

Interviewed: January 21, 1976

Mrs. Elsie Ono (cannery worker)
314 Regent Street,
Steveston, B. C.

- Started working in canneries in 1938.
- Spent as many hours working in a day as it took to process the fish.
- Worked mostly in the summer for B. C. Packers and Nelson Brothers.
- Was never paid overtime wages in the early years even though they may have worked overtime.
- Her first job was washing fish.
- Washing fish can be a tiring job.
- They were processing only salmon in 1937.
- The can filling was done by hand then.
- There were extra benefits.
- Before Mrs. Ono's time, in the cannery, the children of the cannery workers were babysat by one of the cannery workers (they took turns) in a building provided by the company.
- The person who did the babysitting was paid about the same amount she would have made in the cannery.
- This babysitting practice ended during the war.
- B. C. Packers used to be called Imperial.
- One new machine that Mrs. Ono speaks of is one which skins the fish.
- Salmon is easier to work with than some of the different fish they are processing now.
- Herring was canned before the war for food. It was not processed for roe.
- It was packed by hand by women.
- The ladies worked about 8 hours shift when they were working on herring.
- Before the war, there were some Chinese people working in the cannery.
- Mrs. Ono lived in a 3 bedroom house provided by the company before the war.
- All those company houses have been torn down.
- The Chinese were hired by contract.
- The contractor would get a certain percentage of the profits accumulated by the workers.
- There used to be a fishermans co-op store at the end of #2 Road.

- There were less women working in the cannery in 1937.
- Mrs. Ono worked "piece work" filling cans and was paid "by the Tray", i.e. 24 tins to the tray.
- Mrs. Ono was never injured at the cannery.
- There never used to be any lunchroom facilities, the ladies ate their lunch "where ever there was a space."
- Some of the ladies lived close enough to the cannery to go home for lunch.
- There were no coffee breaks around 1937.
- The ladies would start working at 8 and work till 12 noon with no coffee breaks.