

MODERATOR: ERIC JORDAN

Transcribed: Jerry Dzugan DRAFT 1

Panelists:

1. Bill DeArmond
2. Nels Lawson
3. Irene Vaden
4. Mildred Layten
5. John Nielsen
6. Fred Hope
7. Lisa Killinger
8. Florence Donnelly

Fred Hope – What a Cannery Is

In the beginning there was a cannery in Sitka and Klawock- then it spread. But they were mostly in SE AK in the beginning. It consisted of a building on piles, with a source of fresh water nearby. There was a generator to produce electricity. And a furnace to produce steam for cooking. What you had was an elevator that went down to the bay where the f/vs, sometimes a tender, was and unloaded fish. The elevator took it up to the bins, up to 4 to 6 bins on top. They were segregated into dog, pink, cohos, and once in a while king salmon. From there they went into the sliming line, heading machine, gutting machine, and you had all these others buildings and warehouses and you had the seiners: which were the people who caught the fish. They would hang their seines there. In the beginning you had cotton seines and it (hanging) had to be done all the time. Now they have nylon seine and they hardly need any attention. They had crews working on their gear and they made sure the corkline was bigger than the leadline and that it made a bowl effect which kept the fish from going underneath the (boat? leadline).

You had different crews working for different things. The Chinese were the first to come in to AK. It appears there was a law broken at the time, so they quit using Chinese. Right after that the Philipinos came into the canneries. Native people were here and white people were here and we had segregation. The white people had their own buildings and the Natives had their own house. The people came into these houses and usually they came from different places. In Sitka it was like a big celebration. Everyone was so happy to be going to the canneries. Everyone was yelling and singing and having a good time.

When you got to the cannery you took care of your personal belongings. You were assigned a house. The Philipinos had a bunkhouse. It was a huge building and it was segregated into small rooms where they could set up their bunks. And you had a mess hall and a little dining room, and had had airplane floats and you had a fuel dock. It was almost like a little city.

Once you got into town, you found out where everything was and the main place you were concerned about was where the office was and who the superintendent was, right away. Todd Cannery in Peril Straits. Nick Bess (sp?) was the main man, the Superintendent and in Sitka it was Lawrence Froberg (sp?) who was the main man. In Chatham you had John Likeness (sp?).

You had all these buildings with different functions. You had an area where you made boxes. You had an area where you made cans and the cans were sent to the 1st floor where it was filled with salmon and each was designated to hold one pound. A series of women looked at each can to make sure it was full. If it was short a couple slices, they would add slices to that can. It could then be sent to have a lid put on it. Then it was sent to a tray and put in the boiler. I would estimate about 12 trays would go in there. They were slid into a boiler room on a rail. And they were cooked and after a certain time they were extracted then put into the hallway to cool. When it was cooling you could hear the cans popping. You had a grocery store. On those days you pretty much lived on fish but there were other things you could buy at the grocery store. The guys were mostly concerned with cigarettes and all those things you charge. But mostly they'd (the stores) rather see cash. That pretty much covers what I remember about the cannery. If anyone else has anything to add I'd appreciate that.

Eric: Thank you Fred. Now for the history.

Bill DeArmond:

One of the first canneries was put up in old Sitka in 1878. It only ran for two years. It never made any money and they abandoned it and Sheldon Jackson went out and scavenged the lumber to build the school. But it was a hand operation. They even soldered the cans by hand. Sitka didn't get another cannery until the Pyramid cannery in 1918. Its still there (the present Murray-Pacific store etc). They had a couple other canneries too over the years. My own first connection to a cannery was in Pelican. My father Bob DeArmond was one of the founders of Pelican. He was one of the crew with (??) who went out in 1938, the year I was born, to build a cold storage and town out there. Because there was more control of halibut fishing out there at that time. and there was no cold storage near there. So that was way Pelican was built. It really wasn't intended to have a cold storage and and kind of big cold cure facility for king salmon., which was still a big business in those days, supplying the New York Delis with lox.

In the spring of 1940, the big cannery at Port Althrop burned. It was a beautiful cannery. I've seen pictures of it, I don't remember it. But there was no cannery around there then and the nearest ones were in Hoonah and Excursion Inlet and in Sitka. So they put an emergency canning line in the floor of the warehouse in the cold storage in Pelican and just about everyone in town, and there weren't too many people, but just about everyone in town including my parents were put to work. The following year in 1941, they built the cannery building. You can see it in the picture up there (on the wall), just up the inlet from the cold storage. It was a big cannery. Just one line. But I used to be able to go in there as a kid. It was the most exciting place in town as a kid, even more so than the sawmill, the copper shop and Old George's boatshop. And all the noise and whir of machinery and the line of shiny cans flying. And the women in the white headscarfs still able o talk full tilt at the same time and the roar of steam coming out of the retorts and the doors clanging. I used to yell to myself to add to the noise. It was such an exciting place.

The Pelican cannery ran till 1959 when Alaska became a state because the first thing they did was outlaw fish traps. It was a short sighted, emotional and poorly thought out decision. It tore the heart out of the canned salmon industry. It just didn't need to be done that way. Most of the big canneries just shut down and destroyed the livelihood of an awful lot of people. The Pelican cannery shut down and Whiz bought the machinery, moving it to Tyee and it ran down there for

awhile. But that was the end of canning in Pelican.

