

with big named bands would play at some of the large ones and they'd

be very big like the ~~Mel Norms~~ <sup>now known as the</sup> the Latin Quarter was not a blind

pig ~~you~~ you couldn't buy ~~anything~~ anything there but you brought ~~your~~ your

own liquor and they sold ~~you~~ those set up ~~and~~ and had very first class

entertainment. They were drinking everywhere. They went from that

type of luxurious setting to the apartment size where the operator

would have as a stock <sup>his</sup> maybe two or three bottles of wiskey and a half

barrel of beer or some bottles of beer all of which was domestically <sup>made,</sup>

<sup>? That is,</sup> needed as in an alley in Detroit someplace. It all tasted different

to, <sup>It</sup> the same beer would be labeled in bottles, it would be very hard

almost impossible to tell from the way the bottle looked whether it

was real ~~or~~, that is it had been brought in from Canada, because ~~or~~

a lot of the liquor had been brought in from Canada, <sup>our</sup> or whether it was just

made in a as they say a bath tub for <sup>gin</sup> example, but in a small distillery

or ~~beer~~ beer brewery. The law wasn't of course as you know enforced

very strictly, it was impossible too. The city would occasionally make

raids, ~~with~~ with city police, but that would usually be because somebody was

complaining <sup>loudly</sup> about how he had been cheated in the place or hurt, then the



bring it back and then they'd send it to the wholesaler who in turn delivered to the blind pigs in Detroit. They <sup>didn't</sup> ~~couldn't~~ conduct a big business but they made a comfortable living, but it was kind of crude, you see the river is protected, so called protected, by customs border patrol and then on the land they had the police or Feds to worry about, but if the husband went over in the boat the wife would give him the signal when all was clear and the usual signal was to put a white sheet on the clothesline, when he saw that sheet there he'd know it was alright for him to speed back. <sup>F</sup> <sub>f</sub> course, then he had to watch the river. This was quite, ~~hazardous~~ <sup>there were many catastrophes</sup> a lot of innocent people were shot. For instance, the border patrolmen who had not achieved the highest <sup>degree</sup> grade of intelligence or education would chase the rum runners and shoot at them, but they wouldn't think about ~~where~~ where the bullet would go, so persons on excursion boats ~~and~~ the bob-lo boats and the Taj <sup>Tashmoo Trot</sup> used to go up to as far as Port Huron were wounded, often well not often but several were wounded when they'd be just on an innocent trip with

these wild men shooting. The bootleggers got <sup>to</sup> them too. One morning when the morning shift ~~W~~ of about 20 border patrolmen got off their boats they were met by special agents with handcuffs for them and they were indited <sup>s</sup> in a huge conspiracy to accept bribes from bootleggers. Then the bootleggers all got away and lived in Windsor for awhile but eventually they came back ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ and either <sup>stood</sup> served trial or pleaded guilty. And just about all the people arrested ~~W~~ went to prison on this consp<sup>i</sup>rac<sup>y</sup> because they were just paying off some of them were paying off some of the crooked border patrolmen and ~~they walked~~ the way the government made the case was ~~that~~ they had an undercover man, a Mr. X, who was quite mysterious for a while on this thing and was referred to as Mr. X, working with the border patrolmen and if I remember correctly sometimes accepting bribes himself, mean but that did <sup>not</sup> slow up the importation of whiskey. Of ~~course~~ <sup>and</sup> course more was brought over here because of the distilleries in Canada and the easy access of the river, I <sup>mean</sup> ~~mean~~ its a rather narrow river and a fast <sup>boat</sup> boat could outrun the customs patrol and get unloaded. They used

to unload right ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ downtown <sup>at night</sup> at the foot of the Bates  
their's a picture in the press club <sup>that</sup> right now of ~~it~~ was taken with  
a telescopic lense ~~XX~~ and run in the Detroit News of the bootleggers  
unloading one of their boats at the foot of Bates <sup>and</sup> in the river. It  
was an adventure as I ~~XX~~ said to take a boat ride on the Detroit  
River at night <sup>in those days</sup> because you <sup>were very apt to get</sup> actually got in the line of fire. One  
man I knew quite well worked the river told methat he was loading  
up his boat one night with his crew and <sup>u</sup> the fellow he didn't like  
an American, ~~X~~ came ~~up~~ ~~XXX~~ to him and said Do me a favor. I just  
bought this Camel's ~~XXXX~~ hairs coat (we used to buy camel's hair  
coass in Canada, they were much cheaper than they could be bought in  
Detroit) and they were stylish) so he said I just bought this coat  
in this box and I can't take it through customs so take it back on  
you<sup>r</sup> boat and the guy said <sup>and</sup> alright but he was reluctant to do it not  
because he was smuggling something in because h~~is~~ boat was full of  
wiskey and <sup>I wasn't</sup> wouldn't on those grounds because he didn't like the guy  
and wasn't in the mood to do him a favor. However he took it and

