

# MR. X. BOOTLEGGER

*by an anonymous informant as told to interviewer, the late Philip J. Weidling*

Prohibition came to Broward County even before the Volstead Act of 1919. In 1913, the county, then part of Dade County, had voted to be “dry.” Despite best intentions, the restrictions on alcohol actually lead to an increase in consumption. Otherwise law abiding citizens either made alcohol at home, or purchased it from bootleggers or rum runners. Liquor was openly sold from an automobile parked nightly on the corner of Andrews and Wall Street in downtown Fort Lauderdale.

The vast shorelines of the state of Florida

became an easy outlet for smuggling by both air and sea. South Florida’s close proximity to the bustling warehouses of liquor in the Bahama Islands, as well as to Cuban distilleries, made it a prime place for smuggling. Here, in an interview with historian Philip J. Weidling, from the oral history collections of the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society, an anonymous bootlegger, who wished to be referred to as “Mr. X” in the interview, discusses rum running by airplane.

**Weidling:** Ladies and gentlemen, this is Mr. X.



The Fort Lauderdale Golf and Country Club grounds in the early 1930s was located far from most developed areas. Bootlegger pilot “Mr. X” landed his plane filled with illegal liquor on the grounds of the club. At that time the city had leased the club to wealthy alleged bootlegger Roy Quayle for \$100 a year.



Mr. X was one of the men, one of the importers, who operated during that long, dry, period of Prohibition. Mr. X was never a boatman, he was an aviator, and I am going to let him tell you his story about how he operated during that period of Prohibition, Mr. X.

**Mr. X:** Well, there really isn't much story to tell. Things were pretty rough in those times of 1930 and 1931, and a fellow had to make a living somehow.

So, I happened to land here in Fort Lauderdale and I had a tapered wing, a straight winged G-5 Waco. A man approached me and asked if I would go over to the islands and fly some liquor over for him. He would come here and unload me and he had a nice place picked out for me to land, where nobody would see me, and he would give me ten dollars a case.

Well, I flew over to West End<sup>1</sup>, this was in a seaplane, and I found out that there were about six or seven other seaplanes over there engaged in the same business. The warehouses were there. That's the only place I knew in the world, at that time, where a pilot could go over and get room and board and everything you wanted to drink for nothing. The thing was that these warehouses were in competition with one another and they figured if the pilots stayed over there with them, they would naturally buy the whiskey from them, so everybody tried to get me to stay with them. I picked out what I thought was the best place and I stayed there and ordered my whiskey, whatever the man in Fort Lauderdale wanted me to bring over. So I ordered up and we had an agreement made that I was to meet him about ten o'clock at a Fort Lauderdale golf course<sup>2</sup> and he would be there with a car to unload me.

With a seaplane, I went and landed in [inaudible] in back of Stuart (the town of Stuart in Palm Beach County), Florida and landed in the water there, taxied up to the shore, turned the airplane around, kept the motor running, and in order to not let the airplane taxi away from the shore, we tied the tail with a light wash line to a [inaudible]. So, in case I had to make a quick get-a-way, I could get in the water and there would be enough power there to break a little line and I would be off and on my way before anyone could catch me.

This went on for about a year or so until one time I had come over again. . . practically in the middle of the Gulf Stream, my motor started acting up and finally quit. The sea was very rough, I went down in the ocean and there was no chance to land the airplane half way decently and, of course, it busted off the floats and it looked very bad there for a little while.

I looked around and there happened to be a boat sticking barely out of the water, with one man steering and a colored boy pumping, and he was loaded to where the boat only stuck out about six inches above the water. He hollered at me to hold on that he would be over there as soon as he could. He came over and since he was heavily loaded and he was shipping water, he told me he would take me aboard if I would pay for ten cases of champagne that he had to throw overboard, which he did. I got aboard that boat and I don't think I was ever that scared in my life. It wasn't the sea alone, but getting ashore and afraid of getting caught because a boat can't take off like a seaplane can take off.

So, of course, that put me out of business for awhile, and then I got to thinking that what good is a seaplane, as long as you can't land it anyway if the sea is rough and nine times out of ten, it was rough.

