

## **Jack and Me: Thirty Years of Whiskey-soaked Letters Proposal**

### **Overview**

In 1976, at the tender age of twenty-two, I acceded to a solicitation I found on the neck of a Jack Daniel's whiskey bottle to write to the distillery with any thoughts or questions I had about the distillery's product. Being a bit of a wise guy, I responded with a letter letting the good folks in Lynchburg know that not only did I enjoy consuming their whiskey in a conventional way, but that I also brushed my teeth with it, and kept a glass on my bedside table, at the ready to ward off night sweats and other less congenial spirits.

That casual screed was the opening of the editorial valve; since the distillery's first congenial response to my declaration, a flood of letters, official-looking documents and oddments of Americana have made their way through the mails to me. These missives have followed me through 30+ years of address—and lifestyle—changes, though a unifying constant, my continued appreciation of their high-proof product, has remained. I even received several letters while I lived on the tiny Micronesian island of Kosrae, where mail delivery was often an afterthought.

Tallying up the documents, I count over 100 letters, as well as a passel of certificates, public notices (some handwritten) and photographs, and items such as a plug of chewing tobacco, a buckeye, a rubbing stone, drinking glasses, a record of abominable folk songs, calendars and much more, including a colorful deed to a one-inch square of property on distillery land, with the accompanying declaration that I am a Tennessee Squire in good standing.

Well. There's marketing and then there's marketing. The reach and errant angle of these communications, which rarely touch upon anything related to selling whiskey, but instead might inquire as to whether I'd allow worms to be dug on my property, show a deeply creative and quixotic whimsy. Collectively, they limn the peaks and valleys familiar to many relationships, but few relationships bear this eccentric means of communion. When combined with a flowing account of the cultural history of American whiskey, they make for a potent package.

I propose a book whose core is the letters themselves, encircled by my own commentary on the apocryphal circumstances of their composition, the tangents of my life at the time, and the character of my responses. Woven through the correspondence will be the lore and logistics of whiskey making from its early days, taking in its prominent figures (some of whom for which the term “eccentric” is a weak understatement), and its legal and political legacies, from being one of the earliest cash “crops” to being prohibited and demonized.

I’ll also examine how whiskey appetites change with the times: for instance, there was a period in the 70s where whiskey sales dropped precipitously; it was simply no longer considered a stylish drink. Today, bartenders in some places are admired stars; in San Francisco, many mixologists have made a very publicized name for themselves with their cocktail recipes revolving around whiskey. The personal/historical information can be made more or less prominent dependent on the book’s commercial potential.

My model for the book’s style is along the lines of Ten Speed Press’s *The Twinkies Cookbook*, with its colorful exhibits, typographic stylizations and sidebar minutiae; there’s also a model for the book (though a bit more formal) in Nick Bantock’s *Griffin and Sabine*. Besides the actual chapters regarding our culture’s immersion in spirits, additional sidebar content would be a rich mining of anecdotes and imagery regarding whiskey, drinking, and some specifics about Jack Daniel himself, a man of some mystery, despite the iconic fame of his distillations. My working title is *Jack and Me, Thirty Years of Whiskey-soaked Letters*.

Below is an author bio, a structural outline, sample chapter, a competitive analysis, and marketing considerations/platform for the work’s promotion. The sample chapter includes the article I wrote about the correspondence in 1989, published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. My book throughout would articulate the same droll, amused treatment of the circumstances behind the epistolary relationship found in the article.

### **About the Author**

I have run a writing and editing business out of my home for more than 10 years (with some breaks), with broad experience writing and editing marketing material, including web content, ads, brochures, white papers, direct response, case studies, press releases and other types of marketing collateral. I recently quit a two-year job as a senior copywriter, writing travel-oriented pieces for what is essentially a large travel agency devoted to Cabo San Lucas. I have continued to write freelance pieces, including personal essays, travel articles and technology pieces.

I have edited approximately 50 nonfiction books. Among them are 20 or more user manuals for software products, several consumer books on software (the “how to” variety for UnTechnical Press <[www.untechnicalpress.com](http://www.untechnicalpress.com)>), a number of small business books and several works by individual authors seeking representation. I've also edited a number of coffee-table photography books. I am the author of a consumer-level computer book, *Safe Computing*, published by UnTechnical Press.