Cannery life had two big parts we haven't talked about yet. The traps and the tenders. The big canneries depended on the traps and _____ and Libby, when traps were outlawed they sold there operation and shut down. That point can still be debated. The trap caught salmon were higher quality than the seine caught fish. They used to advertise right on the labels: guaranteed genuine Alaska trap salmon. They didn't get handled and damaged as much. When I was older and worked in Ketchikan, I got to work on a trap loader. Not too many still around who got to see and go out on a working trap and see it lifted. It was a fascinating operation getting the salmon out of the trap and into the tender or scows. It is a way of life that has completely vanished now. And the tender fleet: there were hundreds. They were interesting vessels. They were heavily built because they usually took a pounding next to the traps. And those traps had to be lifted no matter what the weather was. And there are still a few around. The old St. Lazaria was a good example of one of the bigger tenders. Others you see around during the herring (roe) season. The F/V Loretta, F/V Amberlee. The Loretta was a mailboat. There are a few of the old tenders around. Life was different in those days.

Florence Donelly:

My first experience with a cannery was in 1947 (?) in Haines, AK. I was too young then to work there. But I would go out every Sunday. All the workers would come and I would bring my organ to play for them. I didn't sing "Humpback Salmon" at that time. If I would have had it available at that time I would have sang it for them.

I went out with the minister and our church representative every Sunday at the cannery and that was a happy bunch of people. They enjoyed their work, there was a lot of laughter, and there was more play time. I remember my family when they worked at the cannery- some of them slept in tents. Most had tents. It was 15 miles out of Haines. My next experience at a cannery was here in Sitka. I was in Sheldon Jackson school. I worked in the cannery in 1929 for 25 cents an hour. My tuition was \$50 a year at that time, so I didn't have much money left. But money didn't _____(?)

It was available for us to work there at the time. We were fortunate. We had a job. My job was to stack cans way up. We packed the cases with empty cans that were ready for filling. I never worked with the fish but I worked with the cans. I was trying to place who was available/alive at the time. I think I am the oldest one alive who worked with the cans. But I enjoyed it. We all had fun.

I was trying to think of how we all survived. It was depression time. We were all happy. We had no income tax. We only had one cop. We behaved ourselves. It was just a different time and when we tell our children about it they just don't believe us. That was all you made? (in wages) Last summer we went to Chatham (cannery). Jim Case (USFS) was the head of that program. We saw the old cannery and the buildings were still up but I never had any dealings with that cannery. But then I worked out of Goddard's Hot Springs when I was working before tourism 1930-something and I enjoyed my work in the old days and I never did work out as a housewife but I enjoy doing volunteer work. If you have any questions, just ask. I'm available.

John Nielsen

In my childhood days, my brother and I grew up in Chatham. We didn't go fishing right away- we were too young. It was 1942 when we first went to Chatham. My dad fished and Charlie Daniels Sr. on the Fredy II- a company boat. The year after that my dad became a skipper of his own boat, another cannery boat, the Sockeye King. Then later in the year he skippered the _____ another cannery boat.

There were other skippers over there. Another company boats was called the Elno (sp?). Run by Charlie Joseph Sr. In later years, Charlie had a boat built by Andrew Hope, The Empress. But his children can tell you about that. I want to tell you about the time I went fishing. My brother was the bull cook. He washed dishes on the boat- was too young to get a share. I was too young too and couldn't draw a full share because I wasn't old enough. But I did like (?) fishing with my dad.

The cannery was owned by the New England Fish Co. There were many of them in Alaska. I fished for three different Fish Co. canneries. One in Steamboat Bay, Chatham and one up in Orca, Cordova. I crossed the Gulf a few times on the fishing boats, purse seining, halibut fishing. I toured (?) a lot with my dad during the war.

Eric Jordan: Seining was different then. You were seining before the power block- where you just had the roller..."

John ...I was going to get to that- that's when I quit fishing (laughter).

In 1945 we were fishing in Sinitson Cove on the F/V _____. My brother was in the skiff. This was in June I believe, and all the horns were blowing on the seine boats ass the word came it was VJ Victory over Japan) Day. I had three brothers in the service and they did not fish on the same boat until they came back from service. I was the big boy in the family, staying home. I was born in 1929, when Florence was working full time. New England Fish Co. was run by the company and they had traps, tenders, power scows, rigging scows- we stayed (saw?) all the operations On the rigging scows and tenders rigging up the traps and towing them to the sites to where they set up the trap. One trap in particular was set up where the Icy Queen is now set up. They named that the million dollar trap.- that used to bring in the most fish to the company. Like they say, the bossman (?) came in the late 1950's. I wasn't purse seining then. I fished until 1952 for pyramid Company. I fished halibut for my uncle John Young on the Patricia May. Halibut then purse seine. Before then I fished for Paul Alvers (sp?) on the Invader in Steamboat Bay. They had company boats there, the Cape Ulitka (sp?), Chinook, and there was ine more. The majority of fishermen there were the Hamilton brothers, Capt. George Hamilton Sr., George Hamilton Jr., Gilbert, Harry, Don, Franklin, baby George.

