

FISHERMAN: Mr. Harry Thompson,  
764 Tweedsmuir,  
Richmond, B. C.

277-7969

David Stevenson - Researcher

- Born and raised in Steveston at No. One Road and Steveston Highway.
- His father worked on the original Steve's farm, Harold Steve's grandfather, a large dairy farm and he grew seeds, especially tulip bulbs, turnip seed, mangal(?) seed, a kind of root for dairy cattle.
- His father acquired his own farm and enlarged it, then grew up and worked on the farm---the farm was between Georgia Street and 6th Avenue.
- He acquired 35 - 40 acres mostly between Georgia Street and Steveston Highway.
- He had about 15 - 18 cows and a milk delivery routes.
- Harry Thompson delivered the milk on the route which was about fifteen deliveries, raw milk, no processing.
- They stayed in the milk business until sanitation regulations forced him out of the business, so he shipped all his milk to be processed in Vancouver.
- This was during the war.
- Mr. Thompson started fishing at twelve years of age in 1936 with his older brother in a skiff..
- Their father eventually made a deal with a Japanese farmer and they got a fish net for the good run in '36, it was a linen net.
- They caught about 40 - 50 salmon, for which they got 40¢ to 50¢ @ piece.
- Their father had a license which allowed them to fish.
- There were lots of gas boats at this time.
- He went to Rivers Inlet in 1938 with an old fellow to fish.
- Rivers Inlet was quite primitive compared to today.
- There were lots of canneries there and sail boats as well.
- He fished for Goose Bay Cannery.
- There were at least several dozen boats fishing for Goose Bay.
- In the day time they fished along the shore, at night they moved into the middle of the Inlet and turned on their lamps; it was like a little city, they were kind of lost.
- The most notable were the Native fishermen and cannery workers, a few Chinese and Scandenavian people.
- Their first boat was the "S.S. Box", an old square thing, very basic with a Model T engine sawn in half and one cylinder running.

- There was not much speed but it beat rowing and sailing, they stayed in the River with it.
- They never went out of sight of Steveston; did most of their fishing in the mouth of the river.
- They would go in the garden and take all the fruit and vegetable that were in season as well as home-made butter, home-made bread and that was enough, as well as milk from the cows.
- They went out overnight, but after they would come in at night.
- They used to build fires on the sand bar at night to keep warm.
- One time in 1937, they had 95 pinks, and a few coho for which they were getting 5¢ each for them.
- They ended up with a five dollar bill which was really something in those days.
- 1939 he remembers the threat of war and the economy picking up quite a bit.
- His family never lacked food and clothing during the depression but his parents worked hard.
- As the years went by he acquired bigger and better boats.
- 1941 he did quite well---\$<sup>500</sup>~~1,200~~.00.
- They paid for a new boat and their net.
- The native people came in June and July to man the canneries, there was different pulse to the town then.
- When the war broke out the government interned the Japanese people.
- It left a vacuum in the industry as the Japanese comprised 80% of the fleet and so he was able to fill in; this decided him to be a fisherman and he got a good boat---a 26 foot double-ender with a 5 HP Vivian engine.
- It had a dog house on it, you couldn't really stand straight in it, you kind of leaned over.
- In the late 1940's the square stern came in, it gave more working room and buoyancy.
- The double ender was better for hand puller with the power-drum you didn't need the double ender.
- When the Japanese left, there were many empty houses and many new people came into Steveston; many strangers.
- He fished dog-fish during the war to get the livers.

- You had to have a half decent boat; 29-32 foot to go out in the Gulf.
- His wife worked in the cannery for Canadian Fish; when he met her.
- Describes the new type of nylon gear: easier to clean and care for; the old linen net had to be cleaned and lasted only two seasons, with nylon nets you can get seven to eight years out of them.
- Everything is synthetic now from hanging twine, lead lines and floats.
- Fishing gear today is much more efficient and today they get only one or two days of fishing a week.
- As his boat got bigger he fished further up the coast.
- He also fished halibut, you had to dress the fish before you could sell it.
- He got 13¢ to 17¢ a piece, this was up near Prince Rupert, one year they fished for 6¢ and 7¢ @ pound the market was based on supply and demand.
- He joined the U.F.A.W.U. in 1944-45.
- He joined in order to fight the companies better.
- The companies controlled everything: gear, docking facilities and you had to go along with them.
- The gillnetters have never been as strongly organized as the bigger boats because the seine boats had employees while the gillnetter fished for himself.
- There are many forms of financial assistance today so that it is possible to be a bit more independent.
- The fishery has moved out from the mouth of the river to the west coast of the Island and San Juan Straits.
- He ran a table seiner and did halibut fishing as well, using seven to eight men as a crew.
- You range further afield and you can make more money, it's a full time job.
- May, June, July---halibut fishing, then salmon fishing until October, then herring were fished then a break and back to herring again in January.
- Discusses the reason for the many accidents in the recent herring fishery: the boats are too top heavy and they try to pack too many fish into them.