

Along the No. 20 Line
Reminiscences of the Vancouver Waterfront

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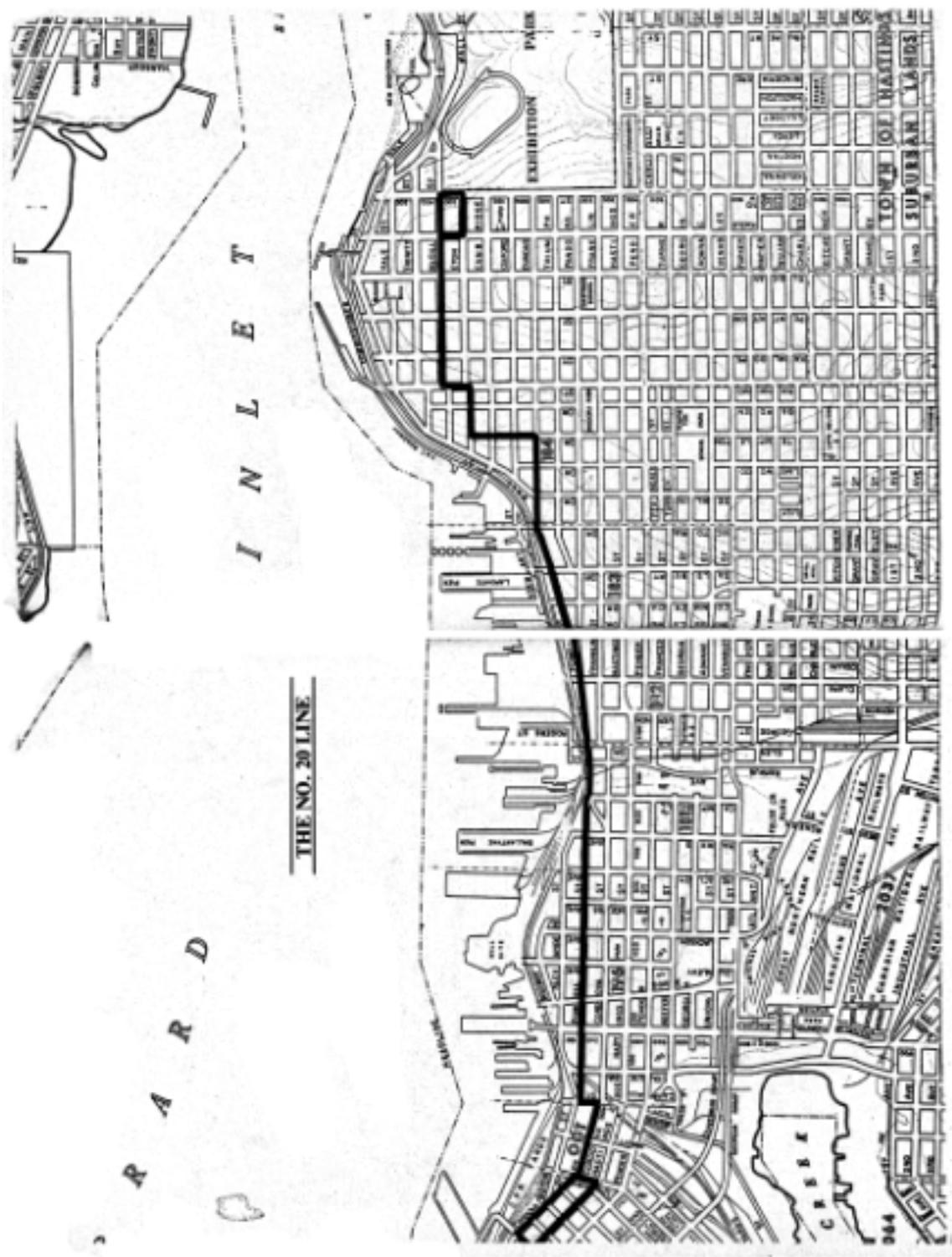
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Part One Memory Hold the Door

Introduction

The No.20 line was a streetcar route which ran from the western to the easternmost limits of the Vancouver waterfront. Opened at the beginning of the 1890s as the Powell Street line, it was the first streetcar route into the developing industrial and working class districts in the city's East End. The line was completed in 1909 and remained virtually unchanged until it was closed down in 1949.

The No. 20 cars ran from Victory Square through what was then the centre of town and out along Cordova street. They rolled through the heart of the loggers' district at Carrall and east on Powell through Little Tokyo. The streetcars swayed past the hotels and row cabins of retired campworkers and rumbled by the locales of now nearly forgotten labour struggles. They pitched and yawed around corners, braked down hills and rattled past most of the docks and mills and industries of the Vancouver waterfront. They wove past the frame family cottages and vacant brush lots of Hastings Townsite to the line's eastern terminus at Exhibition Park.

This book is a portrait of the people and the social geography along the No.20 line mainly during the mid to late 1940s. It is composed of two segments; my own reminiscences and the oral accounts of men and women who lived beside, worked in or regularly were a part of the industrial Vancouver waterfront during that period. The initial segment, in particular, aims to convey a feel of such facets of the urban environment as the sounds and sights of rail yards, of harbour traffic, of overgrown industrial wastelands and the intermixed homes and pensioners bunkhouses.

These description of the urban landscape are intertwined with the more usual reminiscences of a thirteen-year old who in 1949 was not yet an adult but who was near the end of childhood. They include recollections of friends of the family and of previous happenings in these locales. They occasionally chronicle fragments of family history which tell of events and people a generation earlier. In a very few places I have occasionally interjected experiences from a later decade as

well as some contemporary reflections. Thus there are shifts in perspective from various points of view in time. The reader should approach these naturally, as he or she would similar accounts we have all heard.

There is no attempt to present a rounded record. For instance, there is no discussion of school, something which bulks large in the life of even a causally attending adolescent. There is little of interest that I remember about school. I have limited my own reminiscences mainly to the external world, that known to others along the harbourside.

The opening chapter is an introduction to the physical components of the city along the waterfront as well as to some of the people moving through it. You will find individuals, locales and occurrences fleetingly mentioned. Most of them will reappear in other contexts and in greater detail later on. The reader may feel (with the author) that many of the events and people alluded to deserve fuller treatment than they receive here. Some you may pursue in other books but many will have to remain penciled in. These passing references, however, should convey something of the meaning which a small, very prosaic-appearing, strip of Vancouver had for some of its inhabitants.

The oral accounts which form the section section of this book revolve largely about the working lives of men and women about the No.20 line during the 1940s. Some of them reach into the 1930s while others extend to the early 1950s. They are not the senior memories of Vancouver East, recording its early formative stage, 'golden' or otherwise. The present accounts instead deal basically with experiences of the already formed city, proceeding through gyrations of stagnation and boom as it stumbled toward mid-century. As such, they echo shared understandings which were also the context of growing up for me and my friends. There is no suggestion that those speaking here comprise a representative sample of the people who once lived and worked in this part of the city. Yet, taken together, their experiences and views touch upon much of the life which once prevailed there.

Some of these accounts are extracted from more extensive recordings and memoirs and have been edited somewhat in the interest of readability. They vary in viewpoint and content. They differ in nature from my own reminiscences in that they are stories by men and women already working before 1949.

they also differ in style, in part because they are verbal accounts. I hope that no one will read these transcriptions of the spoken word, with their vitality of syntax and richness of meaning, as merely an attempt to introduce quaint and colourful usages.

The final chapters present a bit of the tradition of working-class history along this strip of the Vancouver waterfront. Such oral traditions of friends and relatives, dealing with events which had happened in the very places we knew, once had a considerably wider currency than the do today. While they may be fragmentary and partial they can have a power which published accounts (including the present one) rarely achieve. They have the capacity to move as well as to inform.

This is *not* a portrait of a 'neighborhood community', it is *not* a tale about alleged 'urban villagers'. It is a set of reminiscences and accounts of an industrial seaport which also served as a home base for campworkers and others in the resource industries. Native-born and immigrant, many of those living along the No.20 line were a broadly cosmopolitan lot.

Let's take a ride on the No, 20 streetcar from Hastings Park to its downtown terminus. On it ride man and women shipyard workers, packing house and cannery workers, and others coming home or bound for work in the host of industries which paralleled the route. There'll be fishermen from boats tied up at Campbell Avenue wharf and towboatmen from tugs berthed in slips along the way. Well see local longshoremen and seamen from the four corners of the world off ships berthed at the bordering docks. There'll be housewives packing home shopping bags of groceries and possibly children headed for movie matinees or weekday escapades. We will meet them on this trip along the edge of the city from its eastern boundary to the downtown core.

1. Going Down the Line

We are waiting for the No.20 streetcar in the Highland district of Vancouver East on a late April morning in 1949. It's a working weekday under cloud-mottled skies shot through with patches of blue. Gusts of cold spring wind carry sprinkles

of rain. A half-dozen cars and trucks have gone by in the ten minutes we've been waiting at Kamloops and McGill. But in the rush hours there may be so many cars that you have to look both ways before sauntering across the street.

To a thirteen-year old with nowhere in particular to go the wait seems endless. You lean against the telephone pole at the corner or you kick pebbles for the gravelled roadside, glancing up the track for the tenth time to see if the streetcar is coming. Looking north from the sloping plateau which falls toward the inlet you can see a freighter lying at anchor in mid-channel. The North Shore benches and mountain ridges are festooned with low cloud. To the west you see the main harbour stretching down to the city core. There are grain elevator silos and the long slender fingers of docks. A tug towing a barge, a North Vancouver ferry making its crossing, pennants of mist streaming off the headlands at the First Narrows. Well, nothing new of interest there.

Here it comes now - finally. You hear the whine of the motor; there's the trolley arm on the overhead cable. The high, blunt, face of the streetcar appears over the crest of a low rise. She comes rolling along, swaying from side to side, and heaves to a lumpy stop accompanied by a chorus of squeaks and rattles. The front doors louvre open with a loud wank-wank-wunk. You clamber up the stairs and drop your seven cents into the ticket box. We're away as the electric motor speeds and the car accelerates into its bumpy roll.

There are only a handful of passengers aboard so far because we're only four blocks from the line's eastern terminus. The No.20 approaches the eastern wharfs and runs by almost every dock on the Vancouver waterfront. You can find seamen travelling aboard at almost any hour of the day. There are three in the back of the car right now, dressed for a trip into town. They're from the Alberta Pool pier, Scandinavians probably, off one of the Knutsen Line freighters that are always loading there. There's another guy nodding asleep in his seat, a grainworker going home from an overtime shift. And there's the watchman from that old sprawling shingle mill at the eastern foot of Wall street.

You proceed down the aisle with a rolling walk, holding on to the stanchions, and slide into a grass-yellow, split rattan seat. There's a sharp turn onto Nanaimo. Even at dead slow

the car heels over on one side, leaning on its springs, coming about. The motor thumps and the car body groans.

Two short blocks north, an overpass leads from the top of the bluff along which Wall street runs, over the rail line and down to Terminal Dock. Longshoremen often board here. Ken Barker might have been running to catch the streetcar from his ship lying down below. But today it's only a crippled man who hobbles aboard, the one who lives two blocks away from us. He has a wooden leg, a memento of his rod-riding days. My father knows him well. Who would have imagined that this one-legged, partly blind guy would outlive someone like Ali, who was then still occasionally wrestling at Exhibition Gardens.

We creep down the broad brick boulevard of Eton street and begin to switchback down the hill: four ninety-degree turns in six blocks. Streetcars aren't so good on steep grades. On frosty winter mornings they almost slide down the hills, braking all the way. There's a sandbox set above the wheels and the motorman can release a drizzle of sand onto the rails for traction. Steel wheels scrunching over sanded rails can make you grind your teeth. But of course it's April now.

At Templeton Drive two middle-aged women come aboard. They're dressed in faded coveralls so they must be bound to shift work at Rogers or Burn's or somewhere. A few years ago, during the war, the streetcars used to be filled with women going off to work at some plant or another. Even many streetcar motormen were women. I wonder what happened to them all ?

The car turns here and the trolley arm may come off the powerline overhead. Sometimes it gets a little help. The rear of the No.20 streetcar is lined by a horseshoe shaped bank of seats, you see, and is only half visible to the motorman. On a hot summer's day, with the windows open, mischievous kids, buoyed up with each other's wit and a trip to the movies can reach out of the rear window and give the trolley arm a tug as we go around this turn. "Hey! Did one of you kids touch that line ? 'No'. 'Not me'. 'Not me neither' 'We didn't do nothin.' 'Damn it. I'm keeping an eye on you. Didn't I catch you doing that once before? If I catch you again I'll put you all off'.

Coming around the turn, slow, slow, the cowcatcher nose swings through the turn. Wooden crossbeams complain on steel frames, the shiplap body shudders and the windows

rattle, their leather pull-straps flapping from side to side. Its the background music to living in a real city.

The two blocks along Templeton Drive are an oppressive stretch of not-so-old but nonetheless decaying wooden apartment buildings mixed with dilapidated and jammed-together row houses. But from this vantage point you can look through the streetcar's windows and look west - out over Wall street a block below, out along the C.P.R. mainline curving around the base of the hill, down the tracks into the heart of the industrial waterfront. For a few moments you glimpse a vista of freight cars standing on shunting lines, the towering grain elevators at LaPointe, Sterling shipyards and interlaced fragments of the more distant harbourfront.

On a fall morning while of the way to school, looking out over Vancouver East from the lip of the hill on Hastings, you'd see the mountains of the North Shore and the taller buildings of the downtown looming out of the haze. Below you shoals of fog are being born which eddy around buildings and into which streetcars and people recede and emerge.

Sometimes fog does roll in from the sea. But usually it thickens gradually from mere wisps, collecting in hollows and seeping through the streets, feeling its way down alleys and washing around hills like a tide. Fog isn't usually like a blanket, it has its own shifting geography of currents and textures and colours, anywhere from pea-soup green to gauze white. If you have to get to work or you have to shepherd a truck around town, I guess your appreciation of fog is minimal. But it could be beautiful.

The sort of fog which transforms a city into a changing maze of depths and images requires smoke as well as moisture. There are plenty of both in Vancouver, especially around the industrial waterfront where smokestacks pierce the low-lying mist and pour forth smoke clouds. Most homes are still heated by stoves and furnaces burning coal and wood. Late fall is the season, as people stoke up their fires for the first cold snap. Smoke billows from stove pipes, lazes down from chimney pots and tumbles off roof tops. Smoke of varying colours and densities; a heavy brown smoke from deteriorated coal barely makes it out of the chimney before it tumbles down to the street, ribbons of storm-cloud grey from hot-burning anthracite, almost mustard-yellow billows from furnaces using Alberta Soft No 3, whitish grey puffs from

kitchen stoves burning dry wood. And on a clear winter day the pale sunlight catches pillars of smoke and illuminates them with coronas. But you wont see any of that now, in April.

The No.20 stops at Templeton and Dundas and waits to make up its schedule. There's a clutch of old wooden apartment houses here. Outside stairs led to the apartments above and the ground floors contain a stew of corner stores, junk shops and even a vacant office bearing the faded guilt lettering of a long departed lawyer .From time to time some of these "valuable commercial properties" are rented out to someone who is fed up with wage work, someone who has scraped together his savings and intends to make a living at some business like sharpening saws, repairing radios or selling second hand magazines. But they don't last long.

The motor speeds up and we slew around the corner, heading down the hill on Dundas. The engine hums and the car shivers as we pick up speed. You hear and feel the rails below you - click-clack-clickity clack. Each speed, each grade has its own pitch and rhythm. At the base of the hill Dundas turns into Powell street, more or less the boundary of the industrial East End. The curving rail lines, the streetcar tracks, Wall street and the docks all converge here. Yet two of the corners are large vacant lots covered with grass and clumps of willow, spreckled with ripening salmon berry bushes in season. In that tangle somewhere are the underground dugouts and fallen-down forts where we once used to play.