So, I went back over on a supply boat to West End and I found a farmer there who had about a ten acre corn field and the only bad part was there was a little pine tree right square in the middle of the cornfield. I asked him if I could buy that cornfield from him for the corn he might reap from it. He said that he was agreeable, that he would let me have the field and cut the tree out, so I could land there with a land plane for \$50.

I gave him the \$50, then I went back to the states and the straight wing Waco I was telling about first. I went over to the West End, I had just enough money to buy gasoline to get there and I thought I'd get some over there because everybody over there was doing the best they could to serve you things. I saw that little pine tree was still right square in the middle of that field. Of course, I couldn't go back so I did the best I could to land it and I didn't quite stop before I hit the tree and it damaged the [inaudible] slightly and I repaired it there with their facilities. There weren't many seaplanes flying.



Then in about a day or two I sent a wire back to Fort Lauderdale and told the man that I would meet him at the agreed place, which was the Municipal Golf Course in Fort Lauderdale. I took off with my load. I carried 20 cases, and it was 40 sacks weighing about 800 pounds. This overloaded the airplane, but there was no CIA over there to watch you. I got into Fort Lauderdale and there were several people playing golf and I landed on a fairway. A car backed up to me – of course everybody knew what was going on. They started swinging their golf clubs saying, 'Hey, give me a jar of that, a pint of that, a quart of that.' Of course, we unloaded it all and in five minutes I was gone back toward the islands.

When I got back over to the islands I made the biggest mistake I ever made in my life. I got back there and one of the warehouse operators asked me why did I want to pay for the field, he said that he would give me the \$50 back and he'd increase the field and level it off and make it a little larger and get things fixed up right and

supply transportation from warehouses to the field and make it easier for everybody around. There might be some more airplanes landing later on. Of course, I took the \$50 back. It wasn't six months that there were about 20 land planes flying over out of there, each one making about three trips a day, with an average of 25 cases a load, so that was pretty bad for business. The man that owned the field charged everybody a dollar a case for flying them off his field, I know that sometimes there must have been at least 2,000 cases a day going out of there. . .

**Weidling:** Now Mr. X, you didn't have to land your airplane on the golf course. When the season was dry here you could land anywhere out in the Everglades, it was all flat ground, out there, for instance, where the city of Plantation is. Is that true?

**Mr. X:** Well, at first, the first month or so we landed at an airport even in Stephen's Point and deserted streets in the City of Fort Lauderdale, and so on and so forth, because there wasn't much

In the early 1930s remote western areas, such as Plantation, were often used by rum runners to land their planes.



WEST BROWARD IN PLANTATION LOOKING EAST 1928



danger of anybody being there because all the Border Patrol and the prohibition agents and the Sheriff's Department and whoever was there, they were still watching the lake beds, the lakes and so on and so forth and still didn't know the land planes were flying, so it was easy. Of course, it didn't take long before they found out there were land planes on the way and we had to use dried out lake beds in back of Boca Raton, back in Palm Beach and around there. Sometime they stretched as much as 2,000 feet and they were just as hard and just as good as airports.

There was one spot in back of Boca Raton where at one time we must have pulled in at least 50 loads without anybody bothering us; however, when the place did get hot, the closest I ever came to getting caught was right there. I landed and I expected the Ford V-8 to be there on the edge of the field to unload me, and as I came over the field I saw the V-8 sitting there, which looked like the car to unload me, so naturally I landed. However, I never did shut the engine off and had enough room in front of me to take off again, even though I was loaded. As I stopped, I wondered why the car didn't come up to the plane and I kept waving to them to tell them to come over and nobody did. So finally I saw a man jump out of the car and hollered at me and said, 'Wait a minute.' Then I knew it wasn't the car that was supposed to unload me and I took off again. Now all that custom man, whoever it was, had to do was just drive out and meet us and drive in front of the airplane so I couldn't take off and that would have been it. However, at that time, I guess the bureau was still getting smarter every day and they were still learning, so it was quite easy.

