

Interviewed: February 11, 1976

FISHERMAN: Mr. Hugh Skinner,  
The Crestwood,  
683 Buswell Road,  
Richmond, B. C.

- Moved to Steveston in 1928, at which time father was manager of Gulf of Georgia Cannery.
- Recalls methods of the cannery in those days when they were using a steam box type of cooking.
- The machinery being much more elementary and much slower.
- The labour was mostly Chinese and contracted by a Chinese contractor.
- Fish was filled by hand then.
- The Chinese lived in rambled shack house buildings.
- Says the Chinese were great for smoking opium pipe.
- Recalls incident when police arrest some Chinese for smoking opium, since there was no jail, court was held in the cannery net loft.
- They were fined \$10 and let go.
- Speaks on the nets being Irish linen rather than nylon.
- Talks on the old fishing boats and their nets.
- The cannery dealt with only one person and that was the Chinese contractor.
- Chinese contractor would then go to Chinatown and round up people and pay them whatever an amount he could arrange.
- The difference he could pay them and what he got from the cannery was his profit.
- This went on for many years and was just stopped ten years ago.
- Worked in cannery when young for Chinese contractor for 10¢ @ hour.
- First job was to sit on a stool and put up four cans in each, hand-turned them upside down and knock them together to make sure there were no nails in them from the box plant.
- Cotton net was shipped in from southern States where they went through steaming vats of tar.
- Then they were hung in the rafters of the cannery.
- It was a dirty, smelly job; sometimes the fume made you nauseated.
- We were happy because we got "dirty pay" 50¢ @ hour which was pretty good wages in those days.
- Japanese used to have small seine boats which we called "twin boats".

- They piled half the nets on each side and when they were setting the nets out to catch the herring, the twin boats would pull away from one another and go in a huge circle.
- When they met they would start pulling the nets in half on each side which was done by hand.
- They would have as many as 32 people, 16 on each boat.
- Recalls watching the Japanese pull in their nets singing a "Chante" with the lights blazing and finally picking the herring out of the net.
- It created quite a scene.
- Father was a fisherman.
- Gillnetted some but mostly a seiner.
- Father became a skipper on a seine boat at the age of 14 for Anderson Fisheries.
- Remembers fishing on Fraser River for spring salmon and getting 5¢ @ hour.
- Says the fleet has become much more efficient with their new gear.
- Believes there was exploitation by the canneries of the fishermen in those days.
- They were interested in huge profits which they did make in those days but now that has changed.
- Goes into the cannery side of the business.
- Was very involved in the union.

(Tape becomes inaudible.....)