Green Bay Press-Gazette Tuesday, June 1, 1982

Well-known city booyah chef Bob Baye dies

By HARRY MAIER
Of the Press-Gazette

Chef Bob Baye has died.

For years, newspaper advertisements for area church picnics carried the line "Booyah — Chef Bob Baye."

That was the line that helped bring out the crowds.

Chef Bob Baye, 71, was Robert W. Baye, a retired employee of 41 years from Fabry Glove Co., a city alderman and county board supervisor for 16 years and a booyah chef for more than 40 years.

Baye, 715 Grove St., died Monday after a long bout with cancer.

It was the booyah for which he was known throughout the Green Bay area.

He best could be described as a person who presided over his booyah. Cooking a batch of boiling booyah in anywhere from one to

Robert W. Baye

eight kettles over wood fires was his specialty.

A day at the kettles with Bob Baye started about 5 a.m. and continued into the afternoon, stopping only when the last kettle had been emptied and a few beers had been consumed.

Baye particularly liked to place his kettles close to the church which was hosting a picnic. He figured the aroma of the cooking booyah was sure to attract a crowd later in the day.

And that it did, along with a comment from Baye addressed to nearly every passerby.

A native of Green Bay and long active in local politics, Baye knew thousands of persons, and had a quip for most.

He started in the booyah business with his father, Hubert, when he and his wife cooked for area lumber camps. That's where he got his experience cooking in heavy cast-iron kettles over wood fires.

He admits he modified his father's recipe a bit, but the flavor only got better.

For a typical 50-gallon kettle the ingredients include 100 pounds of chicken, bones and all, 20 pounds of ox tail, 25 pounds of diced onions, 25 pounds of sliced cabbage, two No. 10 cans of peas, two No. 10 cans of tomatoes, 25 pounds of celery, 25 pounds of carrots, 50 pounds of potatoes, 2½ ounces of poultry seasoning, 3½ cups of salt, 8 tablespoons of pepper and 12 or more gallons of water.

Preparation time is about five hours.

When the first kettle was ready it wasn't unusual to have 50 persons in line with their containers for carryouts.

Baye always said it was the seasoning that counted, and the booyah fans knew it.

Jack Noel, a longtime employee of City Hall, worked with Baye at booyahs for about 15 to 20 years.

"Bob had a following," Noel said. "People would watch for the ads and go from picnic to picnic, wherever he was cooking."

The Rev. Donald Buzanowski, pastor of St. Patrick's Church and a chef in his own right, recalled "the booyah always was good. I espcially appreciate the time he broke down his recipe so I could cook it in my small kettle."

Baye also was a charter member of the Green Bay Stadium Commission and served as the City Council liaison to the appointed School Board. He was also a longtime member of the Park Board.

In his younger days, Baye was involved in local sports, particularly softball. He also coached five championship boxing teams at SS. Peter & Paul School.

Funeral services will be at 11 a.m. Wednesday at SS. Peter & Paul Church.

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Meet the 'Booyah King'

By LOIS KERN
Press-Gazette Staff Writer

Bob Baye is the undisputed "Booyah King" of Green Bay.

To area residents, booyah is what attracts many of them to church picnics every Sunday from June to September. To tourists, it's something most of them never heard of. But if tourists are in the area and are tantalized by the aroma from the steaming kettles, they get acquainted in a hurry.

The Press-Gazette has received requests for booyah recipes from many states.

Booyah is not found in the standard cookbooks, only those published by a church or civic group. There are many ways to make booyah, and a lot of the local booyah cookers wouldn't dream of parting with their secret recipe.

But not Bob Baye. He carries copies in his pocket because he knows at every function where he is serving the delicious vegetable chicken soup, that somebody will ask for it.

Baye has been in the "booyah business" for 40 years. Although his father, Hubert Baye, was a cobbler by trade, the older Baye and his wife cooked in lumber camps. That's where Baye got his initial experience of cooking with steel kettles atop woodburning stoves.

He modified the recipe used by his father, just a bit. "I don't use wax beans and corn any more, unless the people ask for it," he explains.

