

Sawbones 206: Medicinal Soda

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Intro (Clint McElroy): Sawbones is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[intro music plays]

Justin: Hello everybody and welcome to Sawbones: A Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine.

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: [laughs] Thanks.

Justin: This is Sydnee McElroy.

Audience: [cheers]

Justin: And I'm-

Sydnee: And, and this is Justin McElroy.

Audience: [cheers]

Justin: Okay, it did fade a lot quicker for me.

Sydnee: No, they like-

Justin: I was hoping to do some mind games where maybe if I said your name first, they would think I said me and would cheer less quiet, but it didn't pan out. You're a sharp audience and I give you credit.

Sydnee: No, they, they were loud. They, they like you better when I introduce you. When I say your name.

Justin: Maybe. Uh, what a thrill it is to be here in Atlanta.

Audience: [cheers]

Justin: I love your, I love your city. Last time I was here for uh Sydnee, was it at? Sort of a heroin con you were at?

Sydnee: No.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: It was the prescription drug abuse and heroin summit.

Audience: [cheers]

Justin: And no one called it heroin con?

Sydnee: No.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: No.

Justin: Well, we were here before and we really liked it and we wanted to come back.

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Justin: Um and so we uh we went to your beautiful uh aquarium for the second time.

Audience: [cheers]

Justin: Best—you know what? I'm sure people say this every time they come to Atlanta, but I'm just gonna say it. Best aquarium in the world.

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: It really is. Every time we go on one of these tours, we take Charlie to the local aquarium.

Justin: Aquarium.

Sydnee: We've been through a lot.

Justin: And children's museums.

Sydnee: So, it's a really great aquarium.

Justin: Like either one. We go to one of those.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Sometimes we-

Sydnee: We asked, we asked Charlie her favorite part and she went, "Uh, the fish."

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Uh cool. Great.

Sydnee: Okay. Sure.

Justin: Thanks. She was watching a video on her phone at the time, so she wasn't really-

Sydnee: You know? The fish. Whatever mom. I don't care [laughs].

Justin: Um but I, I uh when I was um but when we were coming here in the car last night and when we got picked up at the airport the uh driver said um "Do you guys want a water or a Coke?" And I was like, "That's very novel. A Coke. Perfect. Cool, I'm in Atlanta. I'll have a Coke."

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Gave me a very small Coke that I would estimate was about 65 degrees.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: And when I—and I would—didn't even want that bad it was just like, "I'm in Atlanta. I'm gonna have a Coke." And when-

Sydnee: But it was still great.

Justin: It was still great because-

Sydnee: Don't insult Coke here.

Justin: Well no it was, it was not great through no fault of Coke because when I opened it, it just like exploded [laughs] on me. Presumably getting jostled in a car in the trunk all day long does not do great things for Coke. Um but-

Sydnee: Everybody else knew that they were gonna be warm, so he'd been offering them all day and nobody else took him up on the warm Coke.

Justin: J-man's got his back.

Sydnee: Until Justin.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: But, uh we always try to do an episode topic that's kind of related to where we are when we do these live shows, and we knew—well we don't like know everything about Atlanta. We knew the Coke thing, and [laughs] and I thought, I thought, you know, it might be interesting when you, when you go back and trace the history of soda, of soft drinks, it's very medical. So, this totally relates to our show, so I thought that's what we could, we could talk about, and of course we'll talk about Coke. Of course. Of course.

Audience: [cheers]

Justin: Oh course.

Sydnee: I'm saving that until the end though so that you pay attention because-

Justin: Yeah, and please don't boo enemy sodas. I understand, I understand you people [laughs] Atlanta's still fighting the Cola Wars. The rest of, the rest of us have found peace.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: You, you joke about that but my very dear friend Caroline who's from Atlanta, I drank a diet Pepsi in front of her once and she got legitimately angry at me, and said, "What are you doing?"

Justin: She-

Sydnee: "What is that garbage?"

Justin: She grabbed it out of her hand and dumped it on her head.

Sydnee: No, she didn't do that [laughs].

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: And you'd think she would stop after a little splashed out, she just stood there and watched a whole bottle empty out, and she said, "What's on the floor?" And Sydnee was like, "Well, it's a diet," and she cut her off and said, "Garbage."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: That didn't happen. So, when you-

Justin: It could have.

