Sakamoto, Unosuke - translation/original

1991

AV1
9072
S333
J3
1973

199

UNOSUKE SAKAMOTO

M. When did you come to Canada?

S. 1919

M How old were you?

S 15? 9 wonder.

M. Did you come with your mother?

S Alone. My father was here.

M In Steveston?

S Yes, 1919, so I was 16 by Japanese counting. Right?

M Alone?

S With friends, at that time many people came. I became friends with people at the immigrants' hotel.

M. Were there others who were 16?

S Yes, the same age group, the guy who shared the same desk with me in the elementary school came with me on the same boat.

M Whereabouts in WAKAYAMA are you from?

S Hidaka-cho.

M. Is it near Mio?

S It is near Mio. Mio is one village after Hidaka-cho.

M. There are many people from Mie in Steveston. Are there many from Hidaka-cho too?

S Not so many, there are some but compared to Mie, there are much less from Hidaka-cho, very few.

M How about the people from the other places in WAKAYAMA?

S Other places: There are quite a few from KUMANO & KUSHIMOTO, but not so many as Mie.

M. Are they also related?

S Yes.

M Are the majority WAKAYAMA people?

S Yes, many also

M From what prefectures are Steveston people?

S SHIGA, KAGOSHIMA, HIROSHIMA, I think, and then TOTTORI, YAMAGUCHI and in upper Fraser area people from MIYAGI, SENDAI.

M. Upper Fraser, you mean Delta?

S. Yes, Delta towards and near New Westminster.

M. Had your father been doing fishing for a long time?

S Yes, he came in 1900. He died during the war

M - Were you the eldest son?

S I was an adopted son.

M Is that right? Your father had been here for a long time.

S Yes, for a long time.

M. Right after you came, you started to help your father?

S Yes.

M How was fishing?

S Oh Japan people say "If you have 1 mint 5 rice bran, don't become adopted," you know that? It wasn't that bad once you were here. It wasn't that bad...

M How was fishing then?

S Well, there were a lot of fish but the price was very cheap. You could never get so much profit as now. The number of fish is greater but in terms of money it wasn't that much.

M. Where did you catch fish?

S Mainly on the Fraser River.

M. Did you have No 1 licence?

S Yes. At first I used to have the licence for the West Coast too but in those days, licence number was very limited, and my father was (while

in Japan - somebody else took it away.

M. was it possible for Ab's to obtain another's licence?

S Yes

M. How did you obtain your licence?

S Myself, I inherited my father's licence

M. was it the way with everybody?

S Yes.

M. was it difficult to obtain a new licence?

S It was impossible to get a new licence. In 1922, 40% cut-down.
By that Time we coned do fishing without the licences. so honest people received licences to do fishing but sneaky one didn't bother to get the licences. The 40% cut-down was cut-down of the people who owned the licences, so it was a great blow on the whole Japanese.
Of 40% of the whole fishermen were cut down, many fishermen coned have chance to survive but 40% of the licenced fishermen was cut-down really hard on us.

M. Were there as many non-licenced fishermen as licenced fishermen?

S Yes, I think there were great many non-licenced fishermen.

And at that time, naturalization paper, couple of people could share one paper, or one person could own two or three papers by changing a little bit of this name, for example, TARO could become JIRO on a different paper, like that a person carried many papers. These people landed the papers to the people in different places, like the guy who lived in Steveston landed this naturalization to one in Skeena, things like that.

M. How long this could go on?

S Not so long, but, well, such thing lasted for quite a while.

M. Didn't an immigration officer come to check such thing often?

S. It seemed that such investigation was not so easy because the Japanese names were all very alike.
For example, you know there are many SAKAMOTO's around here.
Often I receive the telephone calls, wrong calls, some ask me if I am related to them. Not at all. Even the same SAKAMOTO, my relations are only my children.

M. Well at beginning when you were only 16, fishing was hard on you?

S At that time, a boat was small.

M Did the boat have an engine?

S Yes, with an engine, but at Skeena and Naas they didn't have engines.

They were using sailboats.

M How many sails did the boats have?

S Only one sail.

M It was a very small boat?

S Yes, small. The boat of those days was about 30 feet long and 6, 7, at largest 8 feet wide. Compared to the present boat it was only a little bit bigger than sampan.

M. Did a boat sometimes turn over?

S. Such incidents were very rare. The people were considerably experienced, and they were prepared for their job. If you had a big boat you will take a chance against wind. On a small boat, if you are careful so you will not meet many dangers.