I've published articles or stories in *Writer's Digest*, *Wine Enthusiast* magazine, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Sailing* magazine, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Wired*, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, *Traveler's Tales*, the *San Jose Mercury News* (travel and *West* and *SV* magazines), *Airstream Life* magazine, *Draft* magazine, *Verbatim* magazine, and many others. My website <[www.tombentley.com](http://www.tombentley.com)> has a number of my published pieces under the Freelance and Fiction links. (And I do have a finished “road/coming of age” literary novel too, if you ever want to look at a sample of that.)

Aside from all that, I'm a happy drinker of Jack Daniel's, so I can speak with authority on such matters—as long as I'm sitting down. (But I only hit the sauce after the day's writing is done.)

## **Chapter Outline and Book Structure**

*Jack and Me, Thirty Years of Whiskey-soaked Letters* would consist of facsimiles of the entirety of 30+ years of communications between the Jack Daniel's Distillery (and its putative cohorts) and me. These would include scanned representations of the letters themselves, as well as the variety of labels, bills, court documents, bottle certificates, photographs, and miscellany sent from the distillery, both under its own imprint, the Tennessee Squire Association, and under the guise of various officials and citizens of Moore County, Tennessee. The letters would be bookended by observations of my state of being at the time of their reception, and examples of my replies to the letters and subsequent responses.

As mentioned, *The Twinkie Cookbook* is a fair model for the work; it treats an American icon with both whimsy and respect, and follows a visual model I envision. I have enough letters and related documents to make the book flush with visual and textural interest from a number of angles, even if less than two-thirds of the exhibits are used.

Equal in weight to the Daniels material will be historical and cultural facts and fancies about whiskey in general. Whiskey is an *éminence grise* in American history: Commercial distilleries in Kentucky date back to 1783; that first distillery, Evan Williams, is still producing their high-proof product today, and the proliferation of Kentucky bourbon makers made the dubbing of Kentucky's Bourbon County a foregone conclusion. The 1794 Whiskey Rebellion, a fight against a government tax on a product that was used almost like currency at the time, was the first real test of our government's capacity to enforce laws. An act of Congress in 1964 declared bourbon to be America's "Native Spirit."

The book would include some of the interesting facts about distillation, a section on moonshine and famous moonshiners, and a good look at the American Whiskey Trail, which disseminates information and conducts tours on the sites, history of distilling spirits in the US. If the book is picked up, I'll (happily!) go on one of the

Whiskey Trail tours. The book would also look at the differences between bourbon and other whiskies, and the current economics of whiskey production and sales. The overall feeling of the book will be an appreciation for the whimsy of the Jack Daniel's distillery's outreach efforts, while treating the content of the letters as pieces of earnest correspondence, needful of a timely reply. Of equal measure will be the passages in the book that are mindful of a renewed appreciation for whiskey-related Americana and its place in our history.

The book's tone will be light and fanciful, with a strict avoidance of cuteness. We are talking about whiskey, after all.

### **Section 1 – Distillation (Sections will have several chapters)**

An account on how the correspondence began, my initial reactions and replies, and the reflections on the development of an odd relationship. Letters from the mid-70s and early 80s. This section would also address early whiskey history, though it will quickly tilt to American whiskey history.

### **Section 2 – Getting the Ice in the Glass**

Letters and distillery gifts from the mid-80s to the early 90s. The letters gather steam (and my amazement.) I write the *S.F. Chronicle* article about the relationship in 1989. Historical material about early whiskey makers and seminal figures in the industry (including, prominently, George Washington).

### **Section 3 – Two Fingers of the Good Stuff**

Correspondence from the mid-to-late 90s. I visit the distillery, with some ensuing hilarity in the discussion about my land (a two-inch outhouse for the land is one of the displayed items), and on the tour, where a grizzled scalawag scoops out and gulps down a double handful of the raw whiskey from the distillation vat while the guide is looking elsewhere. Historical material about early distilleries and distillery figures, up to the moonshine era and the effects of Prohibition.

### **Section 4 – One for the Road**

Letters from 2000 on, including those that made it to the tiny island of Kosrae in Micronesia, where miraculously, there would occasionally be a bottle of Jack Daniel's for sale amidst the scant island offerings of food and drink. Such bottles were double the stateside price, and well worth it; I had a rivalry with another Jack Daniel's drinker who was ever at the ready to buy the island's solitary bottles before I did.) Post-Prohibition changes in the industry, consolidations, waning and waxing of whiskey consumption.