Sydnee: What we think of as, as soda or I guess it depends on what where you are. Soda, pop, or just Coke. Right? Everything here is just Coke.

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: Either way, what we think of as that originated in drug stores in the late 1700s and they got really popular throughout the 1800s and they were sold in pharmacies or drugstores because they were full of drugs, so that was-

Justin: [laughs]

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: An appropriate place for them to start, and the kind of the story of soda is it starts with mineral water. So, people had this idea that mineral springs, fresh springs, were good for you and you should spend time in them. You should bathe in them for anything. Whatever made you sick, go hang out in a mineral spring and you'll get better. Right?

Justin: No Sydnee. No. You're a physician.

Sydnee: No, but-

Justin: You should know better than this.

Sydnee: But-

Justin: I'm shocked.

Sydnee: Somebody said, "You know what? We need to take this a step further if it's good for you to bathe in certainly this is good for you to ingest." And, so they started selling bottles of that, but the problem was if you wanted to take it anywhere that wasn't at the mineral, at the fresh spring-

Justin: It's a crime.

Sydnee: No. But like, they needed a way to package it or to sell it somewhere without like still having the carbonation. That was the big problem. So there was this whole holdup while they figured out how to carbonate water, and once they figured out how to do that at pharmacies, then they started having just these taps where you can go and get like carbonated water. That's all it was at first. It was just, you know, here's some carbonated water for you.

Justin: Ugh.

Sydnee: Right! Like I didn't, I didn't think that sounded very good, but people loved it, and it was a very elite, fancy thing.

Justin: They don't, they didn't love it. That's just like what passed for entertainment like, "I'll drink some bad water. Like this afternoon I'm gonna go drink bad water." When a waiter asks me if I want mineral or tap water I wanna like play them in basketball and then dunk on them.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Like that makes me so angry. Which the one the that taste like palatable in any way shape or form—I'm eight by the way. I'm eight years old.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: It's worth noting.

Sydnee: More or less.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: But, but it was considered-

Justin: She acts like she likes mineral water. Like she's crazy about it. Like, "Oh Justin, your unrefined palate."

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Uh, I don't—I'm, I'm one of those like it's like I'll drink tap water. I don't care but anyway but it--I'm not, I wasn't fancy enough, because if you're very fancy and you were in the know you would sit at these bars and drink carbonated water and be very fancy.

Justin: And burp.

Sydnee: And talk with your very intelligent there and like, "Let's look at us drinking our very healthy water." Um and that was great, but they needed a way to expand. "How do we get more people to drink this stuff?" And that's where drugs come into play.

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: So-

Justin: You thought she was gonna say flavors but no.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: So, medicine didn't then and still doesn't typically taste very good. So, I mean for the most part. So, there was already this idea that in order to get people to take medicine we have to make it taste better or attractive to them in some way. Part of that was a marketing play, which is why you would get all of these really wild ads telling you like, "This will make your brain function better and this is good for your whole body and this will make you virile," and all that kind of stuff, but part of that was also add stuff to it. Like the most popular was like alcohol.

Justin: Nice.

Sydnee: Just put some alcohol in there and then everybody will want your medicine. Uh but it was really something that you had to put a lot of effort

into to sell, and so you can see where these worlds are coming together where it's like, "Well, we need to sell all of this bubbly water. We need to sell all of these medicines. Let's put all this together and throw in there some addictive stuff maybe."

Justin: Nice.

Sydnee: [laughs] That's always helpful.

Justin: That's a really good way that people don't think about enough.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: To keep [wheezing], customer attention is such an issue.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: One thing that you can do, once you pay for the acquisition of the customer, one very good thing you can do is put a highly addictive substance in them.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: They figured this out with um cigarettes. You ever heard of this?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: They used to smoke and be like, "Why am I doing this? I actually hate this." But then they figured out, "Let's make them addictive," and they were like, "I actually still don't know why I'm doing this but I am going to, and [laughs] will continue to for the foreseeable future."

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: But, and then tobacco was one of the things they used to put in drinks actually in really early sodas.