Mildred Layton

My experience came from Chatham, Ak. Which was run by the New England. Fish Co. at the time. My mom and dad took all us girls there in the summer and we all thought this was our playground while they worked at the cannery. Once I remember of our fun times there, we had this float they launched the seaplanes and brought them in. Me and my sister were sitting on the float, we really weren't supposed to be there and my sister started splashing me, and I told her to

knock it off in my little 5 or 6 year old voice. She just kept splashing me and I got up and pushed her right into the water and she just sank and she just sat on the bottom. It was high tide and she sat there as I looked over at her and I didn't know what to do and she bobbed to the surface. About that time my father came down to the float. He saw what I had done and grabbed her out of the water. I thought I was really going to get a whipping but he just took us home thank goodness.

We spent our time exploring the beaches, picking up the rocks, picking the berries using any little receptacle we could find which we used to make mud pies, which we decorated with salmonberries and flowers. We'd say we were the finest ever made in the world and lots of games were invented by each and every one of us. Oh the crocheting part- I don't remember too much of that. We used to go to our neighbors and some of them introduced us to tropical fish. We never had experience with tropical fish. This was a big cannery. This lady has brought her tropical fish with her and they were like guppies and they had a million babies in one tank. And even though we did not know this lady we would go visit her because we wanted to see her guppies.

Now as I grow older and reached the age of 14, my mother sent me over to the cannery to stay with my aunt Martha Kitka. My Aunt Martha put me to work up in the cannery loft. They had this great big machine you couldn't hear yourself talk much less hear yourself think. It was my responsibility to lift the lids for the cans, put them in my hands and look for wrapped ones and throw them away. Before I was supposed to put them in the machine and these lids are going down all the time as the cans are being loaded. As 14 year olds go, you drift off into a dreamland and so I am just going like this (makes automated motions with her hands) and I am lost in another world and my machine shuts down and I look up and here is my boss and he is a great big Norwegian man with wild white hair and he looked at me with great big eyes and said 'You are not paying attention to what you're doing!' and he looked behind me and there was this huge stack of lids that had been spit out of the machine because it was getting all the bent ones so everything after the bent one went out on the floor. Well I didn't lose my job because my aunt was forewoman so luckily I got to work out the whole season and I felt really proud and I got a check at the end of the summer but we never thought of money. It was just all fun. So that we were delighted to get that and it went for the Sear Roebuck catalog so we could start sewing our skirts for school and buying sweaters to go along with the skirts. And I turn this whole story business over to my sister Ilene.

Irene Vaden

It was nice to hear what these other people had to say first. It renewed myself of the past. It was delightful and it brought back fond memories. My mother and father had four daughters. There were no boys in the family. When we moved to Chatham, we had to run. We didn't do a lick of work. We played on the float where we were not supposed to. We went down past the warehouses. We heard the popping of cans. We had no idea of what that was. We'd had cans going off. We'd go to the generator, the store, get whatever we wanted to and continue I guess playing and the women working hours upon hours and on the weekend. It was _____? And there was no griping. And I had a automatic washer and dryer and these ladies had a scrub board and all day long but these ladies were happy and these ladies were on a scrub board all day long. The ladies would be talking and laughing and washing our clothing.

Then occasionally a missionary boat would come and we would tramp down to an empty cabin and would do a church service and so forth and we were fearless of the bears that were around the cannery and the adults would see them but we didn't and we would go to the dam and pick berries and that was dangerous growing up by ourselves but we were fearless and take the company boat and row across the channel, further than Mt. Edgecumbe I would saw, like to the islands out here (near Sitka) and we'd go to the lagoon. That's all we wanted to do was go to the lagoon and turn back with the company boat.

On the way back we saw a blond bear. We were told that a bear could swim faster than a boat. We gently and very quietly I think, there was 4 or 5 of us in the boat, watched the bear eat on the shore. We rowed very gently until a certain length of time. That was our experience as children.

And my sister Betty was the fearless one. My father would take his cruiser and dock on the floatplane dock and she would tie it up for him because she knew how to do it. So she invited me and she invited my cousin. We got out in the middle of the bay and the boat quit and there was nothing we could do about it and everyone in the cannery seemed to know we were stuck out there and we were all quarreling with ourselves. Because we didn't know how to get out of there, my cousin Gill came out with his inboard or outboard or whatever its called and towed us in. Well we were all worried about being in big trouble. We ran home. Chatham had benches on all sides so you could sit down so we got ladders and we climbed into the attic. My mother had dried apricots and raisins and apples up there. We couldn't live off the dried fruit up there so time went by and we finally got bored and came back down. When out father and mother got home from work, our father said what you did was wrong. You forgot to turn the gas on. Our experience at Chatham was wonderful. I have told my experiences at Chatham to my daughter and she has named her daughter Chatham after my wonderful stories.