on that particular crossing they were pursued by two border patrol boats who opened fire and they had a hell of a time getting away from them and the chase lasted for quite a long time and went about the length of the river and their boat was shot up ~~in~~ pretty badly but they landed. And the Fellow, the owner of the coat, was waiting for them when they landed and brought the boat in and asked him, <sup>a little tizzy</sup> ~~in a little tizzy~~ for taking so long but they hand him the box with the coat in it and the coat was in the direct line of fire <sup>there were</sup> and had probably 50 bullet holes <sup>in</sup> a brand new coat, so they gave it to him. ~~None~~ None of them had been been hit, but some of the wiskey had been broken by bullets. They <sup>many bootleggers</sup> ~~would make it look like they got shot~~, many border patrolmen got shot and they'd run. Ecorse was one of the main landing areas for liquor and ~~there~~ there were a lot of gambling houses along the river front in Ecorse. <sup>Gambling</sup> The ~~area~~ area was pretty wide open in Detroit in those days too, and I don't mean just numbers or <sup>crap</sup> ~~grap~~ games although there were very big <sup>crap</sup> ~~grap~~ games all over the city and black jack, and any kind of game

that you wanted, but down in Ecorse they had the combination, they'd run the boat with the whiskey ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ from Canada right into the boat well under the gambling establishment and drop the gate and unload the boat there so they <sup>it have</sup> had two things going for them. Some of the people got pretty big reputations nationally, St.

Louis Dutch, <sup>and</sup> Sleepout Louis, all were involved in those operations. <sup>The nicknames were great.</sup>

There <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ no <sup>Nathan</sup> names from Detroit contrary to the popular musical of

guys and dolls but there was just about every <sup>other</sup> kind of nickname and

~~every~~ persons <sup>would</sup> never use their right name or be referred to

by their right name. In the interest of covering up what their activities were what the activities of others were they'd refer to

that certain person, the person this way, <sup>or</sup> without even designating

the sex. On the other hand, they'd be very <sup>cautious</sup> ~~cautious~~ that way and

ten minutes later they'd be <sup>displaying</sup> flinging big bank rolls that they had

just and I mean big ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ten, twelve thousand dollars, fifteen,

<sup>maybe</sup> twenty they'd be carrying in their pockets ~~when they~~ when they go out

on the town they were not <sup>these</sup> reluctant to pull out big rolls in other

blind pigs and spend ~~£~~ money as if it you know didn't <sup>had no</sup> have any worth  
at all. And there seemed to be competition as to who could spend  
the most among them <sup>amount</sup> ~~XXXXXX~~ when they would run into one of them  
some lucky local blind pig place. For instance, Dirty E<sup>I</sup>leen was  
the favorite blind pig of the <sup>men who ran</sup> ~~end of~~ the river and the bootleggers  
and the gamblers and it was a house on Adelaide street, ~~and it was~~  
between John R. and Brush. <sup>id</sup> They drink at Eileen's, She had the  
name because she swore so much and she was really a  
very well like <sup>d</sup> person whose mother in some small town she came  
from thought she was having a beauty shop in Detroit and at one  
time th e Chief of the ~~XXXXX~~ Detectives came up and he knew her  
well because ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ police used to drop in for a drink too  
~~XX~~ and he said Eileen for heaven sake write to your mother, she  
hasn't heard from you and she's worried. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ And Eileen  
said to him how do you know this, you don't know my mother. He  
said No but I got a letter that was addressed to the Chief of  
Police, in Detroit, my daughter so and so operates a beauty parlor  
in Detroit and I haven't heard from her and I fear that something



might have happened to this innocent girl in that big wicked city

of yours in <sup>and so on</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ . So she got in touch with her

mother but ~~they~~ that was one of their favorite places, but there

were many. She had a way of doing business that was ~~XXXX~~ a little

unusual. They'd send her money but she wouldn't collect when the

drinks would be served ~~XXX~~ then when they would be leaving they'd

say how much do I owe you Eileen and ~~XXXXXX~~ she'd say I don't know

you kept track I never keep track of those things and the result

was ~~that~~ she always got more than you know than she would <sup>have</sup> of if

she had kept track. However it didn't do her much good because she

~~XXXXX~~ spent it <sup>just</sup> as fast as she got it, on the spur of the moment

she'd close her own place and go out and spend the money in some

friend's saloon. And ~~X~~ as I <sup>say</sup> ~~said~~ they saloon's were opened. The

only precaution that some of them took, some of ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ them

operated <sup>just like saloons</sup> as some ~~XX~~ of them do today except they didn't handle <sup>have the</sup>

wiskey in the back of <sup>bar</sup> ~~the bar~~ and the only precaution was that they 'd have

on tap some <sup>a</sup> near beer and if the person who came in looked suspicious

was a stranger they'd draw <sup>huma</sup> the <sup>a</sup> near beer ~~and XXXXXXXX~~ if they'd

complain they'd say that's all we sell and get out of ~~XXX~~ <sup>here</sup> hear, this <sup>What do you think</sup>

*this is, a being pig?*

~~is a blind pig~~ there's a law against it you know, he'd be very

*he'd go.*

indignant and he'd call some ~~operation behind locked doors~~ operated

behind locked doors, some very secretly but they all seemed to do

well financially. I never heard of a blind pig operator going into

bankruptcy. I think ~~it was~~ people went out more the streets were

completely safe and more ~~XXV~~ people lived in the city, that is I

mean there had not been a flight to the suburbs and for ~~reaction~~ <sup>recreation</sup>

many would spend <sup>the</sup> their evenings, early morning, in the blind pigs.