Nobody is at the stop today so we roll on to Powell and Victoria Drive. This is Cedar Cove, the main portal to the eastern dockside. Forty years earlier it was the terminus of the Powell street line, now by-passed. It's an enclave of city-core buildings of brick and stone, some towering to four storeys. A Painless Parker dentist practises in an upstairs office of the Hamilton Block while downstairs a barber shop still does a thriving business but a hardware store wears the dusty windows which herald approaching bankruptcy. Across the street, in a string of wooden, false-fronted stores is a meat market, a greengrocer and a cafe. A ship's chandler delivers to the tugs and fish boats docked along Commission Drive, whose only entrance is here.

The centre of Cedar Cove is the Princeton hotel. It's a small beer parlour crammed with people from opening to neon-lite closing. It is the sole oasis providing a glass of beer in

Vancouver East. A stream of longshoremen, grain handlers, foundrymen and others from a host of waterfront industries pass through the Princeton hotel's doors.

You can look across the rail tracks to a pier beside Sterling shipyard and see the flicker of acetylene torches and hear the stutter of jackhammers. Its a boneyard where ships old and new are being cut down for scrap. One by one ships which were once a part of the B.C. coast are going under the wrecker's hammer. The boneyard and Cedar Cove are about the western limit of my bunch's waterfront territory, which we usually stayed within.

There's Halley standing on the corner, getting ready to peddle the afternoon edition of the *Sun* to the lunch hour crowd. That's his corner. He's only a little older than me but he's already been working as a newsie for a year. I guess the truant officer just gave up and left him alone. Now Halley's on this corner from morning to evening. Is that any better than school?

The car door clatters open and two men pile aboard. Rumped, unshaven and ebullient, they must be off one of the tugs which tie up just a ways down Commissioner Drive. They sit down two seats ahead of us.

'Christ, why didn't we get a cab? What're you so cheap about Jack? Hell, we could 'a waited around till the Princeton opened, had a coffee or sumthin'. It's only a quarter hour ta go. Yer not goin' anywhere till this evenin anyways.'

'I don't want ta sit around the Princeton till Coalnose and Bill come wandering along an start up all the crap about how the skipper should've known better than wait for slack around Ripple Rock. How we'd a been in yesterday if it was Coe running things. Christ, we heard enough of that crap. '

'Okay, keep it down. We can drop in at the Columbia when we get downtown.'

I perk up and strain to hear the conversation, What were they towing? What's the name of their towboat ? They've probably been out in some god-forsaken place where you can't even get a bottle of Coke.

This is a pretty busy corner, Victoria and Powell, and they've just installed the first traffic light east of the downtown core here. Yet on the southwestern corner stands a large billboard surrounded by a brushy lot, most of the block, with one exception, is a brushy series of lots. A low platform around the

base of the billboard serves as a kind of deacon's seat for retired campworkers, many of them living in the pensioners' rowcabin just behind it or from this neck of the woods. Some days there are a half dozen men sitting there, taking in the sun and just watching the comings and goings. Is Pat there today ? Pat Fitzpatrick is an old Irish railway worker, a sort of self-appointed godfather to me. He currently lives in those rowcabins which my mother calls "the black hole of Calcutta". But they're not so bad. I should go down and visit him again some day soon.

We're rumbling down Powell past a block lone lot of overgrown blackberry vines. Smack in the middle is an old wooden house surrounded by an oil stained yard. It's the repair shop of Gardiner Diesel, the granddaddy of diesels in the coastal fishing fleet. Across the road, on the north side of the street, is where Bryce's garage, just a rough and ready shed. Bryce us a mechanic who saves old parts for replacement and who will bother to haywire an old clunker together. 'Now there's a mechanic who really is one', says my father whenever he goes there, appreciating both the money saved and make-do ingenuity involved.

At Salisbury Drive we're right beside the rail line - a sprawl of shunting tracks open out here. A yard locomotive is shunting a string of grain cars and lumber piles lie stacked on wasteland margins while awaiting shipment. Rows of colossal grain silos march back to the waterside at Lapointe pier. The cliffside of silos is stippled with shifting patches of sunlight and rain shadows. The road leading out on the pier runs through a man-made canyon of concrete.

We bump to a stop in front of a waiting knot of passengers. Ladies first - it they happen to be nearest the door. Some longshoremen are getting on; they must have finished topping off a ship. No, one of those guys who got on isn't a longshoreman. He must work in the fish-oil processing plant just beside Lapointe. Phew - no doubt about that ! About ten years later I'll be working in that same plant, painting tanks, loading boxcars and emptying out five gallon tins of decaying dogfish livers shipped down from upcoast. They're pressed and processed into ingredients for vitamins and cosmetics. Then I'll know exactly where that smell comes from.

Cheek by jowl with small industrial plants and warehouses, a crescent of old family houses spreads up Salisbury Drive.

along Pandora and through the side streets. Grace Carter lives down here with her two children. For years my mother and I would walk along the waterfront, across the rail tracks, to visit her. With a bandana on Grace looks like an elderly version of Rosie the Riveter. She's been widowed a long time and has almost finished raising her family on her own. That's still pretty rare. In her mid-fifties she's about ready to leave Vancouver to work almost another fifteen years in the fruit packing plants of the Okanagan. Once in a while I meet her getting aboard here but not today.

We're entering the heart of the industrial district. There are small iron and brass casting foundries, a factory making wire cable, and shops making pumps, mining equipment and logging gear. They're scattered in old buildings of wood and brick and in more recent ones of concrete and rusting tin sheeting. Some workshops are housed in the most decrepit-looking sheds but are packed with banks of lathes and other modern machinery turning out complicated engineering work.

Mainland Foundry at the foot of Commercial Drive is a hulking shed of blackened wood and corrugated iron. Stacks of moulding forms and charred trays spill out over the sidewalk. On the way home from school you can peep into the dark interior. Wooden walkways surround a central sand floor; there's a subdued roar of the furnace, men are shifting forms and sometimes you catch sight of a cascade of molten metal tumbling from the melting pot into sand moulds. My anachronistic vision of what a *real* factory is like. You edge around a pillar to get a better look and a foreman sees you and chases you out. 'Hey. What are you doing here kid. Get out -whus, whus'.

We're passing the Mc&Mc. warehouse, a block-long shed of corrugated tin scales rising from the sidewalk to a line of small windows under the eaves. A city works crew had dug up the roadway here, leaving a broad trench and a pile of excavated cobblestones. It's barricaded off and surmounted with red storm lanterns and coal oil flares which burn through the night with a fluttering, open flame. When its dark and wisps of mist drift in from the harbour, giant shifting shadows are cast against the side of the warehouse. You'll be happy to be in a lighted streetcar then and not walking home alone.

Woodland Avenue is the stop for Burns' slaughterhouse, the biggest packing plant on the west coast. Across the tracks on

the waterside, behind a maze of cattle sheds, the main plant rises four stories in dirty rust-brown brick. Rail cars bring in cattle and pigs and some sheep. They wait in the corrals. Every now and then an animal escapes and roams the side streets until Burns' employees and the police round them up and bring them back. It isn't just me who hopes that somehow some of them might get away. But they never do.

My mother started working at Burns' about eight months ago. Times are getting pretty tough. Along with a couple of hundred other woman she works in the sausage making plant on the night shift. It's pretty miserable work - she's home sleeping right now. My father is working day shift in a bakery and we all sort of cross paths coming and going in the morning and at supper time. But the job is beginning to tell on my mother; she's always tired, not even argumentative anymore.

Throughout the industrial zone are islands of sagging, wooden, family houses, old apartments and here and there a corner store or a lunch counter. There is exactly one church in the area, abandoned now. However, a block south of Franklin are a couple of once fairly luxurious but now very faded apartment buildings. Flats, single rooms and small garment shops are all mixed together here.

We pass Capilano Breweries, home of 'old style Pilsner' beer, with its label containing a steaming locomotive, a mountain tunnel, a cowboy, and Indian encampment of teepees, a speeding 1920s touring car and a very stylized biplane winging over the scene. About ten years from now I'll find its a really terrible beer, but my father and a lot of men apparently like it. We're on a straightaway and the No.20 picks up a lumbering speed accompanied by a chorus of creaking wood and rattling windows. The car pitches from side to side as we fly along at thirty or more miles and hour. Clackity-clack-clickity-click, click-click-clackity-clack. Wind flutters in through a partly open window.

As kids going to a movie downtown we sometimes tested our skill on stretches like this, The idea was to stand in the aisle without moving you feet and without holding on to anything. Feet planted apart, knees loose and slightly bent, as the car lurched from side to side. The Driver would holler, 'Sit down please! ' or 'Will you kids sit down, there's no playing in the streetcar !'

We're racing past McLean and Clark Drive. In the morning and evening a trickle of men and some women workers still trudge up Clark to Hastings street, heading for other streetcars to take them in all directions. But four years ago when South Burrard Shipyard operated full-blast here the shift changes involved scenes of near pandemonium. Jean Trebett, a young woman who worked in the plat shop there, will tell you something about it later.

'Oh, by Jeez !' A truck that's been bumping along behind us goes whizzing by on the inside lane and then cuts sharp in front of the streetcar. Scree-hee-eech - ringing steel wheels sliding on steel rails. The car seems to rise on its hind springs, yaws and slews its nose as it buckles to a stop, pitching one of the wicker seats forward. An indignant complaint from the bell-clang-clang, clang-clang-clang. Heads crane up as the truck speeds away. We start forward again and people return to their conversations or reveries.

We're coming to the Tar Flats, a swath of open wasteland stretching from Powell to the water, two almost three blocks long. Across the C.P.R. tracks are five or six acres of rubble-strewn wasteland. This is the westernmost extension of squatters' boathouses and cabins, a man-made cove nestled between the headlands of the United Grain Growers elevators to the west and the ruins of an old shingle mill to the east. There are mounds of old rail ties and dumped obsolete industrial equipment rusting away and the debris of a changing port scattered all around. The Tar Flats taper down to a boggy foreshore but there's no spicy smell of fresh tar, only a melange of oily mud and decaying sediment mixed with a whiff of salt water. 'Ah, the sea', says something in the back of my mind, though its really just a dirty harbour with a vista of loading gantries and ships superstructures protruding around grain elevators.

Beyond Vernon Drive an old bunkhouse stands on a block shared only with wild grass and a huge old maple tree. Its a classic example of the coolie cabins that once fringed Vancouver's industrial waterfront. They're occupied mainly by retired single men, most of whom have been campworkers at some time in the past. One of the pensioners living there is waiting at the car stop. He clambers up the car steps; large knotted hands grip the stanchions tightly as he comes down the aisle. A sturdy cane is suspended from a canvas packsack

slung over his shoulder. He's probably off to do some shopping downtown.

This is the stop for Rogers' Sugar Refinery, the biggest factory in the East End (apart from the now closed shipyards). Its smokestack soars high above the waterfront. The plant stretches unbroken for the better part of two blocks, six stories of dirty brick latticed with rows of grimed-over windows. Originally built in 1898 it remains relatively unchanged fifty years later, a forbidding archetype of the turn of the century factory. So are the working conditions inside, as I'll discover from a short stint of working there a decade later.

Men and some women work in a dusty twilight or under arc lamps. Not much is mechanized and the hundreds of tons of sugar processed each day are bagged, moved and manhandled with hand carts and gravity chutes. Each worker performs a few simple movements, endless repeated, day in and day out, You punch in and you punch out, your movement is geared to the flow of some line or the ringing of bells signaling a ten minute break. And men and women have worked there eight, ten and sixteen years. 'Glad to have a job', some of them say.

That is where I got my first job outside of the camps. Luckily I was fired after six weeks and went to work in a fish plant. But all that is in the future.

We're passing the scrap iron mountain of the Active Trading yard and are coming up to Campbell Avenue wharf. Just a string of wooden sheds and simple packing facilities on a small U-shaped pier, yet it's one of the major fish docks of the Vancouver harbour. Nelson Brothers and a handful of other specialty canneries are wedged together along this dock. A forest of masts sprouts from the seiners and long liners, trollers and crab boats tied up at the floats here. There's a continual coming and going. There's hardly a fisherman of the lower coast, other than gillnetters, who hasn't put in here at one time or another. Friends and relatives of newly arrived fishermen wander along the floats and among the hubbub of delivering catches and taking on ice. Cannery workers in rubber aprons and gumboots shift cases, slosh water, fillet and can some of the catch in the surrounding sheds. A few old men and some kids are fishing for shiners from the floats. Its too far from home for us but for the kids living in the Strathcona and neighbouring areas - well, I guess its their Terminal dock.

Across from the streetcar stop is the Oriental Hospital, a visible reminder of the B.C. tradition of racial segregation which in 1949 is just beginning to change. The Oriental Hospital is run by a Catholic charitable order and houses mainly aged Chinese men. On a hot summer day you can see the patients crowded around the open windows or on the large balcony in the rear. Its a warehouse of memories totally unknown to most of us.

A couple of fishermen just off their boat after having made a delivery at Campbell Avenue board here. Maybe they're going downtown to pick up some supplies or for a few drinks. Then we're away, swaying through a broad looping curve. A panorama opens out over the rail lines and the Great Northern dock, a view of the harbour reaching to the First Narrows. Straight across the inlet on the North Shore you can see the silvered, twin-spired wooden church on the Squamish Indian reserve. The streetcar is half-filled with longshoremen and towboat men, shift-workers and plant workers, housewives and at least one child; riders from distant seas and next-door neighbours. They're all aboard now.

Apart from a few trucks there's hardly any traffic and coming by Hawks Avenue the old No.20 tumbles along in a rumbling roll. We pass a vacant lot from which the mouldering and tattered remains of World War 11 weaponry have recently been removed, About half the buildings lining the street are still family houses, now fading into various states of disrepair. It's peaceful at this time of the day as we head into the outskirts of what once was 'Little Tokyo'.

The houses around here were built in the 1890s, when this was the city's eastern margin. A block south, on Cordova, they are now mostly inhabited by Chinese families. Unlike the neighbouring cabins and apartments housing single men and pensioners, these homes have a domestic air about them. They are painted in impressionist combination of chrome yellow, azure blues, lots of Mandarin (or was it Cantonese?) red, mauves and greens and pastels of all shades. They're a joy to the eye.

Our bunch often used to walk these streets coming home from the Rex of Beacon theatres on Saturday afternoons. We wandered down the gravelled back alleys and meandered across vacant lots, through scrapyards, past backyards, peeping in here and gawking there at whatever struck our

easily jaded fancies. We'd zigzag down Alexander street close to the rail tracks, past the wooden bunkhouses and coolie cabins near where the Hastings sawmill had once stood. Past the brick establishments of Marie Gomez and Faye Packer, their names proudly worked in the terrazzo tile entrance ways. 'Who the hell are they?' We'd peer into the Sailors' Mission or perk up our ears for the sound of Fan Tan around the Chinese Mason's hall and saunter past the now deserted Japanese hall. Scattered about were once proud houses with their long, narrow windows and fanlights, their pillared porches and balconies, cupolas and fish scale shingles. A magnificent and not-yet derelict collage of San Francisco wooden Gothic. 'Yeah, not too bad for such old-fashioned houses', was the grudging tribute we gave them.

The No.20 rolls down Powell past the Drake hotel on Princess and the crossing to Ballantyne pier and the other docks of this sector. Did you ever hear of 'Bloody Ballantyne'? Well, of course. We clatter along past the place where Ryuichi Yoshida and his wife and daughter had once lived. During the 1920s and 1930s he was an organizer of the Japanese Labour Union, as well as being a fisherman. On the south side of the street was where that union had its combined offices and meeting hall and where, for twenty years, they had put out their daily newspaper.

