

Community history, Chinese
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Families

Dora See Poy (1906-2001)

Tiger See Hoe (1913-2009)

(From interview with Diana Giese, ORAL TRC 3454, 1996, *Post-War Chinese Australians*, National Library of Australia)

Tiger See Hoe: It was just rain and sugar-cane, Innisfail. When I first came down here it used to rain nine months of the year—and then the Wet season would start...See Poys was flooded and you couldn't get across to the hotel...There were always three places you could go to work...at the Council or See Poys or go cane cutting.

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Tiger See Hoe: The original store was only one shop...

Dora See Poy: Only one shop, one roof, one little wooden shop...[At See Poys] we worked night and day...We finished work and then went back at night and filled the shelves and did the marking off and did the shortages...We had seven departments: a little bit of grocery and then the drapery department, two sections, the Manchester and the ladies' wear, and the shoes. And then the furniture came afterwards... We employed mostly Australians. There was the Nixon family around the corner, and the Noonans and the Kerrs and the Joneses. All the people that lived here [in Innisfail]. All their children worked at the shop from the time they left school until the time they got married...There was no thing about 'You're Chinese; you're black and I'm white'...We were all there together and we all did everything together, worked together and fought together.

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Tiger See Hoe: When [in World War II] the Japanese invaded Pearl Harbour—well, Australia was just about on the verge of defeat. And that brought the Americans into it.

Dora See Poy: The Americans saved Australia...They used to come here every weekend on leave from Cairns...They made this house here their headquarters in Innisfail. They used to bring cartons of cigarettes and drinks and everything from the Army—and that's how I learned to smoke a bit...I still correspond with one or two of them and I've been over to visit them...They spent money—but they spent it all on pleasure, buying drinks and food...They drank everything we had and they replaced it all...If this table could talk, you'd hear a lot of things that went on.

Tiger See Hoe: In 1941, straight after they came out, we were commandeered. I had to drive my truck to Charters Towers to build the airstrips. You know, we built the complete airstrip in maybe twelve weeks. And they brought their big bombers, the B51s and the B52s and the Hurricanes...All the American Air Force came out here, and that turned the tide of the War.

Sister and brother, they were brought up in the little far north Queensland town of Innisfail, where they worked for See Poys, the region's major department store, established by Taam Sze Pui in 1882 and lasting until November 1981.