It was a social place. Getting back to Jimmy King there was a

sort of <sup>our</sup> message ~~X~~ center <sup>to</sup> to but Gil wasn't very skillful at answering

the telephone. See wives were never permitted in the place, nor

was it ever <sup>admitted</sup> ~~announced~~ on the telephone that anyone was in the

place and Gil took <sup>to</sup> the answering the phone by <sup>not</sup> not saying Hello or

but he ain't showed. ~~XXXXXX~~ <sup>Then he'd</sup> and hang up. We told him that didn't

quite serve our purpose thought it might have been good in one thing

but often our office would call ~~XXXXX and XXXX~~ us there and we would want to talk to them of course. You know in those days, ~~XXXX~~ you could, in the newspaper business, if something big broke say <sup>at</sup> ~~like~~ two o'clock in the morning a man in the newspaper office could make ~~a few~~ a very few phone calls to blind pigs and a couple of downtown <sup>hotels</sup> calls and he'd have a whole staff in ~~XXX~~ his office in no ~~XXXX~~ time at all. Now they might be unshaven and blurred eyed but they'd get out an extra and it would be a pretty good one. Then later of course the whole thing changed, and people started buying homes in the suburbs and rushing home to cut their lawn and do whatever else they do and you couldn't you'd have to practically make a long distance ~~X~~ call to get them and never be quite sure. As I say the amount of liquor that was being brought in from Canada <sup>after</sup> when prohibition was <sup>went into</sup> in effect was minimal and kept increasing as more people got in the business. The first people were afraid of <sup>this</sup> the new law, they didn't know how serious it was going to be, but more and more ~~kept~~ getting into the business and <sup>it</sup>

became unenforceable of course. However the export tax <sup>in</sup> on Canada and the Detroit River and the lower part of Lake St. Claire and the upper part of lake Erie where the two countries are closest together were used by anyone who wanted to use them. However as this business got improved and more people got in it <sup>and</sup> it became tougher, ~~so~~ the territories were divided up ~~by~~ among gangs. Now this law brought many hoodlums to Detroit from other cities, killers, robbers, gangsters, to get ~~in~~ in on the money and they soon had, one group had established themselves in certain territory on the river and nobody else could work in there. Another group in another part, just as they cut ~~XX~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ up the city. One group would have the exclusive rights <sup>to</sup> of the blind pigs in a certain section and another gang in another section and this caused many murders and many beatings <sup>and</sup> in great lawlessness and as time went on and the business got bigger and bigger, the crime got greater and greater ~~XXX~~ and the crime ~~was~~ of course was all over money and territory. They'd steal ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ but not watch other so much because the hijackers were in the business of hijacking, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

*and the* bootleggers were in the business of bringing it in and distributing it, or manufacturing it here and keeping from being ~~it~~ highjacked. This was of course <sup>was</sup> another thing that caused murder <sup>s</sup> and we <sup>had</sup> have for those years, we did have a high murder rate it was all over, the gangster type thing. Nothing however compared with what we have today. Probably four or five times as many in the year 1971 as back in <sup>say</sup> 1930, which was a big year in ~~XXXX~~ prohibition, things were well established and working well.

MK: Were the rum running gangs, Ray, organized on an Ethnic basis

RG: Yes almost exclusively, the Italians, the <sup>S</sup> Sicilians, would be

one, the Irish <sup>would</sup> be another, Poles would be another, <sup>on</sup> unethnic groups

and then the Jewish, the Purple Gang which was all Jewish, didn't

run the river very much they <sup>might</sup> must have ~~had~~ had an interest in some

of the boats but ~~they~~ their big thing ~~is~~ during prohibition was

the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ manufacturing of bottles, labels, beer, alley

beer, and wiskey <sup>rs</sup> on this side of the river, they were not imported,

although they did have some money invested with them, <sup>some others</sup> and then

just plain Americans too were running it, but it brought in ~~KW~~ to

Detroit, <sup>Several</sup> some are ~~XXX~~ still alive, ~~Cicilainx~~ gangsters that made

fortunes on the river and then got in <sup>to</sup> the gambling after that, and <sup>have all now,</sup>

<sup>practically all I can think of,</sup> right now retired and <sup>now</sup> sent their sons to good colleges and

established them <sup>in</sup> into big business.

MK: Are any of the blind ~~X~~ pigs around today as established

resturants <sup>or</sup> and bars

RG: Oh Yes, yeh, one of our best resturants, two I can think of

immediately, oh many, but two I can think of immediately, <sup>of our</sup> they

were better resturants ran all during prohibition almost as if

there weren't any, <sup>Schwetzgers</sup> switzers and they just moved upstairs from

the first floor bar and there was a fish place and they were

~~XXXXXXXX~~ <sup>? Joe Meur's</sup> juniorized during prohibition, there must be many more I

~~XXXXXXXX~~ <sup>can't</sup> couldn't think of ~~K~~ this minute, they would you know might

keep their front door locked or might not even be locked or they

might move upstairs and they might continue to <sup>just</sup> stay on the first

floor. <sup>o</sup> Now that doesn't mean that just ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ anybody could

walk in and get a drink, they couldn't, they'd have to be known, but

*id get near beer otherwise, but they didn't have to be known too well,*  
they didn't have their \_\_\_\_\_.

