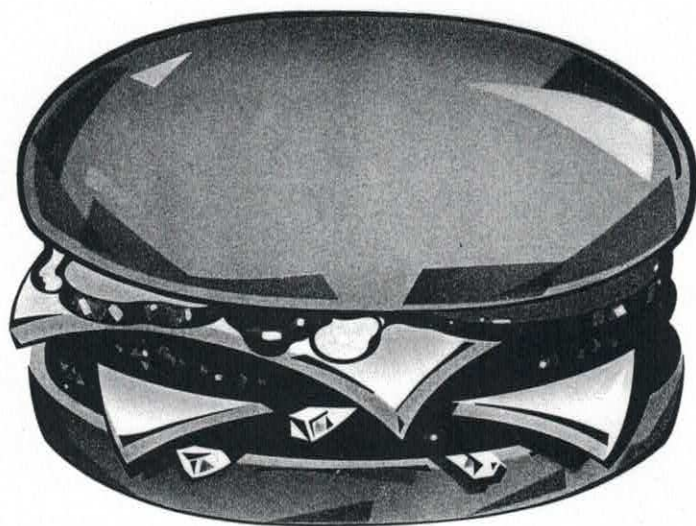


THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY
OF THE HAMBURGER

Hamburger Heaven

JEFFREY TENNYSON



HYPERION • NEW YORK

D E D I C A T E D

to my loving and supportive family Betty, Don, Lisa, and Rob Tennyson,
and to a great friend and inspiration Jay Brown.



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in the United States of America. For information address
Hyperion, 114 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10011

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tennyson, Jeffrey.

Hamburger Heaven / Jeffrey Tennyson.—1st ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 1-56282-982-3

1. Hamburgers (Sandwiches)—History.
2. Hamburgers (Sandwiches)—Collectables.
3. Fast food restaurants—United States—History. I. Title.