**Weidling:** Mr. X, they never managed to stop the flow of liquor into Fort Lauderdale, did they?

**Mr. X:** Well, as far as the local law was concerned and the prohibition agents and everybody else, we weren't much afraid of them because, well, let's put it this way, they could be bought off. But as much as the Border Patrol was concerned, at least in those days, there was nothing doing. If you ever got caught by the Border Patrol, mister, you were caught and that was it. However, all I know is that this one pilot was caught and this happened in back of Hollywood. There was a great big field there, a cattle ranch and you landed right

in the middle. You could see for at least two or three miles around, so it was a pretty safe place. If anybody came that didn't belong, the airplane just took off and the car could go in any direction. The ground was good, and impossible, we thought, for anybody to get caught there. We must have pulled in over 100 loads there and of course the law and Boarder Patrol knew we were landing there, but there was nothing they could do. The minute one of their cars showed, the airplane took off and the car took off.

However, at one time a man landed there with a [inaudible] and a car came over to unload him and he had a mechanic along who was supposed to go back to the islands to service the islands. He had been over here for a small vacation and he had this man standing about two or three feet away from the airplane watching for cars arriving and the car that was supposed to unload him, backed up to the airplane and started to unload the airplane. All of a sudden somebody held a gun on the man who was unloading the airplane and said, 'All right, you're under arrest.' Well, the man didn't believe so he looked around - the watchman was still watching there - looking in all directions and it was impossible for him to be coming from anywhere in the flat field. He looked around and sure enough, there was a Border Patrol man. So the pilot saw him first and he started to jump back into the seat to take off and then the Border Patrol man let the unloader go and held his gun on the pilot and held the airplane. That was the only airplane that ever got caught in operation. Others were caught before that when they had to be left in the field overnight on account of motor trouble, or some of them maybe had a slight accident while they were landing. Then they were left there and of course the government caught those airplanes, but that was the only pilot who was ever caught.

We finally asked the Border Patrol, 'How did you ever catch him?' He said, 'Well, I'll tell you, we went out on the field where we saw all these tail skid marks and we knew about where the airplane was landing. So I dug holes in the ground and carried the dirt off in bushel baskets and lay down on the ground, covered ourselves with grass and waited for the airplane to come in.' And, as the Border Patrol man told me, he said, 'If that airplane had got another 10 feet closer, we'd of



jumped up and run like a rabbit.' She just about missed running over him. It so happened that he was so close to the airplane that when he got up out of the ground, that he was between the man who was watching and the airplane and that was it. The only one that was ever got caught in actual operation.

**Weidling:** Mr. X, did you know if any of the other pilots who were carrying liquor were also carrying any other contraband drugs?

**Mr. X:** I definitely know that none of the airplane pilots did. It was whiskey and nothing else. We were approached a lot of times to maybe haul aliens, or haul worse things than that, like narcotics, but nobody to my knowledge did and I could personally swear to that. Of course, the immigration officers knew we were landing and didn't bother us because they figured it was none of their business because a lot of those boys talked to us and said, 'Now look, we haven't anything to do with the whiskey business or with whiskey. If ever you should haul anything else but that, look out for us because we are going to get on your tail, too.' But we never did, not to the best of my knowledge.

**Weidling:** Mr. X, the people who were bootlegging was accepted by society the same as everyone else. It was more or less considered to be an honorable profession in those days, was it not?

**Mr. X:** Well, of course, in those days everybody knew what I was doing and everybody knew what everybody else was doing. As much as the social life in Fort Lauderdale was concerned, it didn't much hurt me at all. In fact, they knew whenever I was invited to a party there would be some good drinking liquor instead of some shine there.

**Weidling:** I suppose people would let you buy them a drink anytime that you wanted to.

**Mr. X:** That they did. That they did.

**Weidling:** Well, Mr. X how did you get started in that business?

**Mr. X:** That's a long story. I used to be over in Detroit, I say Wayne, Michigan. I was a test pilot for Stinson Aircraft Company<sup>3</sup> and I was standing in the office one time with the sales manager, and in walked a man with a pair of overalls on and it looked like he didn't have much money. He asked the sales manager if he could build him an airplane that would carry a big load – Stinson, Jr. – that

they built at that time, a 215 horsepower engine, and wanted to put a foreign horsepower into it because he had a lot of overseas flying to do, at least a D-69. The sales manager said, 'We have a six place job that has a big engine in it.' 'No,' he said, 'I want the small air plane with a big motor in it.' The sales manager said that they would have to build that airplane special for him. It takes a long time. We will have to run a proof test on it and all that and has to be approved by the C. A. [Civil Aeronautics Board] and it will take a lot of money.

