

Researcher: Darlene Clyne

Tape 65; 2

Interviewed: February 24, 1976

CANNERY WORKERS: Mrs. Obayashi (Aided by Mrs. Yoshida)  
1125 - 6th Avenue,  
Steveston, B. C.

277-7645

- First started washing fish in Nelson Bros. Cannery in 1938 at 25¢ an hour.
- How many hours you worked depended on how much fish there was.
- Sometimes worked ten, twelve, fourteen hours a day.
- Nelson Bros. Cannery were very good people to work for.
- Says that the women who had children didn't work, they stayed home. (?)
- Worked around two months of fishing season.
- Used the  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound,  $\frac{1}{4}$  pound and the tall one pound cans.
- Union was a great help when it came in.
- Wages got better, working conditions better, fishermen got an unemployment insurance.
- In 1937 stayed in bunk house, the bunk houses weren't too bad.
- Bunk house wasn't very clean, wash rooms outside, rooms very small.
- Didn't have to work so hard when the machinery came in.
- Worked much harder when filling the cans by hand.
- Didn't notice any discrimination when working in cannery.
- Felt the workers were very kind, and everyone helped each other.
- Didn't want to evacuate but we had to go.
- When we came back to Steveston most of our things were gone and we had to start all over again, right from the beginning.
- Even the boats the Japanese fishermen had were all gone.
- The canneries helped the Japanese when they came back to Steveston after the war.
- The canneries made it a little easier for the Japanese to get started again.
- During the 1930's there was more first generation Japanese living in Steveston.
- What they were planning to do was to make some money and send the money back to the old country and then they were planning to live in Japan.
- But they never made enough money to get back, wages very low.
- Remembers the Chinese women didn't work in the cannery but the Chinese contractors were there.

- Back in 1930's fishing season very good, always lots of work.
- Only got paid once a month in those days.
- Working in cannery was good, you could take a day off when you wanted, for example, if the children were sick you could take the day off to look after the children.
- Today, canneries much better; before the war you had no hot water for tea, no coffee breaks or any lunch rooms.
- There was no overtime before the war; you were paid by the hour and everyone got paid the same wage, except the hand-fillers who got piece work.
- Better to work piece work because you could make more money.
- The canneries always hired the same people year after year.
- Before the war if you didn't like one cannery you just went to a different one.
- Before the war if there was enough fish everyone worked.
- If there wasn't enough fish only the people with the highest seniority worked.
- The canneries today are much more sanitary now.