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MILLERSVILLE, Tenn.---- My friends think it's strange that I drink three or four cans of Diet Mountain Dew a day.

Just imagine if I hoarded the hooch.

I didn't realize Mountain Dew was such a hot collectible until I visited the Museum of Beverage Containers and Advertising and saw a special section called "The Hillbilly Display." That's the portion of the museum devoted to weird names like "Jake and Daisy Dew" and "One That's Able, Says Mable" that were printed on Mountain Dew bottles during the 1960s.

Museum owner and curator Tom Bates says the names honor the folks who worked in the bottling plants, mostly in Iowa and North Carolina. They had throwback rural names to further flavor the impression that Mountain Dew_like moonshine_was distilled locally.

"At one time we had 500 different names," Bates says during a museum tour. "I decided I didn't want to keep them all."

Bates put some of his collection up for sale in the museum gift shop. I bought an empty 1965 "Zeke n' Daisy" 10-ounce bottle of Mountain Dew for \$7. In exciting cursive, the back of the bottle promised, It'll Tickle Your Innards!

Imagine some advertising bigwig proposing that slogan today to PepsiCo, which owns and operates Mountain Dew.

Mountain Dew dates back to the early 1940s when brothers Ally and Barney Hartman of Knoxville, Tenn., were bottling a 7-Up type brew as their own mixer for hard liquor. They named the stuff "Mountain Dew" after Tennessee Mountain Moonshine. The mid-1960s bottles said the soft drink was "Made from flavors specially blended in the traditional hillbilly style."

Hiccup!

In 1946 Barney and Ally affixed a paper label to their brew showing a hillbilly toting a gun and a signature that said `By BARNEY and OLLIE' (they meant it to say ALLY). This bottle debuted at a soft drink convention in Gatlinburg, Tenn., where Barney and Ally were convinced they had a good thing going.

The "BARNEY and ALLY" bottle is one of the hardest-to-find bottles for Mountain Dew collectors. According to the Mountain Dew Bottle Collectors Home Page on the Internet, less than 40 bottles are in existence.

Sometimes it's even hard to find the true origins of Mountain Dew. In 1994 Marion, Va., (pop. 6,620) named itself "The Hometown of Mountain Dew," claiming that William H. Jones invented the drink in their town in 1961. Marion's aim has been to make the town a tourist attraction much like neighboring Rural Retreat, Va., where Dr Pepper was conjured up in a pharmacy.

But a spokesperson for the Chamber of Commerce of Smyth County in Marion said there is no Mountain Dew Museum or shrine for hillbilly pilgrims to visit. However, the Pepsi Bottling Group, 211 Washington Ave. in Marion has a half dozen vintage Mountain Dew bottles on display in its lobby.