The man said, 'I didn't ask you how much money it takes. I just asked you if you could build the airplane.' He said, 'We can build anything.' So he said, 'All right, build me one that is just the size of the Junior and put the big engine in it. How much of a deposit you want?' The manager said, '\$5,000. It'll take \$5,000 deposit, the airplane will probably cost you about \$17,000 or \$20,000.'

Commission in those days was pretty high as the regular price of the Stinson Junior was only \$6,000. So he said that he would be back in about 30 minutes with the money. Of course, the manager thought it was just another guy dreaming.

We sat around a little while and by gosh in about a half an hour the man came back, peeled off \$5,000 and threw it on the desk.

He looked at me and he said, 'What are you doing here?' And I said, 'Well, gee, I'm working here.' He said, 'What kind of work do you do?' I said, 'I'm a test pilot.' He said, 'You want to go to work for me?' And I said, 'Well, it depends.' And he said, 'How much money you making here?' I replied that I was making a living and he said that he would give me \$75 a week, starting right now and when you start flying I'll give you \$150 a week. In those days that was a pretty good basis for a private pilot, that was in 1930.

I said, 'Starting right now, it will be months before the airplane will be ready, at least a month to six weeks.' He said, 'It doesn't make any difference, you stay right there in the factory and see those guys build the airplane right because you are going to be flying it. When it is all done, you call me up in Daytona Beach and I'll meet you up in New York because you'll have to go up to New York to put floats on the airplane.'

I sat around the factory over there doing



nothing, you might say, just going up to town once in a while and playing pool, got my \$75 a week and when the airplane was ready, I test flew it for the CA for my certificate, took it to New York, put floats on it, test flew it over there for the CA where [inaudible] certificates, then called the man and said the airplane was ready to be taken delivery on.

So, he came up to New York and we flew the airplane back to Daytona Beach. When I got to Daytona Beach I found out that the man was one of the largest bootleggers in that territory, that he had a [boat] in the West End that had three liberty engines in it, that's a thousand 200 horsepower, which would carry several thousand cases of whiskey. He ran it into Daytona Beach and then he was also loading a schooner out of Nassau going up to New York. The first thing he told me, 'Now look, I am in the whiskey business, you won't have anything to do with the whiskey business, if you want any liquor you can come to my house and get all the liquor you want. But I don't want you to ever carry a single pint in that airplane, you absolutely got to be clean.'

'So, all I want you to do is fly it over there and fly my associates over there to buy this liquor. We might go down to Central America, but never at any time have much as a half a pint with you



**The concrete ship, Sapona, in Bimini served as a floating liquor warehouse that sold to rum-runners. The Sapona was completely twisted by the 1926 hurricane and later used for target practice for WW II bombers.**

on board the airplane.' So at that time the port of entry for seaplanes was in Palm Beach and we always cleared back in. Of course, the Border Patrol man knew who the man was. The first three trips we came back from Nassau where we had bought liquor, he never inspected the airplane until finally the fourth time I think it was. One of the Custom men came to me and asked, while I was going through the [inaudible] control, if I minded if he looked at the airplane and I told him no, go ahead and look at it. So, by the time I got through with all the paper work, about 15 minutes, I went back to the airplane and they just had it torn apart. Of course, there was nothing in it, so they apologized and I guess that was the end of that.

At one time I think I must have had at least a million dollars in cash aboard going over to Nassau, travelers' checks. Bank checks didn't work over there, only good old American cash. I lived in Fort Lauderdale. I came to Palm Beach to pick up the airplane and the man came down from Daytona Beach. He called me and said he had about three more men to go down with him and they wanted to go to Nassau, regardless of the weather. The weather wasn't good, but you could fly through a few little thunderheads and he came over and I never saw that much cash money in a pocket in all my life. They had it in their coat pockets, they were just bulging, they had it in little grips, and they must have had at least a million dollars in cash because they went over there and loaded the [inaudible], which was the power boat that had the three liberty engines with 10,000 cases. They bought at least 100,000 cases in Nassau at the average of \$10 a case – that's quite a bit of money and it all had to be paid for in cash.