Justin: They got to be careful about that. Nicotine can be poisonous if you have too much of it, like in Three Act Tragedy the tenth Poirot book. It's nicotine.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: No, we're not doing that. We are not.

Justin: I just finished it. It's not bad.

Sydnee: No.

Justin: It's okay.

Sydnee: No.

Justin: He's not in it a lot.

Sydnee: Mm-hm. Okay. I can't hear any more about Poirot on this trip anymore.

Justin: Okay. Fair enough.

Sydnee: Please. Um so you would put things in it. You'd put flavor in there. That's great, but you would put things like cocaine or tobacco or strychnine or opium or you know, whatever, in there too, and then, or cannabis, and people really liked them and would keep buying them. And so that's where druggists, this is where this started. So, they would start selling these medicines. I mean you would get at like at a soda counter. Like you go up and they would squirt you out a little glass of your medicine that tasted great and had, you know, cocaine in it and it was great [laughs].

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: It was like five cents a glass, and, and that was really popular and that exploded.

Justin: Five cents a glass, cocaine was really popular?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Go on!

Sydnee: I know it's shocking. That exploded during the prohibition era because then you couldn't go get booze, so instead of the hard drinks you turned to the soft drinks. That where soft drinks, that's where they came from. That's where soft drinks came from.

Justin: I wanna be what, I wanna be hanging out with a guy, drinking five cent cocaine when they announced prohibition like, "Who cares?"

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: I feel as good about this as I do about everything!

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: And that, that was really how these like soda fountains why you went and hung out the soda shop. That's how they exploded in popularity is because you can go there, you get the soft drinks that still had like drugs in them [laughs] and good stuff in them, um and that was, and it wasn't a bar so it was legal. And that's also where you got like soda shop started to get these kinds of reputation like, "Oh no. Your kids are hanging out down at the soda fountain. You know? Watch out. That's a dangerous place."

Which eventually overtime soda fountain didn't like and they wanted to be more family friendly and so they—that's when you finally see them stop marketing these things as medicine, and just calling them a beverage and then everybody lost interest because eventually as we'll talk about they take all the fun stuff out of soda. You know?

Justin: Ah.

Sydnee: Yeah. So, what is the story then behind all these different sodas because they all started out in some drug store, some pharmacist made them as a medicine for some reason, and then they became a beverage. Well, one thing I did want to address before I get into this, the ones that we know now is the concept of a phosphate.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: I have heard this before. Like, like in a—like somebody trying to be old timey and be like, "Hey, give me a phosphate there buddy." And I always wondered like I don't know what. Do you know what a phosphate is?

Justin: I mean that's hysterical what you're doing is so funny, but what does that mean?

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: I'm loving this character that you've done but...

Sydnee: [laughs] No, I just mean like you, you said that and I'm like I don't know what a phosphate is.

Justin: Can I get more, some more, a little bit more than old timey characters though.

Sydnee: No.

Justin: I know you got a little bit more for me.

Sydnee: Never again. So, it was, all it was-

Justin: If you could just say twenty-three skidoo, we can all move on.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: All it was, was early on when they started making these sodas a really popular thing to add was phosphoric acid, and it had a very sour taste and you would throw it in there and phosphoric acid was thought to be really good for a bunch of stuff.

It was great for high blood pressure. It wasn't, but they thought it was. It was great for any for indigestion. It was really good for nervousness, and exhaustion. Just get a phosphate and that'll pep you right up. That's where that comes from, was that you would go, and it was just a really sour carbonated water.

Justin: Is it? That's yum. Um, again it was very boring back then. Um, is that what the stuff that's in diet Coke that use like they have to put the warning on the can about—you know what I'm talking about?

Sydnee: No. No. You're, that's, are you talking about Phenylketonurics and phenylalanine.

Justin: What?

Sydnee: But that's a whole other thing.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: We won't get into that [laughs]

Justin: She just knows words like that!

Sydnee: But that's a whole other thing.

Justin: And she's married to me, and she knows words like that.

Audience: [cheers]

Justin: What did I do?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: Thank you.

Justin: Say some more sweetie. Just like one more. One long one.

Sydnee: Um, I wanna talk about root beer.

Justin: Heck yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Gross.

