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Some turn to hooch in hard times ■ Moonshine

UNIONTOWN, Pa. (AP) — As they often do when times are hard in Appalachia, some hill folk have gone back to the woods to fire up their favorite motor-maker, the moonshine still.

That's what prompted state liquor agents warning cannies these fallures to wait from sunrise to sundown for 14 days last summer to heat a distillation still in these southwestern Pennsylvania hills.

"I'd rather do this than any other thing in the world," says Doyle Sykes, one of the agents with the state Liquor Control Board. "It's a real challenge. These people are superstitious. When you get them, you feel so good because you know you outsmarted them."

The flow of illicit liquor is a trickle today compared to what it once was, but some still watchers say moonshining is on the increase again, partly because of the economy and cutbacks in federal welfare programs.

There's less of moonshine out there, Sykes says. "It slowed down for a while, but in the last couple of years, it's picked up again. It's coming back. Times are tough," says James McDonald, another liquor agent. "People are hurting for money. They're going to make a buck any way they can. It's a family tradition. It's a way of life."

Garland Bunting, an agent for 33 years for the Alcohol Beverage Control Board in Halifax County, N.C., says moonshining persists for several reasons, including a 15 percent increase in federal tax on liquor to \$12.50 a gallon in October 1985.

"My personal opinion is when they crank down and make it tight on drugs, people go back to liquor. And all through the years, whenever the economy got bad, they go to the woods."

Last year in Kentucky, where 77 of 120 counties are dry, officials lacked eight stills, the most in any year in this decade.

"It's not as large a scale as

but there's enough of it that it's beginning to show," says Carl Harmon, a supervisor with Kentucky's Alcoholic Beverage Control Board. "I believe it's because the federal government has cut back on some of its welfare programs. People are looking to make extra money."

Moonshining is clandestine work done by night. Stills are stashed in disolate hollows, abandoned mines, chicken coops, hog pens, old school houses. Agents have found them in basements and apartments as well as backwoods sections.

They have found stills powered by old water heater coils and mash fermenting in 80-gallon stainless steel milk tanks.

Moonshine is made from rye or other fermentable grains, sugar and yeast. The fixings are mixed with warm water in a mash for several days until it breaks down into alcohol. Then it's cooked over a flame so its vapors can be fed into a cooled condenser and distilled into whiskey.

Moonshine is also called white lightning for its fiery wall log and clear color.

But hunting cautions potential drinkers. "Lots of times, I found poison, hooks or snakes in fermenting mash. Three animals eat the mash, get drunk and fall in and die. You work right along with the mash. You find maggots and everything."

"It was nothing but fun. I'd love to be doing it now," says one former moonshiner, now working in an office job. "I've kept my still. It's my insurance policy. If I ever need to make a dollar."

Moonshine is illegal because it is untaxed. A gallon of bootleg sells for \$25 to \$30, and a bottle of microproof bourbon can be bought legally in Pennsylvania for \$23.95. The state and federal taxes on a bottle of bootleg amount to 64 cents on the dollar.

Southwestern Pennsylvania has been a haven for moonshiners for nearly 200 years. In 1798, President Washington sent federal soldiers to quell the Whiskey Rebellion, the first internal war of the republic. Farmers were distilling their grain into whiskey because it was easier to transport, but they balked at paying federal taxes on it. Some tax collectors were tarred and



Robert Berg, of the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, displays a confiscated still.

feathered before order was restored.

"Moonshining persists in Fayette County, a mountainous area located south of Pittsburgh at the southern tip of Appalachia. Of its 100,000 residents, about 10 percent are jobless and 13 percent are on welfare."

It was here in July that state agents arrested Jackie Wayne Jordan Jr., 21, a third-generation moonshiner. Seized were 250 gallons of fermenting mash and his father's 1974 Chevy. The year before, agents hunted Jordan's father for running a 75-gallon still in a clay mine.

"I was just trying to make a little money," says the younger Jordan, who is on welfare with his wife and child. "I'm pretty well broke. I figured I'd make just enough to get me going."

Jordan has applied to enter a

rehabilitation program to avoid criminal charges. And he Jordan says he'll never do more.

"It stops here now," Jordan says. "I've quit messing with it all together."

A former moonshiner who did not want to be identified said he made \$1,000 a week in the 1980s brewing moonshine in Fayette County.

"I felt I was working for every nickel I made," he says. "The only one getting best was the tax man. The farmer was making money on grain. The crooner was making money on sugar. I was making good money. I wasn't on welfare or anything."

But moonshine can be dangerous. It can be poisoned, contaminated stills, causing death, blindness and other ailments.

Even though the boilers, barrels and copper coil can cost a couple of thousand dollars to set up, a still can pay for itself within a few weeks.

Although neighbors may work at still operations, moonshiners must hide from ABC agents. Only 147 stills were busted in the state, Wright said.

Last year, the number of stills destroyed had climbed back to 192, and all but 12 of those were in Franklin, Pittsylvania and Henry counties.

John Hughes, special agent in charge of the Hampton District ABC office, said residential growth has pushed those interested in moonshining farther west and in rural Southside.

"It's kind of a costly business, so there aren't that many places in the city where you could have a still and not be noticed. Moonshiners generally want to be somewhere where they're not likely to be disturbed," Hughes said.

In the Piedmont hills, moonshiners know who's making moonshine and the practice is largely hidden. Wright said there is usually some collusion between moonshiners and store owners because hundreds of pounds of sugar are required for each batch, along with grain, yeast and other ingredients.