Yeh ~~many~~ ~~many~~ many in Detroit, they got licenses. When one ~~appeal~~ <sup>did</sup> ~~appeal~~ <sup>Repeal</sup> ???

came and ~~just~~ <sup>right</sup> continued on in the same location, others moved to

other locations. Many of the bootleggers went into legitimate

breweries but I guess I think <sup>They're all out of them now</sup> their all our of them ~~know~~ now.

Yes I don't ~~think~~ ~~think~~ think of any who would have any interest, <sup>that I know of</sup> now,

it was just a continuation. It was lively in Detroit then. Their <sup>were</sup>

outside nights and they were made for fun, <sup>that was</sup> maybe because we were

young but there were a ~~lot~~ ~~lot~~ lot of ~~others~~ ~~others~~ others who thought the same

way <sup>who</sup> when they were older. I don't know wheter, I think that maybe

there was a special attraction to drinking because it was against

the law but habit <sup>s</sup> were funny. I went to Europe in 1929 ~~XXXXXX~~

I was riding the ~~train~~ ~~train~~ train from ~~XXXXX~~ to Paris from Le Havre

and I <sup>only</sup> had a bottle of brandy and I took it out and took a drink from

the bottle, we were used to ~~drinking~~ ~~drinking~~ drinking from the bottle and I handed it





man behind the bar and they'd take some liquor down and whatever

happened <sup>to</sup> that evidence was interesting <sup>note</sup> to know. I know that

later on when I was out of school and in the newspaper business

the press rooms about the city used to be pretty well supplied

~~with~~ \_\_\_\_\_ by whom, I don't know who brought it there, but

evidence, <sup>beer</sup> beer, gin, whatever <sup>there</sup> was always ample to drink in the

newspaper press room.

August 11, 1971

MK: Were continuing Ray with reminiscence's of the prohibition era, do you have some further vignettes related to Jimmy King's.

eat out???

RG: Of course we ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ and Jimmy was among other things

our banker and we all had credit there and we cashed our <sup>p</sup>wekly pay checks with him and he'd keep some for himself which we <sup>had</sup> owed

of course and give ~~me~~ what was left back to us and it wouldn't

be long before we charged in a few days and we be starting a new

tab. This was a customary procedure. Some of the fellows were

very careful with their money. For instance, one I recall got

inherited a few hundred dollars and this was during the depression

and it was a lot of money like \$800 or something and ~~it~~ was really

a fortun~~e~~ so the first thing he did he wanted to be able to look

everyone in the eye and he went around and payed all his debts.

Now most of these debts were in a blind pigs. Of course they'd

given up on him a lot of them and they were all so happy to see

him and get their money, they bought him drinks. Before the night

was over he'd gotten even with the world pretty much so and he

-2-

had a goodly amount of his fortune left and he was quite drunk. So he took a cab home and going into his apartment he began thinking about burglars and he was sure ~~somebody~~ somebody would come in and rob him and take the money he had left. So he had to find a place to hide it. Well he went to bed and slept well and his girlfriend ~~XXXX~~ actually it was his ex-wife, they had been divorced but they were still pretty good friends. She came into his apartment in the morning and he didn't want to talk to her because he was trying to remember where he had hidden the money. He had forgotten completely where he put it. She had insisted on getting him coffee and he wanted to get her out of the room so he could concentrate better, he agreed to it and in a few minutes she came back with coffee for him and toast and when he saw the toast he roared, he jumped out of bed and attacked ~~XX~~ her and wanted to kill her. She screamed and ran out of the apartment. It seems that when he saw the toast he remembered where he had hidden the money it was in the toaster and of course there was nothing left of the money but ashes. Another

one it was on a pay day and he ran up his salary in a crap game and did quite a bit of drinking and still had considerable left ~~XXX~~ and took a cab ~~money~~ home and he was getting slightly hallucinate hallucinated about ~~KEN~~ the driver. He thought the driver was a hold up man an excaped convict about whom he had written in a story that day or the previous day who had escaped from prison who was very dangerous was atX large and so he thought the guy was out to rob him and he'd out fox him. So he carefully took a few \$1.00 bills off his roll so he'd be able to pay the cab and put the rest ofthe money in a very safe place. He put it under the rug of the cab. So when he got home he paid the cab driver said Goodnight. For the next week he tried' frantically to find the cab and never could find the cab which was his traveling safe depo&it box. Not too stable probably in ~~KXX~~ both of those people but almost par for the course. We had a couple of the customers, well some of the customers were book makers, one was a book maker for the Detroit Times building and that was very proud \_\_\_\_\_ and he always carried a

large large amount of money, I'm talking about ten - twelve thousand dollars, so he'd be able to pay off and make good, and pay off in whatever he prided himself in paying you know in giving a fair service to the winners and the other was a telephone operator who worked there and we knew if you worked in the city room we knew not to call on her switchboard around post time because it was tied up with making and playing out bets. She ironically was killed on her way to the race track in an automobile accident but the amazing thing about Redwynn, the man book maker who bet on a large scale was that he never, it seems if he normally carried that kind of money, but he never was run out and he would be very much taken by liquor but would remember exactly the bet that was made with him before he had a chance to write it down. He never made a mistake that I knew of. Practically a genius that way. Some much for the lighter side of it. You know there were some very very awful ~~things~~ vicious things that happened in connection with that ~~Volstead~~ Volstead ~~hall state act??~~ hall state act?? and bootlegging. We had gang murders in Detroit that was a daily occurrence, (did I put on tape about the phone calls I used to get in the morning).

