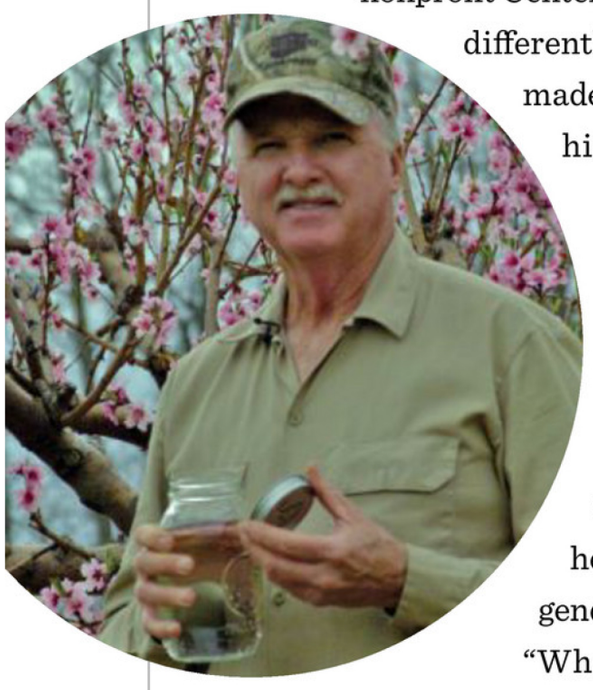
Spirits of the Mountains

Hendersonville's Center for Cultural Preservation uncorks a moonshine documentary



We all know the stereotype of the moonshiner: plaid shirt, overalls, scrawny with a scraggly beard. But David Weintraub, director of the Hendersonville nonprofit Center for Cultural Preservation, wants you to think differently about white lightning and the people who made it, so much so that he's devoted seven years of his life to a documentary about it.

"Like a lot of things in Appalachian history, most people's concepts about moonshine are based on myth, stereotypes, and downright lies," he says. "Most people assume all moonshiners are white, profane, and have long beards and longer arrest records." But the reality reflects a more diverse situation, he insists, with a heritage reflected in every race, gender, and creed in the region.

"What moonshining was about was survival," Weintraub says. "It wasn't about trying to break the law, it was about figuring out how to put food on the table. It was an example of how poor people who had little means ... found a way to survive."

Weintraub has filmed and produced dozens of documentaries for the center. The latest, *The Spirits Still Move Them: Moonshining in the Mountains,* debuts this June, featuring interviews with multigenerational moonshiners and their families. "They wanted to tell you their story, and they felt like this was a traditional art that was dying, that their heritage was dying, and so that story had to be told," says Weintraub, "and I was excited about being able to tell it."

—JONATHAN AMMONS

THE SPIRITS STILL MOVE THEM

Premiere showings, with live music by Apple Country Bluegrass Band (more details at saveculture.org):

- June 17, The Orange Peel, Asheville, 7 p.m.
- June 18, Drive-in theater at North River Farms, Mills River, 7:30 p.m.
- June 20, Southern Appalachian Brewery, Hendersonville, 7:30 p.m.

Bald Eagle *(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)*

This great bird is resurgent—but still at risk—in the mountains

Bald eagles, which all but disappeared from WNC for decades, re-emerged here in 1999 when a nesting pair was identified at Lake James in Burke County.

Since then, 32 new eagles' nests have been discovered in WNC, according to the US Fish & Wildlife Service, which attributes their spread to protection laws and bans on lethal chemicals.

Owing to a 1940 federal law, it's illegal to kill, capture, or sell bald eagles—or to even possess any part of the birds such as feathers or talons.

The mountain area's nesting eagles typically migrate here in late fall and early winter. Whenever you see one, it's crucial to keep your distance (1,000 feet or more) and refrain from disturbing the birds with noise or brash movements, which can alter their behavior during nesting and egg-incubation periods.

Report your sighting: Help the NC Wildlife Resource Commission's ongoing bald eagle research by sharing any sighting details via e-mail to christine.kelly@ncwildlife.org.

—JON ELLISTON

PHOTOGRAPHS (MOONSHINERS) COURTESY OF CENTER FOR CULTURAL PRESERVATION; (EAGLES) BY KEVIN HURT