M Did you do fishing in Japan?

S No.

M Was it easy to learn fishing?

S Yes, easy to learn, it is a plain job, (smile) different from your job which cannot be done without university education: it is good enough to follow it what others do. When you get used to the work gradually you will know by your sixth sense about wind and wave, etc, you will know what kind of wind will come soon etc.
In those days we didn't have any barometer, nothing, we knew the weather by sense.

M. can everybody do so?

S. Yes, certainly, everybody can do such thing.
It is something like the fish (second nature?)
A fisherman has the fisherman's sense.
Anybody has the same sense.

M. You cannot do it if you don't like it?

S. Yes, unless you like it you cannot do it.
Below a sheet of board lies the sea.

M. Did you have any risky experience?

S Yes, I did.

M. What was it like?

S When a gust of wind came... At the mouth of Fraser River, it is a bad place, when the west wind comes, the waves get really high, the tide runs fast, you know, so every year somebody meets with a danger.
Last year not Japanese so often, but white people often meets with misfortune.

M. Then, even if boats get better, don't the misfortunes get decreased?

S Well, people take more chances, so (not much different.
the ratio of misfortunes is

M. People are greedy, aren't they?

S Yes, a man's greed does not have any limit.
If you catch fair amount of fish, you become more daring, a boat is much bigger now,

different from the old one, a boat can stand for a chance, so misfortune happens. Everyday, some Japanese meets with a caramity.

M. More experience you have, less dangers you meet with, right?

S Yes, that is right.
The mouth of this river is the hard place for fishing. Unless you are very alert fisherman, you will often meet with a danger.

M. Did you start fishing at 16? Did you help your father?

S Yes, at first both of us did fishing together.

M Was he a good fisherman?

S No, he wasn't so good. I am not so good either. (smile) So so, I would say. Now I am no longer good. I don't take a chance. Before I used to go out when I saw flags coming back. I took it as a chance. So I don't see anybody of my age doing fishing at the West Coast now but I have never been afraid of waves, so I still go to the West Coast.

M. You said you never felt afraid of the waves. Have you had any risky experience,

S. Certainly. I have some dangerous experiences.

M. Was your boat going to turn over?

S (Smile) not such thing,

M. Is the wind the most dangerous?

S. Well, wind, when wind gets strong, waves get higher, so without wind waves are calm.

M. Does wind gets strong all of sudden?

S- Ys, sometimes suddenly, sometimes gradually.

M. So you stop fishing when you think the wind will get stronger.

S Yes, that's right, that means, we go back to a dock in a hurry
It is dependent on experience and that (* I think the means sense)

M. You do fishing at night?

S Yes.

M. What time of the day is best for fishing, day or night?

S Only at dawn and dusk. Also there is the tidal hour for catching fish, wherever you go, catching by rod or by net, you know the time table issued by government, so we have to drop the nets according to the time table

same with trolling.
You can catch the fish best at the time when tide changes.

M. So you drop the net before that tidal change happens?

S. Yes, yes and the places... you cannot find the fish everywhere. There are the places where fish gather together... So right time at the right place.

M. How do you know those places?

S. It depends upon your experience.

M. Have you done fishing at almost all places at the west Coast?

S. Yes, we don't go to too many places. We do fishing around Yakutat. Yakutat is the base camp. The farthest place is about 5 hours distance, about 40 to 50 miles out of the harbor.

M. In summer how many fishermen are around you over there?

S. About two boats, at most about four boats.

M. Do you have a hard competition?

S. Certainly trolling, you drag the lines with slow speed, once you are out of harbor until you return there. You don't have any time to rest your eyes. You have to watch your lines.

If there are two people on the boat you can take turns to rest.

M. Do the lines get caught sometimes?

S Sure, they do.

M. If gill-net, how many fish can be caught in a net?

S I don't know, if many, 1000 or 1500 fish, it can be depend upon the kinds of fish. If pink (salmon), sometime 1000 or 1500 for one set of net.

M. How often do you drop and pull up the net?

S It depends upon tide hour and place. At some places you have to do it many times. If it is a good place, for example, at West coast, it is a large place, you know, so if it is a place hard to catch fish we drop the net in the evening, leave it down until morning.

M When can you sleep in the meantime?

S. No, it is impossible to sleep, you have to watch the net all night through, otherwise a big Japanese boat will come and tear off the net.

