

TOM JOYCE

Indianapolis and his 7up Empire

By Steve Lang



Tom Joyce epitomizes the rags to riches tale that so many want to duplicate. He turned pennies into a statewide soda empire and spun off several other business ventures. Thomas C. Joyce was born in 1898 in Columbus, Ohio. He graduated from Aquinas College in Columbus before serving in the Army as a first sergeant during WW1. Sometime after returning home from the war he moved to Indianapolis where Myra Joyce, Ralph B. Gregg and he incorporated Tom Joyce, Inc. to manufacture and sell wholesale and retail non-alcoholic beverages with \$300 in capital, one truck and a small building located at 1532 Carrollton Avenue. He took a chance with the new soft drink Seven-Up and never looked back.

A short history of Seven-Up before I go on - Charles Leiper Grigg, who while working for Vess Jones in 1919 developed an orange flavored drink he called Whistle. After a dispute with management he started working for Warner Jenkinson Company where he invented his second soft drink called Howdy, another Orange flavored drink. He moved on and started the Howdy Corporation in 1920 and came up with the formula for a lemon-

lime soft drink in 1929 so he didn't have to compete with Orange Crush anymore. It was originally named "Bib-Label Lithiated Lemon-Lime Soda." Imagine trying to come up with a sales campaign for that name! The drink contained Lithium Citrate which was a mood-stabilizing drug until 1948. The name was shortened to "7 Up Lithiated Lemon Soda" and then "7 Up" by 1936. 7 Up was used in non-alcoholic punches and as a mixer for highball alcoholic cocktails. Nobody knows for sure why Grigg named his Lemon-Lime soda 7 Up. There are many theories including Lithium has the atomic number of 7, Seven-up has 7 letters, it was originally sold in 7oz bottles and many more.

The first mention of 7 Up I could find in the Indianapolis newspapers and city directories appeared in the *Indianapolis Star* on December 30, 1933 in an advertisement for the local bottler Klee & Coleman. The *Indianapolis Star* reported the incorporation of Tom Joyce, Inc on March 29, 1935 and his first advertisement appeared in the local newspaper on August 12, 1935 asking the question:



Tom Joyce, 1940s



Tom Joyce with an ad for his friendly fresh up drink, late 1930s

Who is the owner of the company at 1532 Carrollton that makes "7 Up" the FRESH UP drink that sells for 5c a split and has ALKA-LINE REACTION, Tom Joyce, Inc.

In the beginning Tom had one bottling machine and was the salesman, delivery boy as well as manufacturer of the soft drink. By July 1936 Joyce's operation at 1532 Carrollton was producing 40,320 individual split (7oz) bottles per day and distributing 7 Up throughout the state of Indiana in 60 trucks. This is an amazing feat in just over a year.

In September 1936, Joyce announced he was leasing a two-story building at 104-108 Locust St in Evansville, Indiana. The expansion was needed to keep up with the increasing business in southeastern Indiana and Kentucky. The Evansville Plant had a capacity of 2,000 cases a day or 48,000 7 oz bottles daily. By 1937, Tom Joyce was showing a sales increase of 750% over 1936 and had already added another plant at 427-429 Kinsmoor Avenue in Fort Wayne, Indiana to service the northeastern part of the state. He was also getting ready to move out of the original bottling plant on Carrollton Ave to 20th and College in the old Indianapolis Railways Street Car Barn. He moved into the new location on January 1st, 1938 and it featured 20,000 square feet of production space with completely modern equipment. The new bottle fillers installed were capable of filling 260 bottles of 7 Up a minute. Joyce was now operating 22 delivery trucks in Marion County (Indianapolis) alone and 105 total in the State of Indiana through 45 distributors.