Sydnee: Um, one of the, one of the earliest kind of beverages, well medicines turned beverage that arose was root beer. People had already been uh kind of using the ingredients of root beer as medicinal tonics for a long time, so this was a natural fit for like soda fountains.

Justin: Lot of roots, right? Like well, that's was a stupid, God a stupid-

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Stupid. I was trying to not make a joke and being like urbane for once and the word root is right there in the name of the beer.

Sydnee: I know.

Justin: What a stupid thing to say. What an idiot. Ugh.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: I'm so proud of you.

Justin: I'm not saying anything else. Just do your thing. I'm not saying anything else.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: I'm not coming back from this.

Sydnee: So, they, most early root beers had either sassafras or sarsaparilla in them. Sassafras was thought to be a great medicinal plant.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: That's what it's called. It's called sassafras. Um for, I mean for centuries, and it could treat—it was really, it was a cure all. You could use sassafras to treat uh tooth aches, rheumatism, swelling, general swelling, menstrual problems, um if you had sexually transmitted infections or bronchitis. Any of these things-

Justin: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: You could [laughs] you could treat with sassafras and so sassafras in root beer was a really great—they were like, "Hey, now this is a really healthy beverage and it tastes," I mean people—I'm sorry. I, I understand everybody loves root beer. I don't. I don't get it myself.

Justin: No.

Sydnee: People love root beer.

Justin: It's bad.

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: People who love root beer though really love root beer.

Justin: Oh yeah. There, they like to show off like, "Oh you don't. I'll take yours." Like fine.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: I don't care.

Sydnee: But, but the problem with sassafras-

Justin: Have you ever been offered a root beer and it's the only option and it's like, "Are you kidding me?"

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: I once went to somebody's house and they were like, "Do you want something to drink?" I was like, "What do you have?" All they had was root beer, and I was like, I looked at this and this is what I really said, "I'll drink water."

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Pft. No really. I drink water.

Sydnee: It's unheard of [laughs].

Justin: I know.

Sydnee: Uh so the problem with sassafras was safrole. So that's an oil that is in sassafras and it, I mean proba—in small amounts it's fairly harmless, but they started doing studies on safrole. They found that when they were injecting larger amounts safrole into rats, they got cancer and so there was this big stir, "Should we be putting sassafras in beverages if it's un—I mean it's totally unregulated.

We have no idea how much; I mean you could go on a root beer kick and drink gallons of root beer and then we don't know how much sassafras you got. So, they started removing sassafras from beverages. Now you will find it back today but that's because we actually have a process where we can take the safrole out of the sassafras so you can still have sassafras, but, but that's why it's not in there.

Justin: I still don't want any.

Sydnee: No.

Justin: Thank you for offering.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Um sarsaparilla though took over as the more ingredient, more found in uh root beers. And it was also thought to be a cure all but specifically it was thought to be helpful for syphilis, so this really helped root beer out [laughs].

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Especially when you consider that we, we were still dealing maybe you should inject mercury into your penis because you have syphilis.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Drinking a root beer.

Justin: Yeah, I'll take the root beer. Thank you.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: No. You know what? I just thought about it. I would still take the needle in my penis.

Audience: [cheers and laughs]

Justin: Take that root beer.

Sydnee: It's not that bad. Um [laughs].

Justin: Got 'em.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Also, root beer if you're in here, I am sorry.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

[intro music plays]

[ads play]

Sydnee: From, from root beer there came other sort of like plant based or root based beverages and that's where you start to see the creation of things like ginger ale or ginger beer or birch beer or my favorite of this kind of group is Doctor Brown's Cel-Ray. Now there are fans of Cel-Ray. I had never heard of Cel-Ray, and I was really excited to learn about this celery flavored soda. This is still around. You can still go buy Cel-Ray. It's still a thing.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: I-

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: You were always the one to tell me weird food facts and I don't know how you don't know this.

Justin: Now, weird soda's my dad.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: My dad will be like, "Hey they made, they made Pepsi hot.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Great dad.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Do you mean like left it-

"No. Like temperature hot. It's like spicy now."

Thanks? Cool? I guess. Great. How is it?

"Bad!"

Okay.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: You didn't see that coming.

