

Ann's Bakery Has Sweet History in Tulsa

Dana Simon | Posted: Monday, January 30, 1995 12:00 am

Ann Bay

Personal: 88; born in Springtown, Texas; widow of Raymond Bay; two children, a son, John Bay, who is deceased, and a daughter, Sharon Pollock; nine grandchildren.; five great-grandchildren.

Professional: Owner of Ann's Bakery.

Education: 1924 graduate of Blair (Okla.) High School. The town is 10 miles north of Altus.

Interests, hobbies: Oil painting, fishing at a cabin on Grand Lake.

Ann Bay freely shares her memories. She has plenty of them.

Bay, 88, and her husband, Raymond Bay, who is now deceased, began their Tulsa bakery business, Ann's Bakery at 7 N. Harvard Ave., in 1938.

During those many years, Bay said, she has seen a myriad of changes.

"From the horse and buggy to the moon. What better time could a person live in?" asked Bay.

"I remember the very first car I saw running down the road," Bay recalled.

It was in her hometown of Springtown, Texas, a community near Fort Worth, long before World War II and the Apollo moon launch.

She said she has lived through three major United States depressions. There was one in 1907, a year after she was born, and two depressions thereafter. Her family moved to Oklahoma when she was 9 years old.

Bay, the youngest of 10 children, said she fondly remembers much about her childhood.

She also willingly shares many memories about her life as a Tulsa businesswoman for the past 57 years

Bay worked for Wolferman's located on 15th Street. She was a "city

salesperson" for Hawk's Ice Cream Company on 11th Street.

Her husband, who she devotedly described as "the finest baker that was ever in a bakery," worked in a local bakery.

Bay's husband was a "dreamer." His wife told him about a bakery that was for sale. They bought it and still "kept their day jobs."

They worked nights until they could get the new venture on its feet, then they bought a house in 1938 on Harvard Avenue on the eastern rural perimeters of Tulsa. They lifted the house from its foundation and built their bakery on the ground floor.

At the nearby intersection of Admiral Boulevard and Harvard Avenue there was a grocery store on one corner and a drugstore on another.

It seemed to be a smart business maneuver.

It proved to be so. It has become the home of a long-time tradition for many Tulsans, who have bought birthday, anniversary, good luck and retirement cakes, cookies, pasteries, pies, bread and various sweet confectioneries, from the establishment.

Through the years, Bay's husband invented a doughnut machine and a bread and roll machine.

That is when "hired help was hard to come by," she said.

"It's been fun. It's been tragic, too, losing a husband and a son," the astute businesswoman said.

Bay's husband died in 1968 and her son, John, died of cancer 1 1/2 years ago.

Bay remembers the "bread lines" following World War II. The lines stretched for several blocks when commercial bakers went on strike. The privately-owned bakers worked day and night to provide loaves of bread for Tulsans.

Bay said she feels fortunate that her business has continued to be good.

In the early days bread prices were two loaves for 15 cents.

Cinammon rolls sold for 20 cents per dozen. Sandwich bread was 12 cents a loaf. Salt-rising bread was 10 cents.

The bakery still sells the salt-rising bread. Bay said Ann's Bakery may be the only one in Tulsa still using the culinary technique.

Yeast bread also is sold.

A business setback was when the city of Tulsa bought a northern portion of her business to build the I-244 expressway. This blocked two accesses for deliveries. It also took a critical parking lot.

The business survived.

The gentlewoman said she has loyal customers from all over northeastern Oklahoma. She said people drive from Broken Arrow, Claremore, Collinsville and throughout the Tulsa area to buy the fresh products.

"We've made so many good friends over the period of time. I wish I had kept a record of all the wedding cakes we've made," Bay said.

She recalls making 55 wedding cakes in one weekend and 150 birthday cakes in a weekend. That was before large supermarkets started selling "ready-made" cakes, she said.

She shared one of her secrets.

"All you have to do is give the customers good quality at a fair price," she said.

Bay credits her daughter, Sharon Pollock, with much of the recent success. A granddaughter, Shannon Morey, who is Pollock's daughter, is following in the her mother's and her grandmother's footsteps as a baker and cake decorator. Bay's daughter-in-law, Kay Bay, also works in the office.

Pollock, her mother attests, is a skilled cake decorator. The

"specialty cakes" are popular. Pollock will replicate an individual's portrait from a photograh. She recreates the photo on

the top of the cake. The duplication is uncanny.

Cakes might resemble the cake's lucky recipient or international celebrities. She has done Michael Jackson and Elvis, for example.

Other creative cakes might look like a driver's license, or a special theme, such as, Disney characters or a decorative idea appropriate for a baby or bridal shower or a wedding motif. The themes are endless.

One memory Pollock has is that her mother, Ann Bay, taught her the alphabet by having her form letters writing with tubes of colorful cake icing. The creation of flowers and the other artistry followed. There are 25 employees currently working at Ann's Bakery. The shop stays open six days a week, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., although baking hours are much longer.

"I'll bet we've fed more street people than any other bakery," Bay said. She said nothing is thrown out each day. The fresh products are given to the homeless and charitable organizations, she said.

A few years ago, Bay received encouragement from a nephew to indulge in her favorite hobby, oil painting. She said it is now her love, although she keeps a keen eye on her business. And she said she will continue to do so.

"This has been a fun place. It would be hard for me to leave it," she said.