All along this stretch of Powell you might encounter groups of women cannery workers heading home after completing a shift. In the dawn of summer mornings and in early fall there may be knots of Chinese women in padded jackets and conical straw hats. They wait in small groups along the road for the farm-labour contractors to drive them out to jobs on market garden farms along Marine Drive or or Lulu Island or further out into the Valley.

Jackson and Powell, and there are the Powell Street Grounds. A flat, dusty square lined with a few trees. Maybe there'll be a ball game later in the afternoon but now its mainly populated by groups of pensioners talking. There have been other moments too. For two generations the Powell Street Grounds had been the gathering point for rallies and demonstrations and the assembly area for labour marches. The history of working-class struggle in Vancouver is almost a part of its dust.

Across from the Grounds stands a block of narrow, false-fronted stores built in the late 1880s and 1890s. They are almost all deserted now and will never reemerge from the World War 11 internment of the Japanese-Canadian population who were once centred around here. Once brilliant red and yellow, their shiplaped facades are peeling and fading into washed out pastels. It's like a semi-abandoned interior mining town from the turn of the century set down in the heart of our city.

Here's the New World hotel at the corner of Dunlevy - probably the heart of Little Tokyo and the scene which people probably meant when they referred to 'Powell street' Uchida's bookstore, Yoshino's drugstore, barber shops, fish and Japanese food stores, and restaurants of various sorts flourished here before the internment in 1942. Now a few buildings house dusty second hand junk stores but by the end of 1949 the first deportees will begin to trickle back. One of the first Japanese stores to reopen on Powell street will be Kay's Seafood store and his first customers will look over the assortment of red snapper and crab, squid and horse clams arranged in his windows.

Listen, do you hear it ? Its the unmistakable klaxton of the inhalator squad, the draegermen of the Vancouver fire department, always the first to arrive on the scene in cases of smoke inhalation or strokes or whatever accident. They're racing out on some call from their station. In a half block radius from Gore and Cordova stand the firehall, that concrete bastion which is the Anglican cathedral and the Orange Lodge, now rather deserted. A stone's throw away is the Salvation Army Temple, still deploying its Saturday night fire and brimstone parades against the dens of beer and iniquity which surround it. Also nearby is the city morgue and the Vancouver city police station and jail - a government institutional complex you might say.

Going down Gore to the harbour brings you to the docks of Harbour Navigation, on summer weekends swarming with excursionists. Beside it is the Canadian Fish Company the largest cannery still on the inlet. When it's working you'll find streams of white and Chinese cannery workers busy around there.

Main street, the eastern boundary of the downtown core. From here on in its all brick and pavement with hardly a

building under two storeys. Across the road the Melbourne hotel is a thriving locale of seamen and waterfront workers. Most of the cafe's and stores which blossomed along Main when the war industries filled the streets with plant workers have closed up. Yet Hastings and Main, two blocks south, is still a vital city centre where crowds of shoppers and working people wait to board turning streetcars. The Carnegie Library, still the main Vancouver library, is there and an important part of our downtown.

All the coastal passenger docks lie along a few short blocks of the waterfront here; Canadian National Steamships, the Union Steamship dock, and a little further to the west the pier of Canadian Pacific Steamships. As yet, these boats remain the roads and rails of the B.C. coast. The stream of men and women pouring in and out of Vancouver from these ships makes it impossible not to recognize the city as part of the resource coast.

Crossing Main we shudder down the grade toward Columbia street, past a bunch of pensioners hotels and a couple of washed-in-the-blood-of-the-lamb-stew missions. One of the fishermen from Campbell Avenue gets off here, headed either for the Fishermen's Union Hall a block away or the Columbia hotel. A half-block north and across the tracks lies the terminal for the North Vancouver ferries, still filled with people mornings and evenings, commuting to work on the North Shore.

We're coming up to the corner where Alexander, Water, Carrall and Powell streets run together at cock-eyed angles. Carrall street only runs three short blocks from Water to Pender but for fifty years it has been the heart of the loggers district; it's the place to meet people you know from camp. Its still a hustling, bustling crowded street until late at night, like a downtown city street should be. Water street, the original main drag of the city, is now mainly a produce wholesalers depot chock full of trucks. Frank white, who drove truck into and around Vancouver from the Fraser Valley, knows these places like the back of his hand. We'll hear how he remembers it later on.

Slowing to a snails pace we edge around the ninety degree turn onto Carrall, the car bell sounds a steady warning clanging. There's a shower of sparks from the overhead trolley arm. Pedestrians cross the street unmindful of traffic, groups

of men stand taking at the corners and eddy along the sidewalks. There's an overpass from the Union Steamship pier here and when a boat docks a rush of men in from the camps streams up Carrall bound for their favourite hotels and watering holes.

We're barely moving. The Europa hotel, Kings grocery store, the Wonder Lunch and the barber shop where I always go to get my hair cut are all within a hundred yards of each other. We come to stop at Carrall and Cordova.

This is it. This is *the* crossroads of Vancouver's loggers' district. Within a radius of two or three blocks lie almost every hotel, cafe, beer parlour and store catering to loggers. Also with this circle are most of the 'man catchers' - the camp employment agencies like Black's and Hicks and Dumaresq. Although things are beginning to change, you wouldn't have much trouble recognizing the scene of forty years earlier as described by Bob Chestnut. Ebe Koeppen can tell of his wanderings through here too.

A block south on Hastings And Carrall, across from the Rogers hotel, stands the B.C. Electric building. This corner is a favourite meeting place for all kinds of people from the East End, a downtown version of 'Birk's clock'. The interurban tram station is still here and three or four trams wait in the arched-over depot. Farmers and families from Fraser Valley hamlets eddy in and out of the waiting room. It's almost a museum piece. Every half hour or so an interurban, swaying and screeching, twists its way out onto Hastings for its run to New Westminster through the brush lots of south Burnaby. Three times a day the interurban run out to Chilliwack leaves on a three to four hour trip which crisscrosses the south side of the Fraser Valley making endless stops. Many stump ranchers and others living in the surrounding countryside still don't own a car or truck. The tam station is their entrepot in Vancouver.

Many of the passengers on the No.20 get off at Carrall and Cordova, heading for the shopping district along Hastings. We wait a minute or two to make up the schedule and then turn west on to Cordova. This block is loaded with men down from the camps, in the Stanley, the Manitoba and the Travellers. Not to long from now the name 'Cordova street' will become synonymous with a skid row hangout for canned heat artists. But as yet its still a loggers locale.

There were other men around, in 1949, who remembered an earlier Cordova street - when it was a hotbed of political activity. Hard to believe? The storm centre was right here, across from the Stanley hotel at 60 West Cordova, once the I.W.W. headquarters, later those of the Lumberworkers Industrial Union and finally the offices of the Workers Unity League. Much of the remaining impetus had shifted to the United Fishermen and Allied workers Union hall a block west of Cordova, and to the Marine Workers hall, four blocks west on Pender.

At Abbot most of the remaining passengers pour off the No.20 and cross the street to do some shopping at Woodward's or head down Hastings where the main shopping district of Vancouver East merges with the loggers' district. The Fell Farmers' Market is a block up. There are bakeries and meat markets, shoe and clothing stores, and places selling just about everything you'd want.

The No.20 pulls away heading for the end of its run, turns south and makes a rush up the hill on Cambie. The motor idles and shuts down and she rests in the shadow of the Dominion Bank building. The streetcar is almost empty now. The old man with the packsack is carrying his cane and striding up the hill. The three seamen from Alberta Pool are standing on the sidewalk discussing where to go next. Maybe we'll see Leo Paulcer, an old friend of the family who lives in one of the seedy pensioners hotels along Pender, sitting on one of the benches in Victory Square. If not, we'll meet him later,

Let's cut across Victory Square to Pender street and nose through Ainsworth's or the Co-op bookstores. And after that maybe down to the Rex theatre for a double feature or maybe over to the Cassidy cafe, a half block away on Cordova, where you can still get a good hamburger steak dinner for twenty-five cents.

Cambie and Hastings is the informal boundary of Vancouver East's downtown. The No.20 loops four blocks west along Hastings to the old post office and back down to the C.P.R. docks and rail terminal. She then makes her way east again on Cordova, back along the same route we have just taken.

This is one of the last trips we could have taken along the No.20 line. It has existed, unchanged, for exactly forty years. But in July of 1949 it will be closed down and the tracks torn

up. Not only the line but the life along those streets will change, is already changing. So is mine because next summer I'll be working on a coastal freighter, a fourteen year old passing for sixteen. Within a decade much of what is described here will be gone.

2. Coming Off the Boat

It is still the late forties and the camps and settlements of the B.C. coast are linked together and joined to Vancouver by ships. Along the downtown section of the No.20 line there can be no forgetting that the city is a port enmeshed in the life of the coast. Loggers and mill workers, construction men and cannery workers as well as families from the scattered coastal settlements as distant as the Queen Charlotte Islands or as close as the pulp mills and mining towns of Howe sound, all funnel through the docks which stretch along the Vancouver waterfront between Main and Granville streets. The hub of these comings and going is around the foot of Carrall.

The first contractions of coastal shipping have already begun with the decline of the Canadian National fleet. New roads and the spread of commercial air traffic since the end of the war have begun to ease out the ships. Less than a decade earlier you might have stood at the C.N. dock at the foot of Main street, bound for Allison's camp on the Queen Charlottes. The auditorium-sized waiting room would have been packed with jostling, swirling crowds of passengers, men, women and the occasional child heading to upcoast destinations. It is largely empty by 1949. But the importance of the other coastal fleets it as yet undiminished.

The C.N. pier is a high plateau of timbers which rises from the waterfront, arches over the rail tracks and juts out into the harbour. From its deck you can look across all the downtown docks. A stone's throw to the east lies Harbour Navigation with their *Scenic* and *Harbour Princess* waiting for summer excursionists or bound up Indian Arm on the daily mail run. To the west lie the Sanny lighters which carry crews and work parties around the harbour to the ships lying there.

Beside them huddle tugs, resting after hauling flat booms or barges around the Gulf of Georgia.

Beyond, at the foot of Columbia street, are the slips of the North Vancouver ferries, looking like squat barns atop low scows. They shuttle back and forth to Lonsdale. A few brief years before' thousands of men and women shipyard workers bound for the yards on the North Shore stood jammed together in the open terminal here, lunch buckets in hand. They'd swarm on and off the ferries at each shift change and swirled through the side street to the nearest streetcar stops on Cordova or Hastings. A remnant of that mass of shipyard workers still boards the ferry for a ten minute ride to North Vancouver.

A hundred yards west are the West Vancouver ferries. There is none of the hubbub of the North Vancouver ferries here. Every half hour one of their *Hollyburn* boats, like a mini excursion steamer, butts her stern away from the slip, bells clanging, out into the harbour for a run through the Fist Narrows, past the bell buoy and light at the Capilano shoals to nose in at Ambleside, West Vancouver. Almost a sea trip, an adventure on windy winter afternoons well worth the dime fare.

At the foot of Carrall stand the Union Steamship docks, the lifeline of the industrial coast, the fleet which for fifty years was synonymous with travel to the work camps and canneries of the coast. There is a gap here and then, at the western end of the downtown docks, the long, slender yellow piers of the Canadian Pacific Steamship.

The primary runs of the Canadian Pacific and the Canadian National Steamships are to the major centres of Vancouver Island and the towns of the norther coast. But both fleets have other runs into out of the way coastal reaches. For almost fifty years the C.P.R.'s *Princess Maquinna* ran that graveyard of ships, the stormiest, most rock-strewn stretch of water on the coast - the west coast of Vancouver Island. She ran from 1913 on. In every season and almost all weather she put into places like Tofino and Hesquiat and Zeballos. And the Canadian National's ships, like the *Prince John*, wallowed through north coast seas to reach settlements and camps on the Queen Charlotte's for more than a generation.

But it was the fleet of Union Steamships which earned the sardonic title 'God's gift to the B.C. coast.' One of their ships,

the *Chelosin* , a stubby little passenger-freight boat, was to end on the rocks off Ferguson Point in the summer of 1949 after plodding through forty years of runs from the southern to the northern tips of Vancouver Island. She hung on those rocks, her hull all above water, for almost three weeks, written off as salvage scrap until two local entrepreneurs decided to pump her full of sawdust. They then towed her over to the nearest shipyard and had her patched up. But when they tried to sell her they found that no one wanted to offer the circa fifty thousand dollars they had laid out to salvage her. So much for the repute in which our coastal heritage was held at the time.

But maybe it was the Union Steamship's *Cassiar* which typified the coastal traffic. Already long gone by 1949 she was remembered as *the* logger's boat par excellence. In the un-nostalgic nineteen forties she was almost a legend symbolizing the movement of life along the industrial coast. She even entered into a folksong of that period. Almost any middle-aged logger could have told you about a trip up to camps, much like the run which made the *Cassiar* famous.

The last freight has been stowed in the hold and the deck cargo secured, The final straggling passengers have come aboard, often shepherded down to the dock so that they wouldn't miss the ship. We're leaving Vancouver bound first for the camps north of the Gulf of Georgia. It's a slow passage over to Campbell River, then a small hamlet surrounded by some of the most intensive logging operations in B.C.. From there its only a hort jump over to Quadra Island and Quathiaski Cove where a one time cannery still operated as a seasonal net loft for fishermen. At Menzies Bay we just tie up to a floating wharf to put off some loggers and freight for scattered gypo shows strung around nearby. Maybe there's a wait for slack water at Seymour Narrows. Until they blasted Ripple Rock out of that passage boat after boat went down in that stretch of water. Above that it's into Deep Bay and Granite Bay, where another bunch of loggers troop ashore to be eagerly greeted by some of the crew in camp who hope that the returning men will still be carrying 'something on the hip'.

Next call is Rock Bay, which is a major booming ground, and then over to Bear Bay, where we drift to a stop to drop off a bundle of supplies, At Port Kusan we hover in the channel while mail and freight are discharge over the side into a small

gasboat which has come out to pick up the cargo. Then its on to Salmon River, which is the saltwater foot of a maze of railway logging operation spreading into the interior of Vancouver Island. Here a stream of freight comes off for the families and assorted camps throughout that district. All these stops are along fifty to sixty miles of the coastline.

The *Cassiar* continues up an empty stretch of Johnstone Strait and crosses over to the swift-running anchorage at Port Neville. There's a hotel and store, a few settler families and a large logging camp just up the channel. Then another long run until we reach Port Harvey, mainly a beer-parlour-hotel hamlet serving the scattered logging camps south of Knight inlet. Pretty some we're at Minstrel Island. And so it goes - all the way up to the cannery camps of Rivers inlet. There the *Cassiar* turns to make her run back down the coast, with considerably more enthusiastic passengers bound for the bright lights of Vancouver. The *Cassiar* was in her heyday in the early 1920s but the trip just described could just as well have taken place twenty years earlier or, on other Union ships, twenty years later.

For anyone waiting on a camp float with a cheque in his pocket and itching to leave, the boast coming down the channel could be a beautiful sight. To residents of the small coastal settlements these ships were the lifeline to the world outside. There was always some aura of excitement when the boat steamed up the inlet or around the point to dock briefly at some wharf. It wasn't unusual for Union boats to be late and that increased the feeling of expectancy. Often a sailing was delayed, either in Vancouver or at some upcoast wharf, while an agent shook out a few passengers who he knew should be on the boat. Or you might have to wait as some critical piece of freight or machinery was rushed down to the dock.

People working and living along the coast had a special feeling for the ships which carried them to and from Vancouver - exasperation mixed with a certain affection. 'The boat' brought mail and newspapers and maybe a package of booze. The boats resupplied the coastal stores and misplaced some long awaited cargo. They took people out to hospital and usually brought them back again. They took you out to a stint of work and carried you home again. To many these ships had names and histories and maybe even personalities.

