

Interviewed: February 9, 1976

Mr. Vaino Matson,

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- Born in Lady Smith, came to Steveston in 1942.
- Started fishing in 1914 at Saintulo which was a big family type of community, fishing and logging.
- Used a sail boat which belonged to Canadian Fish Co., he fished at Rivers Inlet, no drums in those days, everything was done by hand.
- Fished at Rivers Inlet off and on most of his life.
- Stayed out in the sail boat 4 or 5 days at a time, boat was 26' long with a canvas tent over the bow, if it rained hard and you touched the canvas you got wet.
- He bought fish, collected for the company and seined as well.
- Got his first gas boat in 1924.
- Everything was easier with the mechanization but the money part isn't any better. There's too much gear, not enough fishing days to make much money.
- Linen nets were used before the nylon.
- Began fishing in the Fraser in 1942, for B. C. Packers.
- You have to fish more than sockeye if you want to make it in the fishing industry, also you can fish halibut and herring.
- There were unions before the war, Pacific Coast Fishermens Union and the Japanese had their own.
- Today, they're all together.
- There was a big strike at Rivers Inlet in 1936 and he never "wet a net" not a successful strike.
- When he first started fishing they got 25¢/sockeye and springs were 10¢/piece, white springs 50¢/fish.
- As far as money goes, there's a bit more these days but not a helluva lot, because of the high overhead these days.
- You've got to have a union no matter what kind of work you do, otherwise you're going backwards.
- Fishing is not so good for family man, too much time away.

- Better now a days for people to get more school and get something better.
- Went to school on Sointulo, classes were in English.
- His father was first a coal miner then a fisherman in Ladysmith, Nanaimo and Comox.
- They worked 10 hours shifts in those days.
- Lived on Chatham Street in Steveston since 1942.
- Steveston hasn't changed or improved since 1942.
- He never farmed "I don't like the shovel, that's my enemy".
- He also trapped up north and still has a trap-line on Gambier Island, not much money, more of a past-time.
- Sockeye catches will be going down, too much gear, too many boats, and the foreign fleet at your back door.
- Gillnetters have just about had it.
- Not much change in the Fraser River.
- The river is polluted now and you shouldn't even eat the fish out of there.
- People seemed to get along better in the old days, more friendly, everybody seemed to be happy, they didn't worry so much about the dollar.
- Used to fish halibut at Hardy Bay on the end of Vancouver Island.
- Used to pull in 150 to 300 fish each time, lots a fish in those days.
- Discusses various canneries that remain on the coast: Butedale, Bella Bella, Namu.
- Got on well with the Indian fishermen: "If you treat people square and honest, they treat you the same, that's the best way to be."
- His wife didn't work in the canneries, too damp anyways.
- Lots of people lost their jobs because of improvement in machines.
- Prefers gillnetters and working alone; you're your own boss.

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- Tells story of a skookuchuk fishing spot at Drainby Inlet, a very dangerous spot to fish as the salmon followed the strong tide.
- Sointulo in the early days was like a big family with a big co-op store, people were very cooperative helping each other.

- During the war, mines were stretched out in the Gulf and Johnston Straits.
- You had to stop and report to a centre at York Island just before ^{Port} Melville Island. He tried to get by one night in sloppy weather and he was shot at twice by the navy.
- Recalls working in North Vancouver ship-yards during the war with the shades pulled to cover the lights.
- During the Depression "you couldn't buy a job in those days", more time to work but money wise you weren't better off.
- When he stopped fishing at Rivers Inlet, over half the fishermen were Indians, now there are a lot fewer, in those days the company supplied the outfit and they had a better chance.
- Talks of people at Rivers Inlet: Chief Johnson and his wife who smoked fish at Kildala Bay in 1918.
- The hatchery at Rivers Inlet was closed as they did not get any benefit from it.
- In 1927 if it wasn't for H. R. McMillan, B. C. Packers would have folded.
- Canneries haven't had it all easy either, they got their drawbacks same as the fishermen.