M. I see, there are a lot of boats passing by.

S If we go near the boundary of carelessly America, there are American patrol boats if we go inside of the boundary

to arrest us. Last year in the north, some had to pay $800 fine.

M. Can you see such boundary line?

S You can tell by mile. At west coast, there are about 12 miles between America and Canada. So if you don't go beyond six miles, you are safe. You measure by radar. In this way we try not to be arrested. Before, many people were caught. Then the fine was only 200 or 300 dollars. But now the fine is much higher.

M. When did you start having a radar?

S Well, two or three years ago. Until recently we used small boats and it cost a lot to have various equipment. But now the boats to go to the west coast almost all of them are equipped with radar.

M. Radar, radio, etc are convenient to have on a boat, I suppose.

S Ye, Radio, radar, Mickey Mouse, with which you talk to the near places, usually two of them, and 'echo-sounder' to know the depth of the sea, a recorder in which fish are reflected, automatic pilot if you keep the switch on the boat goes straight automatically and, [illegible] which indicates the place where you are located which I don't have yet. So elaborate machines, they cost at least 1,500 dollars.

M. So a boat must cost quite a lot now.

S. That's right.

M. Can you go any place by your boat?

S. You don't have enough fuel.

M. So it is only the problem of fuel?

S Yes, yes,
Like Mr. HORII now is the age to cross the ocean by only 17~8 feet boat. (smile)
You don't have to pay $ 340....

M. So soon, you will be able to go to Japan by your own boat. (chuckles from M & S)

S. Before 1900, from UTASE in Osaka, I think by a fairly large fishing boat without any machine those days, only with sailboat, quite a few people came to Canada
These people landed on Queen charlot Island.

M. Were there many Japanese on Q. Charlot Island?

S. Those people from Utase, secretly landed on Q.C.I.

M. Did they do fishing?

S Yes,

M Were they settled down here?

S. Yes, in those days, 1900 or so, it was not difficult to land here, those who came

in early days could live there without passport.

M. Isn't B.C. very cold?

S. Cold! BC is in the north, for sure, but it is surrounded by sea so it is not so cold. Compared with BC interior, B.C is much warmer.

M Is that so? I thought it must be very cold because it is in the north.

S. Here too, it is on the same latitude as Hokkaido, but it is far less cold than Hokkaido, you know.

M Are there any Japanese living in Queen Charlot Island?

S. I think so. In summer many people go there to fish

M Were there canneries there before?

S Yes. there were

M Now?

S Now there are hardly any. There are fishing camps where they collect fish and send them to Nanaimo, Prince Rupert and Steveston.

M. Are they camps of BC Packers etc?

S. Yes, Nelson Brothers, Canadian Fishing, such big companies.

M. Is B C Packers only cannery in Steveston?

S Nelson Brothers too, they do herring cans
We have Canada Fishing but they produce
only little amount of cans
Before Queen Charlotte was there but
now it is at the direction of No. 5 Rd.
In old days there were a lot but now only big ones
are left.

M. Did the Japanese people own some canneries in
the old days?

S No, no Japanese ran them

M. Could the Japanese make a fortune if they
had canneries? Was it difficult to run
them?

S They didn't let the Japanese own a cannery.

M Are the owners of canneries English-Canadians?

S In old days most of the main jobs were occupied
by the English-Canadians, but now the canneries
are operated by American capital. For example
Canada Fishing is an American capital.

M How about BC Packers?

S It is in this country.

M Is it the biggest cannery?

S Right now so, but Nelson Brothers is
raising its head, it seems that Nelson Brothers
is running BC Packers. actually

M Are they together?

S Yes, inside is one, outside seems that there are two companies.

M. Do you belong to ...

S B.C. Packers.

M Are all the fishermen belong to some companies?

S Yes, some belong to Co-op or different companies, but in steveston almost all fishermen belong to either BC Packers, Canadian Fishing or Nelson Brothers, three big ones.

M. When did BC Packers grow?

S About 20 years ago.
The canneries before the war are all gone, Great West, Beaver Cannery, other small ones, they are all gone.

M Did you come back to Steveston after the war, in 1950?

S In 1949.

M Were you the first one to come back?
Were the companies different?