Sydnee: So, from, from my understanding Cel-Ray isn't bad. Uh it, it came apart— it came at a time when celery was thought to be a major health food. So, this was in the, in the late 1800s everybody was eating celery if they could get it because it was, it was just thought to be good for you for every reason. It was really thought to be like one of the healthiest superfoods you could eat. And so, you wouldn't just find celery drinks, you would find like celery gum. Uh, seriously there were celery soaps that you could use so that you could like infuse [laughs] yourself with celery, and it was, it was thought to specifically be really good for like your stomach and your bowels and your digestion and all that kind of stuff um but it was, it was just generally thought to be a good healthy tonic. And so, this is where Cel-Ray came from. It was really just celery seeds. So it's not like—don't imagine them like grinding up celery and sticking it in a drink, and I mean it is, it's like, it's supposed to be like a light bubbly refreshing soda that happens to taste like celery.

Justin: It sounds okay. Not that we've all marinated in it for a little bit like it sounds all right.

Sydnee: It uh it actually, it was generally sold in delis and it, I guess it complimented really well like a rich deli food, like a big like pastrami sandwich or something. So, you would have that, and you'd have a Cel-Ray and it was really popular, and you can go buy them still today.

Justin: Yeah. I, I would love that.

Sydnee: So, there you go. But now we know that celery, I mean celery's not, I mean it's fine. I'm not saying it's bad for you like.

Justin: It's, it's basically water right?

Sydnee: It's—yeah.

Justin: It's water you eat.

Sydnee: It's like green crunchy water and that's and that's great if that gets you to have your water but, you know, it's celery. Coke actually did make a celery cola at the time, but it did not catch on.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Heh. Um one, one drink that I have to mention, one soda that isn't as popular in most of the country but if you go up to Maine I understand that you will find Moxie-

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: [laughs] And it's very popular there. And, and our friend John Hodgman talks about it, so I had to mention it.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um Moxie is a New England based soda. It was introduced in 1884 by a Doctor Augustine Thompson, and it was supposedly made from this very rare south American plant that one of his friends, a lieutenant Moxie brought back, and they turned it to a tonic. It was originally thought to be this brain and nerve toxin or tonic that would-

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Not a toxin. Although I don't know.

Justin: Do you confuse them a lot Sydnee?

Sydnee: I [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Depending on—from the way I've described, from way I heard the taste described, mm, I don't know. Either way, but it was supposed to be really good for your nerves. It was supposed to be good for quote loss of manhood.

Justin: All right.

Sydnee: Helplessness.

Justin: Hopelessness?

Sydnee: Helplessness.

Justin: That's a good soda!

Sydnee: Maybe, maybe it was hopelessness.

Justin: It's a very good soda.

Sydnee: Softening of the brain. It was good for that.

Justin: For doing that or not? For undoing it?

Sydnee: No, it was good to fix it.

Justin: Okay. Got it.

Sydnee: Yeah. It was a tonic. Moxie was supposed to really good for all that stuff.

Justin: I just didn't know if softening the brain was ideal or not ideal.

Sydnee: It did, it did have, it had gentian violet in it, which is actually an anti-fungal. It actually is.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: That's kind of interesting.

Justin: All right.

Sydnee: And, and you'll actually find it in some bitters too because bitters started out as medicine as well. And Moxie still, I think it's like the official drink of Maine, and it's still around if you go up to New England, go up New England way, you can go buy Moxie. But I hear the taste is challenging.

Justin: Challenging.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Challenging. Now some sodas that we're more familiar with, also started out as medicine, one that I will just mention briefly is of course Pepsi. Um [laughs].

Audience: [boos]

Sydnee: I know. I know.

Justin: I asked you specifically.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: I was [laughs].

Justin: I will now spend the rest of podcast admonishing you.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: It was—I just think it's interesting it was, it was also created um by a pharmacist, Caleb Bradum, and-

Justin: A dumb pharmacist. Right?

Sydnee: Dumb Caleb.

Audience: [cheers]

Justin: I asked you.

Sydnee: And, well.

Justin: I asked you to not do this.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Why I mentioned it though is the name—I didn't know this, Pepsi originally was called Brad's Drink.