By March 1938 Tom Joyce was sending 7 Up to all 92 Indiana Counties plus distributors in Owensboro, Ky., Henderson, Ky. and Paris, Ill. and was operating a fleet of GMC and International Delivery Trucks. He held a formal two day opening of his new Indianapolis plant and had 20,000 visitors tour the plant. A 22 foot neon bottle sign was added to the new building that could be seen for several blocks. 1938 also saw the introduction of the 7 Up slogan "I Like It it Likes Me" and "Fresh Up" to the Indianapolis consumers. Joyce made a heavy investment into his new plant with the purchase of a new bottling line that included bottle washer, filler and carbonator which would more than double the plants previous output to 18,000 bottles an hour. In September 1939 Tom Joyce purchased the McLean Place Street Car Barns from the Indianapolis Railways to build a new bottling plant. The remodel and bottling equipment cost Joyce \$200,000 at the time. In today's dollars, that would be an investment of almost \$3.8 million dollars. May 1940 saw the opening of the Gary, Indiana plant to help serve the needs of Northern Indiana counties and to help take the pressure off of the Indianapolis plant. The Evansville plant was expanded in 1941 along with the addition of a new 3,500 square foot building adjacent to the Indianapolis College Avenue plant for storage to help keep up with the rising demand of 7 Up in Indiana.

During the World War II years, times were tough for bottlers with shortages of steel, cork and tin affecting the delivery of bottle caps, and there was a city wide shortage of soda bottles in the summer of 1943 due to glass being a vital war material. Joyce was still supportive of the troops locally despite these business hardships. His company was one of four Indianapolis businesses that gave a day's pay to the Red Cross as a kick off to the National War Relief goal of \$50,000,000, and also earned a "T" and a flag for their uniform shirts designating that all employees were putting 10% of their

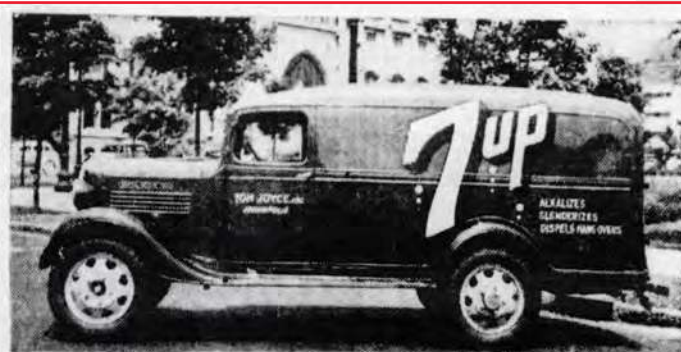


The new and thoroughly modern plant of the Tom Joyce 7 Up Company, bottlers of 7 Up beverage, at College avenue and 20th street. The new plant will be in full operation Wednesday.

Tom Joyce with an ad for his new modernized Bottling Plant

wages into War Bonds. He also supported the local school which was collecting steel scrap for the war effort by donating a truck to haul the scrap to the local scrapyard.

In July 1944 Tom Joyce, speculating on a surge in 7 Up sales when sugar rationing ended, purchased three complete bottling plants in the state of Indiana. He purchased the Nehi Royal Bottling Corporation in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The 4 year old plant being considered a "show" plant in the soft drink industry with a capacity of 9,000 bottles an hour. He also purchased the Double Cola Bottling Company plant in Kokomo, Indiana which included all property, equipment and a fleet of 20 trucks. Finally Joyce purchased the Spring Valley Bottling Company of French Lick, Indiana including their new water treating system and 12 trucks. These acquisitions gave Tom Joyce bottling plants in 8 cities (Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Gary, French Lick, Evansville, New Castle, Greencastle & Kokomo) within the State. Joyce also began expanding his India-



USES GENERAL MOTORS TRUCKS—Seen above is one of the General Motors trucks operated by the Tom Joyce, Inc., 1532 Carrollton avenue, manufacturer and bottlers of 7 Up. The trucks have a special built body. The company began operations on April 1, 1935, and has increased its volume of business to where it now is operating at a bottling capacity of 40,320 individual split bottles per day. It distributes 7 Up throughout the state and operates sixty trucks through distributors.

Early 7 Up truck, showing the use of GM products



Early 7 Up bottle with paper label, and advertising card to go-with

napolis plant with a new 12,000 square foot building and water treatment system. By the time the Indianapolis expansion was completed the two bottling units there could produce 144,000 bottles of seven-up in an 8 hour shift.