S There was a great change. Before the war we caught the fish for Canadian Fishing, so went back to Canadian Fishing but whether according to United Allied Fishermens Union, or

P. 2 →

or agreement among the canneries, I don't know, but they said to me, if the Japanese came back they have decided never to hire the Japanese, so they will not let me work for them. But there was a small cannery called Beaver cannery. They said they would hire some Japanese. Then, the canneries started to lose harmony to carry out their decision.

First when I came out here I was going to work for Beaver Cannery, Richmond Cannery, a friend of mine had been out there ahead of me. On our way BC Packers approached me and told me to come to them not to others, on our way here, at the place called 千千岩. They caught us. So I came to BC Packers.

Since I used to work for Canada Fishing I went to Canada Fishing but they said they wouldn't hire me.

The first one year, they did so but from the next year the Japanese fishermen achieved an excellent result in the first year, so all the canneries wanted to have the Japanese the agents of the canneries went all the way to Manitoba and Alberta to recruit the Japanese fishermen.

In the first year but there were only 28 Japanese in Steveston in 1949.

They were all very confident fishermen who used to catch a lot of fish, so they did very well.

So the canneries realized the Japanese can do much better than those white men who came from Trail or something like that. They strived to be first to obtain the Japanese fishermen.

Canadian fishing which rejected me at first approached me many times afterwards, saying we did such a thing but please come back, we will do anything to please you. they offered me such condition.
But I said no, I said, I went to you many times but you said you would not hire any japanese. How come you say such thing now? I have a contract with BC Packers so I have to work for them for 10 years. If I change my mind in 10 years I may work for you again, otherwise I will not do so
Such was the situation.

M. At the beginning when you came back you didn't have any boat, did you?

S. I went to all over to look for a boat A boat was provided by the cannery but it was a rotten junky boat, it was no good. there were only such junky boats. we had to fix them
Next year all the junky boats were sold for new boats, the canneries were completely cooperative by that time and loaned us as much money as we wanted.

M. So the canneries changed their attitude completely?

S Ye.

M On 1950 did the population of the Japanese fishermen increase suddenly?

S Ye. many.

M. Did almost all fishermen came back to Steveston?

S well, 90% came back 90% of those who used to do fishing here.

M. What happened to Skeena River? Did the fishermen go back there?

S. Ye, some went there leaving the base in Steveston. One there Sunny side Cannery and Port Edward, Nelson Brothers branch. These two are the bigest one there

M Are the Japanese fishermen settled down there?

S Ye. I think there are quite a few especially at Port Edward but it seems that they will not be there for too long any more.

M Why?

S. There will be only fishing camps soon. They will not have canneries.

M. It means, all processing will be done in Steveston.

S Right, then the company can save the operation cost. They all try to be economical automatically.
So university graduates cannot find any job.

M (chuckle) less and less jobs for us.

S A lot of people used to have work up north, but they are gradually losing jobs.

M. How long did your father do fishing?

S (speaking to Mrs. S. in kitchen)
Mama, our father, was it after 2 or 3 years after we married?

Mrs S. He went back to Japan in November of the year that we married.

S was it the last time?

Mrs Yes.

S. Then he was here from 1900 to 1928.

M. Did he go back to Japan then?

S Yes. His wife was in Japan.

Tape 1 - side 2.

M. You had Dantai before the war.

S Nihon-jin (Japanese) Dantai.

M Renraku-kyogi-kai (Liaison Council) and Dai-ichi-gyosha-kyokai (No 1 District Fishermen's Association), I don't know the difference of these associations.

S. Nihon-jin Dantai is for the people in Steveston consisted of the Japanese people in Steveston

M. Only of Fishermen in Steveston?

S. No no, all who lived in Steveston.

S That was Dantai, the previous name was Steveston Fishermen's Benevolent Society, which was later changed into Steveston Japanese Association (Steveston-Nihonjin Dantai).
No 1 District Fishermen's Association consisted of the fishermen of the Fraser River. North Arm, Vancouver was included too. The people who belong to No 1 District were the members of No 1 District Fishermen's Association.
Fishermen's Liason Council was for all the Japanese fishermen on BC Coast, including salmon-fishermen, dog-fish fishermen, cod-fishermen, gill-net and trolling, all fishermen belonged to Liason Council.
Liason Council dealt with the problems concerning fishermen.

M. The price of fish was the biggest problem?..

S Liason Council and No 1 District Fishermen Association did negociation of the fish price together.
The chairman of No 1 District Fishermen's Association became the chairman of the Liason Council. The elected representatives of each district formed Liason Council.