Finally it was our time to work at the cannery and I got the sliming department, a horrible name, and I was geared up for that and I remember the fish coming through on a belt and telling us to put it in a bin and open it up and make sure it was clean and if there was any residue to clean it up and put it back up on the conveyor belt. When I was cleaning I felt fish guts slap across my chest and I felt so much surprise and this woman said ' you will clean that over again'. And at the same time I was so timid and looked down and cleaned it up and before long she throw another one at another woman's chest and the conveyor belt was about chest high anyway and she threw the fish back at her and I had never seen such behavior in my life.

So I remember as we were in the cannery that Alaska became a state. And I was so upset because my mother had us fly down to California to see our eldest sister and they flew us to Chatham and we lived there in Chatham and we heard that they were celebrating in Sitka with bonfires on the street. Any other time was good to be in Chatham, but we felt left out. We could go on all night with these stories.

Nels Lawson

My name is Nels Lawson. I was born in 1939 in Juneau, Ak. My experience with the cannery is both as a child and young adult. My very early years, my family lived in the old village of Douglas and sometimes we lived in Hoonah. During the summer when the boys were too young

to go fishing, they would go with the ladies who worked in the cannery. These were my early years as I went along with the ladies as they worked in the cannery. As I remember, like many of these stories, they were free times and fun times. I believe that it was in the Hoonah cannery as we worked in the cannery we lived in tents. During the day when the salmon were running, the young folks were left to their own devices. As I remember those times there were of varying age of young people left in the tent. Those that were older had the responsibility of trying to keep track of the younger folks. At that time I was one of the younger folks and a little difficult to keep track of. These times were just free time, there was pretty much no restrictions, you could go pretty much where you wanted. I don't remember any spankings, even if you were doing things you weren't supposed to. Basically you were just told you ought not do that again, if you did that you might get hurt. After it was about 1944 I believe my mother got TB. She ended up here (in Sitka) in the hospital for a year. My mother got lucky because she got well. After she got well, my dad got a job working at the hospital. He decided to keep his job and move us all here.

Which moved to a place which we remember as Millerville. I was still too young to go fishing. But my mother and father worked at Pyramid Fisheries. My grandmother I remember quite well., when the salmon went through the Chink they would cut off the collars and throw that part away. My Grandmother and mother would gather those collars and put them in a barrel and salt them and we would enjoy that all winter. That's the best part of the salmon by the way. When I became old enough to go fishing I went with my uncle Bill Peters. I spent a number of years fishing with him. Earlier someone asked about fishing before the power block. Before the power block the seine was pulled onboard by hand. They had on the seiners what they called a turntable. The piled the seine on that. On one part of the turntable they had a roller. The turntable was turned to the stern of the boat where the net was piled and ready to be let go. You would let it go, it would run over the roller, you would close your set, turn the turntable the right way, then 4 or 5 men would pull the net onboard by hand. When the power block came along it was almost no comparison. I saw the flag go up (meaning the speakers time was up). My uncle never gave me the red flag! (laughter). One of the other things we did in commercial fishing, that the canneries started, was one of the things you had to do was work on your seines or even make new seines. So the canneries provided that space to work on your seines or make new seines.

Lisa Killinger

I was quite young when I started. I had to call in my sister last night to fill in the blanks. I might have been 5 years old. And I would ride out in my uncle's boat. My uncle was Andrew Hope on the Neva. I would spend the summers out there and my grandmother worked at the cannery (Chatham) and my grandfather fished and my sister was my babysitter and occasionally my cousin was out there with us.

It was a boardwalk community and we lived in a cottage or cabin up from the float plane dock and had the bare essentials there I remember: a washing machine there. My sister said there was no refrigeration. There was a box outside that was refrigeration. I think these girls were our neighbors. We lived by the float plane dock so you could watch the action down there, but it was a bit of a walk to the cannery. I was little so I really wasn't supposed to be down there. That was probably the first time I ate crab. That exposed you to bears and I think we rode on the floatplane once out there (Chatham). I got into my grandmother's purse one day and ate her chocolate Ex-lax. That's something I'll never forget. There was even a post office down there because I would

get an occasional care package from my parents, maybe a pair of sneakers. I'm appreciating learning more about Chatham cannery because my mother was even born there.

Eric Jordan

I was born in the Wrangell hospital in 1949. Over boxes of canned salmon. It was a good year, before they rebuilt the salmon stocks. They had so many cans of salmon they had to store some in the hospital.

OTHER ATTENDEES NOW INVITED TO SPEAK:

Archie Nielson

Growing up in the cannery was magical. It was a wonderful way of life. It's not what we wanted. We were the siblings of skippers. The families who lived at the canneries learned one thing: It was how to survive. Growing up in Chatham we were too young to work. So we were the most mischievous people on earth. The rigging scow had a Chinese cook with a ponytail that was very long and we studied him. On Wednesday night he would bake pies and nothing carries a smell so far as a windless bay but you could smell those pies. We got together and saw he put those pies up on the rigging scow and one of us thought he would get them one way, and while he chased him, the rest of us would get there the other way and you could hear the Chinese guy bellowing and once he even got his cleaver out to scare us away.

