

Researcher: Don Banister

Interviewed: January 22, 1976

Mr. William (Bill) Shaw,
Broadway Road,
Richmond, B. C.

- Started in the industry in 1925.
- Fished in a skiff during school holidays.
- Used to fish in front of present day canneries.
- There was plenty of fish to be caught there.
- American buyers used to come to Steveston to buy fish around 1925.
- They came from places like Seattle.
- Listened to the Tunney, Dempsey, fight on an American buyer's boat.
- In those days, it didn't matter if you fished without a licence.
- Shady Island was just a small island at that time.
- Mr. Shaw's father worked for B. C. Packers for 35 years.
- Mr. Shaw would sometimes catch 150-200 mixed fish in his skiff:
pinks, springs, etc.
- They used to fish gray fish (dog fish) with lines and hooks.
- Dog fish was hard to process.
- There was a limited market for these fish.
- These fish were reduced into meal.
- It is only in recent years that the bellys of these fish have been
produced as food.
- During the war, there was a demand for dog fish livers (possibly
for medical uses)
- The dog fish were caught the livers removed and the carcasses thrown
overboard.
- The price for livers went as high as \$4.00 a pound.
- Mr. Shaw and his cousin had a camp in Steveson where they bought
the livers from the fleet and resold them.
- There was about 50 or 60 boats from Steveston fishing dog fish.
- The livers were first bought by the pound and then by the quality
they showed under testing.
- Sometimes the dog fish were fished with a net but this practice
was banned because too many salmon were being caught also.
- The fishermen used herring bait on their lines.
- Sometimes he used as many as 2,500 hooks on one set.
- Describes a "ground line" for fishing dog fish.

- Some lines were over two miles long.
- Describes fishing for dog fish.
- Mentions that glass balls were sometimes used as floats.
- Nets were often bought from the company's preassembled.
- Says that he has seen the type of cedar float he used to fish with in department stores. They have faces painted on them and sell for \$1.25.
- When cedar floats were no longer being used he burnt a good many in his fire place.
- The cedar floats were cut on a lathe in a Sea Island shop.
- Describes the process of the shapening of cedar floats.
- Dog fish could be caught all winter long.
- There were no restrictions re dog fish except the one about the sunken nets.
- Dog fishing just sort of petered out.
- Mr. Shaw last fished dog fish in 1948.
- Mr Shaw fished shrimp in Howe Sound during the war.
- There wasn't much market for shrimp.
- There wasn't much dragging for shrimp during the war. They were caught in traps.
- Before any shrimp were sold they had to be cooked (done on board the boat).
- Describes the equipment for cooking shrimp a 12 gal. oil drum, etc.
- describes tugs going up the Fraser during the early years.
- Scandinavians came to Steveston to fish during the war but they only lasted a couple of years.
- Linen nets used in the earlier years were no good to use in clear water as the fish could see them.
- Linen nets didn't require much up keep.
- Describes the practice of "blue stoneing" linen nets.
- Mr. Shaw once caught 5 tons of salmon in a night.
- Mr. Shaw just fishes during the summer months now.
- Mr. Shaw has owned about 7 or 8 boats in his life time.
- Has fished mostly around the mouth of the Fraser.

- The average size of the boats around 1925 was about 25 to 30 feet. They have gotten larger since.
- Boats are a lot wider now (they have more "beam").
- They are better boats now.
- Nets used to be pulled by hand.
- Nets are rolled on a drum now (since 1936).
- Nets also used to be rolled onto a "gerdie" a spool.
- Mr. Shaw was born next door to Steveston, present day Community Center in 1913.
- He now describes Steveston in its early years.
- The community was composed mostly of Japanese people.
- Mr. Shaw's father used to say "You couldn't walk down Moncton Street for people".
- There were 4 or 5 hotels.
- Boats used to come in from Seattle to watch the fights in the Steveston arena.
- Remembers the fire that burnt down Steveston.
- There was a fire engine drawn by horses which had a pump on the side.
- It was taken down to the wharf at the end of First Avenue.
- There was a field at the corner where the present Bank of Commerce is.
- The people took all their belongings to the field.
- Most of the Steveston was burnt except for a brick building at 2nd and Moncton (still standing) built on piles.
- The side walks in Steveston (Moncton) used to be planks over the ditch. Mr. Shaw in his childhood would go along under the planks with his friends looking for lost coins that may have slipped through the cracks in the planks.
- Steveston was full of shacks in which the Japanese people lived.....
.....all torn down now.
- There were hundreds of the shacks.
- There also used to be houses built on piles outside the Dyke.
- Also houses on Scotch Beach and also a cannery.