#### **Section 5 – Nightcap [or perhaps “Branchwater”]**

The most recent letters. Reflections on the oddities of a “relationship” with a corporate entity like Brown-Forman (Jack Daniel's corporate parent), the nature of marketing, the peculiarity of faith-based consumer loyalties like those of consumers to a product like Jack Daniels. Overview of whiskey today: the industry, the industry figures, and the consumers; the rise of small-batch bourbons. Some of my own whiskey-drink recipes.

## **Sample Chapter**

### **The Chronicle Spikes the Punch**

The late 80s were transitional years for the Jack Daniel's distillery, as they were for me. Me first: I left a decent-paying but snore-inducing job as a copyeditor at Borland, a successful software company, to head back to the halls of academia at San Francisco State University. SFSU had what was considered a decent master's degree program in creative writing, and I had what I considered an indecent desire to do something other than consider comma placement in subheads.

I brought to my new San Francisco digs my growing collection of Daniel's correspondence and arcana, which I was happy to see, continued afresh at my new address. The amiable announcement below came in early 1989, the last year of my program at San Francisco State. Note that the letter heralds a bit of a change for the distillery, a place as steeped in tradition as it is corn squeezings.



WHISKEY MADE AS OUR FATHERS MADE IT

# JACK DANIEL DISTILLERY

LEM MOTLOW, PROPRIETOR

Phone: 615-327-1551

110 21ST AVENUE, SOUTH  
P.O. BOX 667  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37202

*Placed in the National Register  
of Historic Places by the U.S. Government.*

GOLD MEDALS AWARDED AT  
ST. LOUIS, 1904  
LIEGE, BELGIUM, 1905  
GHENT, BELGIUM, 1913  
ANGLO AMERICAN EXPOSITION, LONDON, 1914  
CERTIFICATE OF THE INSTITUTE  
OF HYGIENE, LONDON, 1915  
STAR OF EXCELLENCE BRUSSELS, 1954  
AMSTERDAM, 1961

Dear Mr. Bentley:

Several Tennessee Squires have called or written us concerning our new whiskey, Gentleman Jack. Indeed, some have nicely, but firmly, chastised us for not telling them of the first new whiskey to be introduced by our distillery in more than 100 years.

It was last September that we introduced on the Square at Lynchburg, Gentleman Jack, a whiskey quite different from Jack Daniel's. It is made using its own special formula and production method, filtered through hard maple charcoal before it is placed in the barrel and then again, after it is fully matured. The result is a smooth distinctive product with character quite unlike any other, even Jack Daniel's Black Label. Our 84-year-old retiree, Herb Fanning, describes its after taste as having a "Gentle Farewell."

Gentleman Jack is available in San Francisco; however, even there it can be found only in a few selected stores and bars. If you have difficulty locating it, feel free to contact me or my secretary here at Nashville. We'll give you the distributor's name, who, hopefully can locate Gentleman Jack for you. But, better yet, Mr. Bentley, consider a trip to Middle Tennessee. You could both clear away the horseweeds on your Plot #4979f, as well as have a sip of Gentleman Jack with us in the Jack Daniel Hollow.

Sincerely,

Arthur S. Hancock  
Executive Vice President

P.S. Knowing you might be looking for the familiar square bottle and Black Label, attached is a snapshot of our new creation, along with a news clipping about our big day last September on the Square at Lynchburg.







The letter (and a few subsequent swallows of Gentleman Jack, which I got my hands on as soon as I found a Bay Area bottle), got me to thinking again about a problem I'd been mulling over. I'd been having some mild success with magazine pieces over the past couple of years, personal-essay style articles on offbeat or whimsical topics. We're not talking *Esquire* here, but rather a few Bay Area/California magazines (*The Nose*, *SOMA*, *Long Beach Monthly*) that have—like many magazines of late—shuffled off the mortal coil.

But there was a market I couldn't seem to penetrate. I was an avid reader of the *San Francisco Chronicle* then, and took particular pains to pick up the Sunday edition, which besides the heralded Pink section with its concert reviews and art listings, also had the Sunday Punch. It was a wonderfully eclectic compendium of columnists, feature stories, and first-person essays on every topic under the sun—and even what happened after that sun set.