I have to interject that Bill (DeArmond) talks about the traps. But in the early 1950's the skippers in Sitka got together: Bill Peters, Peter Nelson, Andrew Hope, my father...the traps decimated the salmon stocks in Alaska. They sprung up in Alaska once they decimated the stocks down there (referring to south of Alaska). North of Ketchikan they had 27 canneries in Ward's Cove. It was tremendous the dwindling stocks that normally took 4 to 6 years (to rebuild?). So something had to be done so the skippers drew up an initiative to put a halt on the traps. This wouldn't eliminate them altogether, just put a halt on them. And you are right. By 1959 the canneries closed and the main source of income was the canneries and the fish traps.

But back to cannery days. It was said there weren't many bears but there was. The men would hunt them to keep them away because the bears were more aggressive if they got close to the canneries. I remember one weekday the Chinaman was going fishing in Chatham. There were 5 or 6 streams there and all of a sudden you could hear him shout and his short little legs were moving fast with the bear behind him and his ponytail straight out. Who wouldn't think someone could run that fast with those little legs.

Cannery life was magical. It was like the yellow brick road in the movies. They didn't have cameras till I left. The ladies did their part 20 hours a day standing. You try standing 16 hours a day. This they did on a daily basis while the fish were running. They relied on breaks. They relied on jokes and comradery which we never seen/thought possible. I was a former paper painter (?) and we worked 20 hours/day and I've paid for it now. My brother and I were trying to remember the tenders that were in Chatham. They were big boats: A.F. Rich (?), Over the Top, Excellence, Caleb Halley- big, beautiful ships. We had one mailboat, the Estebeth: big puff of smoke coming out, you could see (her) way down (the Straits) turning the corner. You could see the puff of smoke way far away. I though the LeConte (state ferry) was slow. But every Thursday morning, once a week, Estebeth had it beat. That was our supply source for mail. Other

than the airplane, our staple goods came from Sitka or Juneau. I remember that cannery life was a different way of life and it enriched our lives so much in ways that we can't even dream about. Thank you.

Eric Jordan

Thanks you Archie. Before I ask Larry Calvin who actually owns an old cannery site here in Sitka, I have to confess I have a Chatham cannery experience from 1966 or 67. In the summer of 1967, I was seining on a small wooden seiner, the Velvet, and we pulled into Chatham cannery- I wasn't going to mention it, but when Archie mentioned the wonderful pies there, there were still present in 1967 and like Archie this Norwegian with a sweet tooth figured out that the best pies were put out at coffee break at Chatham cannery and I also got in trouble for stealing some of the pies from them. I also have to say that I traveled a lot in SE Alaska, and the best looking women to this 17 year old were in Chatham cannery.

Larry Calvin who owned Pyramid has some memoriabilia about that and I'd like to have him share some of that.

Larry Calvin

In 1962 I was the only charter boat in town. It was a little different than it is now. I was taking a young couple in my 28 foot boat from here to Juneau. Chatham cannery was closed at that time. It was just a watchman and his lady friend and we wanted to get some gas. We climbed up the ladder and started walking up the boardwalk and here comes this man, running down the boardwalk quite fast and a minute later from the shacks behind us, comes this lady shooting a 44 revolver and the people on back (Larry's clients) must have thought that this is just part of the act that goes on here? Anything could happen at Chatham cannery.

My involvement with the cannery started moderately early, depending on your perspective. I helped bring up the cannery tenders, the Shamrock and the Clydesdale. It was still around. But it was many years ago that it was a tender. That was 1953 and my mom was the bookkeeper and I was the tally man. I was a fairly young boy and my job as fish were coming up the elevator, as someone was just telling about, with four counters in my hand, I had to decide if it was a coho or dog or sockeye. The Philipinos were in the back and they knew exactly what they were doing and they were segregating fish into bins as the fish came up. So they would use my count when it came to paying the fishermen. The fish in the bins were going in the cans. They knew when I was off (the count). I think it was only because my mom was the bookkeeper and friends with Frank that I was not fired. I kept my job, but I didn't do a very good job there. That was my only experience working in a cannery.

Now Bob DeArmond wrote a very good history of the canneries. I left 12 of them with Anne at the back of the room, detailing through the years. Originally there were two canneries in Alaska: one in Sitka and one in Klawock. In the back of this literature is one of the early pictures of the cannery down there (Pyramid). One is 1919/1920 and the other is 1920 something 1928. Also one of the best books is *The Silver Years of the Alaska Canned Salmon Industry*. Have Dee Lougenbaugh put you on the list. They are very hard to come by. She has to search for them. You can get a very good look at early cannery life from this book.

My wife and I bought the cannery premises in 1966 and built a building supply business for some years and now I am in the fishing business and the building is in the fish business.

I stored the retorts for the Historical Society. The retorts are in the basement. Just go down the beach and there is the big retort and the iron chink. That's my history with the fishing industry.

Herman Davis

I started working the canneries in 1943 when I was about 10 years old. My first job was to push boxes when the cans were in the boxes to where they were going to be stored. My friend was working with us too. He was working at the separator where the cans go around in a circle and I guess he was kinda daydreaming and he got his hand caught in the machine for 2 ½ hours.