The really big operators never get close to a still themselves. Instead, they rely on young men without identifications to keep the stills undetected and running, Wright said.

It is also usually the case that these operators don't drink their own hooch. "The axiom is, 'Don't drink it,'" he said. "The only one getting best was the tax man. The farmer was making money on grain. The crooner was making good money. I wasn't on welfare or anything."

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Women died from strangling, stabbing

Briefs

NOFOLK — Strangulation and stabbing caused the deaths of two women who were found in a car off the Colonial Parkway near Yorktown, a medical examiner's report says.

The report, released Friday by the FBI, said the women had been sexually assaulted and drugged were not involved in the deaths of Catherine Marian Thomas, 27, of Virginia Beach and Rebecca Ann Dawicki, 21, of Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

The bodies of Catherine Marian Thomas, 27, of Virginia Beach and Rebecca Ann Dawicki, 21, of Poughkeepsie, N.Y., were found Oct. 12. Their throats had been slashed, and rope marks were evident on their necks.

The Virginia Pilot and The Ledger-Star today quoted unnamed sources close to the investigation as saying the women's bodies and the car in which they were found had been moved with care. Several matches were found that someone apparently had tried to strike, but without success.

The women were last seen about 9:30 p.m. Oct. 8. Three days later, a jogger discovered their bodies in the back seat of Ms. Thomas' car at the edge of the York River. The car had been run down a ravine.

Walters would not say if the FBI has any suspects, but he said the length of the investigation indicates the case has "not been easy to solve."

Ms. Thomas was a Naval Academy graduate working as a stockbroker and Ms. Dawicki was a senior at The College of William & Mary.

Man pleads guilty to conspiracy

NEWPORT NEWS — A fifth member of a cocaine-trafficking ring that prosecutors have labeled "Burrhead Party II" pleaded guilty Friday in U.S. District Court to conspiracy to distribute cocaine.

Charles W. Thurston, 41, of the first block of Edgemont Drive in Hampton, pleaded guilty to the conspiracy charge as part of a plea agreement that requires him to testify at further investigations or trials, including the trial of five codefendants that begins Tuesday.

Thurston faces penalties of up to 15 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 on the conviction, although the government did agree to drop a charge of possession of cocaine with intent to distribute.

Thurston, who operates a local bookkeeping agency called Action Attraction, will be sentenced Jan. 30. Until then he will remain free on bond.

Five men accused of complicity in the ring will go on trial in Norfolk on Thursday. Five others have pleaded guilty and pleaded cooperation with the government, while another man named in the Oct. 1 indictment was arrested two weeks before the trial.

It will be the first trial for defendants associated with the Burrhead cocaine operation, all 12 individuals indicted in November 1985, including Charles Cecil Burrhead III, eventually pleaded guilty.

Museum plans approved

WILLIAMSBURG — The Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Board of Trustees concluded its semiannual meeting in short order Saturday morning.

In less than an hour, the trustees gave final approval to the architectural plans for the museum facility at Jamestown Festival Park. The bid-selection process will begin upon approval of funding from the legislature.

The Foundation moved a decision to redoubling the "Jamestown Festival Park." A consulting firm has done research which suggests "Jamestown Settlement" as a more fitting name for the facility. It will be at least two years before the name actually changes, trustees said.

The group approved plans to set up contracts with local schools for educational programs given by the foundation. And the trustees gave the go-ahead for further study of a number of projects: the establishment of a development office, the pursuit of funding for the Powhatan Indian Gallery at Jamestown, construction of the Yorktown Victory Center Parkland, expansion of the foundation's administrative building, and research and design for a new Susan Constant.

From staff and wire reports.

It's Santa!

Santa Claus waves to good little boys and girls at the Gloucester Christmas parade Saturday. Santa arrived at the

airport in a helicopter and rode in the parade on a float with his elves, courtesy of the Lamplighters Extension

Homeowners Club. The parade featured marching bands from the

Audit studied by TNCC administrators

BY DONALD LOEFF
Staff Writer

HAMPTON — Administrators of Thomas Nelson Community College are studying a special review of the dean of student services, but the president does not plan to act on his staff's recommendation until February.

President Robert G. Temple Jr. discussed the auditor's report Thursday with the TNCC Board.

The auditor did find one possible violation of state law. Temple said. Some student clubs have off-campus checking accounts to avoid the college's controls on their local funds.

Clubs that receive funds from the Student Government Association are required by state law to contact their transactions within the college's local fund.

The state auditor's review of TNCC dean Thomas C. Barrett was completed and released in October.

It included some suggestions for improvement to the student services department and some mild reprimands of Barrett's policies.

The auditor found no evidence of misappropriation of student activity funds, according to the report.

Barrett, who came to TNCC

in 1983 as one of the most senior members of the college's administration. He has said he plans to retire from the college in June.

Rather than responding to the Virginia Community College System auditor who prepared the report, TNCC staffers are reviewing his recommendations and will recommend action on each Temple said.

"The college is not obliged to respond to this because it is not a state audit," Temple said.

Although most of the suggestions in the report apply specifically to complaints made by TNCC student leaders about Barrett, the review apparently clears Barrett of any serious

wrongdoings.

"With the exception of the suggestions and recommendations in the report, it appears that the concerns were of a personal nature rather than a breakdown in controls," the report said.

The auditor visited TNCC in October to investigate allegations against Barrett made by several current and former student leaders at TNCC.

The report was prepared by an auditor from the Virginia Community College System office in Richmond who was called in by then-acting President Donald E. Poyser.