Jim Mackay, a seventy-six year old bachelor from Minstrel Island, recaptures some of the more enthusiastic feelings about the Union boats back in his own salad days during the 1930s, feelings which were very much alive a decade later

' You'd get on the boat, get your stateroom and all, snoop around to see if there were any babes on board, maybe get together in somebody's room for a drink and a bit of B.S. you see. Well, before you know it the boat's comin' -let's say into Lasqueti Island - you'd all go out and hang over the rail. Everybody of the Island'd be there on the dock, there'd always be someone you'd know. Charlie Klein'd be trying to talk you into gettin' off to help him for a couple of weeks, women'd be shouting scandal back and forth, some gypo maybe would be there catchin' freight and guys up on the boat be after him about work. He'd be saying, 'Well, have you ever run a Skagit?' Yup'. Well, there'd be last minute wage negotiations, the skipper'd be listening from the bridge to see which way it went, maybe hold the boat a bit. People'd be stumbling along the deck still yappin' as the boat eased back, shoutin' and wavin; and this would go on all the way up the line to Rivers inlet, at every stop. That kinda kept things stuck together you see, the coast was like a buncha people seeing each other on the way by all the time *

Even in the last days of costal shipping conditions hadn't changed that much from a generation before. My first job was as a messboy and spare hand on a coastal passenger-freight boat In the summer of 1950. I was a fourteen year old officially passing for sixteen on the *Gulf Wing* , one of the mosquito fleet serving the camps and settlements of the lower coast.

The *Gulf Wing* was a converted Fairmile with a single cramped forward cargo hold and a passenger lounge which was licensed to carry 138 people but was crowded with 40. She ran out of Vancouver to Vananda and Blubber Bay on Texada Island, over to Westview, up to Lund and then back home on the short run. Once a week the run continued up-

*Jim MacKay and Howard White in 'Raincoast Chronicles', 1977.No 6,p.4

coast to Whaletown, Squirrel Cove, Redonda Bay and into the scattered camps stretching up Bute inlet to its head.

Those who depended on her for freight and transport must have been less than enthusiastic. Like the times we put into Westview at twilight with a southwest wind blowing up our tail. The Westview dock had been damaged by fire and in a good blow it would sway quite noticeably. It was a low tide and the deck was about eight feet below the dock. The skipper didn't dare put the bow in close of the rocks so we couldn't use our stern gangplank. Instead, we ran up an ordinary wooden ladder from the heaving deck of the ship to the swaying deck of the wharf. Four crewmen steadied the ladder and handed the passengers up to the wharf, including a few elderly people as well as children and a mother with a baby. Whatever else it was that's what I call haywire.

The *Gulf Wing* was as much a logger's boat as any then. Down in Vancouver some of the passengers going out to the camps would arrive by taxi and they'd damn near have to be poured onto the boat. Usually everything was alright until they started to sober up and found they didn't have a spare bottle stashed away in their bags. Talk about being mean and miserable ! Regardless of where they were bound for a few would decide fuel up again when we hit Lund. They'd wander ashore too the beer parlour here and that's the last we'd see of them that trip.

During the run you were at work or on call fourteen hours a day and it was a good week when you actually got the full two days off you were supposed to. The pay was thirty-five dollars a week - no union of course. Crew's quarters? Six crewmen shared four bunks in front of the engine. The guys coming off the night watch would crawl into the bunks which the day crew had just vacated. Strange to day, I always thought I'd come back to working on the boats. But after getting hooked on the big money to be made in construction camps I never did.

Coming down from camp by boat was really something. Lots of campworkers probably remember something comparable to a trip down from Kitimat during the early 1950s.

Kitimat in the fall of 1952 was the biggest construction project in B.C. in over thirty years. The previously isolated

head of Douglas Channel was swarming with machines and men. There were men arriving, working and leaving in a steady swirl. We went in on the C.P.R.'s *Princess Norah* and came out on I don't remember which ship. That first year the traffic in and out was still mainly by ship, a fact attested by the standard witticism of foremen who bawled 'On the ball of on the boat' is response to any conceivable snarl up. But by the next year the majority of men were already travelling by float plane.

After you've put in you three to four month stint in a place like Kitimat and have gotten ahead of the game, after you've quit and you're waiting for the boat to take you out, things take on a rosier perspective. Everything you've been bitching about no loner seems so bad. On the way out you may say goodbye to guys you hardly knew as well as to others who you'd really like to meet again. When you hear the boat whistle up the inlet you grab your bag and beat it down to the dock. The boat's coming in !. Everybody aboard troops down to the purser's office to get a cabin and dining room assignment. Maybe you go back on deck to watch the beach camp disappear as you head away. It's about a forty hour run to Vancouver.

After the initial excitement the trip can be exasperating slow. You're in a sort of limbo, steaming down the channels of the inner passage, stopping at pier-footed cannery villages, lying off Namu or Klemtu at night to take on passengers, the lights of fishing boasts and scattered homes gleaming through the dark. It can be a costly ride for some. There are always a few guys who get cleaned out in a 'friendly little game of poker' before they ever hit town. They have to scrounge up enough money from acquaintances to tide them over till the can ship back to camp.

In the early evening of the second day the hamlets of the southern coast appear: Lund, Powell River and then the old church spire at Sechelt. Still a ways to go. Finally you see the Point Atkinson light off in the distance and the reflected glow of the Vancouver night sky. Coming in the street lights and houses of Point Grey and Kitsilano glow more beautifully than any string of pearls. As we approach the First Narrows people head for their cabins for a last minute shave or to make sure that their gear is packed and ready to go. Almost everybody is in good humor and guys are telling acquaintances to be sure to

drop by for A drink at such and such hotel where ' everybody knows me'.

We pass under the Lion's Gate Bridge and around Brockton Point into the inner harbour. You're up on deck now. First you see the hills and eastern reaches of the Vancouver waterfront, Terminal dock and the bluffs below Wall street. The main dockyard area appears with lighted freighters lying along a crenelated crescent. Shimmering lights of red, yellow, green and points of blue are reflected in the purplish-black water. There's the Anglican Cathedral's squat spire on the eastern edge of the inner city and the shaft of the Sun Tower crowned with a huge iridescent globe. You see the slowly turning neon red 'W' of Woodward's store and the coppery-green sheen reflected from the curving roof of the Dominion Bank building at Victory Square. A serrated line of brick loft building rises from behind the rail line, six, seven stories high (it seemed more) dotted with window eyes of warm yellow. Way to the west stands the Marine Building. The downtown skyline, silhouetted and night lit, isn't really all that stupendous but ."Oh God what a BeautifulCity'

The ship's bell rings as we edge into the Union docks. The heaving lines are thrown and we're fast. The gang plank is down and there's a rush off the boat as men head home or over to their favourite hotel. Men coming in from the camps streamed off the boats; the city core was alive with their comings and going, They brought with them the experiences of jobs and locales and constantly changing situations along the coast and made these a part of Vancouver.

3 A Part of Our Downtown.

To understand the Vancouver which lay along the No.20 line you have to know something of the loggers' district. The line cut through the centre of their best-known haunts. Although I spend some of my childhood in a logging camps and would later work in construction camps I was never a logger. Along with some later retrospection, this reminiscence is largely about the logger's district as known to a thirteen year old. It was not totally inconsequential.

Both the loggers and their stores were a vital part of our downtown. For years our normal downtown streetcar stops were Carrall or Abbot on Cordova. We shopped there, frequented the library on Main street and ate in surrounding cafes. As kids out weekly pilgrimages to the Rex and Lux and Beacon theatres took us into the heart of that district and we wandered those streets gawking into the windows of the stores which we ourselves would soon patronize. My family and I had briefly lived in the Arco hotel there and friends of the family continued to live nearby, or passed through the district on their way in and out of camps. It was not a strange or exotic enclave, even less was it a Bowery skid row.

The resource industries, especially costal logging, still relied heavily upon isolated work camps. Some campworkers had families and homes in the city, others sallied forth from scattered stump ranches. But a large proportion, certainly the most visible sector, were single men. They were an urban-based working class which rotated back and forth from city to camp. Vancouver was *the* town that men meant when, after a three month stint in some camp, a few paycheques ahead of the game and getting stakey, they said 'I'm goin' to town'.

For more than fifty years the Vancouver where loggers and many other resource workers congregated was a three by four block area around Carrall and Cordova. The majority of the logger's hotels were all that core. There were also tramp miners and construction workers, millworkers, some fishermen and others. But the district was typified by the loggers who made up the most visible population. Their number was always fluctuating, those momentarily in town always fewer than those still in camps.

More than a half of the sixty odd beer parlour hotels in Vancouver were doted along or near the No.20 line, the greatest concentration being within the loggers' district. While no hotel was exclusively patronized by a single group, men from a particular industry usually gravitated toward particular places. Miners and some railway men around the Cobalt, a mix of loggers and construction men stayed at the Alcazar and Marble Arch. The Columbia appealed to some loggers and many fishermen. A number of others, like the Bodega Rooms and the Grand Hotel, once famous loggers addresses, had become flop houses avoided by campworkers. But in 1949 many of the traditional loggers' hotels were still

going strong: the Rainier on Carrall. the Manitoba on Cordova. the Metropole on Abbot and the Rogers' (formerly the Woods) hotel on Hastings. There were possibly a dozen or two such hotels in all.

From the beginning of the nineteen twenties the most prestigious of the loggers' hotels was the West, a half-block south of Hastings on Carrall. It was across the street from Black's Loggers' Agency, a half block from the interurban tram station, and close to all the action. It became *the* loggers' hotel in the city, know far and wide. Why that was I can't say because the West had little recommend it over many similar places in town. However it became a top-flight address for a logger. The management held and forwarded mail and stored luggage for clients; they ran the place strictly on the up and up and they let it be known that a regular patron was always good for a little credit to tide him over a slack season. But other loggers hotels did that too.

For a while the West hotel placed weekly ads in the I.W.A.'s *B.C. Lumber Worker* which read almost like club notices. They conveyed who was in town at the West, who had passed through and who was expected in soon. These reported comings and goings were something of an attraction but some union members became annoyed at the Paul Bunyan myths and the accounts of sprees propagated by the West's management. This stereotype was so deeply rooted that working class parents admonished their offspring, green with the paycheques of their first jobs, not to 'throw your money around like a drunken logger'.

Unless they had a family or a home in town loggers usually headed straight from the boat to their favourite hotel, where they'd often have a suitcase stored. The owner and staff probably knew him by name and there might be mail and messages awaiting an incoming logger. It was where friends would drop by to find him.

Off the boat, over to your hotel and up to your room. Even the famous loggers' hotels wee pretty Spartan but you had your room to yourself, with running hot water and maybe even a bathtub. After a bath and a leisurely shave and a few shots of eye-opener from the open bottle standing on the dresser, the town clothes come out of the suitcase. Shake them out - 'hmm, mothballs.' Then downstairs for a meal at maybe the Mount Shasta cafe, where you could order anything

you liked the way you liked it. The ambrosia for the first meal in town was likely to be a thick steak, rare, with all the trimmings, from untouched soup to apple pie a la mode.

No trip to town was complete without a feed at the Only cafe, just around the corner from The West. It was a tiny restaurant with a big neon sea horse hanging over its' swinging doors. The windows were 'artfully' arranged to look like an underwater garden of ice blocks, sprouting celery and lettuce, with pods of cooked crabs, pockets of oysters and silvery whole salmon. Through steamed over windows you got a glimpse of an open kitchen with cooks hovering around boiling kettles. It was always busy and you often had to wait in line to sit at the counters for the clam chowder stew and the quick-boiled fish that made the Only renowned, unchanged from almost the beginning to the century.

Then back to the hotel beer parlour to do little drinking. One way or another you soon ran into somebody you knew from one job or another. After a few years in the camps you'd have worked with hundreds of men and a good portion of them would be steaming through this small strip of the city.

While in town a logger would probably drop in at some of the stores catering to them. There was the Hub beside the Lux theatre on Hastings. One of the better known clothing stores, its display windows decked out with quality town wear. This was often worn with a surrealistic abandon of colours, with stripes and checks. Not bad at all. Others might drop in to have a suit made up, preferably in a shade of purplish black, by the Seven Little Tailors, a tiny one-story shop near the corner of Carrall and Hastings, where you'd actually see seven (more or less) tailors behind the window, measuring, cutting, sewing.

Down the block on the corner of Carrall and Cordova was another clothing store. White House clothes, I think, a well known old place in a wooden building. Top quality work clothes in the older fashions were their stock in trade. It was proper store where you got personal attention from clerks in black suits even when buying a pair of work socks. Their stuff wasn't cheap but it was the best you could buy. The best doe-skin work shirts, in solid colours only, grey Stanfield's underwear, heavy Bannockburn trousers for fishermen, Black Diamond wet gear for miners, thick jersey wool cruiser jackets (liners), always of a cream white. And of course they carried

the canvas Pioneer brand dryback jackets and 'tin pants' which, with wear, rain and pitch became so stiff that you could almost stand them in a corner upright. Suspenders were obligatory.

Boots were important. Depending upon their predilections and jobs men wore 'mudpacks' or 'Romeo slippers' or the hightops turned out by Dayton's or even gumboots. But loggers wore cork (caulked) boots. That was their trade mark. For cork boots it was either Pierre Paris or Heads, shoemakers with shops on Hastings street a half-block west and east of Carrall respectively. Pierre Paris was the earlier of the two, started around the turn of the century by a Basque cobbler who produced comparatively light but tough cork boots. Many swore by them. Heads were more massive boots with rounded layers of reinforced leather and they had their own enthusiasts.

A good pair of cork boots could cost a week's wages. They were custom-made by master shoemakers and involved fittings and a wait of some weeks until the backlog of orders was filled. Loggers had long since given up wearing corks in town, except for the occasional young whistle punk showing off. The 'No caulks allowed' signs which still hung in some downtown hotels were already anachronistic. But a pair of cork boots, tied together and carried slung over the shoulders like saddle bags bespoke a certain pride.

There was a long-established second-hand store at Abbott and Cordova run by two middle-aged brothers. The store windows were crammed with already somewhat obsolescent falling saws, logging jacks and peaveys and the clothes to go with them. There were pairs of cork boots dangling from hooks and Harris tweed jackets hanging on racks. Inside, the oiled wooden floor and the dim alcoves were neatly stacked with an unbelievable profusion of goods. Some of that stuff must have been lying around for thirty years. There were some real buys to be had if you could find what you were looking for but the owners were given much to bargaining. They actually didn't seem to like being bothered by potential customers if they were rehashing some debate of another. They were just part of the local scene and it was only much later that I realized that it might almost have been a scene out of Sholom Aleichem.

Nor should one forget B.C. Collateral and San Francisco Tailors, two large pawnshops a block on either side of Carrall. Three copper balls hung above their doors and their windows were packed to the brim with tools, rifles, radios, musical instruments of all descriptions, and what have you. Never a bargain but at least credit at rates which were not especially usurious. There was many a logger (and many a mother of some hard-pressed family for that matter) who, when all else failed, trundled some prize possession down to one of these pawnshops for a loan. Prosaic as these little stories may seem, and were, they were integral to the life of people passing through the loggers' district.

After lodging in a hotel and after hitting a favourite cafe and drinkery, there'd have to be a taxi trip to other beer parlours 'Just to see who else is in' 'Never walk when you can take a cab' was the motto. 'There's more there where that came from'. A spree was a show of open-handed largess. It wasn't the drinking as much as the socializing that was important.

