

P. Buck Suzuki
8662 River Road, Delta.

Interviewed: April 26, 1973.

Ewen's Cannery gave rise to a community of Japanese and Scandinavian in that locality. Buck's father fished for Ewen's and he lived on Don Island. Japanese had been working for Ewen's since mid-1890's. Two men from N.E. Japan were acting then as the bosses and spokesmen - much rivalry between them - one went to Japan to recruit fishing labour - this in 1904 - Russo-Japanese war intervened (gaol for a time - suspicion of espionage) - in 1906, 87 fishermen recruited, came to Canada in 196 ton schooner, illegally. Trip took 3 months - on arrival at Williams Head they were detained. Authorities gave them the option of being deported or of becoming Canadian citizens, because of labour shortage. Schooner landed its cargo on Don Island, then loaded up with Chum salmon and returned to Japan.

The Don Island community was primitive but happy - everyone assisted at a birth, everyone mourned a death - occasional groups of entertainers from Japan. At one time, community numbered 40 to 50. Rice wine made there - authorities broke up barrels.

In 1913, another attempt at immigration took place, 500 ton vessel, intended to bring 400 men. Japanese authorities stopped immigration, so vessel came here empty and loaded up with salmon. Took southerly route back and fish went "off".

Don Island community gradually diminished largely due to lack of facilities on Island. In 1919, Buck moved to Delta to be near school.

Don Island only 30 acres - but excellent soil - radishes and cabbages grown - only 2 horses on island. Later, when river dredged sand was dumped on Island. Cottonwood and fir trees close to his

father's house - trees of 200 feet. They lived in float house built in 1910, still extant, close to Buck's present house.

Sunbury wharf was one of stops for sternwheeler "Skeena". Came every Friday - English captain, rest of crew Chinese. Sunbury wharf was first stop from New Westminster, next was MacDonalds, then Hopcrofts. Wharf and hut now used as net shed. Buck's house was the original post office for that area.

Buck at 4 or 5 years old started going out in fishing skiff - first fishing license in 1925 (nine years old), to fish in small punt along shore. Later, joined a Norwegian fisherman in boat belonging to grandfather of Dick Nelson, present head of B.C. Packers.

Talks of bi-lateral agreement between Canada and the United States to preserve the Fraser River salmon. Larger boats make it possible to fish out in Pacific - in early days, smaller, less powerful boats constricted fishing to Fraser River itself.

At one time, fish were dressed and roe given to sports fishermen.

Now, fish sold whole, though roe is worth more than the fish itself. Dressed fish no longer accepted by canneries. Describes effect of logging on the salmon breeding grounds, and how deep sea fishing has lessened the Fraser River runs.

A. Moir