Punch seemed so quintessentially San Franciscan—a state of mind I aspired to—that I longed to place some witty disquisition within its pages. But the shadow from the ten-thousand-foot question mark loomed: what to write about? A frolicsome piece on unusual skin conditions? A recipe for low-fat chocolate martinis? An imagined conversation between me, J. D. Salinger and Josephine Baker? I fretted, I fussed, I fumed. I came up with nothing. I studied the Punch's pages, looking for the key to their charm, the essence that insisted on their existence. Dash it all—those pages had every type of story, from silly to sublime, and giving them my laboratory eye only gave me eyestrain, not an idea.

But then it came to me. Not an idea, but a letter. Actually the latest in a series of them, which at that point had been stretching 13 years, 5 cities and 2 states. I'd

been receiving mail from the distillery over the course of 13 years, and as you've seen, many of those mailings had been doozies.

That old phrase about hiding things in plain sight applies to more than just detective novels and movie scripts. Sometimes, for a renegade writer, a story's location is less a matter of struggling with your squirming consciousness than looking in your front yard—or to be more exact, your mailbox.

So, I set about trying to capture just what it was about those mailings (and the baffling booty that often accompanied them) that—despite my questioning of their true provenance—seemed so companionable, so small-town friendly, so downright American. So drenched in whiskey. This is what I came up with:

It seems that truth is more than one breed of animal. For instance, there's your factual truths and your spiritual truths. If my grandmother said that Smucker's jam kept her kids from getting the mumps and would keep my kids from getting the mumps, that's a spiritual truth of my grandmother's that no Xeroxes from the New England Journal of Medicine are going to dissuade. I have received such a body of spiritual truth from the Jack Daniel's Distillery.

Whatever the factual disposition of the matter, I have a thick sheaf of papers and odd items that represent a 13-year correspondence with the good people in and around the distillery at Lynchburg, Tennessee. In the fall of 1976, when I was living in Glen Ellen, California, I wrote a brief inquiry asking for a booklet of historical information about Jack Daniel's, written by a Garland Dusenberry. My letter was what Mark Twain would call a "stretcher," a bit of exaggeration that tilted the truth as much as I was tilting the glass at the time of its writing.

I explained to the distillery folks that I thought that old Jack's product was a balm for just about any ailment: a topical ointment for aches and pains, a zesty substitute for toothpaste, a piquant change from tired colognes—a letter written in a spirit as innocent of guile as of sense. I promptly forgot all about it, but in November I received the first of many

dispatches from Lynchburg, a cordial letter from Mr. Joe E. Swing (on the handsomest, gilt-embellished pictorial letterhead I'd ever seen) regretfully announcing a shortage of Mr. Dusenberry's booklets and inviting me to stop by Lynchburg and visit—"We'd consider it a real pleasure to show you around."

Fair enough, I thought. My only contact with Jack Daniel's for the next six weeks was as a personal medicament, and I was quite surprised to receive a package from Lynchburg containing six glasses embossed with a silhouette of the estimable Mr. Daniel and a bit of folk wisdom on each one: "May your sons be brave, your daughters marriageable, your wife loving and kinfolk rich." The letter accompanying the glasses explained that they were "Tennessee Sippers," with the elaboration that, "It's a glass, Mr. Bentley, especially designed for sipping." I thought that was right gentlemanly of the folks out in Lynchburg, and I wrote back a while later to tell them so. I must confess that each one of those glasses perished in service, but not before deliverance of many rounds of the succor that only sour mash provides.

About a year later I received a letter from the distillery informing me that, upon Mr. Joe E. Swing's recommendation, I had been accepted into membership with the Tennessee Squire Association, an organization recognizing friends of the distillery. As the letter stated, "There certainly is no obligation on your part, nor will there be any attempt made by our company to use your good name in any way. It is just our feeling, Mr. Bentley, that too little time is spent in this day and age enjoying the friendship of others." With the letter was a deed to Plot #4979f in "The Hollow" in Moore County, Tennessee for consideration of my "avowed and generously expressed loyalty and devotion for Jack Daniel's 'Charcoal Mellowed' Whiskey," this property belonging to me, "and to the heirs and assigns of such party forever."