I flew for him for awhile and [inaudible] like everybody, he was sitting next to me and I asked him why he didn't learn to fly. There's nothing to it, all you have to do is just sit there and look wise and hold the airplane straight, if the weather's nice. No, he didn't want to do that and I finally succeeded into talking him into doing it and by doing so, I talked myself right off of a job. He finally learned to fly. He never did get a license, and he got so he could fly around a little bit and take off by himself. One day he took up somebody else with him and he had a few shots of liquor in him to give him a little extra courage and he took



off and then he cracked the airplane up and the airplane sank in Lake Worth. That was the end of my job.

And like I told you, things were still tough – I just had enough money saved up to buy this airplane I was telling you about and there was nothing else to do, so I started flying liquor.

**Weidling:** Then you bought your own airplane and came down here, is that right?

**Mr. X:** That's right.

**Weidling:** Mr. X, you didn't identify this man who hired you. Could you give me any clue as to who that might have been?

**Mr. X:** Well, I don't know at that time, just was his nickname was, but I heard later on that, I think after he died, which was not too long after that, he was called the Real McCoy<sup>4</sup>.

**Weidling:** But you don't know whether that was his name or not?

**Mr. X:** No, I don't.

**Concluding remarks by Phillip Weidling:** You've heard Mr. X state that pilots who flew the airplanes were, like himself, very experienced. This, however, was not true in the case of the men who ran boats, or whatever, before the airplanes started. Many of these men were distinct landlubbers. They had to be taught how to start the engines and how to stop them. Instructions from there went, "Go to Baker's Haulover<sup>5</sup> and cut East and you will come to Bimini." Needless to say, very often the seas were rough and a lot of these men were lost at sea never to be heard from again. Among those who were lost were Bill Ashley, a brother of John and Robert Ashley who formed the nucleus of the notorious Ashley-Mobley gang<sup>6</sup>. Others whose boat broke down at sea were picked up off the coast of North Carolina after hardships that were too terrible to describe. These men made good profits, but as time went on, the Coast Guard got more efficient. Finally, many

Name	<i>J. O'Connell</i>		Number	<i>422</i>
Alias				
Residence	<i>Hollywood, Fla.</i>			
Born at	<i>Benton, Ill.</i>			
Arrested at	<i>St. August</i>			
Arrested by	<i>Hollywood Fla.</i>			
Date of arrest	<i>Dec. 21, '24.</i>			
Age	<i>22</i>	Yrs.	Weight	<i>147</i> pounds
Height	<i>5 ft. 6 in. Race White.</i>			
Nationality	<i>American.</i>	Sex	<i>male</i>	
Complexion	<i>Light</i>			
Crime	<i>Transporting Liquor.</i>			
Sentence	<i>724 "</i>	Date	<i>12/22/24.</i>	

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Name	<i>J. C. Whitley</i>		Number	<i>423</i>
Alias	<i>Jimmie</i>			
Residence	<i>Hollywood, Fla.</i>			
Born at	<i>Litchfield, Ill.</i>			
Arrested at	<i>Hollywood, Fla.</i>			
Arrested by	<i>V. Wright</i>			
Date of arrest	<i>Dec. 21, 1924.</i>			
Age	<i>34</i>	Yrs.	Weight	<i>156</i> pounds
Height	<i>5 ft. 10 1/2 in. Race White</i>			
Nationality	<i>American.</i>	Sex	<i>male</i>	
Complexion	<i>Light Ruddy.</i>			
Crime	<i>Unlawful Possession of Liquor.</i>			



Mug shots of people arrested for transporting and possessing liquor.