MK: I'm not sure, but why don't you

RG: Well why don't I do it again. I was covering <sup>of course</sup> most of <sup>my</sup> the work

on the Times ~~on~~ on breaking stories my work and that would be fast

developing stories, would be the ~~the~~ <sup>8</sup> column headline storypage and

in those days it was crime and violence really more than anything

else that sold papers. So a great deal of my time was spent on

that particular type of refined journalism. There was this bill in

1931, well we had I'm not sure ~~XXXXXX~~ <sup>on</sup> record of it was unclear because

the records even the ~~the~~ police department kept at that time were not

accurate records at often but something like 20 murders prohibition

connected murders, gang murders in 21 days and it will be at the rate

of 1 a day. Now it was in the summer time, this was going on and people

would be taken for what they call one way drives. They'd get the

offending party in the car and take him out on the side street shoot

him and dump him out of the car and my phone next to my bed would ring

in the morning just as it was getting daylight. It got so that I knew

exactly what the bell meant before I answered the phone because somebody

on his way to work or ~~somebody~~ on an early job who found a body in the ditch shot in the head. Usually that was the method of execution.

I was always curious as to, even when I was in school, I was always curious as to why a person knowing what was in store for him would get in a car with people like this and I had the opportunity to find out at least in one case. When I was getting out the paper in

Birmingham, Michigan the police chief <sup>called</sup> at my office about 5:00 6:30  
^

one day and I was still working and he said Come on ~~XXXX~~ I'll stop by and pick you up we either just had two murders or attempted but their supposed to be gang shootings and their right on the edge of

town. So I went with him. ~~XXX~~ Two men had been dumped from the car.

One was dead, the other was still alive and conscious, so they got an

~~XXXXXX~~ ambulance to take him to the nearest hospital which was in

Pontiac and I jumped in and road with them and after I got from him

what ~~h~~ happened I asked the question that always bothered me Why did

you get in the car with these people when you knew for certain what

their mission was, and incidentally he wouldn't tell me why ~~he did~~

they did it he just used the then often used term we knew to<sup>o</sup> much but he wouldn't tell you what that too much was. I said but why did you get in the car it was dark then and they picked him up downtown in Detroit, I said why didn't you just run. He said we thought we could talk them out of it when we got in the car. I suppose that;s the answer. Obviously you didn't succeed and he said K no they didn't speak English and they I suppose they actually did but they brought on that they didn't because they didn't want to discuss their job with them as if they were sent to kill the two of them and they ~~did~~ did because this fellow I rode to the hospital with died a couple of days later. You know those gang shootings before these I'm talking about know are before the antibiotics and well the gangsters always went for the head, shoot them in the head and there was never much doubt about the <sup>efficacy</sup> ~~efficacy~~ of 45 caliber bullets in the head but <sup>in</sup> other shootings weren't <sup>some</sup> gang shootings their victim would be shot in the abdomen and if I didn't talk to them right then I might if I had reason to go to the hospital and see them the next day and get from



him directly what happened or I'd get it as soon as I could \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_. Now ~~XXXXX~~ he would be in ~~XXXXXX~~ a apparently relatively good health, he would be bright and talking well and not complaining too much about the way he ~~XXXXX~~ felt and would be very optimistic about his recovery and making plans for the future and

then the next day he would die. Very simply what happened was that

~~XXXXXX~~ it'd be peritonitis and it would take him with ~~XXXXXX~~ penicillin or any other antibiotics and how they would have bled to death ~~XXXXXX~~ they had dominal bullet wounds or not, always fatal in fact they say many people would much rather, when they used to be just about 100% ~~XXXX~~ goners and the cause was peritonitis

There were many <sup>s</sup>aside from the individual murders, ~~XXXXX~~ there were gang wars where several were killed. For instance, there was a feud going on between the Italian Gangs or <sup>s</sup>icilian Gangs and the East Side of Detroit and the West Side of Detroit. This is as close as I was ever able to come to who was shooting because obviously they don't wear uniforms or go with flags flying. Not conventional war, people

don't talk about why others are shot, ones that do talk about it, I usually have found don't know. But they finally so many were being killed that they set up a peace meeting. Terms of peace were to be worked out on in an East Side Fish Market in Detroit. Roughly representatives of the East Side were to be there and 6 representatives of the West Side. and one or two gunmen, that would be a total of maybe 12 or 15 people, to work out peace plans for themselves in Detroit and ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ its environment where they operated. When the 6 walked in and were seated they were immediately shot to death by the other peace-makers that they were to confer with and like most gang killings, all we know about it is why they were there, who the victims were and despite all the columns and columns we wrote those are about the only two facts that there was to be a peace meeting and that these were the representatives of the west side. We could identify them, they all had fingerprints of course, ~~XXXXX~~ with the police from previous arrests and those were about the only two actual facts about the murder from the columns and columns of investigation