Now, I was raised in Los Angeles, so I'm probably more of a country boy than Donald Trump, but not much more. My mind struggled to interpret what a "hollow" might be, and could only come up with something like a shady alleyway. And here, in one fell swoop, I had become landed gentry in Tennessee. At the time, I took this as so much marketing flapdoodle. Charming flapdoodle, to be sure, but flapdoodle all the same. I soon found out that being a landowner in Tennessee provokes a variety of compelling attentions and requires exacting judgment

After I had thanked the Association, I received over time a spate of letters from the various business concerns and personages in Lynchburg. Mr. Clayton Tosh of the Lynchburg Hardware and General Store sent me a planting chart for my land and advised me as to his supplies of hoes and rakes. A couple of months later Mr. Tosh informed me that my land was "sort of grownup with horseweeds and such." He proposed to clean up the weeds if he could have the horseweed worms for fishing. He extended the offer of showing me his "fishing place" next time I was "down here and want to go fishing." Naturally, I felt I had come out well in this contract, and I gave Mr. Tosh the rights to those precious horseweed worms in perpetuity.

Not long after, I was alarmed when I received a notice from Ms Joan Nolen, the county executive of Moore County, that my 1978 taxes had come due on Plot #4979f, but not two days later, Mr. Graddy Richard, then secretary-treasurer of the Tennessee Squire Association, notified me that the Association had taken care of my taxes and sent me a receipt breaking down the various assessments, such as "Library..... .05," and the sum total of \$2.30.

Not having owned land before, I was rather ignorant of the particulars, but that seemed a tad modest for a truly *sumptuous* parcel, so I thanked Mr. Richard for his help and discreetly inquired as to the size of my estate. In

his words, “I would estimate should you wish to establish a family cemetery plot on this property, it might be wise to instruct burial feet first.” I thought that my dead would simply have to adapt.

At this point I’d been corresponding with the varied entities associated with the distillery for nearly three years, and I still couldn’t decide if it all was an elaborate joke, a stroke of marketing genius, the real thing, or a combination of all these possibilities. I had documents that looked real, but seemed to be founded on absurd premises. Well, things just got more and more interesting.

In late 1979 Mr. Richard sent me a hardbound collection of photographs of the Tennessee hill country with some passages of “lyric poetry” beside each one, as a plaintive caption of sorts. Some of the photographs were lovely indeed, but that poetry—ye gods, it was thicker than syrup made from coal, and every photograph of the setting sun was weighed down with adjectives so heavy that sun would never rise again. Of course I penned my thanks to Mr. Richard for his largesse in sharing the local color with me, and he must have sensed a possibility of initiating me into cabalistic rites known only to Southerners. I was sent a record of “authentic ethnic folk songs indigenous to our hill country.”

Well, it’s a wonder I wasn’t hospitalized for melancholia after hearing it. Supernatural ululations accompanied by a hellishly lonely untuned guitar—surely this was the wailing of a banshee that had never known a mother’s breast. I could have been hearing the profound croakings of Hottentot tribespeople—here was a cultural boundary I could not bridge.

I was a touch worried about these developments in my relationship with Mr. Richard. After I had duly thanked him for the voices from Lucifer’s grotto, an H. R. Milsap, from the Moore Farmer’s Co-op, sent me a gnarled twist of fibrous bark that he said was “Moore County tobacco

twist from this year's crop. This is one of the finest flavored chewing tobaccos available." OK, I'm not unwilling to take a risk. Hell, as an adolescent I'd smoked "cherry-flavored" cigars that dripped paralyzingly noxious chemical juices from their tips; I'd drank 180-proof Everclear mixed with just a few drops of lemon juice; I'd even drank a peyote malt—sure, I could handle Moore County tobacco.

Let me declare right now that Tennessee men who chew Moore County's finest are *men*—I had a small bite of the plug in my mouth for only about a minute before my belly was bucked into the Milky Way and my mind dropkicked into purgatory. This was oral lawlessness the likes of which I'd never experienced. I would rather listen to a 24-hour marathon of indigenous ethnic music than even *smell* that stuff. I still have some of that twist left. It's just a greenish-tinged knot, but I guarantee you it could power the space shuttle from here to Pluto.

I began to suspect that Mr. Richard and his confederates had it in for me, but over time I was won over by his and the good people of Lynchburg's well wishes. In the course of several years I received:

- A small bag of black-eyed peas in late December of 1980 because "all of us believe that black-eyed peas and hog jowl eaten on New Year's day assure one of good luck during the coming year";
- A buckeye that "came from a tree located near the Northeast corner of your Plot #4979f. The old-timers in the area carry a buckeye in their pockets. They claim it's more potent than the left foot of a graveyard rabbit." (This from Lamont Weaver, on the letterhead of the Lynchburg Coonhunter's Club, who later sent me a picture of all the boys in their hunting regalia, and invited me there for the annual hunt.);

- A genuine Moore County “relaxer,” a lovely little polished stone for rubbing “that often does a better job than one of those drug store tranquilizers”;
- And a small bag of sassafras root for making “sassafras tea for thinning out the blood, or for fighting off that old springtime lethargy.”

