience."

It was my first assignment . . . down between the Rivers. . . . They [[Dewey Harrison and Everett Liley]] asked me if I wanted to go along. I said, "Yes." I had raided a couple of stills in Louisville before I came down. But it was my first experience . . . . I'd never raided one out in the woods. So they said you come on and we'll put you in a good spot and you'll get to catch the guy, possibly . . . . And we met Bays, and he was gonna raid the still. And the other fellas were gonna get on the other side. So they put me, they took me over and said, "Now there's a big old tree down there." We could see the smoke comin' out of the woods. They said, "Now you crawl down there, because they could see you standing up. . . . And when he runs from it you can head him off. We'll raid the still in thirty minutes."

24Ibid.
So I started back down there, crawling around. I was excited, naturally. And when they got down there, I could hear this noise. What it was, I was so excited, it was my heart beat. And I looked down and my hands were perspiring so freely, of course, I was that nervous. . . . I laughed tryin' to cool, collect my wits together and not be too excited.

. . . Investigator Bays came in and I never will forget it, he had a moustache and a real deep voice. And he said, "Hold it!" . . . Well, this ole boy saw him and took off. . . . We didn't know it at the time, but he was a fugitive from another still. He was wanted in Tennessee. Well, he came up that hollow hollering, yelling, let out, "uh, uh, uh." Runnin' like that at every jump. So he came on up towards me and I waited til he got, oh, thirty feet from me. Course, he would finish running in about a hundred yards before I could cut in on him. Of course, I had no trouble catching him, but he kept goin', "uh, uh" at every step.

And so, ah, one of the other agents come up and shook him to get his wits together. So after we tore up the still and everything we found out his name. And let him go back home. Told him to be in the next day. . . .

The man who was reputedly "the fastest moonshiner in the country" was apprehended by Henderson at Golden Pond, Kentucky. This was to be Big Six's major athletic competition with a moonshiner, and it was this event that led Henderson to believe that he might be a revenuer.

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They had this boy [Charlie Chambers] who was supposed to be the fastest moonshiner in the country. And ah, we slipped down there and he was workin' and one of the men went around, I forget his name right off hand... but anyway Liley went around to raid the still. And he came out at the holler. And this boy saw him and took his boots off. And he took off. And was at least a hundred and fifty or two hundred yards from me. And I don't know why I ever started after him, but I started running him. He ran out of sight when he hit the woods, but I kept after him. And I finally caused him to double back. I must have... ran him at least two miles. He come on back up in the broom sage field. Up close to his home, and, of course, fell down up there. And I saw him when he did. And I went around and picked him up. But he had never been caught before...26

Two humorous incidents happened to Big Six while he was in Butler County, Kentucky. In relation to these two occurrences, Big Six allowed one individual to decide who he was and the other to decide how he arrived at the still site without disclosing any information.

...I was going over to Greensville, [sic] Kentucky, and I was dressed up in my raiding clothes. And...I got up here to Morgantown hill, and I saw this big old long-legged boy...thumbing a ride. So I stopped the car to give him a lift. And I asked him where he was going and he said, "Morgantown." So he got in the car and sat there and so I thought, "Well, I'll pump him a little bit and maybe I can get some information from him about the moonshiners in Butler County." See, I wasn't gonna tell him who I was. I said, "Pardoner, any...good whiskey over there around Morgantown. Any good corn liquor?" He said, "Well, there used to be some around over there quite a bit of it, but this big long-legged so-and-so came over there, Big Six Henderson from down there at Louisville, Kentucky." He said, "Kind of dried up around here." I said, "Well, did you ever know him? Did you ever see him?" Said, "No, but I've heard a hell of a lot about him." Well, I never said any more to that boy and have never seen him since.27

26Ibid. The fastest moonshiner in the country narrative is also found in Kellner, p. 150.

