

MARINE

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Tape 30, S.2

Shin Matsuo
971 Berry Road, Richmond.

Interviewed: April 17, 1973.

Born in Richmond in 1910. Remembers in childhood when big fishing fleets were in, there were pretty wild times on Saturday nights. Natives came in from the Gulf Islands for the salmon runs, and every cannery company had large shack to house them in for 3 to 4 weeks. In old days, fishing was hard work. Now unload boats by suction, taking half an hour per boat. Canning was also by hand. Now 80 to 100 cans per minute per "line". Remembers three large hotels in Steveston around 1918.

His father was in fishing business - Shin helped him - father died, Shin took over business at 24 years of age. At 29, war moved him on to Bridge River country.

In 1948, Mr. Fraser an old school chum, vice-president of British Columbia Packers, asked Shin to come back and organize Japanese fishermen. They were dispersed to as far away as Montreal. Shin moved to Steveston in the Spring of 1949, restriction being lifted in April 1949, all Japanese fishermen wanted to come back, British Columbia Packers couldn't handle all, spread around other canneries. Companies had to loan money to fishermen to buy boats, since all lost in war. Fishing business requires close knowledge of fishermen, close relationship, knowledge of their families, etc. at the same time must be able to get maximum effort out of them.

Japanese community close knit. Involvement in fishing business required involvement in community life up to mid-60's. Now, Japanese integrated much more, particularly through schooling.

Has salmon roe business, dealing with Japan. Son wishes to take over. Recently sent him to Japan to learn business.

Attended Lord Byron school, and High School at Bridgeport. House where he was born, between hardware store and dyke burned down, few months after his family moved.

Was on his way to school when he heard whistle going continuously - that was the fire warning - they were kept in school all day. Star and Lighthouse cannery burned down.

Language problem kept Japanese together in early days. Shin attended English school, then from 3:30 to 5:30 went to Japanese language school - for 8 years, at father's insistence. This is a big help in his present business relations with Japan.

80% of Japanese were Buddhist, now probably 50/50 between Buddhist and United Church.

A. Moir