

Interviewed: February 12, 1976

Mr. Jack Chisnall,

3932 Burke Street,
Burnaby, B. C.

- Fished for 50 years; from Ontario originally.
- Came to B. C. in 1916, she^{Mrs. Chisnall} came in 1911 from Edinburgh, Scotland.
- He was born in 1893, worked in the United States for awhile, at Detroit in the automobile business, then he went. ^{to Seattle.}
- Started in logging in B. C., went to Rivers Inlet to visit a friend and started fishing and logging there.
- First boat was a skiff, a sailboat, 26' long, they were towed out on a Sunday, fished all week until Friday at 6:00, always had a 5 or 6 day week until, say, 10 years ago.
- At that time, there were 13 canneries in Rivers Inlet, highest was 170 boats, lowest was about 70 boats, so that in all, close to 2,000, boats were towed out the inlet.
- Catches were averaging about 500 a boat, sockeye then coho would come in.
- First year (1916) he got 17¢ a piece for sockeye, nowadays of course you get 3 or 4 dollars a piece.
- He hasn't fished for 7 or 8 years.
- So they towed you out to where you wanted to go, the packer came next day and the fish were canned the same day. Today, of course, fish are put in brine and they aren't canned until a week later.
- The skiffs could ride out most storms, better than some gas boats.
- You couldn't make a living at fishing alone, you had to go logging or trapping in the winter.
- Went into the Chilcoten for 3 years, went on pack horse over the mountain, went in from Bella Coola with 18 horses from Annaheim Lake, Indians who helped them get into Takla Lake.
- Hard to make a go of it, nobody ever made big money, only paying \$2.50 a day for 10 hours of logging.
- Large number of Japanese and Indian fishermen.
- Japanese weren't allowed to log and after WW I^I they weren't allowed to fish where they wanted.

- The companies and or the Indian Agent used to intimidate the Indians during strikes and force them to accept lower prices.
- Last strike in Rivers Inlet (1936) brought a bunch of scabs down from up north and that was the end of the strike; they fished for B. C. Packers.
- The fishermen were organized into a union at the time called The Fishermen & Cannery Workers' Industrial Union.
- Mrs. Chisnall lived at Rivers Inlet, at Brunswick Cannery, Rivers Inlet Cannery and Wadhams Cannery.
- The Chinese, the Indians and Whites all got along.
- Her first house (1917) was an old shack with trees growing up into the floor, a bed and a stove and 3 feet of snow.
- Their son is now manager at Namu.
- He had a gas boat before he fished with the skiff, about 30' long, you weren't allowed to use gas boat in Rivers Inlet for awhile.
- The hatchery at the head of the lake made no significant difference.
- The price for fish began to pick up in the 50's.
- Steveston fishermen used to go up the Coast for sockeye then return to San Juan Straits.
- He also fished on a seiner for a year on the West Coast of Vancouver Island when the war started.
- He fished herring for \$1.75 a ton, nowadays you get \$175.00 a ton for herring.
- Used to have lots of spring salmon at Rivers Inlet, average 45-50 lbs. so many were caught and many of the rich fishermen couldn't do anything with them except dump them over board.
- They used to can spring salmon for the tourists.
- Owikeno Village Indians had about 15-20 boats then, now they have no commercial boats, mostly old people in the village, all the young ones went out to school.
- Indian people came from Alert Bay, Kitimat and Hartley Bay to work in the canneries, some even came from west coast Vancouver Island.
- Canneries named are: Kildala, Wadhams, Strathcona, Rivers Inlet, Good Hope, Beaver, Brunswick, Provincial (1917), McTavish (1918), Goose Bay (20's), and 2 or 3 canneries had to shut down before he

- arrived there.....old Whannock, Reid's, Areen's.
- The cans were soldered by hands by Chinese.
 - There was a hospital at Brunswick, Dr. Darby came from Bella Bella for the summer months.
 - Mrs. Chisnall was in the hospital for ulcers.
 - Dr. Darby was a great friend to everybody.
 - He fished the Fraser, mostly in the Gulf after the sockeye were finished at Rivers Inlet.
 - On the west coast he fished mostly herring, pilchards and some salmon.
 - Paid by the fish until about '49 or thereabouts then they started paying by the pound: i.e. dog salmon 3¢ a pound when it used to be 3¢ a fish.
 - He fished sockeye in the Gulf for 12¢ a piece. *in 1934*
 - Homer Stevens did a lot for the fishermen.
 - Comments on the return of Japanese fishermen.
 - During the war they had more trouble with the Canadian Navy than any enemy.....there was a boat at Point Grey that you had to check in with, if you didn't they shot across the bow.
 - He tells of trip down in storm and he wants to pass by and they shine a light on him near Uklata Way (?) and they asked him why he came over "Scuddy Nish was one of them". *- writes articles for the Fisherman*
 - There were quite a few navy boats around, there was a fishermen's navy, seine boats converted in patrol boats with a gun mounted.
 - He used to work at Celtic shipyards in the winter time.
 - Boats nowadays are like homes, with showers even.
 - Some of the old boats had no toilets even.
 - When he first fished herring, used to fish at night and stop and listen, and sometimes use a weight on a wire called a feeler, one guy would row, the other would use the feeler and he could tell how many herring were there, then they used a light, now lights are not used, now you have sonar and it's easy.
 - Story of riding out a storm off Point Grey. *- ends up as "high boat"*
 - Nowadays the Packers use brine to store the fish and he can taste the difference if fish have been stored in brine.
 - In 1920 Goss Millard competed with other canneries up at Bella Bella, he offered over 50¢ a fish after the first 500 fish and undercut his competitors.

- He discusses the Americans taking most of the fish up in the Alaska panhandle and their lack of conservation measures.
- Catches are going down all the time.
- Trollers never used to catch salmon, now they are and they can fish seven days a week.
- ‡ Gillnetters used to put on trolling gear during a gillnett closure and catch about 100 a night, also seine boats are taking a lot of fish.
- Recommends a salmon enhancement program in central coast and thus prevent the Americans from getting our fish.
- Foreign fleets and pollution are also taking their toll.
- Used to be fishing in the North Arm of the Fraser but now there are no fish coming in there. (ha, ha!)
- Tells story about having to dump over 500 fish.
- Talks of old union steam-ships that travelled the coast and the captains who ran them: Cecil Roberts, Finley, Johnston, Edwards.
- The steam-boat was comfortable, fine grub, everything was number one.
- The boat would pick them up at Rivers Inlet and then go to Rupert before returning to Vancouver.
- "Nug-up" any time you like, lots of drinking and boot-legging.
- One time there was a flu epidemic, one of the pursers claimed to have saved people by providing them with lots of rum.....1918 Pattersen was his name,, on the old Comosun.
- The old steam ship burned coal and travelled around 12 knots.
- Tommy Johnson fished in 1912, still fishes now at the age of 83, at Rivers Inlet where he logged as well as fished.
- The companies never backed the ordinary guy at all in those days, the White man had to make it on his own, Chinese had one boss man, same as the Indians.
- Point Grey Indians used to come up at \$5.00 an hour, to fish at Rivers Inlet.
- Brought Indians from all over; i.e. Kitimat.
- The Chinese did most of the dirty work, everything was steam and coal no oil those days.
- Mrs. Chisnall worked at Rivers Inlet as cook.
- She came to Prince Rupert in 1911 and then to Rivers Inlet in 1912.

- Tells story of playing football in the streets of Prince Rupert.
- She looked after the store at Rivers Inlet Cannery.
- Tape ends with discussion of mutual friends at Rivers Inlet.