I caught a fella over here in [Butler] County, a still over there. He said, "I knew you were comin'." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I saw you [fly] over here and take my picture." He said, "Just as I looked up you snapped my picture." I said, "Well, I got a good picture of you." See, I hadn't been over there. It was an airplane . . . flying for the pipe line. When it passed over, he went back in and told his wife. He said, "Big Six, was over here. I'm not goin' to the trouble of tearing this still up. He can tear it up himself." He didn't have sense enough to realize that if he hadn't had that still I wouldn't have been able to catch him. If he had destroyed the still, he let it set out, and when I got over there he still had it intact. But I did pick up some whiskey here. He'd hid it around the place.

Added: [He has never been informed that it was not me flying over his still.] 28

Humpy Parks was an old time moonshiner from Allen County, Kentucky. At the age of 65, he was still making moonshine and Big Six figured Humpy had made illicit whiskey too long.

I caught one [man] over here in Allen County. Close to the Tennessee line. About 12 years, 14 years ago. And he's about, he's about 65 years old at that time, a little wiry fellow . . . .

The dog barked and he took off from that still. And I kinda got scared. I thought I wasn't gonna catch him before he got up that side of the hill. Finally, I caught him.

His name was Humpy Parks. I never will forget it. I said, "Humpy." I knew who he was supposed to be before I went in there, as we generally did get information and knew who it was supposed to be, gonna be, supposed to be around there. I said, "Humpy, how long you been makin' whiskey?" He said, "About 40 years." I said, "How many times you been caught?" He said, "About 40." I said, "Well, Humpy, I got news for you.

28 Henderson, 26 September 1973. The moonshiner who thought Big Six flew over his still in an airplane and took photographs is also found in Kellner, p. 182.
You're from down in Tennessee, but you're in Kentucky now, where that flag flies." I said, "When you come on over there [[to Bowling Green, Kentucky]] you're not gonna be caught for the next five years." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "When you come on there over in front of Judge Swinford and he sees that record of yours, he'll give you five years in the pen."29

Another Allen County moonshiner was apprehended with a 250-gallon still. He, like his fellow Allen Countian, Humpy Parks, was given a jail sentence.

I had a catcher [[with whom I had played baseball]] up here at Bardstown. I caught with [[him]] when I was at the L & N. . . . And I got a call to come up here to Lebanon from down here Bowling Green, Kentucky. And I went up there and they had an arrest, a search warrant for his farm over there. . . . So, I had to serve it. So I went out there.

He told me, "Big Six, you know I don't drink whiskey. I don't have any." I said, "I know, I have a federal search warrant to come out here and search your place. And I'm gonna have to do it." So I went and looked all over the house and couldn't had the sheriff and a couple of deputies, couldn't find anything in there. And I went out to the barn and I took a pitchfork and got up in the hay and pushed up through the hay. And we walked all over the farm. And I couldn't find anything.

I came on back to the house and I went in to the kitchen and I saw a little crack, a real small crack, in behind the stove. And I went over there and pushed it back and there was a false door there that slides and there was some overalls and his wife's dress and a lot of stuff hanging up there in front and I pushed them back and then there was these cardboard cartons. There was 405-gallons of moonshine stacked up in there.

So I called him, I said, "______, come on over here." He kinda turned four colors. He said, "Well, Big Six, I'd rather you catch me than anyone else." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, I know you'll treat me right." I said, "______, I'll treat you like

you're a damn stranger." I said, "You knew it was my job. And if you don't have enough respect for me than to get out here and violate the law I've sworn to enforce, I don't have enough consideration for you not to let you get what's comin' to you." I said, "It'll be up to the judge. I won't say anything for you or against you." He came up in front of the judge and got two years.  

A postmaster in Barren County, Kentucky, who was also bootlegging whiskey gave Big Six a jolt when he recognized Big Six. This was one time when the revenuer forgot to check his files.

Another time, of course, I was over here at Freedom, Kentucky. I had a bootlegger selling in Barren County. He was running the Post Office over there, and I didn't like the fact that he was selling moonshine whiskey and at the same time on the government's payroll.

