

Researcher: Darlene Clyne

Tape 48; 1&2

Interviewed: February 10, 1976

MACHINIST: Mr. George MacKay,  
503 Steveston Hwy.,  
Richmond, B. C.

277-6629

- Started working in cannery at the age of seven in 1910.
- In 1913, was working in net loft for 5¢ an hour, speaks of a lot of Chinese kids working in cannery.
- In 1921-22, worked for Gulf of Georgia on collect boats.
- At that time the Gulf of Georgia was also referred to as the Desbrisary Canning Company because it was owned by the Desbrisary Bros., who also owned a cannery on Whale Island on the border of the Portland Canal.
- Explains the operation of collect boats.
- Says all canneries had collect boats with White tallymen.
- Most of the fishermen at that time were Japanese.
- In 1923 took a trade to become a machinist.
- Worked for Rose & Windburn for ten years.
- Explains about cannery machinery; i.e. "Gang Knives" capper, seamer,
- Talks about making the cans, vacuum, cooking the fish for one hour and twenty minutes at 212 degreesF., then the Chinese men letting the steam out of the cans and resolder them.
- Canned fish in those days for two months only.
- Americans used to come up and take the spring, dog salmon, hump back; our cannery didn't have much sale for it---Americans then sold it to the Deep South.
- Explains the spindle machine and double seam---new machine cuts down on cooking the fish.
- Spindle machine did a hundred cans a minute.
- Chinese labour in those days exploited living conditions deplorable.
- Explains living condition.
- Mentions the Indians and the "potlatch", also mentions the Indians living condition in the cannery owned houses, says the sanitations conditions were deplorable.
- Talks about the Indian graves that the canneries bull-dozed over for buildings; they were mostly childrens graves that many had died of disease.

- The head men of the cannery did not help the people at all, especially the Indians which they looked down on.
- The Indians were greatly discriminated against.
- Money in the fishing industry poor at that time.
- Speaks of 1913 "the big salmon run" after which there was a slide at Hell's Gate; and the fish dropped in numbers.
- Fishermen were limited 200 sockeye to a boat at 5¢ a piece.
- Father built Brunswick Cannery<sup>No. 1</sup> in 1893. - *David MacKay*
- Grandfather was manager of the Atlas Cannery for years.
- Also runned the first reduction plant called the "Oilery".
- Reduction plant on MacMillan Island, Ladner side.
- Speaks of working for B. C. Packers and moving the oyster beds.
- Talks of different canneries in the 40's.
- In them days a case of sockeye was around \$24-\$25.
- No strikes during the war.
- Line men and machine men were getting \$150 a month and board during the 30's.
- During the war years workers got a lot more work: "place really jumping in those days".
- Went back to cannery 1942-1969.
- Thinks union is good but may be going a little too far.
- Talks about union benefits.
- Mentions the wages of boatmen in the 30's.
- Talks of early union organization.
- Talks on great degree of unions working in side and union workers and leaders.
- In 1913 his uncle and Captain Gus, they were running the Steveston cannery, they had no Iron Chink, they butched<sup>red</sup> by hand and they cleared a profit of \$10,000 each.
- Speaks of the Imperial Cannery having a lot of trouble and being taken over by the banks.
- Anglo British Columbia Packing Company was run by England, British shareholders, H. R. B. Oarland as agents in Vancouver.
- They had the Good Hope in Skeena and Inverness.
- The fish from Skeena River (Good Hope Cannery) went straight to England, didn't come down here.
- They closed up early, had a good machine shop and look after their boats well.

- Most canneries didn't keep their boats up, run in a cheap way but were runable.
- Some were safe, others weren't.
- 1913 gas engine came in, converted row boat into power boats.
- Talks on different fish canneries.
- The smaller the outfit the better the working conditions (he heard).
- Worked for Canadian Fish but spent most of his time working for B. C. Packers.
- During the war at Christmas time, each got turkey because of government subsidy not because of good will of the company.
- Remembers the Militia and explains.
- Speaks of working for Ben Rose and Sid Watts, was there for 15 years
- Speaks on boat engines.
- When working in cannery as a machinist, employed all year round.
- Talks at great length of canning machinery.
- Speaks on social life in the canneries.
- Used to play lacross for Westminster Salmon Bellies.
- Used to go out in collect boat and count fish and weight them and then come in and help can them.