GT2868.5.T46 1993 338.4'76479573—dc20

93-11054

CIP

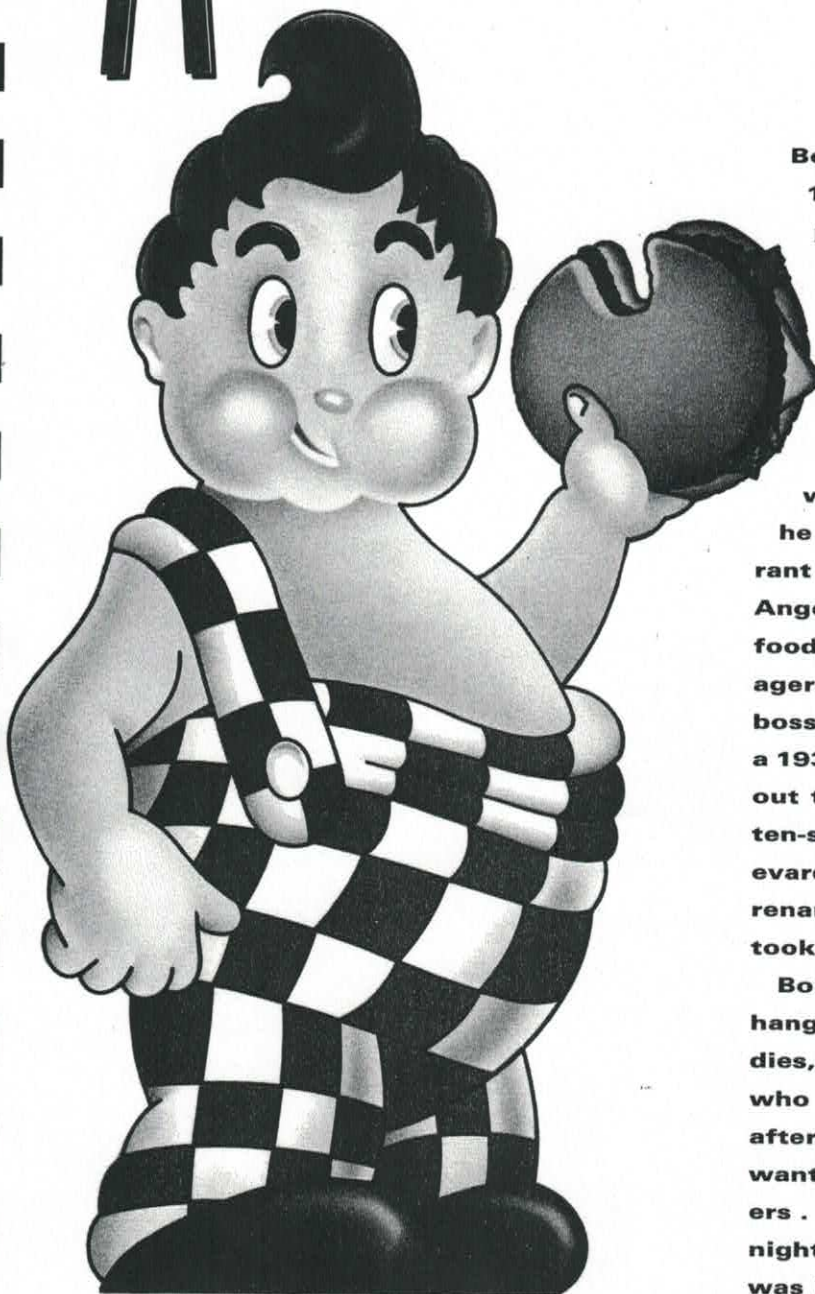
FIRST EDITION

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Book Design: Jeffrey Tennyson
Cover Illustration: David Willardson