So I sent a couple of fellows over there to buy from him, but he was too smart. He wouldn't sell to them.

So I went back over there, over in Tompkinsville, Kentucky, and raided a big still over there. And I thought I could kill two birds with one stone.

I was dressed in my raiding clothes. It was after the raid, though, that I decided to see if I could catch this man over at Freedom. So I had this gallon of moonshine in the car and I took and poured some of it over the front of my shirt so it would smell like moonshine. It would dry up by the time I got to that little country store. So I poured it all over my shirt and I got back in the car and I drove over to the store, went in and he was back behind the counter. And I said, "Mister, can I get a sandwich and something to drink?" He said, "Well, I've got cheese and baloney." So he gave me a little sandwich and a Coca-cola.

So, about the time he got it fixed, I thought it would be a good time to . . . buy some whiskey from him. I said, "Pardner, I'm so dry, you know where a fellar could get some good moonshine whiskey around here?" He said, "Well, hell, Big Six, if anybody knows about it you should!"

Ibid.
I turned three colors. I ate that sandwich. Gulped it down and that Coca-cola [[too]]. And I wondered how he knew. You see, I didn't know him. Didn't remember him . . . . And I went on down to the office Monday, and I thumbed through my records. And I'd caught him about five or six years before that. 31

Big Six was not the only person who was scared sometimes. On one raid in Rockcastle County, Kentucky, he almost frightened a moonshiner to death.

Old boy had a gun in his hip pocket over at Rockcastle County . . . . I wasn't supposed to have to raid the still . . . . so I started down the path and when I got down there, oh I guess it was . . . . fifty feet from the still, I could see this .38 in his hip pocket . . . . If he'd sneezed, I'd blow his head off. But instead of bringing it up, he . . . . threw it down. He ran right into one of the officers.

And I went down there and he'd denied having a gun. Of course, I saw him throw it down. We went back and got it there . . . . So I looked up and said, "You keep him here. If he runs, kill him." So I went on down the path and the old fella back behind me . . . . And I saw this fella comin' up the path, you know, and he got about as from, about four feet from me. I took one jump and I jumped right in his face. And I was mad anyway. And I put that gun right in his face and I pointed that gun right to him and he went "Uh, uh." And I said, "Lay that wood down and lay it easy. If you drop it, I'll kill you." And it scared him til he couldn't tell me his own name. I scared him til he was white . . . .

We took them on in to federal court and he came up to me and said, "Big Six, you scared me worse than I've been scared in my life." And I said, "You stay away from these damn moonshine stills, and you won't be scared or you won't get a chance of being killed out there." 32

31Henderson, 23 September 1973. The postmaster who was also a bootlegger was not apprehended because Big Six was recognized even though he was disguised. A variant of this tale is found in Kellner, p. 193. In Dykeman, p. 302, Sheriff Bailey tried to disguise himself by wearing a woman's outfit. Bailey, like Big Six, did not fool anyone.

32Henderson, 2 October 1973. The incident of scaring the moonshiner is also found in Kellner, pp. 160-161.
A bootlegger in Todd County, Kentucky, made the rash statement that Big Six Henderson was too dumb to catch him. When Big Six heard that, he decided to show the bootlegger who was dumb.

... This fella was bootlegging over there [[in Kirkmensville, Kentucky]]. Somebody said to him, "Holbert, how is it Big Six hasn't caught you? He's caught the rest of them over here." He replied, "He's too damn dumb to catch me..." It made this storekeeper mad. And that night he told me ... I said, "Well, we'll come down there next week and see what we can do about him. ..."

We got over close where we could watch the house, and we watched them come in there and go. See them hand him money as they got in the car, you know. And he'd hand them a package. So we got enough evidence that we could get a search warrant.

