

Interviewed: February 19, 1976

Mr. Dominic Bussanich,

3440 West River Road,
Delta, B. C.

- Born 1904, near just down the road from his present house.
- Began fishing when he was 13 with his father.
- Fished with his dad for quite a few years on a gillnetter, picking up by hand in a gas boat.
- Fished mostly in Canoe Pass but also up north at Rivers Inlet and Johnson Straits.
- Used to fish 5 or 6 days.
- There were a few sailboats left on the Fraser when he started, but he remembers them as a boy and they used them up at Rivers Inlet.
- Went up there with their own gas boats, built his own boats.
- Fished up there for 10 or 12 years, late 20's, early 30's.
- First boat was a square stern 28', V-bottom, power drum, one of the first in the river, with a hupmobile motor, a 4 cylinder motor pretty big engine, 12-14 knots.
- Quit fishing 3 years ago, last few years he fished only in the river.
- River has changed now, the channels are different and Canoe Pass has changed completely.
- Fishing is very difficult in the river now.
- Many short nets, you're working all the time.
- 5 or 6 canneries are mentioned in the book on Ladner; British-American, Canoe Pass Cannery, McDonald, Anglo-American, Brunswick, Currie-McWilliams, Harlock, right across from Steveston.
- The river has changed quite a bit in his time, used to be two channels going down to the mouth.
- South Arm of Fraser is better than North Arm, no fishing at all in the North Arm now - too much traffic.
- Pollution in the river is terrible.
- The catch has decreased in the River because the gear is so effecient but also the Americans are taking most of the fish: Canadians get only 12 hours a week to fish, Americans fish 4 and 5 days.
- He worked on seine boats and he also built boats for living.
- Designed his own out of his head.

- Talks about the boats he built and the difficulty of working alone.
- He prefers wood boats to fibreglass and aluminum.
- New equipment on boats have made fishing easier, you don't work as hard.
- Started on seine boat 1922 went all the way to Alaska.
- He had his own seine boat but he lost it during the depression.
- Gillnetting was a more independent way.
- Seiners were restricted from certain areas.
- Fish prices cheap at that time.
- Seiners sometimes catch 20,000 fish.
- Humps at that time were 5 or 6 cents a piece.
- There were a lot of Japanese fishermen before the war, 3 or 4 settlements of Japanese around Ladner.
- They were very good fishermen and keen competitors.
- They helped you if you got into trouble.
- They were restricted to fishing in one area only.
- They lost all their boats when the war broke out.
- A few of them were cocky about Japan winning the war, but most of them were very disappointed at losing their possessions.
- Boats are much more standardised now and very comfortable with all the conveniences; most of it "rubbish" and not necessary.
- There used to be lots of Indian fishermen from the Gulf Islands who fished in the River.
- Fished pilchards off the west coast of Vancouver Island but they have all disappeared now.
- He describes how to fish herring using two boats and one net: half net on each boat, one man in a skiff uses the weighted wire to locate the fish and then he signals the boats and they open up at the bow and encircle the fish.
- Sometimes get 1,400 (?) tons of herring that way in one drag on the west coast.
- When he first started fishing herring, the herring was salted in big canvas bags by the Japanese then they were put in big boxes and send to Japan.
- He fished for several outfits, they were all pretty much the same: B. C. Packers, Canadian Fish, Bell Irving, Nelson Bros.
- Formed a co-op - Canoe Pass.
- Co-op in 1941-42, gillnetters.

- He started it; he was packing fish for Nelson Bros. and he got together with his nephews and bought a packer boat and then made a deal with the canneries.
- Co-op is now about 70 members and still going.
- Many members are union members and usually respect union strikes.
- There are lots of changes in the Delta area; more people, more houses.
- Fishing hasn't changed that much.
- Roberts Banks has actually improved the fishing.
- Frank Wilson still fishes at the age of 72, off the Roberts Banks.
- There is very little fishing time in the Fraser River now; most fish are caught before they get into the river.
- Sports fishermen also take more than their share.
- Fishing is different now from what it used to be; bigger, more efficient boats.
- Need to have higher prices of fish to pay for expensive boats.
- He used to drive a truck in the off-season to make ends meet and then he went into boat building.
- He is a regular duck hunter and today the motor boats spoil the hunting.
- Discusses the reasons for the poor herring fishery last year; greed was the main reason, trying to pack too many fish.
- There is a need for a 200 mile limit.
- Discusses fishing in the north out of Prince Rupert.