

Interviewed: March 16, 1976

CANNERY WORKER: Mr. & Mrs. Ed Calvert,
401 Garry Street,
Steveston, B. C.

- He was born in a house by the government wharf.
- His father worked for the Richmond Trading Company.
- Walker used to be the owner.
- The store took up almost the whole block on Moncton.
- Walker's son eventually became a vice-president of B. C. Packers.
- His father was a delivery man for the store.
- He recalls the big fire in 1919 of the Steveston front street.
- Japanese took over the store after the fire.
- His father went to look after a farm left by his uncle on Westham Island.
- To get to Westham Island you took a three-quarter of an hour ferry ride on the Beaver from Woodward's Slough to Ladner.
- It carried old Model T-Ford^s, stored next to the engine, they had to be cranked to start.
- Ferry was the only connection from Ladner to Lulu Island to Vancouver.
- Westham Island was mostly farms in the 20's with a bridge that's still there now.
- There was a couple of canneries around Port "Bashaun" (?).
- There were several canneries in Steveston, but a fire after WW I took out 3 or 4 hotels and 2 or 3 canneries.
- The bank and the doctor's office is still there.
- The fire-fighting equipment was mostly a bucket brigade.
- The fire burned all day and evening...the smell of burnt fish came from the cans that had burnt and fallen through the floor.
- There used to be Great West Cannery, Starr Cannery, Lighthouse, where Charlie Deagle's place is now.
- The Atlas and the Colonial is further east.
- After WW I ~~the~~ few of the canneries were running.
- During prohibition the hotels closed.
- The sockeye hotel is now the Steveston, and was the only one standing after the fire.
- Lots of boot-legging occurred during the prohibition period.
- Which started around 1919.
- The fire changed the town quite a bit.

- Around 1926 his father started a farm in Steveston on the present property.
- The house has been there since before the turn of the century.
- His father bought the house from Mr. Walker...he was renting it at the time...it had a barn and he kept the delivery horses there.
- He started farming with dairy cows and developed a milk route... delivery bottled milk with 20 milk cows until around 1947-48..kept the two of them very busy.
- The route consisted of around 200 quarts a day to #2 Road up to Williams Road, there wasn't much north of Steveston Hwy., just Steve's farm.
- The milk business lasted until say '46, then they started getting so many restrictions about pasteurized milk, all the small dairies started to fold.
- There's no comparison between fresh milk and pasteurized, fresh milk was much more popular.
- The regulations were mostly for the Vancouver market.
- During the war it was difficult to get farm labour so help was short and the dairy farm closed.
- The milk was shipped in cans, now it's distributed through a dairy farmers co-op....Dairyland.
- They started to grow potatoes and other vegetables.
- The house across from him originally belonged to a Japanese man but it was confiscated when war broke out.
- Their experiences with the Japanese were good with no friction between White and Japanese.
- When the war broke out there was a curfew for the Japanese, they had to be off the streets by sun down in the summer time.
- The Japanese lost everything: houses, appliances, everything!
- They were mostly Canadians and they weren't involved in the war, they lived in company houses, along the dyke.
- Some Japanese had farms for vegetables and strawberries.
- He rented some land from the custodian.
- The Veterans Land Act took over the distribution of the land, that had been confiscated from the Japanese and sold it.
- They kept some milk cows until 1958, when Steveston started to build up and it was hard to get pasteurized.
- Then he went to work in the B. C. Packers, in the warehouse, labelling in 1960.

- His wife worked in the cannery in 1939.
- Most of the work was done by hand, the cans were done by the Japanese women by hand, on a piece work basis.
- Sam Chong, the Chinaman, had the contract, he paid the workers, it covered the salmon season for the women hand fillers on the line and the Chinese men who worked on the line.
- She was paid 10¢ @ hour when she started, you had to work long hours to make any money.
- The Japanese women carried their children on their backs and sometimes worked right through their lunch breaks.
- The union came in after the war and made a difference in the hourly wage, eventually got time and half.
- Before the war, there was no notice taken of the Japanese, everybody got along, the Whites shopped in their stores and never thought anything of it.
- Steveston was considered the lower, or worst part of Lulu Island by the other Richmond residents up at Brighthouse.
- The town hasn't changed much; new front on old buildings.
- Shows picture of the Imperial Cannery in 1946 taken by a friend from an airplane.
- Comments on the recent housing development and the loss of good farm land.
- There aren't too many of the old original Steveston people left there's few on the farms up by #5 Road.
- Logan berries used to form a large local crop and there was a logan-berry winery where the present west-wind housing development is.
- The Japanese grew a lot of logan-berries for wine.
- The Indian people came during the fishing season from up the coast and lived in houses provided by the cannery, but very few of them lived year round at Steveston.
- The town as a whole hasn't changed much, more strangers around.
- There used to be more community things going on.
- They used the gym at the Richmond High School,
- For dances for the cannery people, lacrosse club dance, and you met people from all over Lulu Island, but now its built up so much that people don't get together much.
- It's more individual he hardly sees or talks to his old school chums at all now, even though they still live not very far away.

- Discusses Bob Shaw and Stan Leslie as old time Steveston residents.
- They used to have plays in the old opera house as well as movies on the weekend and dances; they played basketball there.
- The Japanese had organized baseball teams and tournament with teams from Mission and Haney.
- They played tennis a lot too, at the old Japanese school where the present Army and Navy Club is.
- This is where the old Japanese Fishermen's Association Hospital was.
- White people did not use the hospital although the Hall had a White doctor who attended at the hospital.
- The old Steva Theater was once a Buddhist Temple; it has been remodeled but it's still the original building.
- They built a new temple on Garry Street in the 60's.
- The Steva Theater folded when T.V. became popular.
- You had trouble sitting watching films because of the smell of herring.
- In the days before the war, there was no inter-marriage between Japanese and Whites but it's different today.
- There was martial arts: Judo and Kendo held in the opera house and in the Japanese School.
- Steveston was one of the biggest Japanese communities in Canada.
- Steveston also had a very large Chinese community near where Charlie Deagle's store is now...it had a laundry, a store, Hong Wo's, a general store you could get everything there...it stayed open all the time except for the Chinese New Year.
- Fish sales have dropped especially for the export market.
- All the canning is done in Steveston and Prince Rupert.
- Mrs. Calvert worked in the cannery, labelling as well as her husband.
- Exports to England have gone down quite a bit.
- Cases are packed in 48 lbs. cases of one pound tin or 96½ lbs. tins.
- Different brand labels are put on depending on the orders for them.
- B. C. Packers also sells cans to other companies and puts different labels on them.
- The higher grades of fish like sockeye and pink, they use a B. C. Packers label and then for the lower grades, they get away from the company name and they use other brand names.