

Mr. and Mrs. Ken Elston

Interviewed May 10, 1972.

369 Georgia St.

Ken Elston - Born March 26, 1915 at Hull England, father died when he was 2. May 1920: Mother, Grandmother, elder sister and Ken came to Vancouver - join Mother's two sisters here on "Kinnedosa" ship.

Ken and Grandmother lived with Aunt, Burnaby.

1921 Mother re-married George Phillips (from Glasgow) so Ken moved with them to St. Catherine's St., Vancouver, briefly then to Vancouver Cannery, southwest corner Sea Island where runway now ends - stayed 6 years - March 1929 moved to Steveston - stepfather manager Imperial Cannery - 1932 Ken finished high school started same cannery as tally man til 1936 - stepfather and Ken released by B.C. Packers - Ken joined Canadian Fishing Co., Gulf of Georgia plant Steveston under late George Skinner - there 2 years - 1938 with Great West Packing Co., foot of Trites Rd., Steveston - until 3 years ago - Company bought by Nelson Bros. - closed office, moved to Nelson Bros. now part B.C. Packers - Ken full circle B.C. Packers - types of jobs in career: earlier general - carpentry, blacksmithing, boilers, retorts, painting - now specialized to one machine - early days Imperial Cannery - 3 key men - straight canning - now handle fresh fish, specialty products - earlier no overtime, no union, longer hours - cannery working conditions better now - union formed 1941 or 1942 - Ken didn't work in plant since 1941 - in office then on at Great West, brother-in-law Jack, Manager, married to own sister, Dorothy Whiteside, died 1942 - Ken went to office - handles production from fishermen - procuring - packing fish - moving equipment for seasonal fish runs - supplies to fishermen - most fishermen own or partly own their boats - assistance in financing through company, bank, or credit union - last 2 stressed.

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-gas, grub coupons supplied by company to fishermen at beginning of season - as advance - expect return fish credits through season

-stores at plants, scows, at west coast, Vancouver Island, mainland Alert Bay - biggest camp scow goes to Rivers Inlet "Sampson Four" an old ferry "Quiliet" (?) has full meat, groceries, radio, repair shop, machine shop, boat lift (costing \$70,000 to \$80,000), net shed - goes up June 12 -15 - starts June 25-27 - Sunday night before July -

Nearly all fishing boats have radios - 13' - 25' "Mickey Mouse" type on Fraser River only - average gillnetter 34' (Between 28' - 33') 1 man operation - Rivers Inlet sockeye operation 3-4 weeks - lull - then fall fishing - or leave for Fraser River run.

-Collector type boat 45' fisherman unloads on first - then delivers to ice packer or brine packers - salt added to sea water - chilled - keeps fish good condition - pumped or brailled out at plant.

-Brailing, pumping described.

-10 times faster to load by pumping - used to pump herring - started pumping salmon last year - pumping requires conversion of hatch to proper lining for holding water.

Tighter regulations now re sanitation - freshness, quality stressed now.

-fish piked from small boats.

Ken Elston early life: started 1/2 day at Scow St. school, Vancouver, then father moved to Vancouver Cannery, Sea Is. so 7 years old took jitney bus (canvas sides) 1 1/2 miles Bridgport School - driver Mr. Shepherd

-circle route - start Grauer store - north road - picked up McGregors, McDonalds, Arbuthnots - down to Vancouver Cannery - Acme Cannery - to Miller Road - Huggards, Wileys, Murphy's - to school - 3/4 hour - home by 4 - 5 p.m.

-7 years in Bridgeport Elementary - teachers: Miss Rachael McMyn, Miss Horseman, Miss Ventiman, Mr. Edwards, Mr. King Logan, Miss Rachael Lang, Miss Kate McNeeley, principal, Teachers at Bridgeport High School: Roy MacNeil - who became Principal at new Cambie high School.

Sports: baseball, football, lacrosse, basketball, had rivalry between districts in Richmond - during school and after - played some hockey - strap used then - girls also got strap - strap if caught throwing snowball  
Miss McNeeley's word was law - well respected.

-few Japanese at Bridgeport School - played with Japanese at home (Vancouver Cannery) - always had close association with Japanese - 1933 played as only white boy on Japanese ball team. - Played 5 years (pix)  
-during public school summer job picking beans, blackberries - got 1 cent a pound for beans) - \$1.50 to \$2.00 a day - black berries earned 2-3 cents a pound -during high school - got 2 months work at 20 cents a hour - so \$40 - \$50 total - no set scale - in 1930's took any job - longshore - on dykes from 25 cents - 40 cents an hour

-people Steveston area satisfied 6 - 7 months work - layoffs November to May - fishermen (gillnetters, trollers) - year now or nearly for cannery workers, have unemployment insurance - freezing allows production diversified by products, paste and ground fish.

First car: 1925 Model T Ford - then 1929 Model A Ford 1932 DeSoto roadster  
-re-activated Model A few years.

-Swam Fraser River beside fish cannery, Sea Island - off docks at Steveston.

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-married January 1942 to 'Bill' Dorothy McDonald - fought bog fires  
1930 - 1940 - dug ditches to contain Great West Cannery burned Oct. 15,  
1961, a Saturday, - started by pulley seizure, belts, in ice compressor.

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-mother Margaret Watts, brother Frank, parents came to Richmond 1891 from  
Lethbridge - 1895 to Fraser River at Oilery - said Island called Watts)  
1901 moved to Steveston - Grandfather Thomas Watts construction fish wharf  
Phoenix Cannery, worked on City Hall, Vancouver - back to Oilery,  
destroyed by fire - family back to Steveston - mother worked in Jewish  
store on dyke - married father foreman-manager Scottish-Canadian Cannery  
-first lived, chicken ranch, Railway Ave.

-Dorothy Elston born red house, property now Steveston Community Centre -  
father at Steveston Cannery destroyed 1918 fire in W.W. 1.

Born at home - Dr. Hepworth (mother's brother in school) assisted by Mrs.  
Ted Morgan - started at Steveston School - moved to Seattle - returned  
1925 - picked strawberries, raspberries at Ward's, Shepherd's farm -  
watched movie house burn at 5 a.m. before 1918 - played basketball in old  
Opera House and Cambie High School - attended Lord Byng School, Bridgeport  
High School - worked 12 years at Telephone Office, Steveston, No. 1 Rd.  
foot of Chatham St.

Note: Tugboats operating to Oilery were: Erie, Olive, Spray.

TAPE 24 - SIDE 1 and 2.