Justin: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Which [laughs] which is a terrible name. It's a, I mean it's awful.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: And can you imagine the confusion every time. "What you drinking?"

"Brad's Drink."

Justin: Brad's Drink.

Sydnee: "Does he know?"

Justin: Yeah. He left it unfinished.

Sydnee: [laughs] So-

Justin: Oh God, that's good.

Sydnee: So, Brad's Drink was introduced [laughs] um it was supposed to be a digestive aid, Brad's Drink, and eventually they, for obvious reasons it's a terrible name, they changed the name because it had-

Justin: It's a great name.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: It had pepsin in it, which was to aid in digestion and then it had kola nut, cola, and so they changed it later to Pepsi-Cola because of those things and also because nobody, I assume, was buying Brad's Drink.

Justin: "Do you want Brad's Drink?"

"Um no, I'll get my own. I think."

Sydnee: No. I like Sydnee's drink, please?

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know Brad.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Uh so, and, and of course it's not as good as Coke. Obviously.

Justin: Yeah. Okay.

Sydnee: Obviously.

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: Now my personal favorite and America's oldest soda, is Dr. Pepper.

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: That's my—I'm sorry. That's my personal favorite. Uh it, it has a medical name even. It was created in Waco Texas by Charles Alderton in 1885 and it was sold in a place called Morrison's Old Corner Drug Store.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: That was really the name of this store.

Justin: Folksy.

Sydnee: I know, and uh and at first it was called a Waco, so-

Justin: That's very good.

Sydnee: Yeah. He invented it and they started selling it at this drug store and people would say, "Hey, shoot me a Waco." And they fly up a little cup of Waco and you'd drink that.

Justin: Was it called Waco or A Waco?

Sydnee: No, like Waco.

Justin: Ah, all right.

Sydnee: Sorry.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: It's fine.

Sydnee: For where it was.

Justin: I just thought it was like because it woke you up in the morn—if you had one, it's like, "Ah, a Waco."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: No, it's just like the part-

Justin: Your thing makes more sense.

Sydnee: Yeah, like just like a town. Uh Morrison bought it from him, the guy who owned the drug store, bought it from the pharmacist who developed it, and renamed it Dr. Pepper for another pharmacist that he had like apprenticed under and respected, Charles T. Pepper, and so there go. Neat, and also Dr. Pepper's probably a better name and more widely applicable.

Justin: It's actually kind of a buck wild name.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: We were just kind of like all used to it. If someone introduced a new soda today and they were like this is my soda, Dr. Felepe, you'd be like, "That's actually a wild name for a soda because it's not a medical doctor at all. It's a cola.

Sydnee: It was, it was the same as everything and a lot this just had to do with the fact that these drinks had caffeine in them, so they were marketed as like brain and nerve tonics. They would, they were thought to stimulate your brain function and make you more awake and give you more energy. I mean they had caffeine so, you know. That was pretty much it.

Justin: Yeah. It works. Got the job done.

Sydnee: Um, it, the only thing I'll say about Dr. Pepper is I once had an eye doctor on an eye exam look at my eyes and say, "Do you drink a lot of Dr. Pepper?"

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: And I said, "Yes." And I don't know how he knew to this day.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Very happy Halloween.

Sydnee: Now ooo [laughs].

Audience: [laughs and claps]

Sydnee: I don't know what it does to your eyes. I don't know. 7Up. This is one of the, one of the interesting ingredients, we all know that caffeine was in all these drinks but 7Up has really strange origins. A

businessman named Charles Grigg invented it in 1929 and it was called Bib-Label Lithiated Lemon-Lime Soda.

Audience: [laughs and cheers]

Sydnee: Because it contained lithium initially.

Justin: Whoa.

Sydnee: Which I did not know that. Now lithium, you may know medically is used of course to this day as a mood stabilizer, and it had been known to have these sorts of properties for a very long time. Lithium was used for a variety of different psychiatric diagnoses, but in its heyday lithium was also thought to do a lot of other things, so in addition to treating those illnesses it could be used for things like gout or kidney stones or arthritis so why not just put it in a beverage, unregulated and sell it to everybody [laughs].

Justin: Oh, I know when I—I can handle, I can handle this one.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Because-

Sydnee: Go ahead.

Justin: It's dangerous.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, [laughs] and then, and, and by the way they knew, they knew what they were selling too because their original slogan, the original slogan of 7Up was, "Take the ouch out of grouch." It was-

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: All right.

Sydnee: Will elevate your mood with all the lithium in there. The, of course the problem with lithium is that it has kind of a narrow therapeutic index so, as long as your levels are in a certain range that's fine, but once it gets above that you can become toxic, and nobody was measuring how much 7Up you were drinking or well at the time the Bib-Label Lithiated Lemon-Lime Soda.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: So eventually they had to remove lithium in the 1940s. Um the name 7Up, they're not, nobody's entirely certain where he got that because obviously it changed. Again, some of this is just obvious like nobody was gonna buy I can't even remeb—every time I have to look at it every time I—Bib-Label Lithiated Lemon-Lime Soda. Nobody's gonna buy that so it may be from at the time it was sold in seven-ounce bottles.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: It may be that it had seven ingredients.

Justin: All right.

Sydnee: They're not sure, and then the other thing is that there was like a very common cattle brand that was used and it was a seven with a U, and it's thought that this guy Grigg just really liked the look of it.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: And that's why he called his soda 7Up.

Justin: I mean it's no worse than any of the others. Right? They called that one Brad's Drink. Remember.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Like it probably, I probably, I can help with this. He did something and then he looked at it and said, "Well it's better than Brad's Drink."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: The up, by the way, is because like it's carbonated and the bubbles go up.

Audience: [laughs].

Sydnee: 7Up [laughs].

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: That's the thought anyway. I don't know. I feel like-

Justin: I mean, and you drink it down so like what are we doing?

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Like it could be anything. This is Calvinball.

Sydnee: [laugh] Um so finally Coke. Let's get to Coca-Cola.

Justin: Okay.

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: I feel like and I feel like telling the story of Coke is really silly here because it like that's what you guys do around the holidays.

Justin: Damn, that's all their history.

Sydnee: Right.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: It's all their history classes are.

Sydnee: You sit down. No, I picture like family gatherings like everybody sits down and then like, you know, dad gets out the big book of Coke and by the fire like has this pipe, and is like, "Now listen children as I tell you," and everybody can, is like, "Dad, not again. We all know."

Justin: We all know that miraculous story of Coke.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: The birth of Coke.

Justin: Also, considering that Coke invented Santa Claus is actually not such a buck wild theory.

Sydnee: It's actually, yeah.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: They did, totally. Uh so John Pemberton was a Confederate Colonel who was wounded in the Civil War.

Justin: [laughs] All right, a lot of-

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Sorry. Sorry. He was.

Justin: We can't do this.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] And uh [laughs] and from, from his wound he was treated with morphine, which was available as a pain killer at the time, and-

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: And he developed an addiction, and it began to seek something-

Justin: Thank you for not wooing addiction.

Sydnee: Yes.

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: But, but he made something good out of it because he began to try to find something to help him fight this addiction with something else that can be used to treat this morphine addiction that by this point in history we knew was a problem, and so he ended up discovering Vin Mariani which was a very popular European tonic that had been made out of combining alcohol and the coca leaf, and because it, you could extract more out of the cocoa leaf with the alcohol and so you had this really delicious fortified wine with cocaine in it [laughs].

Audience: [cheers]

Sydnee: That was for some reason really popular and-

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Was thought to be able to restore health and vitality. And so, he started, he tried it, and he thought, "This is amazing." Um.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: "I need to make this and sell it." And so, he developed his own that he initially called French Coca Wine, and it had wine and it had cocaine, but then he threw in there some kola nut because then you have caffeine too [laughs]. So, this is the best beverage ever that he has now created. And uh, and oh, and initially some damiana which was supposed to be an aphrodisiac so...

Justin: Mmm.

Sydnee: You just cover all your bases with this French Coca Wine. So that was initially what he started selling but the problem was Prohibition came very shortly after this, and so he had to kind of make do without the wine. We had to get the wine out of there. So, he started adding sugar syrup instead of wine, and then at that point the main ingredients were the coca leaf and the kola nut and Coca-Cola was born. And it was initially marketed as a nerve and brain tonic again because it was thought to stimulate you and give you a ton of energy and make you able to think more clearly.

Um [laughs] they thought it was really good for again, for stomach. For stomach. So, for like dyspepsia and things like that, and for any kind of erectile dysfunction. It was marketed a lot for that, like, "Ah, you have a— just drink a Coke, and then that's fine." And it, just all the other drinks I talked about it was originally sold at drugstores. You'd get a little glass of it. Five cents was the general price, um and I should note that these, Coke was not the only drink to initially have cocaine in it. It was a pretty small amount is my understanding. It would be like a, like a tenth of a line of Coke I think someone estimated.

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: Sorry that's a metric that you are sort of comfortable enough with that you can just like use and we're all supposed to be like, "Ah, a tenth of a line. Sure."

Sydnee: Well, you know. I-

Justin: "Okay."

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: I don't know.

Justin: So as much as I would normally do when I myself, a human, do a line of Coke, which is a tenth of that.

Sydnee: Like a tenth of that.

Justin: Got it. Perfect.

Sydnee: So, it wasn't like a ton-

Justin: I'm not saying nobody does Coke. I'm saying-

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: I mean I don't-

Justin: Just as a measurement.

Sydnee: I mean I just don't, I—that's the mea—that's the measurement I found. Anyway, so there were some [crosstalk].

Justin: Like might as well just be like an acorn cap of Coke. Like I-

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: I don't know the amount that tenth of a line is.

Sydnee: A [laughs] so there was, my point is that there wasn't a ton of cocaine. I mean granted if you, if had a lot of nickels you could eventually ingest a lot of cocaine you know.

Justin: And a big bladder.

Sydnee: So [laughs].

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: So, it was really popular. Obviously, the cocaine was removed in 1903, so there is not cocaine still in Coke or in any of these beverages because the FDA came in and said, "Why are we letting you put cocaine in these drinks?"

Justin: And they were like, "Yeah, you got us. Sorry."

Sydnee: "This is a really bad idea."

Audience: [laughs]

Justin: "Good point. Good point. Fair. Fair. Fair."

Sydnee: Uh and the only caveat I'll add to that is that and, and Coke obviously became America's leading beverage brand and a lot of that had to do with the marketing and advertising, which was always genius and ahead of the game. And so, everybody bought Coke and it tastes great. Obviously. And one of my favorite because uh so Coke has been out, cocaine has been out of Coke for a very long time, but everybody kind of always knew that like, "Didn't it used to, didn't it used to have cocaine?"

And I feel like in the 1980s Coke started an advertising campaign that was based on this kind of like, like mythological like, "Didn't it have cocaine in it," belief, which it did. Um, called Coke in the Morning, and it was the eighties. And I feel like that they were trying to market it to everybody like, "Don't do coffee anymore. Do Coke in the morning." [laughs].

Justin: Coke in the morning.

Sydnee: Do Coke in the morning.

Justin: Catch the fever.

Sydnee: I feel like I, I—that had to be like a like, like wink, wink, "Coke in the morning."

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Anyway.

Justin: And now-

Sydnee: My understanding is it didn't catch on. People still drink coffee [laughs].

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: Sorry.

Justin: Um, and uh that's the story of sodas. You guys you—would—is it medically advised for anything anymore? I know at the hosp—at our hospital they have Shasta products [laughs].

Audience: [laughs]

Sydnee: No. I mean...

Justin: So, let's hope that the soda is not medicinal.

Sydnee: No. There's the, that's the sad code I will say is that nowadays I spend a lot of time trying to convince my patients to drink less soda.

Justin: Ah well.

Sydnee: So.

Justin: We'll get them next time.

Sydnee: It's no longer medicinal beverage but, there you go.

Justin: Oh well.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Uh folks that is gonna do it for us. Thank you so much for listening here um.

Audience: [cheers]

Justin: Thank you to the Cobb Energy Center for the Performing Arts for having us. Um we're gonna be back with My Brother, My Brother and Me here in a second but uh we're gonna take a little break before that but um thank you to the Taxpayers for the letting us use your song Medicine as the introduction to our program. That is gonna do it for us for this week though. My name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: And as always, don't drill a hole in your head.

Audience: [cheers]

[Intro music plays]

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