'Blowing 'er in', the verve with which loggers parted with their stakes during a spree in town, was legendary. For many loggers who had a home and family in town and who didn't live in hotels those tales were *mainly* legendary. But what did a typical spree amount to anyway? It usually added up to a few weeks in a halfway decent hotel room (which would be considered a dump today), good but hardly lavish meals, a few new clothes and a fair amount of booze. Some might sit in on a poker game or take a girlfriend to a dance and a movie. They might pick up some reading material at the Universal Bookstore. All in all they were rather limited pleasures considering the price paid.

Many loggers in town on a spree were easy pickings for the fast buck artists and clip joints which could extract their cash faster than Painless Parker could yank a tooth. Professional gamblers got a slice of their stakes, as did bootleggers. and some guys wound up getting rolled in some back room. 'Shaved' or 'skinned' was the question asked afterwards. Meaning, did the guy have enough left to tide him over until he could get an advance from an employment agent before shipping back to camp again.

But the mainstay of socializing for single loggers and other campworkers in town was sitting around one beer parlour or

another having a few and talking with friends. Ironically, but not surprisingly, most beer parlour talk was about the work in camps they had briefly left behind. The hotels hummed with discussions of shutdowns and start-ups, of accidents and jackpots in camps along the coast. The layouts of particular logging operations and the quirks of some gimmick used to yard logs out of a certain side hill pocket were all part of this talk. You heard of bosses, of who was working on which crew, of how a particular outfit was making out and what you might expect in a certain camp.

All of this was mixed with the most outrageous boasting, storytelling and lies both funny and ridiculous. After a half dozen beers there seemed to be a marked increase in the number of top rigging slingers and high riggers around the table. Sometimes the stories were parables reaffirming the traditions of loggers' culture., particularly their much vaunted independence and ability to improvise solutions on the job. Other times these tales were intended as wry humor, to see how far you could drive a story before being stopped. Some of the stories may even have been true. But unless you knew who was talking and knew a good deal of what it was about it would be near impossible to sort out what really had happened. Someone else will have to convey an inside view of the language and the spirit involved.

In my own circle of teen-aged friends loggers were admired and envied. Any acquaintance who got a job in a logging camps swaggered a bit in front of his friends. Despite the admonitions of our parents (some of whom knew that life well), many of us were attracted to work in the camps. The seasonality and flexibility of camp work had a considerable appeal. During boom times you could hire on a quit when you felt so moved. The pay was better than anything you'd ever get in town. Coming in with a stake you could take trips or buy things or live a style which few urban workers could afford. But camp work sure wasn't much of a life for men with families in town.

It's true, I had a romantic conception of camp work which even experience didn't shake much. It was 'real work', work that dealt with things more than with people. It was allegedly work 'where you don't have a boss looking over your shoulder'. Most of us parroted that line. It was work in which there was some variety, some challenge and even a little

danger. A part of that conception was valid but much of it was juvenile machismo. In any case, life in the camps and in the loggers' district was not an exotic world to us.

The ever-present toll of industrial accidents was another feature, of logging in particular, which we saw around us. Injured and maimed men were especially common around Carrall and Cordova. Here a guy hobbled along on crutches with his leg in a cast - only a broken leg. There somebody else who'd had the side of his face torn apart by flying cable. Others had an arm or a leg missing or were otherwise crippled. They, and the dead, were the casualties of that unreported war not found on the bottom line of business ledgers. What is the most amazing, in retrospect, is that we - no longer kids actually - accepted this aspect of the resource industries as a part of working life.

Ultimately the most compelling impulse was not the blow 'er in sprees nor the personal camaraderie nor even the pride in work. Rather it was the sustained, courageous, actions of a small and then growing vanguard of men who were determined to dump 'the glory days of logging' into the scrap heap of history. Those early union loggers were part of the earlier loggers world but they also were bent upon creating something better.

After World War II the accumulated pressures for change began to take effect. The resource industries became unionized and employment became more permanent. The majority of resource workers became family men and most no longer came into Vancouver between jobs. By the end of the nineteen fifties the traditional loggers' district of Vancouver was only a caricature of what it had been.

4. Pensioners and Coolie Cabins

Men no longer able to stand the pace of work in the resource industries tried to shift to other jobs or gradually retired on meagre savings. Pensioners without a pension, many of them. Some opted to eke out an existence on stump ranches around the Fraser Valley or in shacks along the Gulf of Georgia. Others moved to boathouse communities along

Burrard inlet. Those who were married settled down in whatever districts they had houses and merged with their respective neighbourhoods. But a more distinct 'community' of retired campworkers lived around the downtown eastside of Vancouver.

There were old bachelors living in rooming houses, in old bunkhouses and in row cabins scattered all along the No.20 line from Victoria Drive to the city's inner core. On one stretch of Pender street a great many buildings were pensioner's hotels. Their inhabitants lived around the margins of, or a short streetcar ride from, the loggers' district.

In the late 1940s these men were mainly in their late sixties and seventies. They were born in the 1870s and 1880s and had come of age during or before the turn of the twentieth century. By 1900 some had experienced not only life in the resource industries of Western Canada but had also been part of other, often distant, worlds. They were in some ways a cosmopolitan lot. The pensioners around Vancouver's inner core were those who, after a long life in camps, chose to retire in the city rather than savour the bucolic charms of country living.

Apart from the problems of declining health and a penurious budget the biggest enemy was boredom. Few went to church, not many were politically active, none had 'hobbies'. There'd be an occasional trip to a movie matinee and sometimes a visit to the local beer parlour when they could afford it, an expensive proposition even at twenty cents a glass. On sunny days many would sit on the grassy margins of the Powell Street Grounds or around Victory Square or at a dozen other comparable places, taking the air and talking to both strangers and acquaintances. There'd be the minor chores around their rooms or drawn-out shopping trips for the ingredients of their slumgullion. When all else failed there were endless games of cribbage or solitaire.

Many single retired men lived in bunkhouse-like structures generically known as 'coolie cabins'. Already then fifty or more years old these buildings had sprung up near the waterfront alongside earlier, now largely displaced, sawmills. One of a dozen such bunkhouses along the No.20 line stood across from the B.C. Sugar Refinery. They were all about the same.

Coolie cabins were simple two-storied wooden buildings about 120 feet long and about 20 feet wide. An open narrow porch linked the dozen rooms on each floor. They were probably built to house two men in each compartment. As pensioners' rooms they were usually partitioned off with a bed in the back and the kitchen and living room facing the porch. For single bachelors they were roomy enough,

A row of woodsheds paralleled the bunkhouse, one shed for each room. Besides firewood they'd probably hold a hand cart and certainly a bucksaw and axe. There might be a few mementos of the man's former trade and whatever other belongings which couldn't be kept in a suitcase under the bed. There were chopping blocks and sawhorses dotted along the line of sheds and throughout the day you would see one man or another out there bucking up and splitting firewood and kindling at a steady but leisurely pace. Sawing, chopping and stopping to rest and talk to a neighbour on the porch or with someone working in a shed nearby.

Some coolie cabins looked almost as if they had grown out of the ground. Everything was of old, long used wood - from the fir framing and V board siding to the scuffed wooden floor and porches, railings and stairs. There were edge-grain wooden doors, lumber window sills and a cedar-shingled roof. Wood that's been worn and walked on and mottled by water, wood that had weathered sixty years of rain and wind. Old wood becomes a relief map of raised grains and sun cracked textures in tawny brown, earthen reds or weather-beaten greys. Interiors become stained by natural oils and human hands. Well yes, they were somewhat flimsy buildings and old men often kept their stoves going constantly but many preferred these cabins to the brick rooming houses in the centre of town.

The ten years that I knew him Pat Fitzpatrick lived in a set of row cabins near Victoria Drive and Powell. They were a single-storey version of the coolie cabins, the residue of long since disappeared sawmill at Cedar Cove and about as far east as such buildings went. My mother called them 'the black hole of Calcutta', which was something of an exaggeration. It did have a low roof which swept down over the walkway and on cloudy days it could get sort of dim inside the rooms. Hop vines grew over and around the low, buckling porch but on rainy days there were aromas of fresh cut wood and smoke which

pervaded everything. Shafts of sunlight shone through the window lighting paths through dancing dust particles.

Pat's place was furnished with the usual wood stove and a heavy camp cot. There was a kitchen table and a couple of wooden chairs, a washstand covered with red-checked oil cloth, a wash basin and a water pail with a dipper standing in it. At the far end of the room were a couple of shelves, a food chest and a box for the stove wood. The cooler was an old apple box attached to some more breezy place on a shaded outside wall and covered by wet cloths. A suitcase of extra cloths stood under the bed while everyday wear hung on pegs near the door. Two calendars sporting outdoor scenes and advertising the Hub or Tenderleaf lard brightened the walls. I have a feeling that this room was very much like the cabin beside the Bridge River where my parents, washing gold a decade earlier, had first met Pat.

Pat still baked his own sourdough bread. Bread and jam with endless cups of sugared tea, liberally laced with condensed Pacific milk, were a mainstay. But the staple food of most bachelors was thick mulligan stew; mutton stew alternated with oxtail soup or stews made of kidney and bully beef. Some might favour a beet and cabbage borsch or a thick potato soup but the mainstay was a stew made from tough beef. I don't know if its much different today.

When I knew him Pat was a six-foot barrel-chested old man with a springy walk, a bushy head of steel-grey hair and big handlebar mustache stained with tobacco juice. He smoked a crooked pipe but preferred a plug of chewing tobacco. Sometimes he'd walk the two to three miles downtown to do his shopping, stopping in at the Princeton on the way back to have a glass of beer. On summer days you might find him sitting below the billboard in nearby vacant lot, maybe exchanging a few words with his neighbours or just watching the passing scene.

Born on the land in the south of Ireland he'd come to Canada at the time the C.P.R. was driving rails through the Crows Nest Pass. He laboured there and later around some of the booming mining towns which were springing up in the Kootenays. He had laid steel on the C.N.R. mainline through the Fraser canyon and remembered sleepy Lytton as a booming, sprawling tent town. The last years of his working life were spent as a section hand and on the extra gangs of the

P.G.E. railway in the western Cariboo. What else he'd been, what else he'd done, I don't know. He'd never worked in a city factory and after leaving Ireland swore he'd never work on a farm again in his life. The C.P.R. tracks ran a half-block away from his Vancouver cabin. A tranquil, uneventful life it may seem - unless you knew the nature of railway construction in those times.

Pat had never been to school a day in his life but had taught himself to read. His reading didn't extend much beyond the occasional daily newspaper, which served as grist for his tolerantly quizzical humor. He had a deep, easy-going laugh, Pat was a Catholic who had little use for priests and the Church. As I remember it he was the only even vaguely religious person in my parents circle of friends. He was actually a gentle Irish anarchist who felt that at some time there had to be an accounting. About the only thing that really riled him was the endless fawning adoration of the Royal Family and aristocrats in general, which was then so much a part of the official Canadian tradition.

Pat turned seventy in 1943 or 1944 and was then finally was able to draw his old age pension. I think something like seventeen dollars a month was the stupendous amount he received. Until then he had existed somehow on scraped together savings. Within the limits of his meagre resources Pat was as generous as any person could be. There's many the bowl of mutton stew I ate and hundreds of cups of tea I drank with him while playing cribbage or black jack for wooden matches.

No one should overlook the fact that old age was made vastly more difficult by the penury in which most pensioners had to exist. To outsiders life in the coolie cabins probably seemed to be a horrendous skid row slum. But it wasn't. It was an impoverished but relatively peaceful semblance of the camps in which many had lived so much of their adult lives. You were near some open ground, you cooked your own food and heated your room to your own taste, you did a little work in getting your water and fuel in. The packs of human predators, thugs and rent gougers, who prey on the aged today were less prevalent. In some way many pensioners today do not fare as well.

Although many retired campworkers limited their reading to Max Brand westerns, the *Police Gazette* and squibs from the

Daily Lyre, there were others who continued reading in a tradition of working class learning which is well nigh forgotten today. Behind the dusty windows of some downtown cigar stores lay some surprising material. The Universal Bookstore on Hastings near Main - unchanged in four decades, its marquee advertising the *Western Socialist* -was patronized by many pensioners. It occupied a ramshackle wooden building with a titling floor and had widows frescoed with advertisements touting tobaccos and racing forms. Inside were racks of newspapers and tables loaded with almost every kind of newspaper and magazine conceivable: English language dailies and weeklies from throughout North America, over a hundred foreign language publications in anything from Finnish to Bulgarian, newspapers from B.C. and elsewhere, radical newspapers now a part of history. There were newspapers for ethnic communities and foreign language magazines of cultural affairs. If you don't think that some retired campworkers living in coolie cabins around the margins of downtown Vancouver read such magazines (including the cultural ones) then you are mistaken. They read both trash and working class classics from places like the Universal bookstore. Leo Paulcer was one of them.

Paulcer was in his sixties in 1949 and had been in North America for almost a half century. He was a bachelor who still spoke English with a thick accent. He lived in the Avalon Rooms along Pender street. Nobody unusual.

Leo was born in a small town in Hungary of parents who had fled farm labour on the great estates of the landed 'Hungarian Nation'. During his youth Leo had toiled as a harvest labourer and apprenticed as a cobbler. Faced with conscription into the army he fled the treasure of national traditions for a new land. He ran away to America with no regrets. Partly of foot, with forged papers and very little cash, he made it to Hamburg and somehow got on a ship bound for New York. The year was 1902 or 1903, a story of millions.

During his first years in New York he did everything, from pearl diving in cafe soap suds to labouring in subway construction. Many a time he was hungry and penniless. Then Paulcer drifted into the Pennsylvania coal fields and became a miner in one of the most horrendous pits of American capitalism. They were still hand mucking and still drilling with hand-held bits and single jackhammers in the smaller mines.

It was bull labour and watch out for the gas. In the coal camps and coal counties the mine owner was the government and immigrant workers faced not only exploitation and danger but also racist sentiments from the more established elements of American society. Paulcer became a member of the Industrial Workers of the World shortly after it was formed and a distributor of its Hungarian-language edition of the *Industrial Worker*. It seemed to be the one practical organization which stood with immigrant workers and was his most influential school during those initial years on this continent. His loyalty to its visions survived the I.W.W.'s demise and remained with him for the rest of his life.

For a half-dozen years Leo Paulcer moved through the American west from mining camp to city to mining town as a tramp hard rock miner. He worked in Cour De Alene, in Colorado, back in Chicago and out in the Arizona mines. He passed through Los Angeles which was still largely a ranching town and where cattle herds bound for the freight yards were driven down suburban streets. He lost one hard earned stake in San Francisco when the bank in which he'd deposited his money went bankrupt and the script that they'd issued proved worthless. His last year in the golden west was spent in an Arizona company mine town which he left without even having saved the fare to the coast. Riding the freights through the desert he was thrown off the train by a brakeman and almost killed. Finally Leo made his way to the Kootenays, came to Vancouver and shipped up to Premier Mines, then a boom town on the northern B.C. coast. It was shortly before the Great War.

Formal citizenship was of rather limited importance to most migratory campworkers then and Leo Paulcer was still an Austro-Hungarian subject. Shortly after the beginning of World War 1 he was arrested as an enemy alien. His interrogator felt that anyone who would leave the country of his birth, even Austro-Hungary, to avoid conscription would not make a good British subject. Ah, conservative internationalism ! But for some reason Paulcer wasn't interned and he was allowed to return to work in the smelter at Premier Mines.

During the influenza epidemic which swept Premier in 1918 Leo was among the few remaining healthy men there and he helped maintain emergency hospital services. His name was later listed on a town honor roll. Soon after he opened a small

shoe repair shop and he remembered the next few years as he best of his life. But in the later 1920s the racist conservatism swaggering through B.C. surfaced in Premier in the form of a 'keep this a white man's country' faction. 'White' meant British and Paulcer was forced out of business.

