

Interviewed: February 18, 1976

FOREMAN -
PHOENIX CANNERY: Mr. Stan May,
629 Cooney Road,
Richmond, B. C.

- First started out in the cannery business at 15 years of age in the north coast at Walkers Lake.
- There was just a little cabin with a stove.
- You would light the stove and put the wet mattresses around it to dry then put the mattress on your bed.
- I was a very "home-sick boy" was used to being around a big family.
- The next year went to Namu, and put in four years there as a apprentice machinist.
- Then took a job as a full fledge lineman when I was 22 on the Nass River.
- It was a small cannery, just two lines but good experience.
- The cannery was run by steam engine.
- We had our own little power plants run by steam or gas engines.
- I would put in four months on the Nass River, then come south and work at American Can over hauling machinery during the winter.
- I did that for quite a few years, then switched companies and came to Canadian Fish in 1939.
- Went to Carlile Cannery on the Skeena River.
- Would go up in the spring and drive piles, work on machinery.
- Put in seven months a season.
- We got a \$150.00 a month and our board.
- I would put \$100 a month in the band and at the end of the season walk away with seven hundred.
- I had my wife and two small children with me.
- The company provided the house and paid the electricity.
- When the war came along we started working all year round.
- We started to do herring then and worked long hours.
- Worked one year at Phoenix Cannery in 1942.
- It was the biggest sockeye salmon run in the Fraser River.
- Remembers a seine boat leaving one morning at 7 a.m. and they were back in at 4 p.m. and had made \$1,200 per man.
- In those days I was making \$6.75 a day and working 16 hours a day.
- There was no union and no overtime.

- At that time you just worked for a monthly rate.
- I was on the first negotiating committee of the United Fishermens Union for the shoreworkers.
- Then I was made foreman at 27.
- Then went to work at Butedale for Canadian Fish for four years all year round.
- We did cold storage, reduction plant herring and salmon.
- Then the kids needed educations so came down here, was promised a job in town but they didn't give it to me so I quit.
- Two hours later I had a job at A.B.C. Packing Company at Phoenix Cannery, I went right back down as a lineman again.
- In three months I was made foreman.
- First Reduction Plant started in 1928.
- I stayed at Phoenix Cannery for 26 years, then they were bought out by Canadian Fish Company.
- In the days of the Phoenix Cannery we had hand filling, piece work.
- And it was piece work on herring; we canned herring in ovals and tall.
- We had a lot of Japanese working there.
- Noticed a lot of changes in machinery.
- We had hand filling first then got Troyer-Fox filling machine.
- It was a slow speed machine, slow speed vacuum.
- Then we went up from high speed up to 200 cans a minute.
- Phoenix very good company, one of the best companies to work for; very fair and wages good.
- Always got a bonus at Christmas, a months wages, a turkey.
- If we had a big year like 1958 we used to get a bonus of two months wages at Christmas which was pretty nice in those days.
- Believes the companies made great profits in the 30's and 40's, but its changed now.
- Hard for companies to make a go of it now.
- I always thought the workers were getting underpaid by the company in those days.
- The more you paid the better class of men you had working for you and this would pay off for the company also.
- Back in the 1930's some of different jobs for the men were pitching fish from the bottom of the boat up to the deck and then into an elevator and up to the cannery.

- Talks on the new methods of today.
- On the herring; shovelled the herring on to a big conveyor with buckets on it they worked hard those fellows.
- They were on piece work too, they got paid by the ton.
- Believes fishermen are over fishing the areas today.
- There is a little bit of a pricing war today between companies; some companies pay better than others.
- Speaks on the discrimination of the Indians and the Chinese back in the 1930's.