

These return trips typically resulted in more pop sales. For many Canadians, the weekly trip to the Pop Shoppe became a ritual.

By 1972, the Pop Shoppe had 14 franchise outlets in Ontario, and the original factory continued to operate in London. The original partners sold their operation to Venturetek International Ltd. (Venturetek), a Toronto-based venture capital firm. With this new infusion of capital, the Pop Shoppe began setting up more franchised depots across Canada. Many of these depots also served as manufacturing facilities, from which the pop was both bottled and distributed. In 1974, the brand expanded into the United States. By 1976, the Pop Shoppe was ranked one, two or three in almost every soft drink classification in Canada, surpassing brands such as Orange Crush and Hires Root Beer. It was even starting to close the gap on Pepsi-Cola.¹ At its peak, the Pop Shoppe's short-necked "stubby" bottles (see Exhibit 2) and its television commercials starring National Hockey League (NHL) player Eddie Shack were icons of 1970s Canada.

By late 1979, sales for the Pop Shoppe chain were in decline as grocery stores began offering private-label discount soda and the traditional soda brands began to offer wider distribution and cheaper prices. Consumers preferred the convenience of the grocery store over the hassle of returning recyclable containers to a stand-alone Pop Shoppe. Losses soon reached \$3.8 million. Although reducing the U.S. operations would have saved a significant amount of money, by 1981, the company decided to abandon its entire U.S. operation and focus on Canadian operations. Unfortunately, these moves were not enough. On November 19, 1982, Venturetek went into receivership, destroying the entire franchise chain.²

THE POP SHOPPE IS REBORN

Despite its demise, the Pop Shoppe remained in the minds of many consumers and memorabilia collectors. Those who remembered the brand could still find remnants of the Pop Shoppe on eBay, at flea markets and at garage sales. For example, popular websites such as eBay and Kijiji commonly listed for sale original Pop Shoppe bottles (some still filled with soda), plastic cases, bottle openers and other compatible products. Although the brand had died in the market, it was still fondly remembered by many consumers.

In 2002, an entrepreneur named Brian Alger stumbled across his next business opportunity. While talking with friends one evening, the group began wondering what had happened to some of their favorite brands and businesses from their childhood. The Pop Shoppe name came up. It was a brand that Alger knew well from his own childhood in the 1970s:

Pop Shoppes bore witness to all the events in my life. It was there at my softball games, my birthday parties, at Christmas. It was in the background, but it was *there*, and it shared all of these things. It just meant a real, good, familiar brand to us.³

He remembered it as a Friday night ritual:

It was one of those things we did as kids. We went out with my parents; it was a real bonding kind of thing. It's rare to find a brand that embeds itself in your life like that, and gives you those kinds of thoughts and feelings when you see the brand.⁴

¹ Blair Matthews, "The Epic of the Pop Shoppe," *Soda Pop Dreams Magazine*, January 2003, www.sodaspectrum.com/shoppe.htm, accessed December 6, 2008.

² Jack Willoughby, "Pop Shoppe's Bottlers Get Rid of Loan Burden," *Globe and Mail*, May 4, 1983, p. B1.

³ Brian Alger, personal interview, October 15, 2010.

⁴ *Ibid.*