There were lots of accidents that happened in canneries and even on the boats. I remember the Flamingo. It had a gas engine onboard. I guess a lot of gas had leaked into the bilge. There was a spark and I guess it came from the _____ and that boat exploded and put a hole right in the side and all a crewmember had to do was roll out of that (hole) and fall into the water because the boat was on fire.

And the Patricia hit a rock and everyone was just scrambling, just trying to save their own lives because they thought the Patricia Mae was going to go down. One crewmember who was sleeping fell out of the top bunk and fell on the deck. He went right back up there and went right back to sleep again and that was true. My nephew, Leo Houston (?), almost drown in the Inian Islands. The power scow they were using was too low or too high. By that time they graduated from oars to the 9 horse Johnson to the inboards. We had an inboard power skiff in by the Inian Islands and my brother turned too fast and the power skiff flipped over. This was when people used to take care of each other. A lot of the boats let go of their sets and sent their power skiffs over to get help the crew back. Some (in the water) said, "Never mind me, never mind me go get ____" So they grabbed Leo. I think is was ____ Jacobs. My brother was down and he reached as far as he could go and he grabbed a bit of his hair and they brought him back up. So things like that did happen.

Our parents were working. They was no body to watch us. And like Nels (Lawson) said, we could do anything we wanted to. We found a dead bird one time. We had a funeral for the bird. Even some of the girls were crying. One of the girls said a prayer and sang a song. One of the kids said what are you going to do without a coffin and said "I've got an idea" and ran home and got a matchbox. So we put the bird in the matchbox and we buried it. Then someone said "It needs a name". So we named it Todd, 'May he rest in Peace', after the cannery. After the funeral, one of the kids went home and got a ton of fruit and another went home and got some pilot bread and another went home and got just a little bit of Kool-Aid. And we had a reception after the funeral (laughter).

That cannery was a big playground We used to play boats on the beach. They used to have a 12 x 8 log for _____. My buddy and I, Russell Wright, tied two of them together and we found a wooden box and we made a cabin. We made on of the younger boys the cook and one of the older boys the captain and that was Russell Wright and he started pulling that log off the beach and there was a little bit of chop and it tipped right over and they had to wade chest deep in the

water. One of the boys was crying, "I'm going to tell on you guys, you threw me in the water". There were no rules- no rules- We had a lot of fun.

Roy Bailey

My experience of the fishing industry (was) especially in the canneries and seine boats. But before I get started with that, I had a cannery memory. I was on the F/V Neva. I was about 13, maybe 12., on the cannery tender Clydesdale or Shamrock. One of the young fellows was named Calvin and I'm not sure which one that was. But why I remember that was the young fellow had a bad cold, a summer cold, and he was so sick he couldn't do anything He couldn't sleep, he couldn't rest. None of the crew could do anything with him. So the cook says "I can fix you a medicine that can help you get to sleep". What he did was give him a glass of milk with a raw egg and a generous portion of whiskey, and we never saw him for the rest of the day after that.

(Commenting on the refreshments on the back table) There is one item missing that everyone knows from way back then and that is hardtack. That was part of the diet for everyone in the fishing industry. My introduction to canneries came at a very young age. I was in the North Sea (sic?). I was coming from Sitka to Juneau. I was in a boat called the North Star. I remember the first stop we had into Port Althorp and we went to a cannery there. I was very young then and it was fascinating to see them get in there and get this huge load of canned salmon. That was my introduction to canneries. The canneries I became acquainted with was Todd cannery, the very first one, Chatham, Pyramid and others. We had to be stationed at that port to sell your catch at that cannery. Hood Bay, Hoonah, Funter Bay, these were very large canneries at that time. One of the people I knew from that time was Martha Nelson. She is 91 years ago and just finished with a large (medical) operation. All I got out of her was that she did work at Todd Cannery.

My introduction to Todd cannery, we had to take care of the younger kids, while our parents were at work. We would go down to the beach at low tide, take some sticks, build a little fire, and we would have roasted clams in the fire. That was our past time. Of the fishing part that wasn't mentioned, was those boats that were seiners had old engines. In them. the Atlas or the Standard and generally they had three cylinders. They were huge. They had a huge flywheel and it would ring like a bell and it was so loud you didn't need an alarm. They would turn the flywheel over to get the cylinder in the proper position and put a cup of gasoline in a little cup on top of the engine and this was called priming the engine. And they would prime all three cylinders and put the switch on and when it was running people called it exhaust driven, which was water cooled exhaust. They said it sounded like "po-ta-to". If you didn't stay clear of the exhaust you got kinda gassed.

My experience on the seine boats started when I was about 13 years old. The reason is all the high line crew had their own men picked out before the season started. But most of the others throughout the season got what was left and I think I was one of the last ones at 13 years old. But I became quite acquainted with all the works aboard a boat. Being the youngest on the boat, I got all the night shifts for night runs from here (Sitka) to Chatham and here to Icy Strait. I didn't mind that at all. I was learning the country. On pitch black nights, going up Chatham (straits), I would go up on the flying bridge because I could see the mountain outline better in the dark. I remember I saw on two sides of the vessel two long luminous streaks that stayed with the vessel awhile. I didn't know what they were. But that was just fascinating.