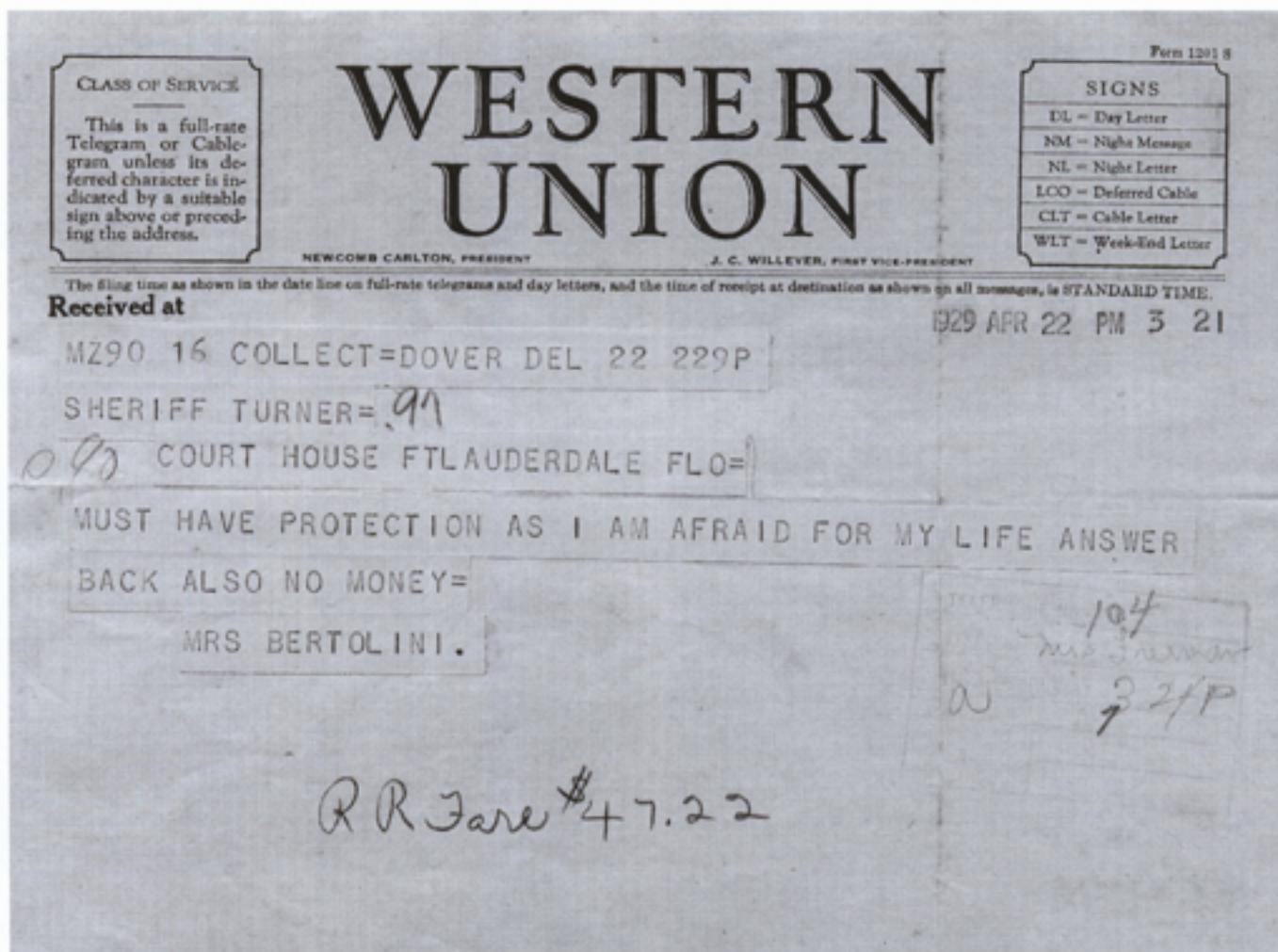
of them were caught, many of them were lost at sea and most of them have disappeared, gone from here to the extent of the actual men who ran boats it is almost impossible to get first hand experiences. For that reason, I Phil Weidling, am filling this in of my own knowledge. I was just a boy during that time and didn't participate in any of the crossings, but I knew all about them and did go to Bimini a few times and saw the bootleggers in action there.

Another phase of the bootlegging was the squabbles they had among each other. These included, of course, several murders. One of the most distinctive was the society bootlegger, as they called him, Bill Bertolini<sup>7</sup>, whose body was found just north of Oakland Park Beach Boulevard. It had been laying there about four or five days - he had been shot in the back and everyone in town thought they knew who did it. Names were mentioned back and forth, but nobody was ever arrested for it.

There were other murders, a great many people who simply disappeared and some who apparently took a nice trip out west or some other part of the country or even some other country.