So that Saturday, the following Saturday a week from the day he made that remark, we went down there and executed a search warrant on him... He said, "I haven't got any whiskey around here." ... I went out there in the yard and over on the side in the weeds like was an old, one of them old bushel baskets. Then, I went over there and turned up the top of it. It was three-gallons of stuff in there. So I called out, I said, "Roger, come out here. How did this happen? Did the rabbits, the hens lay an egg over here?..." And I told him, "Well, you made the remark that I was too damn dumb to catch you." Of course, I didn't tell him who had told me.33

From Clinton County, Kentucky, came a humorous tale concerning Big Six and an old time moonshiner.

... While he [[Big Six]] was here [[in Cumberland County,]] he went over to Clinton County. There was a moonshiner over there by the name of Henry Cummings. Well, Six arrested him and they were walkin' through this field. You know, this man was out there a grubbin' this field. Well, Henry and Six were a-walkin'...

33 Ibid.
and Six was tellin' him he would probably get a sentence. Ole Henry rared back and said, "Hell, Six, I'd rather be settin' in jail than out there a grubbin' a goddamn field." 34

Big Six Henderson caught two sisters in Wayne County, Kentucky who were making illegal whiskey. After the prison sentence, they became radio singers.

I caught some other women. I caught these two up in Wayne County. These two sisters and they could run real fast. And after they got out of prison, they went down to Tennessee. Down around Portland, or Celina, some place, and sang on the radio. And they went under the name of Hadacol and Geritol . . . . They were pretty good singers. Last time I heard them they were singing on the radio. 35

Big Six and his fellow agents found a still in Kentucky that he decided to preserve on film. He arranged for a special agent to come from Cincinnati, Ohio, to film the occurrence. After the filming was completed, he and the agents, apprehended the moonshiners.

. . . We had a guy from Cincinnati come down with a long range camera and watched them go to the still and come back with the camera . . . . It started raining and I told them, I said, "Boys, you're gonna have to stay out here all night til we raid it. Cause nobody's going out of here now. . . . We watched them and one day they loaded that wagon up and they put the big pump, 2-inch pump on the flatbed wagon and took all that stuff back to the still. We waited until they had time to start up the still.

34 Informant A, interview held in Burkesville, Kentucky, 26 March 1974.

And I'd already sent the other fellas around to

be up there where they could get around where they
could raid it. And when they were in position, so we
headed for the house. Cause I knew his wife would

yell and raise hell, and I wanted to stop her. . . .

I went on out there to the still and they had already

stopped Gilbert and Percy both.

When they started to pump the mash in was when they

hit the still. They said they started to run, but,

hell, the revenuers was thicker than the bushes.

They had them surrounded. And when I met him (Gilbert

Hodges) out there the first thing he said to me,

Gilbert said, "Big Six, why didn't you come in here

and raid us two weeks ago?" I said, "Why?" He said,

"Percy and I have worked like dogs settin' this still

up." I said, "Yeah, I know. I've been settin' up

there, layin' up there and watchin' you get up and

go to milk in the mornings at ten minutes after six,

go eat breakfast and then go to the still. You did

that every day."36

Isom Williams worked with Big Six until he was physically

unable to accompany Big Six on raids. On one raid, Williams
decided to have some fun with the moonshiners.

Williams did that to one guy. He took shaving

soap . . . and . . . put it in the mash. And when
they started to cook it, all these suds and stuff

come up in it. They started cussin'. He pulled

that one time and just died laughing. That soap just

bubbled out. It was like a fog coming up. They

started cussin' and raring around. He'd get a kick

out of it.37

The federal officials who were involved in apprehending

moonshiners and their illicit products are for the most part

memories of a past era. Agents such as Williams and Bays are
deceased. Henderson himself does not remember many of the


37Ibid.
important facts: when the moonshiner was arrested; who the person apprehended was; where the capture took place; and what the verdict of the trial was; whether the moonshiner had his case dismissed by the judge. Perhaps Henderson cannot recall this information because of his age or because he apprehended so many moonshiners, he is unable to associate the tales with the information that would make the tales more meaningful to the scholarly researcher.