Up at Icy Straits it was generally the start of the season and the seines had been blue stained and the seines had been tarred. Getting up onto Icy Straits in that very cold water, the tarred seines were like springs when you put them down on deck they came right back up. That was part of the break in of the seines.

In the canneries there were Philipinos. There were very few Chinese. But the machines were called Iron Chinks and as was mentioned there is one here. That replaced the Chinese by the Americans. It was an interesting machine because they would take the salmon and put it in a position where the flippers would catch it and out would come the fillet of the salmon. The head was gone, the fins go through the machine and it was clean period. Then it went through the sliming table and so fast that it filled up the _____scows in just a couple of days. That's when the salmon runs were on.

For a pastime for the cannery workers themselves, at the beginning of the season, you weren't always working. So part of the entertainment was doing anything you could find. Some would go fishing. The ladies would go berry picking. At one time it was raining quite heavy and this thought that they was someone picking berries right next to her in the bushes but it was a bear. He was also trying to find berries. And these were the stories no one would tell you unless you asked them. These were the stories the women would tell, different from the men.

Fish traps. The last ones I saw were in Salisbury Sound and Point Adolphus in Icy Strait. These two were still in operation at that time and were so efficient they were eventually outlawed. They even caught whales but the whales in turn would demolish them and they would have to do a lot of re-rigging on that.

The company boats had these big old 3 cylinder engines. Then the high speed engines came along. These boats in Chatham cannery, the Exhibit, those boats from New England (cannery owner company) they were refitted with an engine called the Hallscot (sp?). This was a 6 cylinder high speed engine like an automotive type. So the end result is, you have a pedal that you stomp on so you can shift into forward, reverse or neutral. Then the Chrysler Royal came in and they took over then.

Of the local cannery I worked in I had to train new people in the stapling machine for the boxes. The 2 cannery vessels were the Shamrock and the Clydesdale. Like I said before, what's missing from the back table is the hardtack which was a staple and still is today.

Herb Didrickson

Everyone was talking about Chatham Cannery but I'm from Sitka and we fished for the Pyramid Packing Company. Lawrence Reborg (sp?) and Frank Wright were superintendents at that time. I started at a cannery at an early age. We were talking about stitching those boxes. We made 1,000s of them. A young fellow who was half Philipino and half Hawaiian took us under his wing and we were just helping him out but we weren't getting paid, but we did such a good job he said, I'm going to go down and get you on the payroll". And that's what he did. So for 2 weeks we got paid. It was almost enough to buy a bike but not enough. He didn't return the next year and the boss knew we did a pretty good job of it so we got the job of stitching boxes. From

there I graduated to being a salter. You had to make sure that the box with salt was full all the time as the fish were coming through. I remember at that age we were putting in 18 hour days and I kind of fell asleep and the boss came around and tapped me on the shoulder and said "Get on the ball". So I finished out that year as a salter and graduated to be a fish sorter. That's where the fish come up the elevator on a conveyor belt before they go into a bin. So you had a bin here. Maybe it was sockeye, had a bin there might be dogs, and you had a lot of humpies. That was the last and that's where they'd be stored so you had to know your fish. Then the next year I was a fish counter. I got down on the boats when the fishermen came in. That was the only time we counted fish. When they cannery boats came in, they were bringing them in their own trap fish and they didn't need to be counted, they just needed to be sorted. There you were, you were on the fishing boat. You had to know what they looked like. It was kind of tricky when it was early in the season, everything looked like a king salmon. The humpies didn't have their humps yet. You didn't see the stripes on the dogs. So you had to be pretty sharp. Sometimes the fishermen would prefer to have their own fish counters you know. The old timers, when they were pitching fish, they just wanted to get it done. So on the old timers you might just be a bit slow with the counter, so they would ask certain counters to come.

Working the canneries in the years when we were at war. You might work 18 to 20 hours a day. So I kind of went up in the cannery loft getting some fresh air and across the channel was a navy base. The submarine came in fueling up and tearing right off again. They didn't stick around. But it was something to see. We hadn't seen submarines before. We were more familiar with fishing vessels. A lot of the teenagers were happy when fishing season came around. There was work at the cannery and the canneries were full of them. Of course they had a lot of fun. I finally graduated from that and went fishing. But we would visit different canneries on weekends and there would be dances at the Philipino bunkhouse and they'd play music. It wasn't that we liked it, but it was music you could dance to. A lot of the canneries had (basketball) hoops and I was interested in that. At a lot of different places we had games against different boats. So there was a lot of activity. There were time fishing, I got what you call a training ship. You didn't get full share, but at the end of the season I found out that I only got a partial share- \$33. But that \$33 got me to Sheldon Jackson (school)- and Mr Yaw, out of the goodness of his heart, made it the difference. It was \$80 (to get into the school).