M. How many members did Liason Council have?

S. For example, Skeena District had a lot of canneries.

M. Each cannery elected a member?

S. Yes, every cannery had about one representative from No 1 District also had at least one representative from each "ku" (division) For example Steveston, as it was a large division, it had three or five representatives, and up River had about one or two representatives.

M. Mr. Sakamoto, you were the chairman of No 1 District F. A. and L. C., weren't you?

S. For three years

M. When was it?

S From 1938 to 1961, until the beginning of the war.

M. You had a lot of problems, what was the biggest problem?

S The biggest problem was, at the same time the war started, the fishing boats were confiscated. Confiscation of fishing boats was the biggest problem.
All the fishing boats were brought to New Westminster from all over the places, West Coast, Skeena, Rivers Inlet. The boats were first brought down to Steveston and then from Steveston to New Westminster.
taken

M. Were all the boats brought in all together?

S Yes, yes.

M. Did the fishermen bring in their own boats by themselves?

S. No, they weren't allowed to bring in by themselves. The navy people came and they tugged the boats.
Then my boat was fairly big and speedy so they used my boat to pull the other boats together.

M. So all the boats were tugged, without work of engines.

S. Yes.

M. There must have been quite many boats.

S. Yes, certainly. I don't remember the number of the boats. They made a place a little bit down of New Westminster to collect the boats, and Navy people watched them. Then the committee called "Japanese Fishermen's Boats Sale Committee" was formed and Committee members were selected by the government, the only Japanese member was Mr KISHIZO KIMURA, I had to help them since I was responsible for No 1 District Association. Skeena was represented by Mr Mio, Cod and West Coast was represented by Mr Fukuyama, I wonder since all the Japanese had to leave there, they signed on the procurations. Each district chairman had to get procurations signed by the fishermen of his district (or division).
The government then advertised for buyers, there was a list, 'how about this boat, how about that,'... and Whitemen and Indians chose the boats they liked.
At first it was all right. The government asked us the prices, to know the value of the boats.

Then they let us know the offered prices, which we let the owners know at the places they moved to. I had their new addresses. I still have the list. I wrote to them, telling the prices and asked what they wanted to do. By that time they all know that they had to sell their boats for cheap prices. They all sold the boats with tears.

M With engines, machine, etc?

S Yes, yes, at the end, if someone wanted a boat, which was priced for 1000 dollars by us and the government, if this person didn't have that much money, he says, I have only 500 dollars but I want this boat so sell it to me. The government made on its own authority the bill of sale and sold a lot of boats in this way.

M So that fisherman could get only half of what he expected to have and he couldn't complain to anybody?

S Yes, that's right. No way. We were under War Measure Act.

M Were you still in Steveston?
in a hotel

S I was in Vancouver to deal with this problem. All japanese had to leave Steveston by the end of May. We couldn't stay in Steveston so we went to Vancouver and in Hotel Patricia, 400 block of East Hastings. we stayed. Our office was at 211 Dunlevy ?, it is Long Shoremen's office now.

Mr. Kimura had the office there so every morning we went to the office.

M. were there about 5 Japanese working there every day?

S Yes, yes.

M. How long did it take you to complete that business.

S. Since it seemed that it was going to take a long time, my wife and children were already out of town accompanied by our relatives. I was in Vancouver until 23rd of September.

M. Where were your family?

S. They were in Minto, until 1949.

M. Did you find a work there?

S. At first I didn't have any work but later I worked at a sawmill & logging.

M. Were there many people from Steveston?

S. No, not so many.

M. All your relations went to Minto?

S Relations, only 2 or 3 people.

M. Japanese fishermen's Boats, were there thousands of them?

S. Not thousands, because by then the Japanese fishermen's licences were limited.

M. So they were all sold?

S. Most of them were sold.
Mr. KIMURA is writing a book about it, which is going to be reserved in the university library. He came to show me this draft.

