

Interview #4 – tapes II and III

Summary of topics discussed in interview:

- Japanese fishing boats built by seven boat makers – boats lasted 30-40 years – using first class lumber, boats were smaller then (story about boat being made just prior to internment during World War II)
- Series of stories about the Japanese having to report to “Custodians” before being sent inland
- Various every day problems related to the internment: owned a car – a Packard – that was given to Mr. Olafson who helped Mr. Nishii dispose of his property before being sent inland – December 8, 1941; radios were taken away from the Japanese, curfews were set and no newspapers were sold to them either
- On May 18, 1942, they were given eight hours notice to travel
- Mr. Jarvis took over the old house on Moncton Street the day the Nishiis left (subsequent story about the disposal of property, discussion about legislation pertaining to internment of old and young Japanese - story about who went where)
- Early immigration from Japan – everyone first went to Victoria for the immigration process. Mr. Nishii’s father paid \$50.00 to enter Canada in the 1900’s.
- Mention is made to Cicely Lyon’s book *Salmon: Our Heritage*
- The Chinese and Japanese did not get along together in Vancouver during the Manchurian and Shanghai incidents (1931-1935.) Chinese labourers brought into Steveston during the summer fishing season were mostly single men whereas the Japanese settled in Steveston and raised families
- Anecdote about the Chinese restaurant above a Japanese dry goods store
- Hong Wo store on the dyke catered mostly to Japanese fishermen
- Story about the Caucasians versus the Asians just prior to the Depression
- Mr. Nishii was born in 1918 at the Japanese hospital. He went to Lord Byng School in 1924 and lived at Winch Cannery and walked 1½ miles each way from the foot of No. 2 Road
- Story about classroom segregation. His teachers were Miss Steeves, Miss Harrison, Miss Kirkland and Mrs Hunter – some went to the “old” school, some to the “new” school. The Japanese built an annex because they owned land.
- Japanese Benevolent Association – language school held ½ day on Saturdays but was discontinued about 1934
- Eight year old boys worked on boats with their fathers and uncles while the girls worked in the fields

- Lived first at “Winch” camp at No. 2 Road but on May 14, 1918 there was a big fire and eighty houses and three canneries were destroyed. The Columbia Cold Storage pumps stopped the spread of the fire eastward (there was a strong westerly blowing that day)
- List of canneries
- Description of another fire in 1926 – taken to Howse ranch to be out of the way (story about insurance and a large number of saved cans of salmon)
- Many Japanese did return to Japan due to disappointing treatment during their internment but many returned to Canada later (story about Toronto having the largest Japanese settlement in Canada today)
- Story about Japanese running Lethbridge Cannery
- Being bilingual, many Canadian Japanese were able to secure jobs in Post-war Japan (eg. Airlines, export industry)
- Fishing -- In the old days, the Japanese community supplied growth capital to its members – \$950.00 completely outfitted a fishing boat then. Fishing conditions are described: 400 licenses only for Japanese for fishing District No. 1; not restricted to Caucasians though (various stories about the fishing industry and Japanese fishermen); limited individual boat catch to 200 pink salmon because there were not many women working at filleting to keep up with incoming fish (this was the case at Winch Cannery); at one time there was a 400 fish average per boat; 1906-07 was the biggest Fraser Salmon run with 926, 000 cases of sockeye salmon
- There was an oilery (fish reduction plant) on Gunn Island or on the south side of Kirkland Island but it burned down in the 1930s and after that the offal was dumped into the Gulf (story about a ferry – sternwheeler – that went out from Woodward's Landing to observe the fire at the oilery)
- Story about how the women who worked at the Cannery were paid more to stay in the fields one year
- Indian village next to Japanese settlement (story about Indian burial ground) but the Indians left for Cooper Island later