Then one day he says "Get your fishing gear. You are going fishing with Andy Hope". And I did. That year the Shelton Jackson II was built. It was a brand new boat. So I got to spent time with him for the next 12 years. I enjoyed my time with him. What a captain he was! Somewhere along the line we were going to build a new power skiff. Mr. Hope was a boat builder. So we are going in early. So we went into the shop. So we got the keel laid. Then the ribs made. So the next trip we were going to fill in the rest of the boat almost complete. The power was a 40 hp Chief, not a marine engine. That was pretty good for those times. We had the first powered skiff here in Sitka and Mr. Hope built that. A lot of the seiners that were built here in Sitka, the Skannes (sp?) being one. The boat from Angoon plus the Sheldon Jackson II. That was the last of the boat builders right there. You don't see many of them any more, (who'd) just go ahead a build a boat. Harry Jimmy owns it now. I think we should make that a historical site. I hope we cover a little bit of seining in Sitka.

Eric Jordan

I was an assistant skiff man for 7 years which didn't happen too often. I didn't run the skiff. I was the guy that threw the lead off the bow of the skiff. Apparently it was better to have me in the skiff than on the boat entertaining the crew with various stories.

Florence Donally sings the Humpie Song

I like Humpback Salmon
Good old Humpback salmon
Caught by Alaska fishermen
I like clams and shellfish
They sure do make a swell dish
But I think that your hand packed clams are grand.
I don't like your T bone steak
Caught from a steer in Texas
But give me fish.
And I don't care if I pay taxes
I like humpback salmon
Good old humpback salmon
Caught by Alaska fishermen.

Fred Hope

There are a few points that should be mentioned before we close. And that is a description of a salmon trap and basically what it is. First you have to know that in Chatham Straits or any body of open water, you have salmon traveling along the shoreline and a salmon trap is like a big fence in front of their path. The fish are led by that fence and led into a corral where they are corralled evidently there are several pots that fill up. There is a watchman aboard and he has a radio and when the pots are full he calls up the cannery and says on the radio, "My traps are full, send a tender". That's the other thing I want to get to. We have a very passionate feeling about our boats. We always talk about our boats and high up on our list are the tenders. I talked to Herbie Didrickson and Herman Davis about the boats we know of. These tenders were bigger boats. The seiners were 40 to 50 feet long and the tenders 60 to 70 feet long. And what they did was collect the fish where they were fishing and brought them back to the cannery.

We have these fascinating names and what I want to do sometime in the future, is go over the whole list of names of boats we know about. Right off the bat I can tell you the boats I know from New England (fish company- Chatham Cannery: Over the Top, Quaker Maid, Neptune, Macaca, Earl E (sp?), Kalib Haley (sp?). Todd cannery: Equator, Paradise, Pirate.

I always loved those odd names. Somebody ordered a boat be built then gave it a fascinating name. Thank you

Eric Jordan

One of the famous boats of S.E. seining was named Tiny Tim II. The Janis M out of Craig, Vagabond Queen out of Hoonah.

Pat Svetlak

I was born and raised in Petersburg. But I was grown up in McHenrylife (sp?). We lived in Kake

for awhile and my dad was a fisherman. He was a very good fisherman. He made lots of money so we built a new home in Kake. My mom worked at the cannery. It was just a mile out of town in Kake and our brand new house caught fire. I was just a little girl. My older sister was babysitting me and she brought me out but I ran back in for my favorite doll. Some man ran to the beach and soaked a blanket and put it over himself and ran inside to get me but I was afraid of him and I ran and hid under my mom and dad's bed. Then later on I was on the boat with my mom and dad. My dad always had to anchor up so I could eat. And I had a line with a hook and a sinker and I threw it overboard and I was jigging for halibut. All of a sudden the line went zzzzzz! I wrapped the line around a pole and pulled up on it and held it with my foot and pulled up on it again and that halibut didn't even fight. It came up and weighed over 100 lbs. I was screaming and yelling, "Dad! Dad!" and he came out on deck. He thought I fell overboard and all I could do was point down (into the water at the fish).

After our house burned we moved to Petersburg and bought a house there. That's where I was born and raised. The only reason we moved to Petersburg was there was no high school in Kake at the time. When I was 10 or 12 years old, after school I would change my school clothes and helped my mother pick shrimp. I was always glad when Sunday came because there was no work. Then I worked in the cannery and I gutted fish, slimed fish and worked in the attic (?) belt. I pulled eggs. I worked up in the loft. I made boxes. One time when I was gutting a salmon something fell. It was a capsule. Inside the capsule was a note from a little boy who was 11 years old and said, "whoever finds this please write to me. Here's my address". So I wrote to him and he sent me a picture of him in his baseball uniform and I believe I still have that card.

Working in a cold storage was long and hard hours. I worked till 3am and went back at 7 or 8 a. Those were long hard hours. Wintertime I worked crab. The guys who brought the crab in, every time they opened the door the snow was like a blizzard. It was really cold. Cannery life was also fun. I worked on halibut, 300 lbs. As the fish came down the line, and they put a little Korean girl on the line. I told my boss "Why did you put that little woman on the line?" The halibut was over 300 lbs! As the fish came down the line I heard, "Pat! Pat! Help me!" and one (halibut) had fallen to the floor. Then the boss moved her.

There was a lot of good things and bad things. My cousin's husband got his finger cut off. They kept it on ice and took him to Mt Edgecumbe (hospital) here. Needless to say I'm retired now.

While I was working at the cold storage I met a man there from the Coast Guard. He took me away from the cannery life and here we are.