time

work and reporting that we did. And it was often that way except in a case where we had a witness who knew something about the people and the outstanding case in that category would be what

quickly became known ~~XXX~~ as the Collingwood Massacre. This happened

in 1932?? (Put a question mark there)( I think it was 32) an

American Legion Convention had been held in Detroit, in several

months prior to this Collingwood Massacre and the American Legion

at that time was a huge organization ~~XX~~ and their conventions

would just ~~XXX~~ would be enormous they would just take over a

city, all the hotel space, all the auditoriums all the streets the

speak-easies, ~~X~~ the resturants and it was a very big thing. Well there

was a gang operating in Detroit in liquôr and they were called the

Little Navy Gang and they bought from the Purple Gang a large

amount of alcohol to help supply the American Legion demand and

promptly sold it but they didn't pay the Purple Gang. Now this

wasn't advisable way to do business with the Purple Gang=they frown

on people not paying their debts, so after a lot of warnings it

later developed into one of the members of the Purple Gang, rented an apartment under a phony name on Collingwood at 12th. Then they

~~XXXX~~ got <sup>Solly</sup> ~~Simon~~ Levine with whom who knew both gangs well to bring three or four members, four members of the, four leading members of the Little Navy Gang, out to the Collingwood address to meet with representative s of the Purple to work out some easy payment plan and he did and went with them, accompanied them up there and was going to sit in on the peace meeting or at the credit meeting. So the purples' as soon as the <sup>four</sup> members of the Little

Navy Gang <sup>got</sup> in the Purples just shot them to death with 45's and left hurriedly. The police knew somehow, I think they had left a pool

room and picked up <sup>Solly</sup> ~~Simon~~ Levine in a pool room and ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

there was also a handbook and somebody ~~mentioned~~ there mentioned

to the police that <sup>Solly</sup> ~~Simon~~ Levine had gone out with four of the Purple's

~~XX~~ the Purple's were Raymond Burnstein, Ah

<sup>a</sup> MK: Harry Fletcher

<sup>2</sup> RG: Well Harry Fletcher wasn't convicted, he went with him, yeh he was

with them, Harry Fletcher,

MK: ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ <sup>Keywell</sup> ~~Keewall~~ <sup>Keewall</sup>

RG: Philip <sup>Keywell</sup> ~~Keewall~~ <sup>Keywell</sup> not Harry ~~Keewall~~ and Izzy Sucter (or was he in the

Navy, I'm trying to place him) no not Izzy, (strike the last name that's not right, we'll get it and put it in there) <sup>later</sup> and the Ah so the police

arrested <sup>Solly</sup> ~~XX Simon~~ Levine and well <sup>Solly</sup> ~~Simon~~ did his best to maintain silence

but it didn't work and then finally told police the story exactly what

happened and of course he was held as a witness. They arrested three

members of the Purple, Fletcher left, he disappeared and Ah the three

went on trial and were convicted of first degree murder on the basis

<sup>Solly</sup> of ~~Simon~~ Levine's testimony and also the testimony of a man named Larry

Collic who was then in the junk business, ~~XXXXXXXX~~ he later became very

wealthy, then in the junk business later called scrap business, ~~but~~

he was driving his truck into the alley ~~XX~~ as the Purple's in an

automobile were exiting the alley in ~~XXXX~~ back of the Collingwood Manor

Apartments and he <sup>g</sup>gone to school with all of them, ~~XXX~~ he knew them.

Well Levine knew him to and he mentoned to the police that they saw

Collic on the way out, so the police arrested Collic who after pretty ~~XXXXXX~~ intensive questioning said he did see them and could identify them and ~~XXXX~~ so testified at the preliminary hearing. However at the trial Levine stuck to his ~~XXX~~ story, Collic changed his story and said ~~XXXX~~ no he knew these defendants, he'd gone to school with them but he didn't see them that day at all but the police made him say that, that the ones he saw coming out of the alley were all Greeks. He didn't know but they looked like Greeks to him. So he was charged with perjury and beat the case, he had a very good criminal lawyer, Joe Hally, and he got him acquitted. Well to ~~get~~ get back, three went on trial and Levine was the principal witness, of course they had a lot of others, the manager of the apartment who rented the apartment to somebody, some of the neighbors that might have seen somebody, they found one of the guns a 45 automatic, was dropped in a bucket of paint just outside the door of the apartment. Fletcher was not arrested but the others were and tried and given life in Marquette Prison. Fletcher about a year later, and \_\_\_\_\_ the deputies coming in, surrendered

and he had a beautiful alibi, the alibi was that he was in jail in Pennsylvania at ~~XXXX~~ the time of the murder. He had somebody swear to that he had affidavits \_\_\_\_\_ that he was in a small city or small county jail in Pennsylvania but he was tried anyway but by that time the witnesses had all disintegrated so he was acquitted, he later went to prison on some hold-up charges that weren't the same but the Ah they were interesting because he was supposed to have held up, he and several others, were supposed to have held up a little coffee house in Pontiac where he played cards for money and it was a ridiculous thing, I never believed he did it because they wouldn't have to go to Pontiac to hold the place up, Fletcher, with his reputation as ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ being such a tough guy could have held it up by telephone, just call them and say bring the money down and ~~they would~~ people would because they were afraid of him. I think I'll break for a minute.