What he does use, and this is for a 50-gallon batch, is 100 pounds of chicken, 20 pounds of ox tails, 25 pounds of onions, 25 pounds of cabbage, two No. 10 cans of tomatoes, two No. 10 cans peas (with liquid), 25 pounds of celery, 25 pounds of carrots, 50 pounds of potatoes, 2½ ounces poultry seasoning, 3½ cups salt, 8 tablespoons pepper and 12 gallons of water. This will add up to about $125 worth of good eating.

Baye says "I never cook with 'flat' water. . .I always add the seasoning early." He allows at least five hours of preparation time. If you've ever worked on this detail at a church picnic, the first thing you learn is that you'll have to be on the grounds early in the morning.

Although not listed with the "ingredients," Baye suggests a big garbage can and a half full of wood per kettle. "If you're cooking on blacktop or cement, make a sand base about two inches deep," he advises. Hardwood paddles are used to stir the booyah.

Baye estimates that he cooks about 15,000 pounds of chicken per year. That's 1,500 kettles of the stuff. He cooks at church picnics, backyard picnics, for private clubs and this year will make booyah for three weddings. He made the booyah for the picnic held to mark the closing of Whitney School.

Infact, his booyah is so well-known that his name often appears on the advertisements for the event at which he will cook.

His skills have taken him to Oshkosh, Sheboygan, Appleton, the Skunk Hill tavern in Kaukauna, and even at Frog Station. "I've had several requests to make booyah in Chicago," he reports. Baye has also cooked under differing conditions, such as in rain, under canvas, and he even once wore his apron over a snowmoible suit.

Bob says "You can be cooking 10 kettles of booyah, all with the same ingredients and the same time schedule, and have trouble with one. Maybe it isn't the same color product as the others. So you borrow some from another kettle."

At clean-up time, the kettles are washed twice with soap and water, and then greased with cooking oil to preserve them. The kettles come in 25, 50 and 80-gallon capacities, and the larger ones cost in excess of $200.

Baye used to be recognized primarily as a sports figure in the community. He coached all sports at Saints Peter and Paul School. In fact, it was his association with the sports program there that started him in the booyah business. The booster club asked him to prepare it for their fourth annual picnic at Bay Beach. That was in 1938.

Not only Baye, but his brothers were involved in sports. Bob played baseball for Herrick's Clothing, the Press-Gazette and Stiller's. If he wasn't pitching, he was in the outfield or on first base.

He coached five championship boxing teams at Saints Peter and Paul, working with Gussie Bodart. One of his seventh and eight grade teams won a Press-Gazette tournament. He's proud that some of his kids went on to make starting line-ups at St. Norbert College.

Baye says what he likes most about working at picnics, especially at Saints Peter and Paul parish, is that so many of the boys he coached make a special effort to see him there.

Baye's activities do not stop with sports and booyah. He also served as alderman of what was then the 10th ward for 16 years, and has been on the Lambeau Field Stadium Commission since it was organized.

Bob retired three years ago from the Fabry Glove Co., after 50 years, but he's far from retired when it comes to making booyah, which is almost a full-time job for him. He credits his wife as his efficient secretary.

His final word of advice to anybody who chooses to follow in his Sunday specialty is: "Plan a busy Monday. Then you won't feel the aches so much."

'Booyah King' Bob Baye Serves Jack Crowley

Wednesday, June 23, 1982

Bob Baye's booyah recipe

Bob Baye, the booyah chef, died May 31. For years, he was a familiar figure at most of the Green Bay area church picnics, where he presided over heavy, cast iron 50-gallon kettles of the booyah that made his name synonymous with the chicken-vegetable stew.

A request to print Mr. Baye's "family size" recipe for booyah was recently received from Dr. Kenneth Strebe of Mountain.

"As a lasting tribute, it would be nice for his fans to continue to enjoy his booyah," Strebe wrote.

Following is Mr. Baye's recipe:

BOB BAYE BOOYAH

10 gal. water (six bowls per gallon)
20 lbs. chicken
3 lbs. oxtail or beef
5 lbs. onions
4 lbs. cabbage
4 bunches celery
5 lbs. carrots
10 lbs. potatoes
2 (28 oz.) cans tomatoes
2 (15 oz.) cans peas
¼ C. salt
1¼ tbsp. pepper
1½ tbsp. poultry seasoning
2 oz. flavor enhancer (add to your taste)

Simmer all ingredients in water for seven to eight hours.