A BIG BOY IS BORN

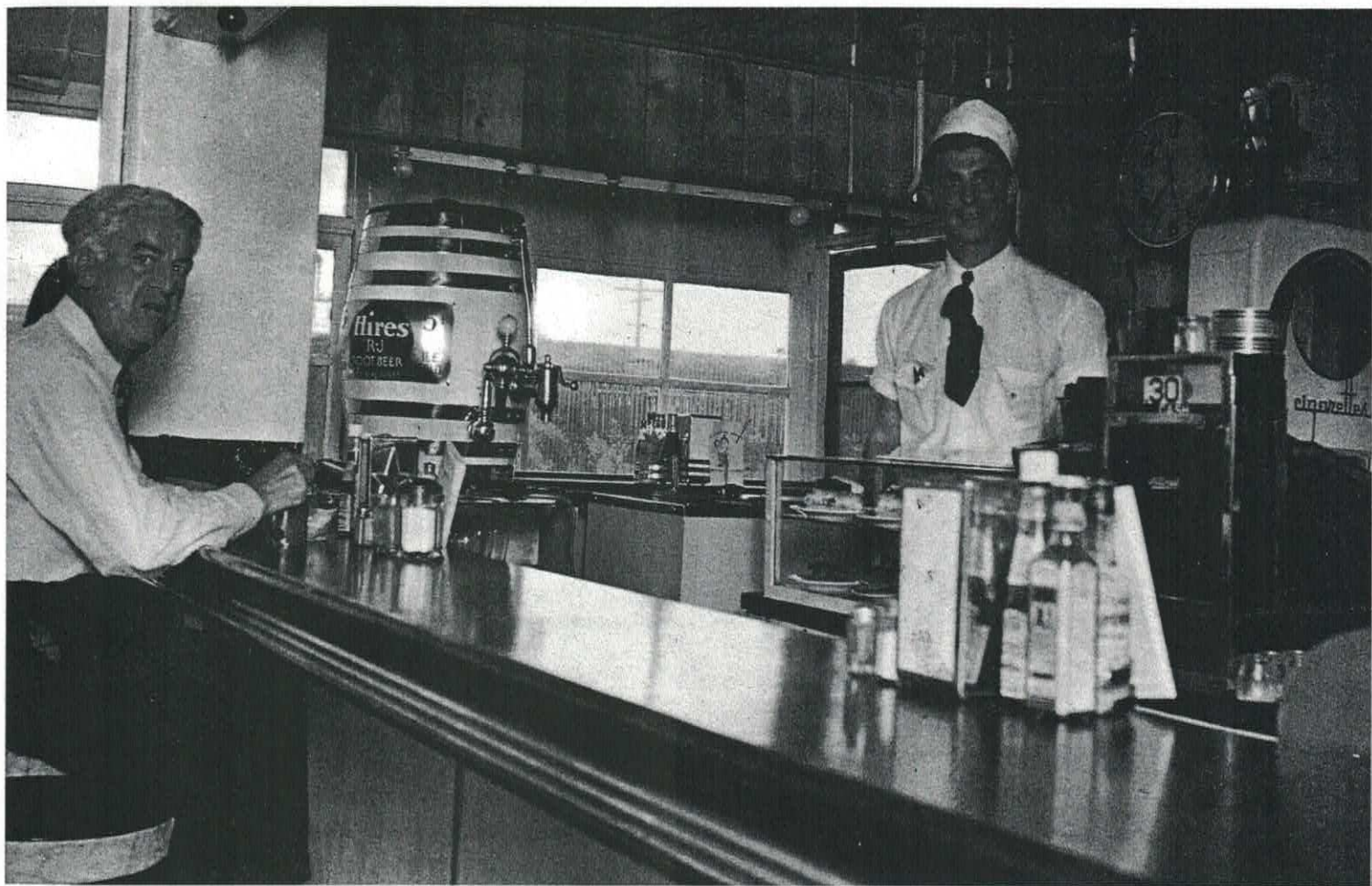
BOB WIAN DOUBLES THE FUN



THE ORIGINAL BIG BOY.

Bob Wian was just out of high school in 1933 when his father's furniture business, pinched by the Great Depression, was forced to close its doors. To help out his family, young Bob became a dishwasher at a southern California restaurant chain called the White Log Tavern. There, in a matter of months, he worked his way up to store manager and was pulling in \$21.75 a week. In 1935 he joined the popular Rite Spot restaurant in his hometown of Glendale, near Los Angeles, and he learned the finer points of the food service business from his friend and manager, Len Dunigan. Eager to become his own boss, in 1936 Wian sold his prized possession, a 1933 DeSoto roadster, for \$300, and bought out two elderly ladies who operated a small ten-stool hamburger stand on Colorado Boulevard in Glendale. The going price: \$350. He renamed it Bob's Pantry, and on his first day took in twelve dollars.

Bob's one-man operation became a popular hangout for a group of his high school buddies, members of Chuck Foster's Orchestra, who would often stop in for a late night bite after a gig. Bob always knew what they wanted. Naturally they'd order hamburgers . . . and lots of 'em. One chilly February night in 1937, Stewie Strange, the bass player, was heard to utter these words: "How 'bout

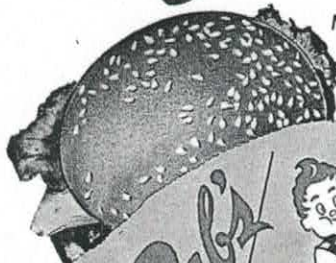


THE LEGENDARY BOB WIAN, INVENTOR OF THE DOUBLE-DECKER HAMBURGER, BEHIND THE COUNTER OF HIS FIRST BOB'S IN 1937.

something different for a change, Bob?" Wian decided to have a little fun with the guy. He carved a sesame seed bun in three slices, added two burgers between them, then layered it with lettuce, cheese, and relish.

Mr. Wian maintains that it was his intention to make this leaning tower of burger "look ridiculous" and thereby fill his customer's request for something truly "different." But, as he tells it, "the double-deck burger juices were absorbed by the center bun. It was delicious, and everybody in the band wanted one." At that moment, yet another major milestone in the course of hamburger evolution,

Bob's BIG BOY HAMBURGER



Made as Only We Know How . . .
Two Patties of Freshly Ground
Hamburger, Served on a
Special Baked Sesame Seed
Toasted Bun with Mayo-
naise, Lettuce, Cheese
and Topped with Our
Own Relish . . .

45¢



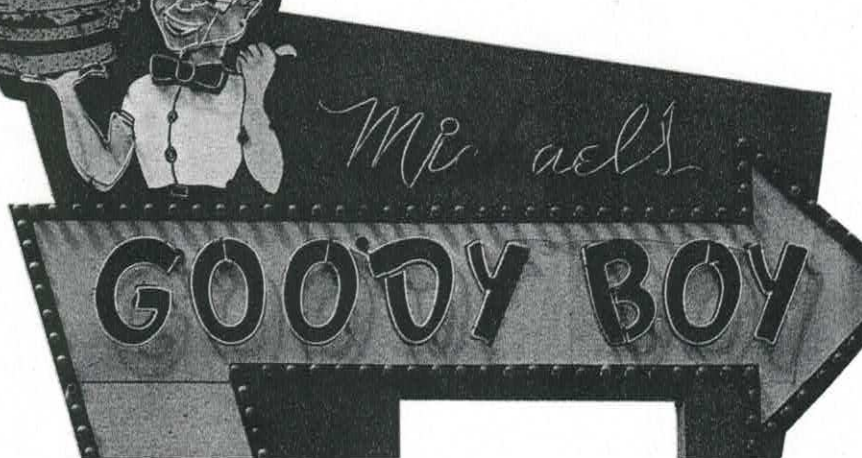


Bob knew that he was onto something—this fistful of fun on a bun—ought to have a name.