That was when he first moved to the comparative civilization of Vancouver's downtown eastside and into the Pender street hotels. They would be his base for job forays along the coast and into the interior. It was his home for the rest of his life. He worked in interior mining camps and in fish canneries along the coast; he cooked in small logging camps as well. In between he went on prospecting trips of up to a half year, once into the Omineca country, another time into the Bridge River district and also through western and northern Vancouver Island. That's what Leo was doing when I first met him in 1944.

Some years later rheumatism and decreasing stamina forced him to pack in prospecting. He worked as a baker in Vancouver for a while and tried to convince himself that he was just getting another stake together to go out again. His tent and gear and suitcase collected dust in our basement. Like all prospectors Paulcer over the years had acquired a suitcase full of penny ante mining stock, which was almost always worthless. It was a suitcase full of modest dreams for a decent retirement which he occasionally sorted through. Once he actually found stock of some reconsolidated company which he was able to sell for a portion of what he had paid for it.

But Paulcer's working life did not end with prospecting; he had nothing to retire on. Leo became a cook on coastal tugboats and then shipped deep sea. He sailed to Japan and the South Seas on freighter and to England and the Gulf coast ports of America on others. In Lourenco Marques, Mozambique, he got into a fight with his American shipmates over the way they were treating the local black longshoremen. His anger flowed not from any fashionable third worldism but from a much older, then nearly forgotten, vision of working class solidarity.

Two trips later Paulcer was injured in a dockside accident in Chile. He returned to Vancouver and never worked again. Over seventy years of age, having worked in B.C. itself for over forty years, Paulcer still had difficulty in obtaining the pittance

paid as old age pension. Watch dogs of the public purse in that period too were ever vigilant in the search for 'freeloaders'.

The last time I saw Leo Paulcer he was laid-up in the General Hospital after a near fatal hemorrhage. Propped up in his hospital bed he was attempting to read the *Pacific Tribune* with a large magnifying glass. A few months later he was dead.

They were of a generation which had been a part of the great transformation, they had been part of the construction of the modern world. Many had participated in the final phases of the great migration to the New World; their muscle and brain had helped lay the railways which bound the continent together. Some were part of homestead frontiers or mining rushes. Others had cleared the sites of present-day cities as well as of boom towns now faded back into obscurity. In a moderately long life time they had lived through an age when steampower was the promise of the future to the time when steam was obsolete. They had witnessed the world-wide consolidation of capitalism and also the burgeoning revolts against it; had seen the spread of socialism and the bitter battles of the labour wars.. They were part of an age that engendered millennial promise which, for some, could still strike fire in old age.

There were many whose lives were comparable to those of Leo Paulcer's and Pat Fitzpatrick's. Hidden behind the crumpled suits of pensioners you saw sitting over a coffee in the White Lunch or around downtown squares were experiences both dramatic and mundane, the story of an age.

5. A Geography of Wasteland Playgrounds

I always thought of a real city as a place where tight-packed tenements jostled together with industry and traffic, Outside it's inner core, Vancouver East wasn't like that though. There was industrial wasteland and overgrown vacant lots were scattered everywhere. Development was uneven, some sections were solidly built up in the tract housing of World War 1 streetcar suburbs while adjacent sections might encompass more open land than houses.

On Wall street only four of the dozen blocks which ran along the top of the bluff facing the harbour were built up. An unbroken stretch of five blocks of brush contained exactly one old house. Another three blocks were a mixture of cottages, sawdust dumps, vacant lots and a grain elevator. We lived on one of the built up blocks - it contained five houses on one side and seven on the other. There were small houses on double lots, with large gardens which might blend into an adjoining vacant lot. Our own place was like that. It was fronted by a gravelled side road running between deep, grass-choked ditches while the rear of the lot sloped down into a tree-tangled gulch which led to the C.P.R. tracks and the harbourside.

I didn't realize it then but I actually knew Vancouver at the tail end of a long period of comparative stagnation. Part of the industrial wasteland scattered along the waterfront had earlier been laced with operating plants, now fallen into decay. Many of the brushy lots which looked so pristine and natural to us had previously been cleared for house construction. Not a few of them had reverted from private ownership back to the municipality during the depression in default of land taxes. This inversion underlay the nature of the urban environment we knew. Of course as kids we didn't care.

Ball parks and properly constructed playgrounds couldn't compete with vacant lots as places to play. The lots offered a tangle of salmon berry and thimble berry brush, with grassy glades and thickets of willow. They were ransacked for pussy willow bouquets in early March. On sunny fringes were thick swards of bunch grass and maybe broom, interspersed with phlox or other wild flowers in season. Nettles and a host of other plants whose names we never learned grew in the damp shaded underbrush in some places. Our ignorance was sometimes matched by vehement certainty; near the head of one glen grew a lot of 'Jerusalem cherries' (they were soap berries actually) which everyone 'knew' were related to deadly nightshade.

There were ferns with midsummer stalks three feet tall which you pulled up, stripped bare of leaves and used in spear battles between contending children's armies. Grasp with both hands, pull straight up, evenly so they don't bend. 'Hey, cut it out. No throwing for the head. Come on, that's not fair.'

Deep hollows in some vacant lots filled with spring rain water, soon followed by a succession of tadpoles, frogs and children bearing glass jars and improvised scoops. A few of the largest ponds spawned a fleet of flimsy rafts. But by age ten we were smugly superior to such fresh water sailing. We had an ocean at our doorstep and a rowboat to sail on it.

Some tracts were an almost impenetrable jungle of brush. There were blackberry briars and brambles, redbcaps and salal. Ah, but salmon berries- that's the stuff. Many's the time I dawdled to school on late May or early June mornings, picking salmon berries on the way. Hanging in profligate array, glowing a translucent orange or red, tempting you to pick just one handful more.

There were networks of trails, almost tunnels in the densest bush. Along them we dug foxholes and trenches; sometimes we built underground dug-outs, shored up and earth-covered with 'hidden' entrances. We always had an eye for good climbing trees. They should have crooks and crotches and good limbs to sit on or hang from and should be high enough so that you can look down on nearby houses. They were old vine maples, mainly. On some a spiderwork of scrap lumber tree forts blossomed forth during summer vacations. Other trees, besides ravines or sawdust piles, were festooned with rope swings. You'd swing out in an arc, let go and fly through the air to make a three-point landing on spongy ground or loose sawdust.

Wasteland and brushy margins weren't restricted to stagnant suburbs, they were scattered along the entire No.20 line. Along Powell street, through part of the city's most industrial area, over a quarter of the street frontage was overgrown wasteland. There were half-block and block long lots filled with chest high grasses and hardy scrub. Even on the edge of the downtown core grassy swards and briar patches sprouted in profusion. Chickadees and even wild canaries nested in these little plots between decaying rooming houses along Alexander street. In a few places clumps of thule grew undisturbed in ditches along the railway tracks.

Back alleys were unpaved. Gravel over hard-packed dirt became riffled with washboard and stippled with veins of rain water. On a warm, rainy spring day the surface of back alleys became a microcosm of rivulets - some clear, some cloudy and others muddy yellow - eddying toward the ditches. Puddles

reflected the clouds and patches of blue sky in a fragmented mirror. The alleys were fringed from spring to fall with a ragged growth of green. Tough creepers pushed their way into the little used portions of the alley, sedge-like tussocks grew on the shoulders. Clumps of spear grass mixed with thistle marched back to the fences. Here and there were some hardy woody shrubs and, of course, dandelions were everywhere.

Wild hops tumbled over fences on the margins of house lots. It grew ivy-like up onto the roofs of old garages and low cabins and turned porches into latticed bowers. Old hop growth has thick rope-like vines and serrated, raspy leaves. The hops themselves are compressed multi-layered cones of leaves, brownish-green and sap rich. The pungent aroma of hop buds and their musty shade is entwined in my memory with row cabins in midsummer.

Wild growth spread through the boundaries of industrial yards and industrial waste spilled over into tangled vacant lots. For a few years after the war one vacant lot at Powell and Hawks became a scrap heap which attracted out special attention. The fuselages of a half dozen Ansons and Mitchells were dumped there. Their engines removed, they were piled across each other in crazy-quilt fashion. There were control columns to wiggle, dials to read, knobs to turn and switches to flick. There were seats to bounce on and hatches to crawl through and even deactivated machine-guns to swing. We nosed through this scrapyard playground, already poked through by resurgent willow shoots, on our way back from Saturday matinees until we became jaded with even these toys.

Across from the Campbell Avenue wharfs stood the Active Trading yards, a towering mountain of scrap metal which sometimes rose above the surrounding buildings and merged into the grass-bounded spur line below the Hastings viaduct. Active Trading was an always changing geography of newly minted or rusty metal forms and the general liter of an industrial society. Cycles of growth and erosion were created by deliveries and dissections - car bodies here, a briar of copper cable there. There was a constant hammering and hissing and clatter as the scrap arrived, was sorted and cut up, and shipped out again.

Factories were not much given to paving over unused portions of their properties; urban biota was allowed to establish itself where it could. A machine shop was a machine

shop and if a strip of land behind the plant was not used it would likely be left to grow into a profusion of tough grasses and hardy sumac. Grassy margins along the harbourfront would disappear under piles of export lumber to reappear again as this cargo was shipped out. Elsewhere, ridges of dumped sawdust overwhelmed block-long vacant lots which then were gradually reclaimed by spreading salmonberry brush.

There was a regular boneyard at the foot of Victoria Drive where tugs, coastal freighters and other vessels were gutted and broken up. Steel-hulled ships were systematically cut down with acetylene torches and the plates sent off to the scrapyards. The fleets of wooden tugs and similar vessels were of little value and scrap; deck gear and fittings were stripped off and the engines pulled out. A few of the the larger hulls became hulks for hauling logs and some ended up as floating fish collector stations. Others were towed away to be beached or added to the breakwater of some up-coast booming ground. Around the dirt yards and trackside margins of Lapointe pier and Commissioner Drive lay old lifeboats, battered ventilator funnels and sometimes even tilted wheelhouses.

From time to time we took our dugout canoe and paddled down to the boneyard. We'd sneak in behind one of the half-dozen boats lying there, tie up at the stern (which would hide the canoe from the watchman's shack) and scramble aboard. Once we climbed inside an old Union steamship which looked as if it had been taken untouched from the end of its run directly to the wrecker's. We explored the companionways, staterooms and saloons, we clambered through the wheelhouse and down into the engine room. It left me with a queasy feeling, rooting through an old ship I may once have travelled on and which was now going to be cut up.

Most sawmills had already disappeared from the Burrard inlet waterfront by the mid 1940s, although a few still remained, especially on the North Shore. One of the last operating sawmills on the southern shore of the inlet sat at the waterfront foot of Renfrew. It sat on the water side of the rail tracks and we walked by it every time we went to Windermere pool and looked into the open door of its shingle mill. What really interested us though was its log sorting pond.

Playing on the log booms was strictly taboo, being on almost every family's list of prohibitions to children. So

naturally were drawn to the booms. The only real danger was falling in and getting trapped beneath the logs.

Sunday was the only day you could play there because the rest of the week the mill was working and boom men would chase you off in double quick time. Unlike the booming grounds at Lynn Creek on the North Shore, where the logs were rafted together with swiftnets and were more or less unmovable, most of the logs around the sawmill pond were loose. The larger cedar logs were almost unmovable icebergs of wood' but smaller logs around the open areas could be poled back and forth. Or you'd try to roll them - sometimes it took two or three kids hopping in unison from one side to another to do that. Their narrow ends might bob up and down as we raced and jumped from one log to another, playing follow the leader and warning each other not to fall into the drink, but falling in anyway, from time to time. I lost my gumboots that way once and had to walk home along the rail tracks in my socks, trying to think up a plausible story of how I'd lost my boots.

But the aromas ! The smell of cedar logs which have been lying in salt water and the scent of fresh cut cedar - a sweet-sour, spicy perfume. Or the more pungent sap-like smell of cut Douglas fir and the musty yet acrid odor of wet Hemlock. Aromas which are the most evocative of memory.

Scrapyards, boneyards, pile-drivers and sawmill log ponds may seem a long way removed from brushy margins and overgrown vacant lots but they weren't. Geographically one would merge with another. In the course of a summer afternoon we might ramble from stump-strewn thickets in the gulch, walk along the rail tracks, scramble over stacked lumber and sawdust mountains being reclaimed by spreading willow, clamber through industrial litter along the waterfront and head back home through alleys and vacant lots. In my memory, as in our play, these were all intertwined.

6. Beside the Rail Lines

Despite the importance of the railway terminal to the rise of Vancouver as Canada's Pacific port, rail lines were in little evidence around the city. There weren't great rambling freight yards along the Burrard waterfront; the two major yards were tucked away beside False Creek. The No.20 route was unusual in that throughout its length it paralleled and at points brushed against the C.P.R. mainline tracks into Vancouver. It was here, along this narrow waterfront strip, that the rails from the interior, from the Prairies and from the rest of Canada connected with the docks and ships of the Pacific port.

Below our house on Wall street was a stretch of spur lines where strings of freight cars were left standing. One saw brakemen signaling with their red and green-eyed lanterns. During the day (but more usually in the middle of the night) yard engines switched and shunted these cars, breaking them out and reassembling them for delivery to docks and elevators. The yokes of cars were coupled and uncoupled. The switching engine idled, it's huffing quickened as it pulled ahead for the shunt. The quick race of the engine in reverse - Tch-Tch-Tch-Tch then the impact of the shunt. A series of crashes rolled through the hollow freight cars, each thunderclap spaced out through the coupling -baum-baum--BauM ---BAUM, slowing but growing louder as the approached. Then the shunted cars rumbled out along the spur line, screeching until they creaked to a stop.

Almost every spring or summer, somewhere within our stretch of the harbourfront, a section crew would tear up and replace old track. Just eight to a dozen men on motorized speeders and hand cars, sometimes using compressor fed jackhammers but still mainly working with spike mauls, spanners and muscle. They worked away for a week or two and left behind a debris of old ties spotted between the harbour and the trackside.

The piles of old ties were then burned. Permeated with creosote, piles of fifty to a hundred ties would burn away around the clock. The fire chewed away from the core, flared out and poked through layers of ties until the mound collapsed and was raked together again and burned some more. One pile or another would likely be burning some time during the simmer months. They were an attraction not to be missed;

bonfires where we roasted potatoes. You'd come home smokey and charcoal smudged and powdered with the red ochre dust.

It seems to me that there were a lot of open fires around. Smack-dab beside the rail lines at the foot of Renfrew stood the Capilano shingle mill, an array of rumbling dog ladders and log carriages and screaming saws. That was definitely *not* a part of our playground. For me, the most dramatic feature was the bee hive slab burner; four storeys high, built of iron plates in the shape of a squat lighthouse with a bulbous, heavily meshed, head. It burned the mill's waste wood and sawdust with profligate abandon. The low, almost tranquil, clunkering - clankering of the conveyor belt dumping wood slabs into the burner was an inextricable sound of sawmills. Depending upon what they were burning and how dry it was, the burner would exude either wisps or rivers of grey smoke. At night the flames could be seen poking through the meshed head and the reddish glow, reflected in the harbour water, was visible for miles around. Occasionally an eruption of flying sparks fluttered up and drifted a couple of hundred yards before glimmering out. Quite a sight, but not one much appreciated by residents of nearby wooden houses.

We rummaged through the castoff litter of the rail yards, burnt-out signal flares with their dart-like tails stuck in ties, cones of coal dust or grain, wisps of straw, lathes and casings and torn Kraft paper linings of boxcars. There were water-stained traffic cards stapled to the sides of cars which told of contents and gave instructions on handling, such as the 'Do Not Shunt' signs on cars standing on shunting track. Metal strap seals banded through catch levers of boxcars were embossed with codes sometimes decipherable as to the cargo, origins and route taken. 'Don't break 'em open, cause that's breaking and entering. You can't tell the railway cops nothin' if they catch you around a car with a broken seal'.

