

BACK

Pop Art

Rare Soda and Poppycock at
Ifs, Ands, and Butts

by DeAnn Daley Holcomb

ONE SURE-FIRE, THIRST-QUENCHING WAY TO SEEK RELIEF FROM THE SIZZLING Texas summer is with an original Coca-Cola or Dr Pepper. Yes, I said original — and the only place to find the “Real Thing” is at a Dallas hideaway called Ifs, Ands & Butts, a shop devoted to rare soda pop and, as the name implies, tobacco.

Tucked away in the historic Bishop Arts District of Oak Cliff, the soda pop store is run by proprietor Hamilton Rousseau, a transplanted Texan from South Carolina. (And no, he *doesn't* go by the nickname “Pops.”)

Rousseau has carved out quite an enterprise, selling thick-glassed sodas with lids that you need a turnkey to pop off. You can take your time browsing through the huge clear glass refrigerator, searching for that special soda pop you thought didn't exist anymore. There's Grape Nehi, Delaware Punch, Sarsaparilla, Orange Crush, NuGrape, Frostie, Grape Crush, and Big Red — many originally produced in the early 20th century.

The store carries 135 nostalgic, gourmet, and energy drinks, including what Rousseau describes as “an exquisite selection of cream sodas to die for,” and, he claims, the largest selection of root beers in the Southwest.

“If you're old enough to walk or healthy enough to walk at an old age, I've gotcha,” Rousseau says. “My customers aren't interested in diet drinks. They want the real thing.” Old-timers can quench their thirst on beverages like the Citrus ginger ale from Winchester, Kentucky, dating back to 1927, or Vernon's ginger ale, a popular brand in Detroit and the oldest soda still produced in the United States, since 1866.

Rousseau refers to himself as a “sodaholic,” and he's turned his passion for pop into an international venture, even selling selected drinks on the Internet. People travel to Dallas from across the country just to re-live a childhood taste sensation. “I had a customer travel 75 miles to get Delaware Punch for her husband, who was in the hospital,” Rousseau recalls. “That soda was a favorite of the World War II era.”

No doubt Rousseau's southern charisma adds to the nostalgic ambiance of the store's atmosphere. In his southern drawl, Rousseau can talk for hours about the history behind each soda. For example, Rousseau imports Squirt, Fresca, and Delaware Punch bottled drinks from Mexico, and gets his Coca-Cola from Holland. It's referred to as Dutch Coke, and Rousseau claims that it's the original formula introduced after World War II. “Hands down, Dutch Coke is my best selling soda,” he says. “That's because everybody loved the original Coke.”

Rousseau has created a contemporary, relaxing atmosphere inside the store, with tables and chairs and piles of magazines and books. A dreamer at heart, he's also written a book called “Soda Pop Philosophy,” a collection of his eccentric thoughts and sayings. The binded book sits on top of one of the tables in his store for anyone to read. “I call it the ‘The Ramblings of a Madman or the Insights of a Genius,’” Rousseau says. “I just let the customer decide that after they read it.” **LZ**

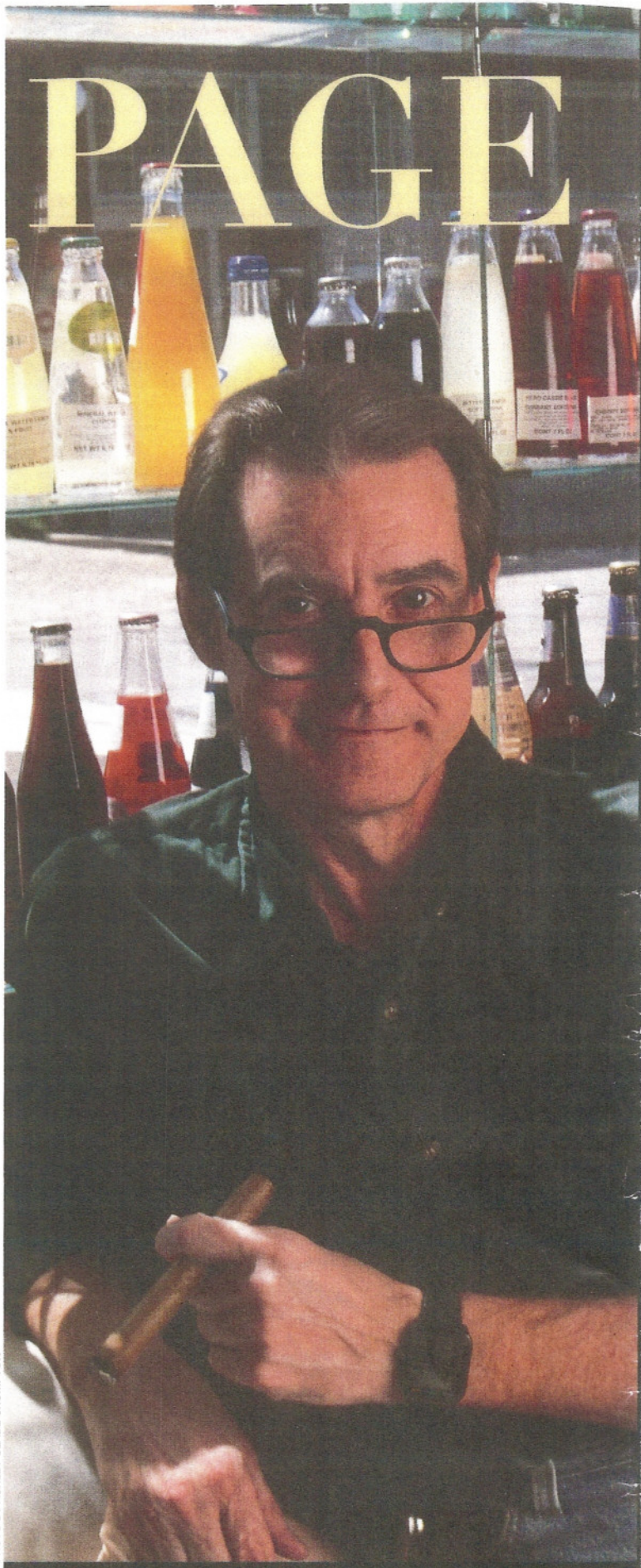


PHOTO BY ASHLEY SLADE CRUMPTON

Drink every soda available at Ifs, Ands, and Butts, and you're eligible for membership in what owner Hamilton Rousseau calls the “Hall of Fizz.”

Ifs, Ands, and Butts is located at 408 N. Bishop Avenue in Oak Cliff, (214) 941-1222.