



Intelligencer photo by Bill Hunt

C.W. Hunt, Belleville author, displays his newest book, Whisky and Ice. He'll be at a book signing today at Greenley's, Front Street.

Author invites readers to probe local mystery

C.W. Hunt to sign books today at downtown store

By Tom Gavey
The Intelligencer

Belleville author C.W. Hunt invites readers to participate in a mystery made all the more fascinating because it's rooted in fact in Whisky and Ice.

The book follows on the heels of Hunt's popular Booze, Boats and Billions.

Again, the former Belleville high school teacher and entrepreneur chronicles the rumrunning exploits in the Belleville area during the 1920s.

"Whisky and Ice spins out of Booze, Boats and Billions. It's a story that came to me, I didn't have to go to it," he says.

Much of the book deals with to Ben Kerr, a man known during his heyday as "The King of the

Rumrunners."

The mystery surrounds Kerr and what happened to this man sought by both the U.S. Coast Guard and a Hamilton crime lord.

Hunt says the more he found out about Kerr, the less he liked him.

"I didn't like the guy by the time I was finished with him. But, he was a fascinating figure. On the one hand there was this skilled outdoorsman and on the other was a classical pianist," he comments.

A plumber by trade, the society conscious Kerr listed himself as a musician.

While Kerr and his rumrunning exploits between the United States and Canada makes for fascinating reading in itself, Hunt also details a time when Canada was just emerging from the Victorian era.

Readers learn about the double dealing that was present in provincial politics during the prohibition debate, including the 1926 election still seen as one of

the most bizarre in Ontario history.

Hunt also recreates a time when government liquor stores required a person to have a licence to buy liquor and before that pharmacists and doctors were popular sources of the demon liquid.

Over two years research went into Whisky and Ice and Hunt says he relied on survivors of the era, newspaper accounts in Belleville and Hamilton, library sources and other sources.

Much of the book is based in the Belleville area and older readers are sure to recognize the names of principles in the books and businesses and places that are prominent in the story of the daring exploits of Kerr and his confederates.

Hunt recently spent a week with the homicide squad in Cleveland, Ohio preparing for his next work, a crime fiction novel.

He'll be signing copies of Whisky and Ice Saturday at W.R. Greenly's Booksellers between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.