Some kids and a few men checked through empty boxcars around the elevators for grain sweepings. A number of families kept pigeons, others had chickens in their backyards. At Alberta Pool there were usually twenty or thirty empty boxcars, doors standing open, with always a little grain left inside. On weekends you'd see someone or another with a broom, a dust pan and a couple of burlap sacks. An hour or two of sweeping would usually yield twenty or thirty pounds of wheat. The trouble was that the C.P.R. police made frequent

visits to these spur lines. You didn't know what they might do, maybe even arrest you for taking a few pounds of wheat that later was going to be swept out into a dump by car cleaners anyway.

My father had ridden the rails in and out of Vancouver often enough in the already distant days of the depression. Men riding the freights into Vancouver would start dropping off near the Rogers Sugar Refinery. Boarding was another story. You had to get on by Main or Gore (after that they'd have picked up too much speed), leave yourself enough room to run and watch out for signal switches. You had to be able to lope along a bit faster than the train, grab on to the ladder and then, all in one motion and without any hesitation, swing aboard. So they said.

Ali was sort of proud of having picked up the skills of riding the rails and being able to survive desperate times on the road. But when he began to talk about it he quickly stopped himself. 'There's no romance in that. Don't ever try it'. Log booms and riding the rail cars were strictly taboo. 'Stay off them, period. No ifs, buts or maybes. Just stay off. Or else.'

We kids sometimes walked to town along the rail lines and regularly sauntered down the tracks between Victoria Drive and Windermere Pool. Warnings and ultimatums were repeatedly dinned in my ears at home, 'Don't crawl under the boxcars, no matter what. If I ever catch you playing on those trains that's it. No more going down to the water for you. Understand!' 'Yes, yes. I understand. No, we don't do that' Of course we did play in the boxcars or run along the top of a line of cars parked on some siding. A few times we latched onto the ladders and rode the cars for a short distance along the spur line as a yard freight slowly pulled away

Each kind of car had its own critical geography of ladders and catwalks. Narrow planked catwalks ran the length of each boxcar with a small wooden platform and hatch leading down into the car at one end. Far below, at either end, were the couplings and looping hydraulic lines. Steel rung ladders led up to the roof on each of the cars outside corners.

There were still wooden boxcars with planking crisscrossed by steel tighteners and with arched reinforcing rods below. But mainly the trains were composed of all-steel boxcars filled with grain or with cornucopia of general freight. There were also open gondola cars carrying gravel or scrap iron and

bundles of steel beams, hopper cars with high flaring sides for loads of coal or sulphur, and cylindrical tank cars embroidered with catwalks and carrying oil and chemicals. There were flat cars, sometimes loaded with crated machinery but mostly packing cribbed loads of timber and dressed wooden poles, and there were slat-sided cattle cars carrying their sad, bawling cargoes bound for the slaughterhouses. Wagging along at the tail of the train came the cabooses, wooden-planked, painted bright red and with a stove pipe sticking out like a mountain cabin on wheels. Each had a raised windowed watchtower where a brakeman sat looking over the length of the train.

The sides of the boxcars were emblazoned with the names and emblems of the originating lines, mainly those of the Canadian Pacific Railway and some from the Canadian National. But there were others as well: the Great Northern, with mountain goat rampant, the Santa Fe with its Celtic cross, cars from the Southern Pacific and from the Illinois Central. You'd see boxcars of the Union Pacific and those of the New York Central, and yes even some from the Rock Island Line - a continent rumbling by in names. They were touched with the aura of distant cities, deserts and industrial valleys. Prairie farm kids living near railroad mainlines may understand that feeling better than most city dwellers will.

Outward bound from Vancouver with a clear track ahead, freights had picked up much of their running speed by the time they passed Terminal dock. They thundered by, the engine running at three-quarters throttle huff-uff-huff-uff-uffing and the cars rattling clackity-clackity-clackity-clack or clank-clank-clankity-clickity-clank. Their voices varied depending upon the kinds of cars and the rail bed. Old wooden boxcars were especially vocal, squeeching and creaking along. Racing by at full speed there would be a rising roar and then a drawn out Whoo-oo-whoosh of the locomotive followed by the whir of the cars going flat out Clackity-clickity-clackityrattle, rattle, rattle. Trains straining to pick up speed had a laboured, quick panting sound. Freights slowing down as they approached the yards hiccupped smokes and sounded a hollow stuttering cough, the cars jangling along behind.

Idling on a spur lines on a cold winter morning, yard engines sonorously exhaled almost pure-white puffs of smoke. In midsummer wisps of translucent grey rose from the

smokestack in a column of heat waves. Depending upon what coal it was burning and what condition it was in a locomotive could send black clouds or slate-grey ribbons or even whitish smoke rings from it stack. Sometimes a sooty black stream would drift up, depositing an oily ash on porches and hung out washing. Towing a train of loaded cars the engine spewed out dark grey billows which merged and drifted behind like a banner. Standing on an overpass as the train raced below you were enshrouded in a cloud of gritty, slightly sweet, smoke.

I doubt whether there is any machinery today which can duplicate the impact that steam locomotives had on us. Actually, those locomotives were rather puny when compared to the biggest construction equipment or the jumbo jets of today. Still, in my memory none of those later leviathans can hold a candle to working steam trains. Maybe it is the impressionableness of childhood, but steam locomotives snorted and roared and shook the ground. They sounded whoops and whoofs and hissed trailers of steam when running.

The cowcatcher nose snuffled ahead along the rails. The single-eyed lamp stared from the front of the boiler housing and behind that the smokestack exhaling billows of gritty smoke and occasional showers of sparks. Down the housing are the Bactrian humps of the condenser bells and behind them the iron-forged cab with the engineer at the controls. On the curving fantail you might catch a glimpse of the fireman stoking coal from the tender into the firebox. Standing beside the rails at night you'd see the flickering glow from inside the cab as the locomotive rushed by.

Steam filled the pistons, the driving rods thrust forward, turning the drive wheels. Connecting rods slid ahead, pivoted on their cams and drove the pistons back to be filled again with live steam. All this was visible below the boiler and slow enough to be followed by the human eye. Machines hand fed by men, a shovelful at a time, moving the trains from eastern cities, across rock hills and muskeg, through towns and past prairie farms, over steppes and up mountain grades and then down along the last stretch toward the Pacific at Vancouver, past where we lived.

7. Boathouses and Squatters' Rights

During the mid and late nineteen forties some 200 or more boathouses dotted the shore of Burrard inlet, clustered in small hamlets reaching from the Buckerfield's elevator almost to Port Moody. There were others in False Creek and along the North Shore. Boathouses were built on or over the tidal foreshore, which was under the jurisdiction of the National Harbours Board and therefore removed from the pronouncements of local government. These 'squatters' houses and shacks were part of an old tradition of the urban waterfront.

The section I knew best was just down the bank and across the tracks from our house on Wall street. Some eight boathouses strung along 300 yards of harbourside near the eastern end of Commissioner Drive. Built on pilings, the houses edged off the side of the road allowance, sometimes the rail embankment, and out over the water facing the inner slip of Terminal dock. Since none of the inhabitants held title to or paid taxes on the house sites they received no municipal services of any kind. Neither electricity nor water nor sewage nor any other services were extended to boathouses. Near the heart of the city conditions were more rural than can easily be imagined today.

The last boathouse in this groups was built in the early spring of 1944. The Gainers, a family with four children, moved in; they became my closest friends over the next five years, almost until the end of my childhood. I spent almost as much time long the waterfront with them than I did at home during those years.

The Gainer's place at first was only a two-room shack with a sleeping lean-to attached. Once the pilings were Driven into the mud between the rocks it took only two or three weeks to raise the rough lumber shell which was their house. It was like a summer cabin, more primitive than many of the boathouses down there. Two years later they added another two rooms to the then rambling structure jutting out over the water.

The boathouses ranged from one room shacks to large, solidly built houses raised on massive log piers. Property maintained, some boathouses stood firm for two generations. Most were built on pilings driven into the foreshore and were sunk into the road bank at one end. Twenty or thirty pilings,

ranging from heavy timbers to two-by-fours, were hammered into the mud and anchored with heavy rocks. Cross beams and joists held the pilings together and provided the underpinnings for the platform on which the house was raised. Over time, beaten by wind and waves, some of the pilings would come loose and a litany of creaks and groans would issue from beneath the floor. On a dark night, with only candles burning and no adult around, it was a perfect setting for ghost stories.

There was a wood shed on a separate platform and also a stage or dock set just above the high-water mark. Every house had at least one rowboat. This complex, usually on two or three levels, was linked together with open walkways and stairs or ladders. The combined porch and walkway around the house, the door facing the waterside in the Grainer's place, was six or eight feet above the water. It was a fine place to sit on a spring day, scrunched up against the weathered shingles or flapping tar paper, smelling the harbour, squinting out at the passing scene and reading comic books.

There was no running water on any of the boathouses. Wash water came from rain barrels set under the eaves. One man used a spring at the base of the bank across the rail tracks as his source of drinking water, but everybody else got theirs from a water tap on the inner side of Terminal dock. The tap was near the dock's floor and you'd row over at high tide and climb up a ladder with your buckets - one hand on the ladder, one on the bucket and one to open the tap. It was a boy's chore: two boat trips with two four gallon pails of water each trip. Then pack them up from the landing stage into the house.

Getting firewood was a more drawn-out task that required some planning. The Grainer's place, like all the other boathouses, was heated by a wood burning cook stove. With only a wall of shiplap, the house could get petty damp and drafty in winter. The fire was kept burning constantly when anyone was home and it took a lot of wood for fuel. That came mainly from logs and sawed off butt ends and wood chunks fished out of the saltchuck. Much of the debris floating around in the harbour was too heavy or too water logged for us to handle. You'd keep your eye peeled for the right tide on the right day, when drift lines of smaller debris formed. A half-day of patrolling around by boat could net a mass of butt ends and slabs which were towed back to the house. But the real work only started when you had the 'logs' corralled at the stage. The

father would usually fill up the woodshed before he left for camp but that never lasted and we had to do the best we could with the chunks we could handle.

The wood had to be wrestled onto the stage at high tide, manhandled on to the sawhorse and then cut up. That's where the six foot long crosscut saw came into play. Pull easily, let it ride on its own weight once it's started, don't force it. Pull and then let the 'man' on the other end pull it back. Never push, just guide it straight in the cut. ZwringingZwringing.....Zwringing

'Damn it, it's never sharp enough' A Swede saw would do for the smaller pieces. Then the cut blocks went to the woodshed to dry out.

The chopping block was engraved with a thatchwork of axe cuts and fringed with wood splinters. You used a heavy, single-bitted thick-edged axe for splitting. The chunk you're about to spit should sit square and solid against the block. Get the right distance, don't stretch and don't strain. An even swing down from your shoulders and if you can add a firm flick of your wrists just before the axes strikes, so much the better. Thunk.....Cre-ack' That's the way it was supposed to work with dry wood. But the wood we had was probably still wet or knotty and you;d have to get the sledge hammer and wedge out. Or the piece flew off the chopping block and hit you on the foot. 'Ah, ta hell with this. Let somebody else split that. Where's a better piece?'

The worst thing about the boathouses was that none of them had electricity. People used coal oil lamps and Coleman gas lanterns. Candles were pressed into service when coal oil or white gas ran out. The yellowish glow of coal oil lamps coming on at twilight behind the windows of waterfront houses was quite something. They were even all right to have supper by. But just try to read or do school work by lantern light - no thanks.! And of course there were no other electrical appliances, not even a radio.

Apart from some camp cots, wooden kitchen chairs and table, an overstuffed sofa and so forth, the Gainer's had a mammoth gramophone. You wound it up, replaced the steel needle every so often and carefully laid the acoustic arm on one of a couple dozen 78 records. Flo's favourite was Hank Snow caterwauling about "My home by the Fraser'. God only knows where most of the records came from, stuff like 'The

Rose of Trallee' and 'There's a long, long trail a winding'. There was even a scratchy record of 'Hallelujah I'm a bum', that most protean of industrial American songs.

There were four kids in the family: Phil, the youngest had just started school when I first knew them in 1944. Anne was a year older. Will was my own age, going on nine, and soon my best friend. Another brother was three years older and soon no longer hung around with young kids like us, except for an occasional scratch game of soccer on Commissioner Drive. But the three younger Gainer's, their two cousins, and I were the core of 'our bunch'.

Jack Gainer was in his late thirties, a catskiner who worked in logging camps. He'd be home for a month or so and then back in the camps for three or four months. In five years I never got to know him. I never saw him drunk and I never saw him friendly and his children jumped to it when he gave an order. Wiry, of dour nature and a quick temper, his indifferent callousness frankly frightened me and I stayed well clear of him when he was home.

Flo Gainer was a jovial, rough-spoken woman who treated children, adults and pets with a laissez-faire equality. She was more of an older sister than a typical mother, it seemed to me. She liked her children and she liked her beer and she thought that everyone over the age of eight should be able to fend for themselves if there was food in the house, which there always was.

A Sunday meal was fried hamburger and mashed potatoes with jello for dessert. More usual fare was spaghetti and ketchup, pork and beans with ketchup, ketchup and wieners and bread, and endless baloney sandwiches. Campbell's tomato soup with bread dunkings, rounded out with heavily sugared tea, were iron rations. But when Jack returned from camp, or when friends were in town, it would be five dollar bills all around and there would be trips to bakeries and visits to fish-and-chip shops for a week or two.

Flo was a chronic T.B. case; in and out of hospital constantly. But it didn't affect her singing, 'I can sing as loud with one lung as I could with two,' she said after an operation. Of necessity, the kids did learn to fend for themselves - with no marked ill effects. Of course, their grandparents who lived nearby were always available in an emergency.

The Gainer's grandparents hailed originally from the Prairies but had lived in a boathouse a hundred yards down the way for over twenty years. The grandfather was a small, taciturn man of about seventy with a bad ticker. He had been a carpenter and a sometime boat builder, working at occasional jobs and living partly off savings before they received their old age pension. Some evenings you would see him rowing to Terminal dock to get water, standing at the oars of a heavy skiff like a Burrard inlet Charon. He spent his days puttering around a garden, working on his house or building various unworkable labour-saving devices.

Their place was a large, solid bungalow set on massive handbuilt rock and timber piers. It was better than many houses in the East End. The grandmother was something of a Ma Joad figure, an easy-going woman who preferred Abbott and Costello slapstick above all else, And somehow she managed to set three meals on the table each day. They had raised their own family and were now caring for two of their grandchildren whose mother had died. Like many others they had learned to walk on water in order to get by.

Most boathouses had window boxes or earth filled barrels planted with flowers, or had small gardens carved into the side of the bank. Gainer's grandfather had built the most elaborate of these gardens; a series of terraces cut into the embankment and walled with old railway ties. The terraces were filled with carted-in soil and compost. He tried to grow the usual combination of potatoes, onions, carrots and so forth but water was always the big problem. During hot summer days water had to be dipped from the rain barrels and once that gave out it had to be brought over from Terminal dock. Sooner or later such gardens were abandoned and went wild. What remained were the hardier perennial flowers and shrubs. On a few stretches of the Burnaby inlet shore, thirty years after the boathouses had been cleared away, one could still find the occasional piling and the scattered clumps of rose briar, irises, gladioli, lilac and stunted apple shrub that was left behind.

The cluster of eight boathouses along Commissioner Drive was no more a 'community' than any other part of Vancouver East. Apart from individual friendships or ties of kinship there was no particularly cooperative spirit between the residents. What passed as neighbourly tolerance actually entailed

keeping your nose out of other people's lives, for better and for worse.