The gifts and letters followed my moves around Sonoma County, from Glen Ellen, to Camp Meeker, to Sebastopol, then up to Seattle and back down to Santa Cruz. I received advice about the best time to pick pokeberry shoots on my property, got a chemical analysis of my soil, was invited to the Frontier Days Celebration, and was asked my opinion on the putting up of a second traffic signal in town, “Well, now there’s talk of getting parking meters around the square!” I was advised of a petition to quash a referendum on making Moore a “wet” county after all these years “dry”; I was informed of a serious outbreak of rabies among foxes in the area (that from Ophelia Brazier of the Moore County Health Department)—I could go on....

My greatest regret about not ever getting out to Lynchburg (possibly because I didn’t want to break the spell) was not going to Mrs. Mary Bobo’s 100th birthday party, July 10, 1981, to which I was invited by Bobby E. Murray, mayor of Lynchburg and publisher of the Moore County News, who wrote of Mrs. Bobo that “she is the nice lady who lives in the two-story white house right down the street from the County building right across the street from Lawrence Waggonner’s house. She, Mrs. Mary that is, has been operating a boarding house there since 1908, and she puts put a fine noon meal as a lot of us around here can vouch for.” May you live forever, Mrs. Mary.

It’s been slightly less than a year since I received my last communiqué from The Hollow (something from the League of Women Voters about a

local issue), and I'm a bit anxious, because that's too long of a time for talk between friends. I spent a while trying to analyze if the people at the distillery have concocted the most elaborate marketing scheme in history, or if there really is something akin to innocence and good fellowship left in our culture. But spiritual truths being what they are, it really doesn't matter if this was cooked up by some simpering MBA from Princeton; it doesn't matter at all, because the community, the experience rendered, exists as a spiritual truth. If your eye is clear in the reading, you *know* that the Snopes' in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County exist, just as I know that Mrs. Mary Bobo exists—I can *feel* her presence.

Besides, life is not life without mystery. To take a quote out of context from a letter from the distillery answering a request of mine for old Jack Daniel's label reproductions, "I am sorry that we don't have much information about them, but Mr. Daniel wasn't much for keeping written records. Unfortunately, though, whether it be Lynchburg or your Sebastopol, Mr. Bentley, it is hard to tell what a man had in his mind seventy or eighty years ago." Amen. Sometimes it's better not to know.

I'd punched through: working with Peter Sussman, the editor of *Punch*, and a fine man, brought me two-thirds of a page in on April 9, 1989, right below the treasured L. M. Boyd's "Grab Bag" of whimsy and exotic facts. Below is a scanned section of the *Punch* story showing a drawing rendered by a *Chronicle* artist that, not having seen me, weirdly enough resembles my late 80s look (yes, I always wore pajamas as I avidly read my mail).





Sussman did trim a little bacon fat from my original, but I was pleased as punch (forgive me) to have made it into the Punch pantheon. And I had, as many writing teachers advise, let the story come to me. Literally. I also decided to let the story go to them—the source. I sent a copy of the piece to the distillery, and was heartened by the quick reply:

**TENNESSEE SQUIRE**  
  
MOORE COUNTY  
LYNCHBURG (POP. 361) TENN.

May 5, 1989

Mr. Tom Bentley  
312 Pierce Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117

Dear Mr. Bentley,

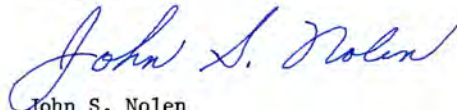
Thank you for sending a copy of your recent article, which appeared in "The San Francisco Chronicle." We got a big kick out of it, and certainly took no offense at your "sense of fun." We are glad you have enjoyed the fellowship we have extended through the years, and hope you will continue to enjoy it for many years to come.

By the way, it may interest you to know that all the folks you've been hearing from are real, and you'd be apt to run into just about any of them here in town.

I am sorry to report that Miss Mary Bobo passed away in 1983, one month short of her 102nd birthday. She was a fine lady and is missed by us all. The Boarding House, however, is still open, and Miss Lynne Tolley, a great grandniece of Jack Daniel, is now hostess and proprietress. Very few changes were made and it continues to be run in a manner that would make Miss Mary proud.