The name came almost as quickly as the concept, and was inspired by a chunk of a lad named Richard Woodruff, who would often drop by the Pantry to help Bob out with sweeping and cleaning chores in exchange for a hamburger or two. Richard was six, and lived down the street. He was short, plump, and as the story goes, he would often wander into the restaurant wearing a pair of droopy overalls. His nickname was "Fat Boy," a name Wian initially considered for his bigger, better burger, but "Fat Boy" was already in use as a product trademark, so he christened his creation the "Big Boy" hamburger. Another regular at the Pantry, a Hollywood cartoonist, sketched the now famous "Big Boy" caricature on a napkin, an image which launched several billion burger bites.

When word got around about Bob's invention, folks began to line up for a taste, and as sales of the Big Boy sandwich sizzled, other burgermeisters took note. Soon double-decker burgers were as common as bunk beds at summer camp, and rotund little "Burger Boy" mascots were everywhere, as Big

AS HIS FAME GREW, THE BIG BOY EVOLVED, AND SCORES OF IMITATORS LIKE GOODY BOY AND FAT BOY FOLLOWED HIS LEAD.

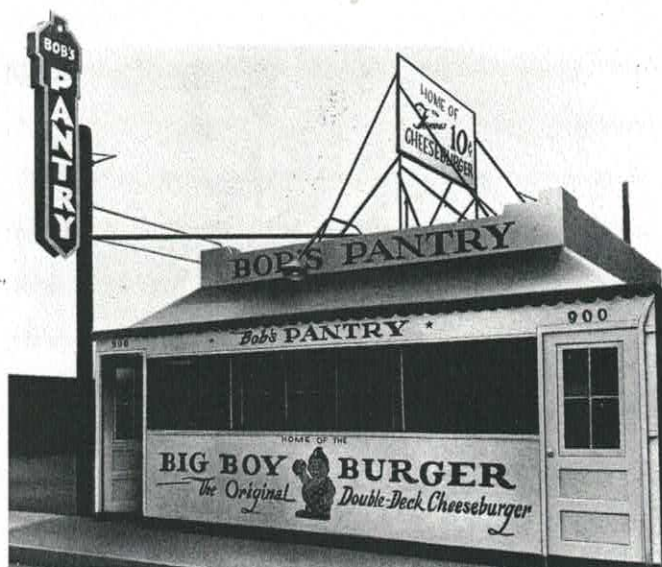


Boy begat Chubby Boy, Hi-Boy, Bun Boy, Beefy Boy, Country Boy, Brawny Boy, Husky Boy, Yumi Boy, Lucky Boy, Super Boy, and several hundred other variations on the theme.

Within three years, Bob had enlarged his original location and opened a second in the Los Angeles area. In 1948 the king of the double-decker hamburger was voted mayor of Glendale. By 1949 he was the proud father of three Big Boy Restaurants, each combining a modern coffee shop interior with a "snappy service" drive-in in the rear of the building. In 1950 over 2½ million Big Boys were served, and by 1955 his growing chain of burger emporiums sold 5 million 45-cent Big Boys, on which his staff of burger builders (affectionately referred to as "Boyfriends") applied 38,000 gallons of mayonnaise, 5 million bottles of ketchup, and 25,000 gallons of relish.

