

Summary – Andy's Diner

The spirit of the recently-departed Andy's Diner still resonates with Seattleites. A long-time fixture along 4th Avenue S, Andy's was famous for charbroiled steaks served in actual railroad cars and its collection of authentic railroad items and pictures.

After four years in Reno working at a hotel restaurant, Andrew Nagy Jr. relocated to Seattle and in short order married [], the daughter of local theatre magnate John Hamrick. In July 1949 the Nagys opened "a novel dining spot ... a regulation steel dining car with the wheels removed and fitted it up as an attractive café" at 2711 4th Avenue S, about a mile and a half south of the central business district. In 1956 Andy's Diner moved another mile farther south to 2963 4th Avenue S, and it's this incarnation that Seattleites fondly remember.

Nagy's nephew Andrew Yurkanin had joined him in the restaurant business in 1955 as manager and jack-of-all-trades at the soon-to-be-renamed Dixie Flyer Diner on Aurora Avenue. When the ex-Dixie Flyer was moved to 4th Avenue S in 1958, Andy Yurkanin followed suit and continued to manage the rechristened Andy's Too Diner. By 1959 he had become a full partner with Nagy and moved uptown, as it were, to Andy's Diner (the Andys were familiarly referred to as "Big Andy" (Nagy) and "Little Andy" (Yurkanin)).

By 1959 the diner's business was booming. More railcars - a bar car, a club car, and an executive car - had been added, and an entrance building had been constructed. Andy Yurkanin recalls the diner's golden years: "We served about 1200 people at lunch on a goof day - we had capacity for 380 people, and we filled the place 3 times over. We also served between 200 and 400 dinners." The fare was originally typical diner food, with a growing focus on steak and prime rib dinners. Saturday, the busiest night, kept long-time employees Alberta Lemonde and Betty Ayers active. Thornton "TA" Wilson, Boeing Company chairman, was a regular customer, stopping in three times a week.

The Andys began expanding their business as early as 1961 when they opened a restaurant called Li'l Abner's based on the cartoon character created by Al Capp. Only a single Li'Abner's saw the light of day, however- apparently hillbillies couldn't compare with railroad, when it came to restaurant themes - and by 1964 the concept was defunct. Undeterred, Nagy and Yurkanin opened a string of successful restaurants in the 1970s: Andy's Tukwila Station in 1976, the Eugene Station (now called the Oregon Electric Station) in Eugene in 1977, and Andy's Auburn Station opened on C Street in Auburn in 1980, among others.

After Andy Nagy passed away in October, 1980 Andy Yurkanin carried on until his retirement in 1996 after nearly 40 years in the restaurant business. His son ran the restaurant for a few years until it was purchased by two local businessmen. The end came in 200 when Andy's closed its doors.

In a sense Andy's Diner lives on; its collection of railroad cars are still in place and functioning as a restaurant called the Orient Express. But much to the regret of longtime Seattleites the old-time diner experience is gone.