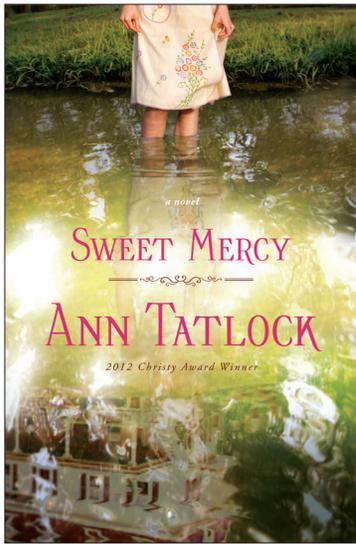




**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH ANN TATLOCK**



**Sweet Mercy**

by Ann Tatlock

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**1. Why did you choose to write about the Prohibition Era?**

I'm fascinated by this era and what it teaches us about human nature. As the saying goes, *The forbidden fruit is the sweetest*. America definitely saw the truth of that during the thirteen years of Prohibition (1920-1933). This was the era when alcohol was banned and the entire country was considered dry.

As soon as the federal government made drinking illegal, everyone started to drink. Well, that may be an exaggeration, but only a slight one. Liquor consumption skyrocketed, and everyone got busy turning their bathtubs into gin distilleries. Saloons went underground and became speakeasies, where business was booming every night of the week.

In addition, Prohibition proved fertile ground for a whole new kind of criminal industry. Bootlegging became a lucrative business for gangsters like Al Capone (who has a cameo appearance in *Sweet Mercy*), George "Bugs" Moran, and Charles "Lucky" Luciano. At the same time, many law enforcement agents made a few extra dollars themselves by taking bribes to look the other way.

The Prohibition Era isn't something we as a nation talk or write about very much. It seems as though we've almost tried to block out that disastrous experiment from our collective memory. And as an attempt to "regulate morality," it was definitely a disaster.

Instead of making people "good," the laws of Prohibition only served to expose human nature's propensity for doing exactly what we're not supposed to do. I believe this is called Original Sin!

**2. Where did the idea for Marryat Island come from?**

I grew up hearing about Hoppe's Island, which in my story became Marryat Island. It was a recreational spot owned by my great-grandfather Edward Augustus Hoppe in the 1920s and 1930s. Situated in the Little Miami River near Foster, Ohio, the island was a popular place for swimming, boating, picnicking, and dancing to the bands that played in the pavilion.

My father spent many childhood days enjoying the island and the nearby lodge, and his memories of the place stayed with him long after the island itself no longer existed. Some of my last conversations with my dad before he died in January were of Hoppe's Island, as I wanted to portray the place as accurately as I could.

With one possible exception, of course. While I never knew my great-grandfather (he died an untimely death in 1944 when he was caught in the waterwheel of his flour mill—the very mill that formed the millrace that created the island), I can say with a fair degree of certainty that he wasn't a bootlegger and the lodge was not a liquor transport station.

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**3. While doing your research, were you surprised by what you learned about Al Capone?**

I was very surprised! I had always heard stories about Al Capone, of course, but never once did I hear that he had accepted Christ during a Sunday service in Alcatraz. It was only during my research that I came across this “obscure fact” in two different biographies about Capone. His conversion was dismissed by many who knew him because he was suffering from an illness that affects the mind. One of his friends declared him “as nutty as a fruitcake.” But even after he got out of prison, Capone went on telling people he’d been saved by Christ. His confession was enough to allow him to be buried in sacred ground by the Catholic Church, where he lies beneath a headstone that reads “My Jesus Mercy.” Was his conversion real? Only God knows for sure. What do I think? I think God’s mercy and grace are great enough to cover even the sins of Al Capone.

**4. What main idea do you want your readers to take away from *Sweet Mercy*?**

Just as the title says, that mercy is a sweet gift, and because of it we are not subject to the punishment we deserve. Christ took on our punishment and, in dying for us, gave us life. Only He can clothe us in the righteousness we need in order to stand before a Holy God, whether we think we’re a “good person,” like my character Eve Marryat, or whether we are a notorious criminal, like Al Capone. We are all sinners saved by mercy and grace, period.

**5. Do you have others books, and if so, how can we find out about them?**

*Sweet Mercy* is my tenth novel with Bethany House Publishers. For information on my other books, please visit my website at [anntatlock.com](http://anntatlock.com).