After

I was out at the apartment the night the men were shot in the Collingwood Massacre and we'd were experiment <sup>ing</sup> ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ why we

happened to know about it so fast we were experminenting then with  
the polic radio in our office at the time and we heard coming over  
the air that several persons had been shot in this apartment, s o we  
went right out, photographer and I, and went very fast and they were  
still really bleeding when I arrived but the difference between  
newspapers then and now, \_\_\_\_\_ so much then  
but doesn't any more, then I have a picture of <sup>somebody</sup> ~~XXXXXX~~ standing and  
reading <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ Detroit Times Extra with the headlines about the Collingwood  
Massacre and in the picture it also shows them carrying two of the  
dead men, wrapped in blankets of course, to be taken to the morgue.  
So our paper our extra was out there and that's six miles from downtown  
seven miles about from 12th and Collingwood and we printed read and  
printed and delivered ~~the~~ to the <sup>sen</sup> before they had taken the  
bodies out of the apartment and it was a very fast, newspaper work  
was a very fast job then it slowed down a lot there's not the  
competition among papers as there used to be. This Collingwood  
Massacre was really the last incident the last gas<sup>p</sup> of the purple gang

\_\_\_\_\_?  
?



because Ah others had drifted away from that, moved out of the city,  
~~SOME OTHER~~ other ~~MEMBERS~~ some of the other members, and then three of  
their top men were convicted and got life imprisonment and that  
hadn't happened to others in the purple gang, they had a terrific  
attorney Ted Kennedy, who managed to ~~XXXX~~ win most of their cases  
for them and two others had been murdered, Eddy Hasskler and Eddy  
Fletcher had been murdered in Oakland County. We never knew exactly  
why they were murdered, where it was or murdered by a rival dope  
gang. Now the Purple didn't handle dope, it could be that these  
two members had some interest in it, if that was the ~~XXXXXX~~ <sup>right</sup> report,  
but no one every did as in most gang murders no one was arrested or  
tried for the murder of Haskler and Fletcher. The As I said then  
three of ~~KNE~~ them went to prison for life , Eddie Fletcher who was  
pretty high up in ~~the~~ among them, was on the limb, he didn't show up  
for ~~XXXXXX~~ another year or so and just fell apart. It never was  
it's always overrated their organization, I still read about the things  
that the Purple Gang are doing ~~KN~~ now and they haven't done anything

-17-

now since that last Collingwood Massacre and god that's 40 years or so ago. ~~XXXXXXXX~~ They were in existence only a short time and they came ~~KEY~~ ~~EA~~ about rather accidentally. They were kids who grew up in the same neighborhood pretty much and the Bernstein's had a let's see there were Abe, Raymond, Joey and Izzadore, four brothers and they had a brother-in-law ~~WHXXXXXXXX~~ named Charles Chicoby who ~~XXXXXX~~ had a cleaning establishment and dyeing establishment and he was in labor trouble and there was a cleaner and dyer ~~WHX~~ war on in Detroit, a price war and it got pretty tough, they were throwing acid on truck loads of clothes and they were dynamiting cleaning establishments and the Bernstein's just naturally went to the aid their brother-in-law Charlie ~~XXXXX~~ Chicoby, who was a legitimate business man, and then they ~~XXXXX~~ kinda got the reputation of being tough because they were participating in that with their friends on his ~~EA~~ side and they had a few arrests in connection with that and when the matter was settled among the cleaners and dyers they just went on with different rackets, extortion, protection rackets, small merchants and naturally go into

-18-

prohibition which was pretty big. They employed, I don't think they ever more than 20 persons that you could say were members of the Purple gang, ~~XX~~ and it was a loosely knit organization. In other words Purple A, Purple C, and Purple D might have one enterprise ~~going~~ going and Purple B and Purple x might have another one going and they'd have individual deals going on, rackets going on they wouldn't necessarily cut the others in. They were always freindly, they would always go to one anothers aid but they didn't act as a gang of 20 persons for instance in any enterprise that I ever heard of. It was the grew ~~HE XXXXXX~~ up as I said they knew each other from kids, grew up in the same neighborhoods, used to hang around the old Oakland sugar house on Oakland Avenue and were kind of tough neighborhood kids until their brother-in-law got into this difficulty over in business, and they went to help him and branched ~~XXXXX~~ out. Now how they ever got the name Purple gang I don't know and they don't know, I've asked several of them who ~~I~~ I knew fairly well, you know, how they'd get it, and they just don't