Few old-time moonshiners who once made moonshine in copper stills exist in today's fast-changing society. Sugar is too expensive, copper in great quantities cannot be found, the moonshiner is unable to locate an appropriate place to hide the moonshine still. The agents have also changed their methods of searching for and seizing moonshine stills. Where once the revenuers walked through woodlands to seize and destroy the illegal alcohol, now the agents fly in airplanes to search out moonshine stills. Also with the problems in the cities, many people are migrating to the country and there are fewer and fewer secluded wooded hills and ravines on which to set up a still site.
CHAPTER III

BIG SIX HENDERSON: FOLK HERO

Americans have always taken great pride in acknowledging the existence of the countless heroes whose careers and lives are embellished in American history and folklore. Davy Crockett is remembered for his valiant death at the Alamo and for his Herculean feat of slaying a bear at the age of three. The mentioning of George Washington's name recalls the winter at Valley Forge, America's first President, chopping down a cherry tree, and throwing a silver dollar across the Potomac River. Abraham Lincoln is remembered for the Emancipation Proclamation, the Civil War, and walking miles in the snow to return change to someone. In each of these men are the qualities that Americans most admire: trustworthiness, honesty, bravery, and resourcefulness. However, the history books overlook those persons who also perform great deeds, who, in a lesser sense, helped to mold the history of our nation, and whose names also have become household words in certain areas of the United States. Where written history does not acknowledge such people as William Bernard "Big Six" Henderson, oral folk history takes over and keeps alive their exploits through the traditional narratives which have made them folk heroes.

According to Richard M. Dorson,
... when a close knit group of people... had spun... tales... about a character in their locality of occupation; a true folk hero... came... into existence. He... might... be historical or fictional. But to qualify as a true champion of the folk he must be the subject of their tales.¹

In Cumberland County, Kentucky, the residents of Burkesville and Coe Ridge have had the opportunity to observe firsthand the career of Big Six Henderson. From 1941 until the late 1950s, Big Six, his deputies, and local police officials raided, confiscated, and destroyed hundreds of moonshine stills in Cumberland County. It did not take long for every moonshiner and bootlegger to become familiar with Big Six, either by direct or indirect confrontation, and his name and deeds quickly spread throughout the area.

William Jansen discussed in his doctoral dissertation, ("Abraham 'Oregon' Smith: Pioneer, Folk Hero, and tale-teller") the significance of the survival of Abraham Smith in folk memory. The career of Smith was colorful; however, he was recognized by the folk, not as "... an outstanding pioneer, but... as a folk artist -- a tale-teller who, though he did not invent tales, ... had... a narrative... art so polished as to make them seem the particular property of the teller."² Jansen further stated


if Oregon Smith . . . was . . . typical, the outstanding tale-teller . . . was . . . not a swapper of tales, but a solo performer with a fairly set repertoire. Further, . . . the tale-telling performance . . . was . . . marked by first-person narrative, by an insistence upon the 'truth' of the story told. . . . 3

Though Big Six was recognized for his tale-telling ability, he differed from Abraham Smith in that Big Six was also known for his career as a revenuer. Like Smith, Big Six did not invent his narratives but he had, and continues to have, a set repertoire. The narratives and narrative patterns were similar enough that it was difficult to distinguish between the author's recorded narratives and those tales collected by Esther Kellner for her book, Moonshine: Its History and Folklore. In many instances the formulaic patterns were almost identical. In some cases only verb tenses were altered; however, the concluding comment remained the same.

There are four basic requirements for heroes according to Dixon Wector in his seminal work on the making of heroes. The hero performs unselfish service, acquires a nickname, obtains sympathy for handicaps, struggles, and failures, and does not reach hero status until his death. 4 In performing his duty, Henderson would be called in the middle of the night to meet federal and state officials at a still site. Many times Henderson and his men would remain at the site during rainy and cold weather.

3Ibid., p. 342.

Henderson acquired the nickname "Big Six." The story behind his nickname is found in Chapter I. During his career, Big Six shot himself in the arm, and his back was injured. After a brief rest period, he returned to normal duty. Big Six is unique in that he achieved hero status before his death, not after his death.