We appreciate your thinking of us, Mr. Bentley, and if your travels ever bring you our way, we hope you'll have an opportunity to drop by Lynchburg for a visit. It'd be a pleasure to meet you, and we'd consider it a privilege to have you as our guest for dinner at Miss Mary's Boarding House.

Sincerely,



John S. Nolen  
Secretary

JSN/naw

*May your sons be brave, your daughters marriageable,  
your wife loving, and kinfolk rich.*

Of course, it was sad to hear of Mrs. Mary Bobo's death, because she sounded like a patriarch, but at 102, it was probably time to take a rest from preparing all those pecan pies. I didn't quite know how to take the information in there about every one of my letters being from "real people." I believed that at some level, and even if most of the Squires were receiving scheduled scoopings from the same sheaf of correspondence I'd enjoyed, where was the harm? Besides, I was getting replies back from them to my answers, so I still felt like an insider.

And all it took for a little positive reinforcement to convince me that things would remain their normally abnormal self in Lynchburg was this missive from late that year:

Lynchburg Coonhunting Club

P.O. Box D

Lynchburg 37352

October 13, 1989

Mr. Tom Bentley  
312 Pierce  
San Francisco, California 94117

Dear Mr. Bentley,

I saw something this morning I think you might just get a kick out of. It has stuck in my head all day and I can't get rid of it, so I thought I'd best write you about it since it was on your plot #4979f that I saw it. You know that old elm tree just to the East of you there with the big limb that hangs over onto your land? Well, as I come over the rise on my way to work I saw something on it. Something good size too, like a wildcat or something crouched on that limb. I had to stop the truck and get out and look back because the sun is straight in your face at that hour in the morning as you know.

Well you'll never guess what it was. It wasn't no wildcat, I'll tell you that. It was a dog! What do you think of that. Many's the time I have had a coon dog climb after a treed coon, Mr. Bentley, but I have never seen a plain old yard dog just stretched out on a limb like that doing nothing but watching the sunrise, seemed like.

So I looked at him and he looked at me and pretty quick he just jumped down off that limb and strolled down the other side of the hill as cool as you please. It was something to see. You really should have been there.

I just thought you ought to know that your property down here is being inhabited by a dog who thinks he is a cat or something.

Maybe a bird.

Yours truly,



Lamont Weaver

PS I talked to Mrs. Craig over at the Moore Co. News. She might put it in the paper.

Lamont Weaver sure *sounded* like a real person, no matter how many hounds he hallucinated. In the early 90s, I would get a chance to find out by visting the distillery first-hand. But first I just had to graduate, move north, and then move back south again. Lucky for me, the distillery kept tabs.

[Possible sidebar material interspersed throughout; see "Text Enhancements" concept in proposal]

### ***Competitive Works***

There are a number of historical works about whiskey in general, a number specifically about American whiskey history, and a couple of biographical publications about Jack Daniel himself. I've listed some of the publications in the last 10 years. There are also some minimal mentions of the Tennessee Squire Association in some books on marketing subjects (noted below). However, I couldn't locate works that offer the combination of history, personal anecdote and entertainment as the book on the subject I propose.

The publication dates of the general works on whiskey do indicate substantial recent interest in broad topics centering on whiskey.

### **General Historical Works**

*Whiskey (Eyewitness Companions)*, by Charles MacLean (ed), DK Adult, (2008)

*The Whiskey Companion: A Connoisseur's Guide to the World's Finest Whiskies*, by Helen Arthur, Running Press (2008)

*Bourbon at its Best: The Lore and Allure of America's Finest Spirits*, by Ron Givens, Clerisy Press (2008)

*Jim Murray's Whiskey Bible: The World's Leading Whiskey Guide from the World's Foremost Whiskey Authority*, by Jim Murray, Carlton Publishing Group (2006)

*Bourbon, Straight: The Uncut and Unfiltered Story of American Whiskey*, by Charles K. Cowdery, Made and Bottled in Kentucky (2004)

*Big Shots: The Men Behind the Booze*, by A.J. Baime, NAL Trade (2003)

*American Still Life: The Jim Beam Story and the Making of the World's #1 Bourbon*, F. Paul Pacult, John Wiley & Sons (August 2003)