-19=

know. One of them suggested that it might be because of one time they bought had a chance to get second sweaters, you know sweaters with a flaw in them, ~~they bought~~ they bought a bunch of them at a very reasonable price, maybe they stole them, maybe they bought them I don't know but he said they bought them reasonably and they were all purple, so they bought them and they used to go, Eddie Fletcher came to Detroit from Brooklyn and he moved into the neighborhood and they adopted him, pretty tough kid and he was a prize fighter. so he would, they'd go to his fights and they'd wore their purple sweaters and people ~~XXXX~~ would see the group of them, now the reason they wore the purple sweaters was probably the only thing they had at that time they were poor kids and then they, of course they did make money later, they Ah Uhm Another story that a ~~XXXX~~ police lieutenant or Police Inspector, Joe Gardman who was never at a ~~XXXX~~ loss for an answer, a newspaper man asked him one time who's this ~~XXXX~~ bunch for Chicoby, Ah there were a lot of gangs in Detroit at that time the Green Sedan Gang, you

know, and the Packard TouringCar Gang, hold up people , the paper always tagged them with names, and he ~~was~~ said their the Pruple Gang just pulling out of thin air which is as good as any or the sweaters or nobody really knows where the name came from and Ah there has been a lot of curiosity about it. Oh

Woman: I heard you talking about somethin another

RG: Last Monday??????

Woman: in the basement, Yes

RG: Is it

Woman: Yeh

RG: Yeah, Yeah

Woman: They <sup>didn't</sup> look like they ~~had~~ <sup>were</sup> such plush apartments, ~~did~~ you think

they lived there

RG: They didn't honey, they rented the apartments to kill them.

Woman: Just to kill somebody

RG: To kill the Little Navy Gang. Yeah

~~MK: Could you explain why it was that ther~~

MK; Ray could you explain why it was that there

Woman: It says on the back of it the date

MK: that the gang never stopped <sup>to</sup> getting ~~ing~~ revenge against Solly Levine

RG: Oh yes, after he testified. No I didn't think that Solly's life span ~~was~~ would be very long but I was set back that they really protected them against any harm because they were working with their attorneys then to get a new trial for those convicted and somehow they made affidavits, depositions, swore ~~everywhere~~ every place that he had lied about the whole thing and that ~~they~~ he and the police talked with him and made him make up this story, that it was purely a made up story and they thought that Solly would be ~~x~~ I don't think sentiment entered into the thing, ~~xxxxxx~~ they thought that Solly would be more valuable to them alive than dead and they tried but never succeeded in getting a ~~new~~ new trial but Solly still living but I don't know where, I haven't seen him in a long time but he's still around, he'd been seen

MK: What became of some of the defendants?



him at all because the witnesses all in the meantime repudiated their stories, that is the two main witnesses Collic and Levine said they lied and ~~said they would~~ again say that it didn't happen. So he wasn't tried he was in his various ~~pa~~suits in living, he did pretty well and then the came the ~~X~~ Tim Sigler who was special prosecutor for the grand jury and made the most of it, he became governor after that and the publicity he got out of the grand jury and then indicted ~~Fletcher~~ <sup>Fletcher</sup> and several others for this hold up in the Coffee House in Pontiac which I don't think ever happened or might have. He served his term, he served it for 12 years in Jackson and came out that one of the prisoners was a brother and from all the reports I got has been working legitimately in the ~~gold~~ <sup>building</sup> business, since he got out. Now whether he has anything going on the side I don't know but He is connected with the building business and I'm told works hard at it.

MK: Was he suspected ~~in the~~ <sup>of</sup> involvement in the Senator Hooper murder.



RG: Yes, but just about everyone was. See he and all of the  
 Fellows used to hang around a bar in Detroit on Chicago Boulevard  
 and Linwood and this fellow Larry's bar, actually this Larry  
 Olary I mentioned is driving into the alley owned it and just  
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ a side investment for him because by then he was a  
~~was~~ wealthy man with a lot going for him in the steel business.  
 There  
~~They~~ were some ex-convicts ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ I'm told hanging around that  
 bar and during <sup>Fletcher</sup> Fletcher and others planned to kill Hooper, Senator  
 Hooper about whom <sup>more</sup> ~~we knew~~ later. But some three people were indited  
 not Fletcher, three were indited and on the basis of this pretty  
 weak testimony were sentenced to conspiracy to murder which carries  
 in Michigan a five year maximum. and they served time in prison  
 and were released but it wasn't a very ~~convincing~~ convincing conviction,  
 at least to me, because undoubtedly Hooper who wanted to get a dog  
 racing bill in Michigan, he was involved either for or against  
 I never could quite figure out which side he was on, he seemed to  
 change sides so often, but there was a lot of talk at that time about

a dog track and I suppose there was talk about that and the people connected with it ~~and~~ in many bars including Larry's but there was ~~a~~ never any connection between the talk of murdering Hooper, if it was talk of murdering him and the actual murder. Of course conspiracy being a crime in itself , didn't have to be, but three were convicted but not ~~Fletcher~~ Fletcher. I don't think he, I never thought he, I worked on that covered that, of course, Hooper, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ I never thought he had anything to do with that. They had all sorts of stories, even stories that the police investigated very thoroughly with prisoners, some prisoners were let out of Jackson prison ~~a~~ that particular day just to go out to kill Senator Hooper and came back in and if you added up all the people that most were ex were either convicts or ex-convicts were telling these stories, if you added up all the people that were lined up to take a shot at this man, it would extend, the line be about from Chicago, to Jackson if in cars.

~~Fletcher~~ Fletcher  
 MK: Now Louis ~~Fletcher~~ Fletcher was not in your opinion, Ray, a member of the Purple Gang.