Mody Boatright in his study of Gib Morgan, a man who had numerous tales recounted of his experiences in the oil fields, also offers a set of characteristics of a folk hero.

The hero . . . delighted . . . in single combat with men and beasts; he . . . was . . . given to boasting; he . . . took . . . pride in his weapons, his horse, his dogs, his woman; he . . . had . . . a remarkable birth and exhibited precocious strength in his childhood; in the end he . . . met . . . a tragic death in which he . . . was . . . treacherously or supernaturally slain. 

Big Six enjoyed pursuing and capturing moonshiners. During one recording session, Henderson stated that "... it fascinated me to . . . catch those fellows [moonshiners]." Big Six, like Gib Morgan, had associates who "... were scrupulously kept subordinate. They were important . . . only as instrumentalities through which he did his work." Henderson would not relinquish his hand gun, a forty-four-caliber pistol, even when he became a United States

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7Boatright, Gib Morgan, p. 3.
Federal Marshal. He also used shotguns, machine guns, and rifles.

Big Six's birth was somewhat remarkable in that he was conceived when his father was sixty-one years old. Henderson did not, however, perform any outstanding feats of strength as a child and death has not yet occurred.

Other characteristics the hero must embody are self-respect, a sense of decency and "fair play," self-confidence in leadership abilities, common sense, and resourcefulness. Big Six and his deputies

. . . were quick and [we] weren't trigger happy. [We] wouldn't hurt anybody [unless [we] had to]. Unless it was [our] duty. We didn't operate that way. And we gave and received respect from most of these fellows. At least we put the fear into them because it wasn't a question of apologizing to them. I told them federal officials, 'I'll take this badge. But I've worked out here twenty-eight years with these violators. When I have to apologize to them, I'll turn this badge back in.' He [[unnamed person]] said, 'Well, Big Six, I don't think you'll ever have to do that.' I said, 'Well, I've never mistreated them moonshiners. I've never walked off from one of them, either.'

The final characteristic of folk heroes to be considered here is boasting. Richard Dorson states that "... all heroes exhaust physical virtues and perform or boast about prodigious feats of strength, endurance, violence, and daring." Moody Boatright adds that "... there are many ways to boast. One is by conspicuous consumption and one is by ostentatious modesty. Another is by

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8 Wector, The Hero in America, p. 482.
10 Dorson, American Folklore, p. 201.
putting on airs -- by conducting yourself in such a way as to
put others on notice that you are their superior ... "11

There is no doubt Big Six is proud of his career and his life, even
to the point of boasting about it.

I've had a lot of close calls, several close calls. I've put five thousand moonshiners in the penitentiary. More than anyone else. Back in the old days, when I first went in, they had an idea that they had a God-given right to make whiskey. But I could run like a deer. In twenty-eight years, I never had anyone to run off from me because I could run like a deer. I didn't smoke, and I didn't drink. I was in good shape.12

To the American public in general, little is known about the life and career of Big Six Henderson, but, to the residents of Cumberland County, Butler County, Metcalfe County, Clinton County, Barren County, Grayson County, Edmonson County, Rockcastle County, Allen County, Wayne County, all essentially in southcentral Kentucky, and perhaps other Kentucky counties, Big Six Henderson is a well-known man and folk hero. His name is synonymous with revenuing and moonshining and his life is an open book to the men who courageously worked with him. Having similarities to such folk heroes as Gib Morgan and Abraham Oregon Smith, he, nevertheless, has differences which make his lifestyle and career unique. His name and deeds may not be recorded in written history, but the tales which are related by and about him constitute an important body of narratives in the oral folk history of Kentucky.


CONCLUSION

The focal point of this study has been to demonstrate the usefulness and reliability of oral biography and autobiography as history. By contacting informants who directly or indirectly had dealings with Big Six Henderson, I was able to record examples of valuable information not found in printed sources. Even though some potentially prolific informants were unwilling to discuss their contacts with Big Six with me, this led me to believe that the information recounted to me by Big Six was essentially accurate.