The only way that liquor could be bought in the islands was with cash. This meant that the persons who employed the men who ran the booze had to entrust him with the money to buy it. Now, sometimes, as Mr. X stated, this amounted to a great deal of money indeed and of course it was always a temptation for the actual boat operator to go elsewhere and use the money for whatever purpose he might see fit. Some of the men suspected of doing this, simply disappeared. We don't know whether they went elsewhere or whether they were caught up with. Their bodies were not found, so we assume they got away.

You also heard Mr. X state there was pretty good money bootlegging. During the long period of the Depression about the only two classes of



Isabella Bettolini left town after her husband was found murdered and she swore out a warrant for the man she believed killed him. She later agreed to return to Fort Lauderdale to testify if the Sheriff guaranteed her protection and paid for the train ticket.



people who had any money here, particularly in the summer time, were the farmers and the bootleggers. The farmers continued to make pretty good money throughout the Depression and in winter time we had tourists who came down here and some of whom were pretty good spenders. The residents of the town who were not engaged in these activities were hard pressed to pay their taxes, which were very burdensome in those days. They had no money what so ever for luxuries, and barely enough to skimp by with necessities. In those days, journeymen carpenters

were lucky to get a dollar a day and that was only when they worked, which was not, by any means, every day. A good job in the bank might pay as much as \$20 a week and the people who earned it spent most of it on taxes; of course groceries were much cheaper then. Fishing was a little bit better and they could support themselves somewhat by eating fish, "grits and grunts," whatever came to hand. In many ways, we had a lot of fun during the Depression, but in retrospect it was miraculous that as many people as there were were able to save their property, finally saved it.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> West End is the oldest city in Grand Bahamas Island and is the closest landfall to Broward and Palm Beach Counties, being within 60 miles. During the United States' Prohibition, warehouses, distilleries, bars and supply stores sprang up in the sleepy fishing village. Rum-running became a cottage industry out of the islands of Nassau, Bimini, and West End
- <sup>2</sup> The Fort Lauderdale Golf Course was built on land given to the city by a land development company. It is located about three and a half miles west of the city on West Broward Boulevard. It consisted of approximately three hundred acres of land. It was opened in December 1926, two months after the disastrous 1926 hurricane. The clubhouse, opened in 1927, was designed by locally renowned architect Francis Abreu in a Mediterranean Revival style. The City of Fort Lauderdale, facing financial troubles, leased the property to a Chicago syndicate of twenty-five businessmen in 1928. The lease was later taken on for \$100 a month by a reputed bootlegger from Chicago, Roy Quayle, who ran it until the city took it over again in 1936.
- <sup>3</sup> Stinson Aircraft Company was founded by aviator Edward Stinson in 1920 in Dayton, Ohio. They moved the base of their operations to Detroit in 1925.
- <sup>4</sup> Mr. X could have possibly been referring to the rum runner Capt. Bill McCoy. Reputably, unlike other smugglers, McCoy never watered down his booze and always purchased quality liquor giving rise to the term "the real McCoy." He is said to have retired to Florida in the mid-1920s. Whether he really did retire can be open to speculation but he was at the time very well known and operated on a very large scale. See Sandra Henderson Thurlow's *Stuart on the St. Lucie*, 2001 Sewell's Point Company, Stuart, FL. "Capt. Bill McCoy - *The Real McCoy*", page 57.
- <sup>5</sup> Baker's Haulover is located north of Bal Harbour in Dade County.
- <sup>6</sup> See *Broward Legacy*, Volume 24, Number 2, "The First Sheriffs of Broward County, Florida: 1915 - 1933."
- <sup>7</sup> According to the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, April 10, 1929, Bill Bertolini's decomposed body was found that morning "tossed on a lonely stretch of the Floranada Beach" (around Lauderdale-By-The-Sea), "Deputy Sheriff Wright's party discovered a number of well beaten paths on the Floranada beach which were thought to have been made by parties unloading contraband goods from liquor boats." Bertolini was born in Massachusetts and his family lived in Delaware. He was about 28 years of age when he was murdered, supposedly because of an ongoing battle between rum runners and hijackers. *The Daily News* of April 26, 1929 devotes an entire paragraph to describing his widow's clothing in the article "Widow of Murdered Man To Tell All, Comely Little Wife of William Bertolini To Face Alleged Slayer": "Dressed in black, her entire ensemble was of funeral black. The only bits of color were the gold of the wedding band on her finger and the metal clasps on her black pocket book."