*The Evolution of the Bourbon Whiskey Industry in Kentucky*, by Sam K. Cecil, Turner Publishing Company; Reprint edition (June 2003)

### Jack Daniel's Specific

*Blood and Whiskey: The Life and Times of Jack Daniel*, by Peter Krass, Wiley (April 2004)

*Jack Daniel's legacy*, [Ben A. Green](#), Rich Printing Co (1967)

### Mention of Tennessee Squire Association Within Marketing-Oriented Works

*How to Advertise*, [Kenneth Roman](#), [Martin Nisenholtz](#), Kogan Page Ltd. (September 2005)

*Why Customers Come Back: How to Create Lasting Customer Loyalty*, [Manzie R. Lawfer](#), Career Press (January 2004)

*Magnetic Service: Secrets of Creating Passionately Devoted Customers*, [Chip R. Bell](#), [Bilijack R. Bell](#), Berrett-Koehler Publishers (August 2003)

*All Consumers Are Not Created Equal: The Differential Marketing Strategy for Brand Loyalty and Profits*, [Garth Hallberg](#), Wiley (September 1995)

There are also a number of Jack Daniel's cookbooks in print, one of which was sent to me by the distillery as a gift (see Exhibits).

The [www.thewhiskeyguide.com](http://www.thewhiskeyguide.com) website lists a number of books on whiskey appreciation and production, many of them focusing on Scotch whiskeys.

## **Marketing and Publicity**

I am an experienced marketing writer, and would put my expertise to use to promote the work. I have written articles for local and national publications, both personal-essay style and journalistic, and would seek out a range of markets to write companion pieces based on the book, as well as press releases. I'm familiar with the mechanisms of distribution sites like PRWeb.

I am also quite experienced with web marketing, and am web-savvy enough to build and populate a website related to the book. I am somewhat versed in Search Engine Optimization as well, and would put those principles to use in bringing increased traffic and notice to the site. My recently started blog, focused on writing subjects is live at <http://www.tombentley.com>. I would readily begin a website/blog specific to the book upon having a book contract in sight. I have been a guest poster on a couple of blogs, and. Here are some guest blog posts:

<http://editorunleashed.com/2009/04/23/how-to-interview-with-skype/>  
<http://www.dripit.org/oceans-of-pain-mountains-of-possibility/>  
<http://www.tribebuilding.com/2008/12/tribes-we-have.html>  
<http://www.tribebuilding.com/2008/12/tight-tribes-are-made-of-this.html>

Should a contract be in the offing, I would immediately begin frequenting whiskey-related sites that have forums, and weigh in there (with a signature that would point to the upcoming book release, or free promo excerpts on my site). Podcasts, which I've also done, are a distinct possibility (I do have some audio examples, upon request).

I did several radio interviews for my *Safe Computing* book in 2000, and would be happy to pursue increased attention through that avenue. I have a recording of one of my interviews with a well-known computer-media figure, Shaun King, founder of Your Mac Life <<http://www.yourmaclife.com/>>. I can email or send on disk a copy of that interview if you want to ascertain my radio presence. If you want to check out my visual (and determined-to-be-silly) presence, there's this:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8KY3luGxrU>



There is a possibility that the distillery itself might want to co-sponsor a book tour or some speaking engagements, and I'd solicit such attention. However, I do know that the Tennessee Squire Association is wary of formal publicity, so I'm uncertain of their level of cooperation.

I am a member of Seth Godin's Triiibes <[www.triibes.com](http://www.triibes.com)>, a social network populated by marketing experts, and I daily take away many tips on engaging (and selling) a community around an interest. A current thread I began on Triiibes on the false dichotomy between creative and commercial interests is the most commented thread (2,500 and counting), among thousands of threads and thousands of Triiibes members. I am quite familiar with the publicity-generating resources found in Timothy Ferriss's *Four-Hour Workweek* and in Jonathan Fields's *Career Renegade*. I am a student of Peter Bowerman's <<http://www.wellfedwriter.com/>> and have a number of his valuable treatises on self-marketing that I'd employ in establishing the book in the public mind.

I am articulate and at ease speaking in public, and would look forward to using my skills to promote the work and keep it newsworthy.

This book will have history and humor—and I can bring it alive. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Tom Bentley  
16 Tulsa Lane  
Watsonville, CA 95076  
831-724-7321  
[bentguy@charter.net](mailto:bentguy@charter.net)