Available printed materials were utilized as footnote data; however, the majority of source materials was oral biography and autobiography. By using the Clerk's Criminal Docket books from the United States District Court in Warren County, Kentucky, I found interesting references to court procedures. Although Henderson was not able to cite specific dates, some of his accounts were corroborated by Docket books dating from 1938-1962.

Jocephus Coe, variously spelled Joe Cefers Coe and Joe Cephus Coe, was arrested seven times between 1938 and 1962 for moonshining in violation of the Internal Revenue Law. In two instances his case was dismissed. The remaining five arrests resulted in his being imprisoned and fined.

Bully Wilburn was apprehended three times. Twice he was
imprisoned and once his case was also dismissed. He, too, violated the Internal Revenue Law by making illegal whiskey.

Everett "Fuzzy" Anders, arrested three times, was committed to jail in all instances. Twice he was held for contempt of court as he appeared for trial in a "state of intoxication." In 1943 he was sent to the Correctional Institution at Ashland, Kentucky, to serve his sentence.

"Fuzzy's" relative, David Marshall Anders, was captured twice and was sent to the National Training School for Boys at Washington, D.C. He served both sentences during 1944.

Informant B was arrested once and, in keeping with his version of his capture, was found not guilty. His arrest occurred in 1946 and the jury declared him not guilty without leaving the room.

Informant C, apprehended twice, was found guilty in both instances. In 1937 he was probationed for five years; however, in 1954 he was sentenced to serve three years in the Federal Correctional Institution at Ashland, Kentucky. Informant C had related to me that he had served his sentence in Pennsylvania, but no record could be found to corroborate his claim.

Henry Cummings was arrested in 1939. He pleaded not guilty and was released under instructions of the court. No further record could be found of Cummings.

Further research in the area of moonshining in Kentucky would provide insight into a portion of Kentucky's history which has had little scholarly study. Cumberland County, the area in which the majority of my fieldwork was performed, has an untapped wealth
of knowledge available from the lips of local residents.

It would be helpful for former or present law officials, who have worked with Big Six or who know informants who have had dealings with Big Six, to contact informants who might otherwise be unwilling to respond to the scholarly researcher's questions. However, since moonshining and bootlegging are still occurring in southcentral Kentucky, it is virtually impossible to successfully contact and interview skeptical informants.

The collector of moonshining information should spend as much time as possible in the area under study. By living in the county or general area, the collector could earn the respect and trust which is invaluable in a study of this type.

As a final note to the future folklorist who attempts further research in moonshining, be discerning toward potential informants and the information given by them. I wasted many hours traveling on back roads trying to locate informants who would provide new source material, only to find I had been given wrong directions or the prospective informant was deceased. Apparently, this was a humorous trick to my sources of information and, upon returning to them, they would only smile and shrug their shoulders. Therefore, it is important that the researcher sift through all information to avoid wasting valuable time and effort in fieldwork.
APPENDIX: BRIEF SKETCHES
OF THE INFORMANTS

Circuit Court in Adair, Casey, Cumberland, and Monroe
Counties for thirty years. Life-long resident of Monroe

Keen, Maurice Clifton "Doc," born 1919. Life-long resident of

Informant A, vital information not known. Interviewed 26 March
1974.

Informant B, born c. 1920. Life-long resident of southern
Cumberland County. He is a part-time carpenter and handy-
man. Interviewed 23 February 1974, without the aid of
a tape recorder.

Informant C, born c. 1915. Life-long resident of southern
Cumberland County. He is now in retirement and does a
small amount of carpentry work. Interviewed 23
February 1974.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published Materials


Tape Recorded Interviews


Informant A. Burkesville, Kentucky, 26 March 1974.

Informant B. Cumberland County, Kentucky, 23 February 1974.

Informant C. Cumberland County, Kentucky, 23 February 1974.

Keen, Maurice Clifton "Doc." Burkesville, Kentucky, 26 March 1974.

Letter to Author