



BIOS

Bill Schmidt

The late Bill Schmidt (1927-2007) was an innovator and pioneer in the bottling of Coca-Cola®, as well as collecting Coca-Cola memorabilia. In 1901, his grandfather Frederick Schmidt left his manager position with Southern Railway Express of Chattanooga to purchase a Coca-Cola bottling franchise in Louisville, Ky. In 1920, Fred Schmidt divided the Louisville franchise territory between his three sons with the Elizabethtown territory given to middle son Luke Schmidt. Upon his death in 1941, Luke's wife Irene managed the operation until 1955 when their son Bill, after completing college and serving as a pilot in the United States Air Force, returned to Elizabethtown to take over the family business. Bill and his wife Jan represented the third generation of Schmidt Coca-Cola Bottlers. Bill and Jan began their love and passion for Coca-Cola memorabilia with a trip to an antique art auction in Indianapolis in 1972. Their passion for collecting Coca-Cola memorabilia resulted in filling warehouses. In 1976, dedicated space was created in the bottling plant for the Schmidt Museum Collection of Coca-Cola Memorabilia, which opened to the public in March of 1977. In the fall of 2005 the Schmidt Museum of Coca-Cola Memorabilia moved to its new 32,000-sq.-ft. museum/warehouse facility located just off I-65 at 109 Buffalo Creek Drive, Elizabethtown, Ky.



Bill Schmidt

Jan Schmidt

Jan Saunders was a California girl training to be a United Airlines stewardess when she met Bill Schmidt during a blind date with 12 other Air Force officers and their dates. Jan and Bill married and moved back to Bill's hometown of Elizabethtown, Ky., in 1955. Their passion for Coca-Cola memorabilia began with a trip to Indianapolis in 1972 where they attended an antique art auction and bought enough items to fill their station wagon. "We were hooked," she said. By 1976, their collection of Coca-Cola memorabilia was filling



Jan Schmidt in the museum, 2011



warehouses. In 1976, dedicated space was created in the bottling plant for the Schmidt Museum Collection of Coca-Cola Memorabilia, which opened to the public in March of 1977. After 25 years and almost a million visitors from around the world, the museum closed in November of 1999 due to changes in state visitor regulations. In April of 2001, The Schmidt Museum of Coca-Cola Memorabilia reopened in the Elizabethtown Tourism and Convention Center located at 1030 North Mulberry. The interim museum exhibited over 1,100 rare artifacts from a collection, which now numbers well over 80,000 items. In the fall of 2005 the Schmidt Museum of Coca-Cola Memorabilia moved to its new 32,000-sq.-ft. museum/warehouse facility located at 109 Buffalo Creek Drive, Elizabethtown, Ky. It has been said that Jan and Bill Schmidt's Coca-Cola collection defines Coca-Cola collecting. In addition to her involvement with the museum, Jan Schmidt is currently involved in the Elizabethtown community through various charitable organizations.

Larry Schmidt



Larry Schmidt

Larry Schmidt represents the fourth generation of the Schmidt family to be active in the Coca-Cola bottling business. He began working at the bottling facility in the 1970s. Larry remained active in the management of the business – becoming president in the mid-1990s and staying in the position through the sale of the Coca-Cola franchise in 1999 and the subsequent sale of the bottling and canning facility in 2004. Larry has been involved with the Schmidt Museum of Coca-Cola Memorabilia since its founding in 1977. It has been said that the existence of The Schmidt Museum

of Coca-Cola Memorabilia is the reason Coca-Cola collecting has such a large and passionate following. In addition to his involvement with the museum, Larry Schmidt is currently involved in the Elizabethtown community through various charitable organizations. Larry Schmidt and the Schmidt family have been very philanthropic throughout the years in the Greater Elizabethtown community.

Allan Petretti

Allan Petretti is the leading expert on market trends and values of Coca-Cola collectibles. He sold his printing and advertising business in the early 1970s to devote his full-time efforts to soda pop collectibles. In 1976, Allan began publishing a mail-bid auction dealing specifically with soda pop collectibles. These fully illustrated semi-annual auctions, conducted through nostalgia publications, have become one of the main sources of Coca-Cola memorabilia, selling more than 60,000 pieces. He



frequently conducts seminars around the nation and is a noted appraiser whose expertise is called upon for special collector events at The World of Coca-Cola in Atlanta, Ga. He's also been quoted in *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Robb Report*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *London Times*.

Richard Opfer

Richard Opfer of Richard Opfer Auctioneering, Inc., has met the needs of both buyer and seller with an unmatched reputation for honesty and integrity, complemented by unequalled service and expertise. Richard holds a degree from The Reppert School of Auctioneering in Decatur, Ind., as well as certificates from New York University and the Certified Auctioneers Institute (CAI) where he received top honors. He has gained customers' trust and confidence by combining all these qualities into one simple philosophy: work harder than anyone else in the business. Opfer Auctions is a recognized authority in the toy-and-collectibles industry and has had a full-service auctioneering firm since 1970.

Richard Opfer Auctioneering has put the industry-wide-recognized advantages of the "auction method" to work for its clients. The established, systematic, proven selling strategy is a time-tested procedure for success, outperforming any other marketing approach. Richard conducts over 100 real estate, antique and personal property auctions per year as Richard Opfer Auctioneering, Inc. He has testified in court as an expert witness and qualified appraiser, and has served as consultant at the Mint and Boxed Toy Auction for Christies, New York. Professional memberships include the National Auctioneers Association (NAA), the Certified Auctioneers Institute (CAI), the Maryland Auctioneers Association and the Pennsylvania Auctioneers Association. Opfer Auctions is licensed in Maryland, Kentucky, Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Richard Opfer Auctioneering, Inc., has served the following clients:

- The Estate of Eugene Sussel
- The Collection of Roger Steckler (pocket mirrors and tip trays)
- The Estate of Robert McCauley (swords and weapons, American Indian items, antiques)
- The Estate of Robert Brocksbank (Black Americana)
- The Advertising Collection of Phil & Karol Atkinson
- The Collection of Albert Hendler (cap guns and advertising)
- The Mahopac Farm Museum Auction
- The Cloisters' Children's Museum (antiques and fine art)
- The Detroit Antique Toy Museum
- The Charles Duff Mechanical Bank and Toy Estate
- The Legendary Collection of George Haney (advertising and toys)
- The Bill Norman Collection of Mechanical Banks
- The Tom Anderson Collection (toys and folk art)
- The Gottschalk Collection of Automobilia
- The Larry Schafle Collection (toys, folk art, American Indian items)
- The Jimmy Friedman Collection (comic character toys)
- The Edgar and Donna Orchard Collection (Black Americana)