

Royal Cafe:

50 YEARS ON MAIN STREET **PART 4 OF 6**



By GARY DIELMAN

For the Baker City Herald

Editor's Note: This is the fourth in a six-part series of articles written by Gary Dielman, a longtime Baker County historian, that explores the vital role that Chinese immigrants played in the county's history. The series, which started in the Nov. 6 issue, focuses on the families who owned the Royal Cafe on Main Street in Baker City from 1936 to 1990. The series will continue over the next two weeks, publishing in Saturday issues.

The Engs Come to Baker City

After Wah Eng retired to China, Harry continued running the import-export business in Pendleton until about 1924. Harry, Allan, Gan, and Jack partnered to purchase the Pendleton Café, which they operated from 1924 to 1934.

Sometime between the end of 1934 and early 1935, Harry, Allan, Gan, Jimmy, and Jack moved to Baker City and began operating The Tea Garden Café on the second floor of 2009 Main St., formerly owned by Gracie Toy (1898-1971). Toy chose to start a new restaurant, Toy's Noodle Parlor, at 1917 Court St., which she operated under various names until retirement in 1970.

The 1930 federal census of Pendleton lists Allan and Harry as living in a boarding house that included Germans, British and Italians. The next source of the whereabouts of the Engs is found in Baker City Directories, which list businesses, the owners, spouses, residence, and whether they are renters or owners.

In Baker City Directories (BCD) for the years 1930-1935, there is no mention of Engs. However, the 1940 census indicates the Engs arrived in Baker City in 1935.



Baker County Library Historic Photo Collection

Gooley and Faye family in 1952. From left to right, Mary Lou, Dorothy, Paul, and Richard. Photo taken on the front steps of their house at 1425 Court St.

The Baker County Library does not have the 1936 BCD. First documented mention of the Engs available in the library is found in the 1937 BCD, in which Jack Eng is listed as manager of The Tea Garden restaurant located on the second floor of 2009 Main St. (above today's BELLA Main St. Market). Listed as living in apartments across the hall from the restaurant are Jack Eng, plus Allan Eng and Harry Eng, cooks at The Tea Garden. The Royal Café is not mentioned in the 1937 BCD.

First mention of the Royal Café (1910 Main St.) is in the 1939 BCD. (The 1938 BCD is missing.) Jack is listed as manager of both The Tea Garden and Royal Café. Workers listed at the Royal Café are Gan Ong, Harry Eng, and James Eng; residence for all of the Engs in 1939 was still 2009 Main.

The 1940 BCD is missing, as are BCDs for the WWII years 1942-1945. Fortunately the library has the 1941 BCD, which lists numerous Engs working at the Royal Café: Allen (Allan), Gan, Gooley (pantryman), Harry, Jack (also as manager of The Tea Garden), James (Jimmy), Robert Eng (son of Allan's brother), plus two non-Eng workers, Jan and San Toy. Looking under the name Royal Café in the 1941 BCD, we find listed as owners: Allen, Harry, Gan, Jack, and James. After the war the 1946 BCD listing of owners had not changed.

Royal Café's Support of the American war effort

On Dec. 12, 1941, five days after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, the Democrat-Herald ran an article about two of the owners of the Royal Café, Jack Eng and Jimmy Eng, who had each bought \$2,000 defense savings bonds. In an

interview Jack Eng said, "I don't know why this should be so unusual. We are just doing our part and plan to do much more. After all, we Chinese must fight twice as hard, because we have twice as much to settle with Japan!"

Indeed, the Engs did contribute much more. All five of the original owners and two sons volunteered to serve in the U.S. military. Jack and Harry were rejected for medical reasons. Gan Ong and Jimmy Eng both served stateside in the Army. Harry's son, Gooley Eng, who enlisted in the Navy in July 1942 at age 20, was the only one to serve overseas.

As a cook on a ship that sailed all the way to Guadalcanal, Gooley observed the results of the land and sea battles fought there at the beginning of the U.S. war against Japan in the Pacific. Gooley was assigned to a small transport boat which sailed

Summary of the 1940 Federal Census of persons residing at 2009 Main St. in Baker City

The April 8, 1940, Federal Census listed nine male Chinese restaurant workers living in second-floor apartments at 2009 Main St. (above present BELLA Main Street Market): Jack Eng, Gan Eng, James Eng, Allen Eng, Harry Eng, Gooley Eng, Shou Heen Lew, Ah Pon Lui, and Eddie Wu. (Across the hall on the Main Street side of the building was the Chinese Tea Garden restaurant, where many, if not all, worked.)