Tom Joyce touted 7 Up as the ideal mixer for the Holidays and its medicinal value in an article appearing in the Dec 28, 1937 *Indianapolis Star* stating "When using 7 Up remember to pour gently on the side of the glass. Most people stir, shake or fizz 7 Up and waste the Life Gas" and he went further "Because of its medicinal properties 7 Up is great help in the sick room. It helps to keep the stomach calm and in hospitals it is given after ether to prevent



Joyce showing off his new equipment purchased for the plant

nausea and retching. The drink will stay down when other liquids won't and provides energy food in the small amount of sugar that is contained in the beverage." 7 Up was similar to health spa waters with a heavy charge of carbon dioxide which helped to dilate the stomach aiding in absorption and digestion.

Tom Joyce over the years did a lot of advertising in the city newspapers. As early as 1938 he was sponsoring the Vince Barnett Calling All Stars at the Lyric Theater in town and hosting music shows on local radio WIRE 1430 AM and WISH 1310 AM. He employed local athletes in the summer like Chuck Broderick, quarterback from Butler University and Jack McMahon, halfback from Notre Dame showing them delivering 7 Up

Two early bottles, including the famous rare eight bubbles, later versions had seven bubbles. Lighter and ashtray compliments of Tom Joyce.

Bottom image is a cup and saucer off the yacht of Mr. Joyce the Indiana 7 Up king



in a newspaper ad. In 1941 his company sponsored Sam Hanks driving the Tom Joyce Special Kurtis Offenhauser race car in that years' Indianapolis 500. Unfortunately the car broke a connecting rod on the Thursday before the race sending Hanks into a spin and suffering a brain concussion, back injuries and injuries to his left leg. He advertised over the years through youth and adult sports team sponsorship and local activities. He once sponsored a baseball games between Midwest clubs where all of Perry Stadium (cap. 8,000) was filled with employees from his statewide distributorship. He and his wife sponsored little league baseball, girls' softball, bowling and many other teams throughout the years. Joyce's sponsorship of Riverside Park 7 Up day was very popular with children and adults alike. The July 23, 1941 Seven Up day where rides were 3 cents with a 7 Up bottle cap had 20,000 people in attendance.

Tom Joyce enjoyed the Florida life after purchasing a magnificent estate in the Miami Beach area in 1940. He owned a yacht called the Seven-Up which was purchased in 1955 for \$72,000. Wallace O. Lee tells the story of his Miami Beach trip in 1947 when Tom took him on a tour of half a dozen of the best night clubs. As soon as Mr. Joyce walked in, the orchestra leaders stopped whatever their bands were playing and swung into "Back Home Again in Indiana." Wallace asked how this had started and Tom told him he had thrown an afterhours party at his estate for club managers and orchestra leaders and ever since then his appearance has been the signal for the band to swing into the Hoosier song.

Besides his great success with 7 Up, Tom Joyce was a busy man with other business ventures in Indianapolis and Florida. Tom added Tom Boy Soda to his sales line with the original tag line of "It's Atomic!" on the bottles, and was President of the French Lick Valley Bottling Company. Tom partnered with John Helmer & Sons Contractors in offering the Indianapolis area home buyers a Lustron House. The Lustron House was a prefabricated home of colored porcelain enameled steel panels which sold for \$7,500 - \$8,000 dollars in 1948. He was also a partner in Joyce Appliances selling televisions and radio sets. Tom was an active Republican in both Indiana and Dade County, Florida politics and in Florida founded and was President of the Columbia Federal Savings and Loan Association as well as the director of two other banks.

When Tom Joyce passed away from a sudden heart attack at his Bal Harbour, Florida home on December 17, 1960 at the age of 62, his estate was worth \$250,000 in personal property plus his real estate holdings in addition to his many business ventures. He had come a long way from his \$300 incorporation over his 25 years in business. Mrs. Georgette Joyce, Tom's widow, was elected by the 7 Up Bottling Company and the Columbia Savings and Loan Association to succeed her husband as President for both ventures. In 1964 Mrs. Joyce started bottling "Like" soda which would go on to become Diet 7 Up. She sold Tom Joyce 7 Up Bottling to Westinghouse in May 1972.

Tom Joyce had several non-7 Up brands, including those pictured below, Tom Boy being a local favorite "It's Atomic"