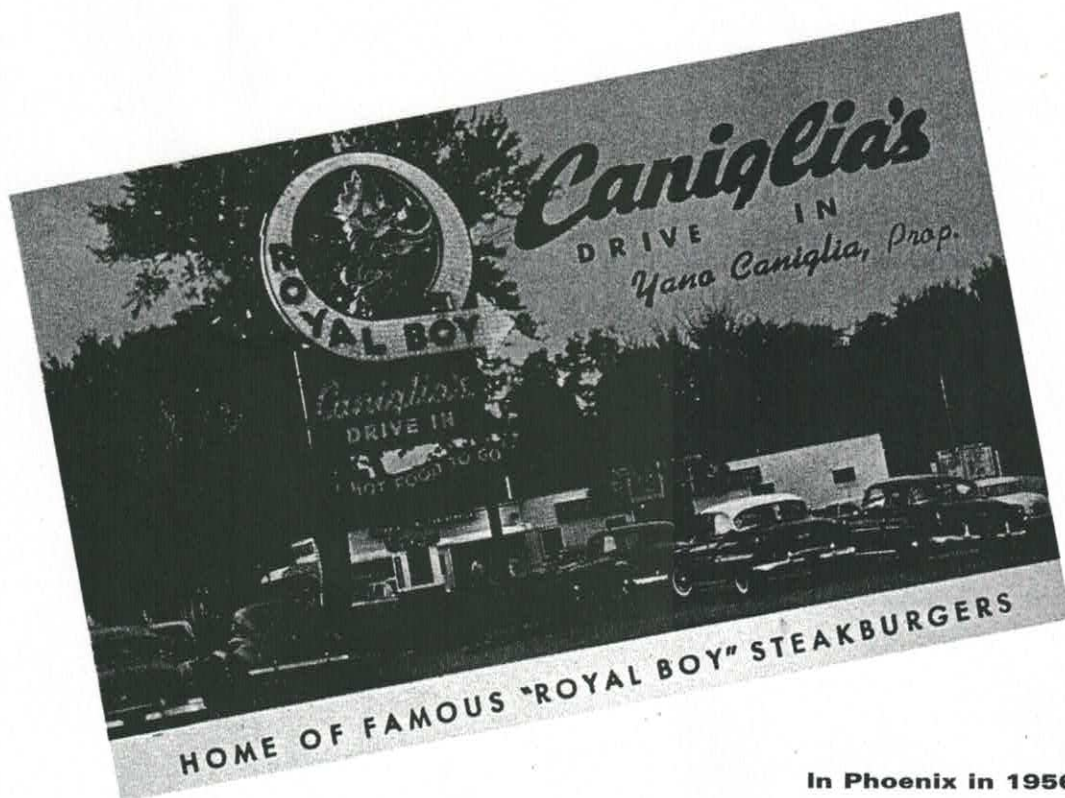
By the mid-Forties Wian started looking eastward. In 1946 he signed a franchising agreement with Dave Frish of Frish's restaurants in Cincinnati, paving the way for Frish's Big Boys to enter Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Florida. In franchising the Big Boy name regionally the unique arrangement allowed each particular sponsor to claim the Big Boy as its own. Hence the variety of independent surnames attached to the famous Big Boy burger: In Michigan the hamburger was marketed at Elias Brothers' Big Boy Restaurants. In Tennessee it was the exclusive property of Shoney's, and of Kip's in Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. It was Manner's Big Boy in Cleveland, Vip's in New Mexico, Abdow's in Massachusetts, J.B's in Utah and Nevada, while Elby's brought the Big Boy to Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

IN THE MID-SIXTIES, FRISCH'S BIG BOY BROUGHT THE FLAMBOYANT CALIFORNIA-STYLE COFFEE SHOP DESIGNS OF ARMET AND DAVIS TO TAMPA, FLORIDA.



WIAN'S FIRST BIG BOY RESTAURANT, BOB'S PANTRY, ON COLORADO BOULEVARD IN GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA.





THE PHENOMENAL SUCCESS OF THE BIG BOY INSPIRED A NATIONAL EPIDEMIC OF BURGER BOYS BEARING DOUBLE-DECKERS. RICHARD'S TRADEMARK DUO FEATURED THE CALIFORNIA TWIN-BURGER.



In Phoenix in 1956, amid considerable fanfare, Bob unveiled "the nation's most elaborate hamburger joint." At a cost of over a half a million dollars, the newest home of the Big Boy drew crowds in record numbers. *Time* reported "a dawn to dusk flow of people and automobiles drawn by a compelling image: the 12-foot-high statue of a bright-eyed, chubby child, with a brown cowlick, and 'Big Boy' emblazoned on his chest."

This state-of-the-art operation, described in restaurant trade journals as "a drive-in coffee shop," provided drive-in service for fifty cars, and a large dining room with counter service seating one hundred. The design included two kitchens and dual fountains, better to serve the restaurant's split personality, and enough



COUNTRY BOY



BUN BOY