S. In February, 1949, the Fishermen's Union sent me a telegram telling me to come out to meet some representatives of Fishermen's Union. I think it was February. I came out, you know Buck Suzuki, he was working as long shoreman and at the same time he was making negociation with Union people.
We went to the representative's meeting of BC coast fishermen, Buck me and George Tanaka who is in Toronto now, three of us went there. The Union people asked me, in April the Japanese are allowed to come back to the coast, how many fishermen will be coming back?
I was not ready to be asked such question, I was a little in trouble, but I said to them, I think probably about 150 men will be back.
Then the Union people said, if all the Japanese, about 500 or so, come out all at once, we will ask the minister of Fishery who is supposed to come here in February 20 or so not to give licences to the Japanese fishermen.
I said to them, I am absolutely sure that 500 men will not come at first.

it should be at most 150 fishermen.
Then they asked, Can you guarantee it?
I said, Yes I will. I said so because
we would be in trouble if the union
asked the Minister of Fishery not to permit
any licence to the Japanese fishermen.
the Union people Then said to me, If
you say so, we will suggest the Minister
of Fishery to permit the licence to the
Japanese fishermen.
I think we could get this result
thanks to Buck who had been working as
a longshoreman since a year ago and
negociating with the people in the Union.
Such was the situation.
Even 150 people didn't turn up.
So it was all right.
The Union people later said to me,
You were right in saying so.

M. Did you meet with hostility at first here?

S When we came here first if we left
our boat behind, all the accessaries
were gone right away. We couldn't
do anything about it. So we got a
permission to tie our boats at North Arm.
To hang the nets, they didn't let us
hang the nets in Steveston, not in these
net huts. So we took our nets and all
materials to Fishermen cannery.
We stayed in Hotel Petricia where we
stayed during the war. We took a train
to Marpole & walked to Fishermen
cannery. We bought, cookies, cakes,
a carton of pops at the station store for our
lunch.

M. You commuted every day?

S Yes, until the nets were ready.

M Tsuru cannery?

S Tsuru, BC Packers, Brands, still now the small one stands there. I haven't been there for a long time. I think now only family, Mr. Okino, lives there.

M. Does he work for the cannery?

S No. not for the cannery. He is still a fisherman.

M. How many of you started fishing like that, commuting from Vancouver?

S About 7 or 8 of us including Mr. Murakami, (son) Sakata, Shiko, etc, my friends.

M. Did it last for a year?

(speaking to Mrs. Sakamoto)

S Well, let me see, was it July that you came out of Minto?

Mrs S Was it June 29? You remember we stayed in Hotel Patricia, for two weeks or so?

They didn't let us rent a house.

S. Even if there were empty houses they didn't let the Japanese have the houses.

Mrs S It was the regulation.

Next year, the people who came back the next year could rent the cannery houses.

AV7
9072
S333
J3
1973

We rented a scow, they let us have it because they said it was not a house because it floated on the water.

M So such houses were all empty while the Japanese were away?
Steveston must have much less population when the Japanese were gone?

S The member of Nihonjin-Kaikai was 2600 before the war.

M Today how many Japanese are there?

S About that many I think.

Mrs Quite an increase lately.

S I wonder if it about 2000 or so

M Are the Japanese less now compared with the pre-war population?

S & Mrs Less, I think.

S Not very different.

Mrs & S Recently the Japanese population increased quite a lot

S Recently the Japanese are dispersed in various part of Richmond.

Simultaneously

M Are some fishermen living in Richmond?

S. Yes, some do.

S. And now differend from pre-war time, there a lot of people who are not fishermen.

M. Were there farmers in Steveston before the war?

S Yes, but only few. Almost all were fishermen. Many people were hanging on one licence so we had hard life
We could'nt get work in other places, we had to live on one licence
If now, if there are three men in a family they all can have licences.
Now again, under Davis, they are trying to decrease the fishermen, they dont increase the licences anymore! you can get a licence only from a man who quits.

M. Will the fishermen decrease from now on?

S. Yes, both white and Japanese fishermen will be on the decrease
Each time someone brings the boat to that place of government and sells there, on the whole fishing boat decrease. The boat has to be sold with the licence. That licence, nobody can use it.

M can a person who buy that boat use the licence?

S NO, nobody as the boats sold by the government are concerned.
If a boat is sold privately, the licence is available.

M. Would you tell me about River Fish KUMIAI which Mr MURAKAMI, Mr HAYASHI and you all belonged to?

When was it established?

S. (Silence) When did it start?

M How long was it in operation?

S. More than ten years I think.

M Was it formed in the 1920's?
At the time of licence-cut-down?

S I think it was after that.

M Then about 1925 or so, you think?

S Probably so (not very sure).

M Were you an executive of KUMIAI?

S No, I didn't do anything. I was an inspector (of accounts)

Mrs S. Mr Otsu who was in charge of KUMIAI has been dead.

