

AGRICULTURE - - Cattle Judge,
Strawberry, Potatoe farming

Gordon McKay,
547 No. 7 Road, Richmond, B.C.

Interviewed: April 5, 1973.

Born 1910 on River Road on father's farm, Brighthouse Estate, between No. 2 Road and No. 3 Road . . . in a family of two boys and two girls.

. . . helped on the farm as youngster . . . winters were tougher . . . ice on Middle Arm froze over . . . you could walk across . . . water came from Fraser but drinking water from Marpole . . . in milk cans brought back on horse and buggy . . . crossed on Lulu Island bridge to Sea Island then Sea Island bridge to Marpole . . . when bridge redecked at end of World War I, had to travel by scow.

. . . had water piped in from Vancouver by then . . . at about 12 years of age telephone was in home.

1925 - electricity in by pole system . . . all lanterns in barns before . . . no fire but used 12 - 15 lanterns between horse farm and cow farm . . . father milked 100 Holsteins . . . later lost all with TB and bought Ayreshire herd but they took too long to milk . . . TB test not so good then as now . . . very little TB here now.

. . . went to Bridgeport school . . . 3 miles . . . usually by saddle horse or horse and buggy . . . democrat, cutters and bob sleighs in winter.

c1920, 1925 - hauled hay, oats, straw to Vancouver all winter long . . . one winter started in November and ended hauling mid-

March . . . had lots of snow then, different from today . . . used to see hockey played in Middle Arm, Richmond vs Marpole. . . . first school grades teacher was sister, Pearl . . . other teachers Miss Pentland, Miss Westland, principal Miss McNeeley. 1930 - married Alice McKim . . . left family farm 43 years ago. . . . bought farm Williams Road: early peas, early potatoes (Epicure), strawberries - sold to Empress Manufacturing Co. for processed berries, fresh fruit to market . . . got 5¢ a pound, wages were 15 cents an hour. Today - 22¢ a pound to canneries, wages weeding \$1.35 . . . pay for picking by basket . . . costs higher to grow berries, wages higher, spraying expensive, costs \$5,000 to \$8,000 for spray alone . . . Captan has been extensively used as spray for rot and mildew . . . many new sprays out this year . . . McKay does his own spraying . . . labor: previously picked up pickers from Vancouver depots with own trucks . . . last year and this year contracted labor with Chinaman.

1930 - farm had 2 or 3 cows . . . also rented another farm.

1948 - moved to Westminster Highway 40 acres area of present subdivision between No. 7 Road and No. 8 Road . . . had dairy cattle, grew strawberries, Netted Gem potatoes, some oats and hay . . . McKay grew strawberries 43 years earlier than anyone here except McKim . . . not so many diseases in early days . . . no aphids earlier . . . when something new appears in California it reaches here in 5 - 6 years . . . farming is a gamble . . . new moth here last year . . . each year part of berries is lost to rain.

McKay is national director, Holstein Association of B.C.
. . . attends three meetings yearly at Brantford, headquarters,
and travels in B.C. meeting farmers.

Improved Holstein cow, particularly the test . . . milk now
tests over 4% but people buy 2% . . . milk and cattle improved . . .
Holstein cattle shipped to 52 different countries in 1972 . . . big
export business to Italy, Japan and France. . . Canada and U.S.
raise top Holsteins in world . . . competition keen for foreign
market . . . foreign market like big cattle and Holstein steer,
as they are short of milk and beef.

Strawberries - types. At farm on Williams Road grew Marshalls and
at farm on Steveston Highway grew Marshalls . . . then switched
to Northwest for 20 years . . . now growing Shuskan mainly (a U.S.
type) and first year growing Totem (a Canadian type) . . . Agassiz
experiments for new varieties. Sells to - jam or canning to Golden
Kist Jam Company, New Westminster.

Present farm is 160 acres . . . moved there 18 years ago . . .
area had oats, hay grown on it . . . stopped growing potatoes . . .
market price not good every year, supply and demand changes prices.

Recalls depression years on Williams Road farm - exchanging
2 sacks of potatoes for 1 pound butter, 1 sack potatoes for 1
gallon of gas . . . used to ship lots of tiny potatoes to Hong Kong
by dozen . . . in 25 pound sacks. Sacks formerly from North
West sack . . . no longer . . . potatoes in boxes to Potatoe Board,
they sack them . . . Marketing Board established years ago . . .
was good at that time for potatoes.

Strawberries now under Provincial Marketing Board . . . do nothing for growers except hold two meetings with processors and growers . . . need board federally operated . . . McKay farms 40 acres strawberries . . . 1972 was big loss with rain . . . some winter kill this year . . . expect price up this year as few Mexican berries coming north this year, also Washington has fewer berries this year so supply and demand will raise berry price this year.

McKay gradually cutting down on strawberries because of labour . . . Red Stele disease gets into land growing strawberries and clover . . . stays in low spots, moisture . . . turn over ground and grow other crops . . . leave it 8 years before returning to strawberries. More arable land here than will ever be needed.

Cattle now . . . total of 114 including cows, heifers and calves (some replacements) . . . milks 45 - 50 cows . . . has no beef cattle. McKay sells good cattle for export . . . sold bull to Italy . . . prices high there . . . quality of cattle in Canada will continue . . . Ontario biggest cattle producer . . . small farm but close . . . one fieldman has 50,000 in his district . . . a lot more cattle herds getting into B.C. interior, and Prince George, Vanderhoof . . . as population increases more dairy cattle will go up . . . very few herds of other than Holstein left in B.C. . . . Australian herds formerly Jerseys, but switching to Holsteins.

Land taxes on his farm from \$940 (18 years ago) to over \$4,000 . . . wages tripled but can't get help.

If meat prices boycotted, farmers will not produce meat and eventually meat prices will go higher (\$3 a pound for beef) . . .

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A few years ago dairy feed was \$38.00 a ton, now it's \$96.00 a ton . . . cows are producing a little more milk than previously and test is up.

McKays have 4 children: Marjorie, Frances, Norma and Gordon.

Dellis Cleland