All nine Chinese had been living there since April 1, 1935, all born in China, all had an eighth grade education, and all worked 60 hours per week. Total apartment rent for all nine residents was \$50. Individual resident information follows:

- Jack Eng, age 36, head of the household and manager of a restaurant and received no wages.
- Gan Eng, 37, lodger and a partner of a restaurant and received no wages. (Gan's official surname at immigration was Ong, a common spelling variant of Eng.)
- James Eng, 34, lodger, a partner of a restaurant and received no wages. (Jimmy is his real first name.)
- Allen Eng, 41, lodger, a partner of a restaurant and received no wages.
- Harry Eng, 41, lodger, a partner of a restaurant and received no wages.
- Gooley Eng, 19, lodger and dish washer at a restaurant; earned \$800 in income for the year 1939.
- Shou Heen Lew, 18, lodger and dish washer at a restaurant; earned \$800 in income for the year 1939.
- Ah Pon Lui, 41, lodger and cook at a restaurant; earned \$900 in income for the year 1939.
- Eddie Wu, 40, lodger and cook at a restaurant; earned \$1,000 in income for the year 1939.

around the Solomon Islands for two years between early 1943 and early 1945. Gooley's service in the Navy ended in January 1946, when his escort carrier was in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, where his ship was involved with the atomic bomb testing in the Marshall Islands. By the time he was discharged, Gooley had obtained the rank of Ship's Cook, First Class, a rank equal to Chief Petty Officer, and was in charge of one of two kitchens on a ship with a 3,000-man crew.

After discharge from the Navy, Gooley, who was not yet married, heard about the GI War Brides Act that allowed persons who served in the military to bring wives to the U.S.

Instead of returning to Baker City, Gooley worked a year as a cook at the Evergreen Hotel in Vancouver, Washington, in order to earn enough money to return to China and pay for an elaborate wedding. In Chinese tradition it was the groom's family who paid for the wedding.

In 1947 Gooley returned to China, where he was introduced to his future bride, Faye Lee, by a woman from the same village, who had married into the Eng village. After several dates Gooley and Faye were married in October 1947. In early 1948 Gooley and Faye sailed on the S.S. President Wilson from Hong Kong to San Francisco and on to Baker City.

D.B. Cooper legend began 50 years ago

By DOUGLAS PERRY

oregonlive.com

"Bomber hijacks Portland jet flight," The Oregonian's headline screamed from the front page.

"Skyjacker, \$200,000 Sought Here," offered The Oregon Journal.

Fifty years ago, on Nov. 24, 1971, a "nondescript," well-dressed man bought a \$20 ticket at Portland International Airport and boarded Northwest Orient Flight 305 bound for Seattle.

That man would hijack the Boeing 727 and ultimately parachute out of the plane somewhere over the Pacific Northwest. He took \$200,000 in ransom with him.

The Journal's coverage the next day included an interview with a Flight 305 passenger named Richard Simmons, who ran an employment program, called Job Therapy, for former convicts.

"I'm sure (the skyjacker) will need therapy such as we offer, for he certainly will not get away with this and will be caught," Simmons said.

It turned out Simmons was



The Oregonian

The Oregonian on Nov. 25, 1971.

wrong. The skyjacker almost certainly never partook in Job Therapy, for he was never found, the crime never solved.

And ever since Nov. 24, 1971, the mystery of D.B. Cooper (the skyjacker bought the ticket using the name Dan Cooper) has fascinated people the world over. Last weekend, more than 200 people gathered at the Kiggins Theatre in Vancouver for CooperCon, a celebration of the case's myriad theories and suspects. The FBI officially abandoned the hunt in 2016.

The arrival of the half-century mark has spiked interest, but the heyday of

Cooper fascination was the 1970s — right here in the Pacific Northwest. That's when the annual celebrations of the skyjacker spontaneously started in Ariel, Wash. That's when T-shirts with the message "D.B. Cooper, where are you?" popped up at Portland stores.

An example of how Early Coopermania expressed itself: Someone secured a credit card in the name of D.B. Cooper and started having luxury items sent to an apparently random office at 4429 NE Broadway in Portland. The cardholder never paid for the purchases, of course, prompt-

ing American Express to send a letter to the office that began: "Dear Mr. Cooper: Quite frankly, the American Express Card is not for everyone."

The quest to find the real D.B. Cooper, meanwhile, continued apace.

Five years after the skyjacking, a farmer in Clark County discovered a "tattered and moss-stained" pair of pants in a tree. He called the FBI, and G-men hustled out to the farm — though they seemed a little embarrassed when reporters also showed up.

"All we want to do is pose the question, 'Are these his pants?'" Agent Dick Dyer told the press. "We've been getting pants, parachutes and

parachute cords for five years. I'm not that excited about it, but we've got to give it the full shot."

Despite that full shot (the agents sent the potential evidence to the FBI Lab in Quantico, Virginia), we still don't know if those were D.B. Cooper's pants. Just as we don't know the skyjacker's real name or whether he survived the dangerous nighttime leap from Flight 305.

The same year that produced the wayward pants also saw publication of a comic D.B. Cooper novel, "King of the Midnight Blue," by a Seattle writer named Darrell Bob Houston. "Sex and Skyjack Shocker," the book's cover promised.

Houston immediately received feelers from Hollywood, he said, but he scotched any potential deal by demanding a whopping \$200,000 for the rights — in 20-dollar bills, plus four parachutes.

No matter. Like most Cooper chasers over the years, Houston wasn't in it for the money. Something about the mysterious skyjacker spoke to him.

"D.B. Cooper was an outlaw, yes," Houston said while promoting his book in Portland. "But I guess the saving grace was that he didn't hurt anybody. Besides, if we eliminated all the outlaws, like Billy the Kid and Jesse James, what heroes would America have left?"

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