S I was young then, I was 38 when the war started.

Mrs It was the hardest time.

S The youngest child was only two.

Mrs. You shouldn't say two.

S Five, she was five

Mrs what on earth are you speaking about!

M. How many members did KUMIAI have?

S. 150 people.
Only in Steveston no not all the fishermen were members.

Mrs S. Only those who were in good terms.

M. Were there other KUMIAIS?

S Ye, there were at Winch, at Star Cannery.
River fish was the biggest.
River Fish consisted of the people in Steveston and Canoe Pass, where there were fair number of Japanese. Canoe Pass is a little below of Delta. a little below of Ladner. It was also the island in front of us. The people there were headed by Mr. AKUNE, mainly people from KAGOSHIMA.

M. You were the member since the KUMIAI started?

S Ya.

M. What was the main function of KUMIAI?

S Buy and sell of fish.
The cannery season was until September 15th, during that time you were obliged to give the fish to canneries. After that you were free.
After that you were free to sell your fish to US, Japan, to make salted salmon to send to Japan, for your own advantage; we did those thing by ourselves. At the same time, we bought foods, clothings,

everything, for our members sometime for non-members too if we were asked. KUMIAI handled such things.

M Did you have a store?

S Yes, we did.

M So people came to the store to buy such things

S Yes, yes.
We had a delivery body too. a customer could make an order by telephone.
My daughter's husband used to be a delivery boy.

M How many people worked for KUMIAI?

S Chief accountant and three clerks in the store. Mr MURAKAMI's daughter worked at the store too.

M Was the store open every day?

S Yes, every day

M On Saturdays and Sundays?

S Yes, everyday opened seven days a week.

M Did a store open all year through?

S Yes, nothing to do with the cannery season.

M. KUMIAI sold fish from 15 of September to ...

S. By the end of the year. In those day we did

fishing until December for about 2½ months. We took care of all the fish that the KUMIAI Members took.

M. So Kumiai's stuff were one inspector...

S. Three inspectors,

M And a president and vice-president. You had five executives?

Mrs S. You also had an accountant and KANRI, didnt you? (manager)

S Yes, the manager was in charge of buy and sell.
If there were a lot of work a president come to work at KUMIAI but at the same time he was doing fishing too.
The manager and KUMIAI employed some workers, fair number of workers, at the salted salmon season we needed quite a few workers.

M. Did you have a plant of salted salmon

S Yes yes, we had a plant.

M Where did you send the salted salmon?

S To Japan. We also sold salmon roe.

M. Did you make a good business?

S Yes yes, we divided the profit the rest that was left after paying to the staff.

The inspectors received a fixed amount of pay which was a little.

Mrs S They received only 10 or 20 dollars.

M. In those days how much could a fisherman make by selling fish to a cannery what was an annual average income)?

S. An good year, only a little, only 1000 or 2000 dollars would have been good.

Mrs S. An ordinal year, during depression, we could get only 7 or 800 dollars at best.

S In the year that the war started, I could get 4 or 5000 dollars which was the exception of all those years.

M So the last..

Mrs S Yes, it was getting better.

M What happened to Uchida when the war came?

S It was over,

Mrs S. It was dissolved.
The manager was taken away by the police to the internment camp.
He was Mr. Kineoka, a Japanese Language School teacher.

S. He was a Japanese citizen, he was not naturalized.
It was natural that I should have been taken away at first but as I was naturalized the authorities used their

discretion

(Japanese

Mrs S. Mr. Kajiro, a language teacher in Steveston. He was taken to the Internment camp and after the war went back to Japan by repatriation ship. His daughter after the war came back to Canada and now is in Toronto; is she in Toronto? She invited Mr. Kajiro over here again. He has been here for four or five years? Not so long ago, he came.

S. Four or five years.

Mrs. He is quite old.

S Both of them were handsom. They must be pretty old now.

Mrs. You should meet him too.
Mrs. K used to be a midwife belonging to Dantai in the old days

S. Dantai used to operate the Japanese Language School and Hospital.

Mrs. In the old days we all went to Dantai to deliver babies.

S When we had to leave our house we stayed at the Dantai Hospital and Mrs Kajiro cooked for us, for a while
until the end of May.

M When was the hospital closed?

S In May, I think.
still
Mrs Was it open in May?

S Yes it was open

Mrs Is that so? We were already moved out of Stevenston.

End of Tape 1.