

Helen Zesko (cannery worker)

926 Railway,
Richmond, B. C.

277-8201

Interviewed: January 9, 1976

- Started in 1940 for B. C. Packers at 16 years-old, washed fish fillited and ran machines.
- New filling machines installed in 1942.
- Working conditions tough in 1948 (cold, etc.)
- Canning done by hand (salmon and herring).
- Many women employed then but less women do more now due to machinery, describes "hand-filling".
- Started work at 20¢ an hour in 1940.
- No compensation in 1940.
- Used to be more men than women due to the heavy work.
- Work has improved in the canneries, i. e. safety regulations, heating.
- There were bunkhouses in 1940.
- Camps were made of regular houses.
- No children under 16 working for B. C. Packers in 1940.
- Japanese came back from internment in 1950, they were nice people to work with.
- No racial conflicts at B. C. Packers around 1940. All people Indians, Whites, Japanese paid same rate except piece workers who made more than the hourly workers.
- Women made 20¢ an hour at B. C. Packers in 1940 and the men were paid 30¢ an hour.
- Describes a machine called the "gang knives" used for the $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. cans.
- Oysters and clams begun to be processed in 1950 and that processing ended in 1960.
- Cannery work went on normally but busily during the War.
- Can not remember any unusual or interesting events in cannery history since 1940.
- Some of the work in the cannery is demanding depending on what you're doing.
- Work in the canneries has improved 100%.
- Has enjoyed working in the cannery.