

Interviewed: February 10, 1976

CANNERY-MANAGER & : Mr. Ken Elston,
PRESIDENT : 1274 Trites Road,
Richmond, B. C.
277-7184 277-8453

- Started in B. C. Packers in 1942.
- Started off as a brine man.
- The fish were cut and immersed in a brine tank for 15 to 20 minutes then bailed out and then canned.
- He then became tally man.
- Fish weren't weighted as much then as some were just counted.
- He worked as tally man til 1936. (?)
- The cannery houses were on both sides of the dyke all the way from the western extremity of Steveston to east of #2 Road.
- Each camp had a cluster of houses.
- Mostly Japanese people lived in the cannery houses.
- The houses were taken down in the late 40's and early 50's.
- There used to be many more Chinese people working in the canneries.
- There used to be a Chinese contractor who hired the cannery employees except key-people.
- There was no over-time then.
- The contractor kept the employees by hours and paid them.
- When the union came in the contractors began to disappear.
- The internment of the Japanese people disturbed the fishing industry more than the canning industry.
- Native people have become more scarce as cannery employees, over the past 30 years.
- Mr. Elston attributes this lack of Native people to the lack of suitable housing.
- Cannery employees' term of employment has gotten longer.
- The machinery in the canneries is much different from what it used to be 30 years ago.
- They used to have a machine called a "steam box" which was a method of exhausting the air out of the tins.
- After the can got its lid on (the lid was clinched loosely) the can went through a long exhaust box which was at 210 degrees which partially cooked the salmon, this created the vacuum, it then went through a seamer machine which put a permanent seal on it.

- There was another machine called the "can unscrambler".
- This machine sorted the cans and fed the filling tables.
- He says that the economy of the canning industry necessitated its centralization.
- The labour angle also facilitated the centralization of the canning industry.
- In 1935 & 1936, B. C. Packers was also running a pet food operation.
- In the early years of B. C. Packers did not have a very diversified line of products.
- Crab is now becoming more scarce.