## AT 60, DRUGSTORE STILL SELLS DRUGS

Lascoff's, With Brisk Trade in Exotic Potions, Snubs Soda Fountain Era

By GAY TALESE

Within a serene brownstone on Lexington Avenue, on the corner of Eighty-second Street, a 59-year-old pharmacist named Frederick D. Lascoff has specialized for years in selling leeches to battered prize-fighters, catnip oil to lion hunters and thousands of strange potions to people in exotic places around the world.

The Lascoff drugstore, which celebrated its sixtieth anniversary last week, is a Gothic-styled apothecary shop whose walls are lined with more than 50,000 bottles containing everything from Acacia to zinc.

It should not be inferred from the foregoing that Mr. Lascoff's apothecary shop carries only rare herbs and weird pills; far from it. The bulk of its business comes from standard prescriptions. But through the years J. Leon Lascoff & Son has made a reputation for producing bizarre concoctions when requested.

## Fighters Steady Customers

Prize-fighters wishing to have blood sucked from their facial wounds have been some of Mr. Lascoff's steadiest customers. And when the African explorer Martin Johnson was off to hunt lions, he first equipped himself with catnip oil from the druggist.

But one of the most unusual requests came from another drugstore owner, who once wrote Mr. Lascoff to ask: "Can you please tell me what I can do to make my drugstore smell like a drug store?" Seems that food odors in his establishment overpowered the desirable "drugstore smell."

Soon Mr. Lascoff evolved a formula of phenol, valerian, asafetida and iodoform; and, sure enough, it gave forth a

drugstore scent.

The Lascoff establishment never has needed such a formula, because it has long had a ban on foods, soda fountains and other un-pharmaceutical items common in many drugstores. Its two-story main chamber is void of jukeboxes, pay telephones, cigarettes, paperback novels and comic books.

J. Leon Lascoff & Son was founded a couple of blocks away from its present site by the elder Lascoff, who died in 1943. Dr. J. Leon Lascoff, born in Russia, arrived in the United



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FOR MEDICINAL PURPOSES: Empty whisky bottle, a memento of Prohibition days, stands on a shelf at the Lascoff Drugstore on upper Lexington Avenue. The label indicates that the prescription—required in those times—called for four daily doses of two teaspoonfuls each.

States in a Prince Albert coat and silk hat and took a job in a drugstore at \$2 an hour. Among other things, he washed windows.

## Firm Founded in 1899

He started his own firm in 1899, a year before the birth of his son, the present owner, Dr. Frederick D. Lascoff. The latter also has a son, Fred Jr., 22 years old, now working in the apothecary and making considerably more as an apprentice than his ancestors—without washing windows.

While this is not one of New York's oldest drugstores (it is debatable which is), the J. Leon Lascoff firm has an international trade that includes royalty, the rich, and far-flung hos-

It moved to its present spot on Eighty-second Street in 1931—on ground that formerly was a saloon. This seems strangely fitting, because all during Prohibition a familiar slogan was:

"Old little gin mill don't you cry,
You'll be a drugstore by and by."

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