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For IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Growing the Legend of Al Capone's Best Tourist Guide in Central IL: New Info Published**

Legend has it that Al Capone was an occasional tourist in the Lincoln-Logan County, IL, area as the guest of his local beverage distributor, John "Coonhound Johnny" Schwenoha. Coonhound Johnny took Capone hunting and arranged for other entertainment. After Coonhound Johnny was arrested for bootlegging, according to legend, he was pardoned by the President of the United States for health reasons—allegedly the only bootlegger to receive this perk.

A previously unpublished source of information about the Capone-Coonhound Johnny connection comes from the family history of Joyce Ogden Gibson, Lincoln Community High School Class of 1959, now of Monrovia, CA. Recently Joyce Gibson emailed me about her mother and father's eyewitness accounts of Capone as a visitor to the roadhouse known as Hutton's Lodge (on Route 121 between Lincoln and Hartsburg), and I have added that information to my community history of Lincoln, IL, in a Web-page-chapter titled "Watering Holes of the Route 66 Era" (link below).

Joyce's father, Jerry Ogden, operated Hutton's Lodge when Coonhound Johnny took Capone there for refreshments and entertainment. Joyce's mother, Jennie, was the cook and waitress. Capone praised Jennie for her potato salad and slaw.

This new information complements other information in that chapter from two published sources that tell of the Capone-Coonhound Johnny connection: Paul Beaver's *Logan County History, 1982*, and William Kaszynski's biography of Ernie Edwards titled *Pig-Hips on Route 66* (2006). My chapter includes a photo of Coonhound's roadhouse, established north of Lincoln on Route 66 (now I-55) after Prohibition ended in 1933. Coonhound died in 1944. In 1947 this building was moved to Clinton Street in downtown Lincoln and became the community recreational center (the "rec").

In mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hutton's Lodge was known as Lonnie and Mae's. Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, this establishment has been known as Tom's Lodge, and remarkably it continues to operate—a rare roadhouse remnant of the Capone era. Coonhound's summer home, located in "Coonhound's Grove," was just a couple of miles away from Hutton's Lodge near the Sugar Creek bridge.

Coonhound Johnny's son, Vince, was known as "Little Coonhound," and he built the Tropics restaurant—which later became world famous—on Route 66 in 1950, the very same year in which Governor Adlai Stevenson's state police gambling raids ensnared him and motivated him to leave town for CA.

Joyce Gibson's father, Jerry, was a friend and hunting companion of Coonhound Johnny. Jerry trained his own hunting dogs and bought all of them as pups from Coonhound. Joyce emailed me two very rare photos of Coonhound Johnny with some of his dogs, and in the

background of the photos are guns and raccoon pelts. These are the only photos of Coonhound Johnny I have ever seen! Joyce's mother, Jennie, also liked to hunt; and Joyce provided me with photos showing her mother with trophy deer and Lady, her mother's favorite hunting dog. Joyce included a childhood photo of herself with Lady, Joyce's "babysitter."

To the "Watering Holes" Web-page-chapter, I have added Joyce's memoir, the photo of Joyce and Lady, the two photos of Coonhound Johnny, several other hunting photos of Joyce's mother and father, a photo of the interior of Hutton's Lodge, and a photo that seems to depict well-dressed, big city gangsters with their fast car. Recently, my friend Bob Olson of Springfield, IL, gave me one of Coonhound Johnny's large, metal dog tags, and I added a photo of it to the other Coonhound material in "Watering Holes." Also included on this page are a photo of Coonhound Johnny's head stone and a description of its location, which I discovered in Holy Cross Cemetery (south of Lincoln adjacent to old Route 66, just before the 1940 bridge across Salt Creek).

In the 1930s, Jerry and Jennie Ogden owned and operated the J & J Tavern in downtown Lincoln at 408 Pulaski Street, near the fabled Rustic Tavern. Joyce provided information about the J & J and several photos of it. That content, too, has been added to "Watering Holes." Some of these photos are provided in high resolution so that you can see such details as the text of signs behind the bar. Curiously, one sign says, "No Ladies Seated at Bar," but there are two women standing at the bar. A pinball machine, illegal at that time, is clearly visible in a couple of the photos.

I speak for a lot of folks in expressing deep gratitude for the most interesting material that Joyce has generously shared. Email Joyce at [gibson.joyce@gmail.com](mailto:gibson.joyce@gmail.com). Joyce and I invite you to join us on Facebook. Email Bob Olson at [oly2059@aol.com](mailto:oly2059@aol.com).

Direct link to information and photos relating to Coonhound Johnny:  
<http://www.geocities.com/findinglincolnillinois/wateringholes.html#coonhound>. Scroll down that page for information and photos of the J & J Tavern and Hutton's Lodge.

For more information about Coonhound Johnny's post-bootlegging business with gambling machines, his Lincoln residence, and his summer home just off Route 121, access and scroll down the following page:  
<http://www.geocities.com/findinglincolnillinois/pinballwizards.html>.

Sincerely,

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PS Feel free to forward this message, publish it, or print and distribute it as you wish.

Photo of a youthful Coonhound Johnny:

