

PRESENTS

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Small Texas breweries confident of survival

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — Small breweries in Texas say they are confident they can survive the dominance of national brands and avoid the fate of the more than 700 local and regional beer makers that have gone out of business in the past 50 years.

Budweiser and Miller, which share 52 percent of the nation's beer-drinking market, spend more on a single 60-second television advertisement than the Spoetzl Brewing Co., brewers of Shiner Beer and the only independent brewery in Texas, spends on advertising in an entire year.

Texas beer industry experts say those huge national advertising budgets have contributed to the demise of most hometown breweries: only about 40 breweries operate nationwide today compared to 750 in existence in 1933.

"There has been for a number of years predictions that the brewing industry would reduce itself down in nature similar to the automobile or soft drink industry, with very few companies controlling most of the business," said Bill Monroe, vice president for marketing for Lone Star Beer in San Antonio.

"In some sense, that's coming true because many regional breweries didn't know how to compete and went out of business," he said. "But regional brands today that have learned to compete against national brands in almost a David and Goliath type situation are doing well."

Lone Star was an independent brewery until 1977 when its stock was traded for stock of Olympia Brewing Co. of Washington. Pearl Brewery, also based in San Antonio and formerly independent, was pur-

chased by General Brewing Co. of San Francisco in 1978.

Monroe said Lone Star was stagnating in the spring of 1980 when it launched an advertising campaign humorously featuring a giant armadillo and the slogan, "the national beer of Texas." The ads turned the company around, Monroe said, and resulted in a sales increase of more than 20 percent.

"The regional brewers have got to realize they cannot compete in the same fashion the national companies do, that we just don't have the resources available," Monroe said.

Lone Star was stagnating in the spring of 1980 when it launched an advertising campaign humorously featuring a giant armadillo and the slogan, "the national beer of Texas." The ads turned the company around.

"With our appeal being the national beer of Texas," Bud with all their money and Miller with all their money cannot be identical to us with whatever they do with creative marketing."

In the central Texas town of Shiner, population 2,100, the white brick Spoetzl Brewery has been standing a few blocks from the tiny downtown area since 1909. It is the last independent brewery remaining in Texas.

Modernization of manufacturing equipment in the early 1970s increased Shiner's pro-

duction ability, but the brewery still produces only 40,000 barrels of beer a year — about 500,000 cases.

"What we produce here a year long some of the large brewers would produce in two weeks," L.K. "Speedy" Beal, sales manager for Shiner, said. "We have a better chance of survival today than we did 10 years ago, but it's still a struggle."

Beal said Shiner has survived because Texans have developed a pride in their "homegrown" brand.

"People are looking for something in our beer they don't find in a national beer, and I guess that's called character," Beal said.

"The trend is toward small things because the giant industries have been turning the world around. Smallness takes you back to the time when America was being settled and every business was small."

Shiner Beer's annual advertising budget is about \$40,000, and the bulk of that is spent for promotion at local events such as chili cook-offs, bazaars and rodeos. In January, 6,000 cases of Shiner were shipped to California for the brewery's first venture out of state — except for the shipment of 5,000 cases to Nigeria several years ago.

Lone Star also anticipates moving out of Texas, but only across the border into Shreveport, La., where a distributor will serve East Texas.

Unlike the other two small breweries in Texas, Pearl Beer distributes its product in about 20 states and attributes its survival to its success in the light beer market.

Pearl, Shiner and Lone Star all agreed a trend toward regionalization in America could help save the nation's few remaining small breweries.

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United Press International
AUSTIN — Republican Eric Samuelson, who contends the U.S. Constitution authorizes only gold or silver coin as valid payment for debts, lost a bid Wednesday to have the Texas Supreme Court rule on whether

his \$1,500 filing fee for the governor's race could be paid in paper money, checks or bullion.

Samuelson said in his petition if he lost the case, he would withdraw from a race against Gov. Bill Clements in the GOP primary.

He lost. He had asked the court for permission to file legal briefs and make arguments before the court contending that the U.S. Constitution provided only for gold and silver coin as payment of debt.

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