Relations between neighbours involved the usual contradictions between general attitudes and actual behavior. For instance, on one side of grandfather Gainer's house lived an old Chinese bachelor who spoke only rudimentary English. He was infirm and we rarely saw him outside of his one-room shack, unless he was packing a pail of water from across the tracks. A general anti-orientalism held sway among all the boathouse dwellers yet Gainer's grandfather sometimes helped this old Chinese neighbour pack in a load of firewood despite his casual outbursts against "Chinks" (and just about every other identifiable group). And apparently this old Chinese bachelor preferred the isolation and independence of his life there to whatever communality might have awaited him in the Oriental Hospital.

We knew two other boathouse families. Adjacent to the terraced garden lived a man, his wife and their daughter. He must have been in his sixties and was regularly employed with the B.C. Corps of Commissionaires - a low paid watchman in other words. You'd see him proudly going to work in that outfit's stylized blue uniform. We avoided him because he was prone to lecture us on the maxims of the day. To our great delight, slanging matches began to break out between this man and his teen-age daughter and boiled out over the walkways around their house. If near, we kids would rush up to watch and even to shout encouragement to the combatants. 'Shut your mouths you ragamuffin street-Arabs. You'll wind up in prison yet', he might yell at us. We would snigger and snort.

There was another family who lived in a well-kept boathouse next to the Gainer's; the man and wife were about the only ones in that group who you could say were 'neighbourly' in the traditional sense. You'd sometimes see the husband helping the old widower who lived next door buck-up a load of firewood. They had a daughter about our age, Rita was a year or two older than me, thirteen when we were in grade six together. She was a tall, finely boned, adolescent neighbourhood girl when she started to pick up men that year. Walking to school we teased her mercilessly with the usual malicious humor of children, about her ever changing love affairs. She didn't have a heart of gold and she could be adamantly mercenary but mainly she was just a schoolgirl

then. Within a year she was working the dockyard gates and her parents were apparently the last to know what was going on. We occasionally made a game of tagging along behind Rita and her evenings escort, hooting 'Jail bait, jail bait. Do you know how old she is?' But when it became clear that she wasn't part of our bunch anymore we stopped teasing her and left her alone. Long before she was fifteen she was picked up and incarcerated by the juvenile delinquent authorities. A few months later when she returned briefly to her parent's home she was a tough young prostitute with nothing girlish about her.

There were two other houses on the eastern end of that stretch which didn't figure into our scene at all. One house, the most massive of them all, belonged to a retired fisherman and his wife. His former gillnetter sat moldering away in a cradle on the beach near the house. They may have thought of themselves as a cut above the rest of us because during their summer parties their visiting grandchildren shied away from our bunch like the plague. Separated by a long stretch of mud beach was the last house, looking like something transposed from a Latin American shantytown. Through it passed a stream of residents of whom we all were a little leery. Further to the east, three hundred yards on the other side of the Columbia grain elevator, was another section of maybe thirty boathouses which we passed in the summer on our way to Windermere Pool. But that was another territory and we rarely crossed paths with the children there except in school.

The Gainers always had an old rowboat to paddle around the harbour in. Later we kids acquired a large dugout canoe from a Panamanian ship lying at Terminal dock. The crew found it floating empty off the Philippines, had taken it aboard with the purpose of selling it at the next port but couldn't and finally gave it to us before they sailed. Twenty feet long, deep and with a beam of over three feet, the canoe had been adzed into perfect balance. It could carry a half-dozen kids, the family dog and whatever else we threw in and still ride the waves with ease and stability. It was heavy but in a pinch one kid with a cut-down piece of board could paddle it handily. In this canoe we went everywhere in the eastern harbour, surreptitiously in my case because I wasn't supposed to leave the confines of the immediate area by boat.

We paddled to the sawmill log pond at the foot of Renfrew, to the nearby floats and moored boats around a small shipyard there, and maybe as far east as the Second Narrows. We paddled a thousand times around Terminal dock and west to Lapointe pier and sometimes to the boneyard at the foot of Victoria Drive. A half-dozen times a year we crossed over the inlet to the big booming grounds at the mouth of Lynn Creek to go crabbing. The North Vancouver waterfront around there was a broad salt marsh beach fringed with a waterfront of trees and brush, with nesting birds and high grasses.

Seals occasionally came at night to patrol back and forth in front of the boathouses. They'd bob up, head stuck out of the water for a look around, then nose forward in a quick surge and dive to maybe reappear again off in the distance. You'd stand stock still, quiet, and watch every move they made.

The harbour was pretty polluted, more so thirty-five years ago than today. Freighters, tugboats and other boats dumped their garbage and pumped their bilge oil overboard. Sawmills and other waterside plants released their scrap or dumped some of their wastes into the saltchuck. Yet among this oil and refuse grew luxuriant beds of kelp and eel grass. Schools of fish fed in it, seabirds cavorted on it and at least some ten and twelve year old children swam in it. 'Dunked in it' might be a better phrase because the water was always icy cold. And at night you sometimes had to take a hot bath to remove the film of oil you'd gotten on you.

We didn't do much fishing; it wasn't particularly interesting and we didn't like fish. For all our closeness to the sea we never knew much about marine life - shiners, rock cod, bull heads and skate were about the extent of our knowledge of fish. The thick macrame-like hangings of mussels on the pilings and their associated communities were 'bait' at best. We didn't know from beans about limpets and other shellfish, or about the clams which squirted up water from mud beaches over which we stomped. Most of the intertidal life which we exposed and watched scurry into hiding from overturned rocks was largely beyond our interest.

What was of unquenchable interest were 'The movies.' In flush times and in tight ones, even when the dinner table was rather bare, there was almost always money for Saturday matinees at the Rex or Beacon movie theatres. A dime for the show and a dime for extras. They featured the typical

Hollywood epics of romanticized outlaw individualism made during the late thirties and early forties. I can't say how permanent their influence was but Jesse and Frank, Pretty Boy Floyd, the Youngers and the Dalton brothers all entered into the games we generically called 'guns'.

Vancouver newspapers invariably referred to the boathouse dwellers as 'squatters', a term they never applied to the forest companies battenning on public lands or the industries along the Vancouver waterfront which were all built on National foreshore. In fact many working people themselves tended to look askance at the supposed goings-on in the boathouses - although few would have had the gall to call the inhabitants there a lumpen proletariat.

It is true, they showed no trace of political or any other vision that a more equitable world might exist. But most of the boathouse dwellers were or had been working people throughout their active adult lives. Many were now aged or partially disabled and most were poor, even by the standards of the day. Most had probably paid their way many times over. They were people who struggled to maintain an uncertain 'independence' at the margins of a changing world which had less and less room for them.

Since families had lived in these boathouses for two and more generations people eventually began to talk about 'squatters rights'. They repeated the dictum, 'They'll never push us out of here'. But in 1951, after the National Harbours Board decided it wanted the waterfront cleared, it took only a half-year of a media campaign about unsanitary slum conditions to set the stage. Eviction orders went out. There was no compensation paid. No Captain Swing appeared on the horizon. The cluster of boathouses along Commissioner Drive disappeared under the wrecking hammer in less than three days.

8. Around Terminal Dock

Terminal dock was never especially important in the scheme of Vancouver harbour. It was built in 1926, on the tail end of a boom, almost a mile east of the main dockyards. It was a

piling-footed wooden wharf standing out from and running parallel to the shore. Between the pier and the shore was a mad-made cove, rich in sea life and harbourfront flotsam and jetsam. There were stretches of open beach and dilapidated old mills dotted east and west of the dock. That's about the way it remained until after the Second World War. It was right below our house, a part of our backyard.

There's usually quite a bit going on in a harbour. Around the basic structure of docks and waterside plants are the comings and goings of tugs and barges, fish boats and deep-sea ships. It's always changing, It's different by day and night, its different on a summer's evening and on a rainy fall afternoon.

In the morning at about the time you should be on your way to school, the *Scenic* came cutting up the harbour past Terminal dock, bound on the mail run to the scattered hamlets and small camps on Indian Arm, every day of the year. High narrow wheelhouse, low wooden hull with a shovel-nosed forward deck pushing through the water like the ex-Columbia riverboat she was. She came streaming through a crisp winter morning, decks empty, the wind carrying a faint rhythm of her engines. In the summer, weekend excursions of Harbour Navigation boats headed to Belcarra Park or Wigwam Inn loaded with picnickers, roisterers, union and fraternal outings. You could hear a gabble of laughter above the drone of the engines. And in the early evening the boats returned with shimmering white masthead lights and red and green running lights. Sometimes you'd hear singing or accordion music or, occasionally, the skirl of bagpipes drifting across the water.

There were fish boats, not so many in the eastern stretches of the harbour but always some, headed for the repair yard down near Windermere Pool or over to moorage at Dollarton. Slender double-ended gillnetters and wood-planked trollers with shiplap cabins, many still powered with Easthope gas engines, the haywire mechanic's friend. Their slow explosive exhaust could speak to you. On a dark rainy night the masthead light might be near invisible but you could hear what a boat with an Easthope was doing. It was off your starboard side or to you port, it was coming at you or pulling away. Idling along at trolling speed it sounded a tchuk-tchuktchuk-tchuk. When sweeping along on an outgoing tide it was tuktuktuktuk and when battling against the current a

belaboured chuk-tuk, chuk-tuk, chuk-tuk. Inextricable voices of the B.C. coast then.

There was the steady burbling rumble of Vivian diesels in packers going by. Or the deep tunk-tunk-thunk-thunk from the engine rooms of large coastal towboats butting up the channel on some mad March day, towing sawdust barges out to Powell River or bringing in a string of flat booms.

During a brief summer squall black storm clouds darken the sky and pile up against the mountains while billows of opaque grey clouds scud along below. Rays of sun slant in from the southwest and varelas of rain trail across the harbour, stippling first one strip and then another. Whitecaps froth into curlicues and here and there are wind-whipped manes of spray. The stolid harbour sea comes alive. A tug towing a scow bucks the tide as it pushes out from the Second Narrow and wallows into the chop. Close hauled, the scow weaves and the lifting tow rope slashes the water as it yaws to and fro.

There's a special quality of luminescence in this light. The water is translucent black-green. The rusty red of the the scow and the butter-yellow and cream-white of the tug's superstructure, its black hull streaked with russet bands - all glow. The tug's bow rises, dips to one side, rolling out a bow wave and spray. Smoke from the funnel rises, entering the sky, a dark current caught in slow motion.

Deep-sea freighters make little sound when they're running loaded, just a low vibration that you feel as much as hear. But when riding high, unloaded and without much ballast, their propeller clears the water. Huge propellers with three curving blades arc up, each blade rising from the water to make a half revolution and then (much faster it seems than when rising) slicing down again. Picking up seaway the propeller throws up a plume of mist behind an empty ship and sends a growling Wrump-Thrump-Whrow across the harbour.

If there was only a thin fog some ships might try to edge out of the harbour. Half-hidden shapes would loom up out of the mist, become ships and then slowly disappear into layers of grey. But in a real fog there's not much movement. A chorus of foghorns can be heard everywhere along the No.20 line, the repeated calls of freighters lying in mid-channel, the hooting whistles of tugs, the sometimes alarmed beeps of a crossing North Vancouver ferry and the deep, imperious, diaphone

horn -BEA ...OW - from the distant lighthouse at Point Atkinson.

Ships dropping anchor in midstream weren't very noisy, just the clanking staccato of the anchor chains as they ran down over the side - WangWang, WangWang, Wang. You hardly heard the splash. The most insistent sounds were those of ships docking, invariably at two in the morning, it seemed.. An overture of thumping tug engines and whistles as the ship was maneuvered into berth, some preliminary screeches to wake you up and then a full cacophony of squawking commands from the bridge sending heaving lines, hawsers and spring lines from the deck to the dock. From megaphones and the newly introduced loudspeaker systems came static-broken voices in indecipherable languages, crackling through the night, starting up again to secure lines just as you were back half asleep.

Sitting at our kitchen table, looking out over Terminal dock and harbour, you;d see the water traffic and ships at dockside being loaded and unloaded. Maybe a stubby Cates tug was maneuvering a lumber-piled barge over to the side of a freighter lying below us. Sling loads of lumber were being hoisted up over the side, the winches wheezing and clanking.

If they were putting on a deck load there'd be lumber handlers swarming over the topside. Or maybe pallets of cement sacks or flour were going aboard, the cargo nets out and longshoremen and small pallet tractors wheeling around the splintered deck of the dock. Sometimes gondolas railcars filled with scrap iron had been shunted out along the dock. The winches would strain to lift bundles of scrap into the hold, banging and clanging and rattling against the hatches on the way down.

Winches going half-ahead, hold. You'd hear but not quite make out some signals. Slow, down, down into the hold; the loads unslung. A fast haulback up, stop, up again, with the winch whining. The loading boom swings out over the dock accompanied by snorts and humming cable. A pause as men hooked on another load and then stood back. The boom, first imperceptibly and then rapidly swinging in over the hatch, Bursts of speed mixed with slow, deliberate finesse.

There were some old freighters around, a few still burning coal, with high flaring sterns, twin funnels and cramped superstructures. Each one was a little different. But as the

shipyards around Vancouver and elsewhere came on stream a flood of new freighter appeared, the ten-thousand ton Victory ships and, somewhat later, the Liberty ships. They were turned out in their hundreds and continued to be the backbone of most fleets which put into Vancouver until the end of the 1940s.

During the war years the harbour was often riven by the eerie hooting of Corvettes making their trial runs. From the smaller yards which had recently produced seiners and tugs slid wooden-hulled minesweepers and Fairmile patrol boats. For about one year a stream of escort carriers lay at Terminal dock undergoing their final outfitting, their crews already training in the turrets as teams of shipyard workers finished up the vessels.

For some years after 1945 the vacant margins of the harbourside were strewn with the litter of a dismantling war industry. There were stacks of Davit rafts and lifeboats, gun turrets and housings and forms of unfathomable purpose. Recently built minesweepers and patrol boats were hauled to the backwaters of docks, awaiting sale or wrecking. First the navigational and deck gear was removed. Then the deck was cut open and the engine hauled out. Men armored in welders' helmets, towing acetylene torches behind them, went to work on the hull. The arc of fire, first yellow and then brilliant white with showering sparks, cuts away section of the superstructure and then ate down into the plates. The remaining hull rose in the water as sections were cut away till only a shallow shell was left. But in the meantime, in the months and years that they came and went, we clambered over those ships and rooted through the hatches and on them explored the seven seas in our imagination.

As long as I can remember a pile driver lay berthed on an inner slip of Terminal dock and was a part of our playground. It was basically a low wooden scow with a four-storey derrick at the bow and a shiplap housing that contained the engine and crew bunks at the stern. The guts of the pile driver was an oil-fired steam engine which turned the winches and pulled the cable to raise the pile-driving head. The working deck was a maze of sheaves and cables, gargantuan bollards and reinforced stubbing blocks. On summer weekends, when there was nothing better to do, you could paddle across and tie up beside the pile driver. If you were hot enough and felt

sufficiently daring the derrick served as a perfect diving tower to cannon ball off.

Somewhere or another around the harbour pile driving was always in progress. The creosoted timber pilings were tethered beside the pile driver and lifted into position. Huffy a steamy breath the engine hoisted the driving head - a half ton slug of steel - up the tracks of the derrick tower. There was usually a long interval while the piling was tugged and straightened out and then the downward rush of the head - whoo oosh. THWOK....Kung. A giant's blow followed by a ringing reverberation as the driving head struck the piling, hammering it down into the bottom. All this repeated a dozen or more times until each piling was driven in. It was a methodical, if dramatic, business which initially attracted our attention - but never for very long.

For the better part of four years our bunch played on and around Terminal dock and wandered through the ships berthed there. We couldn't go near any part of the dock where they were loading but if we stayed out of sight of the gatehouse and out of the storage sheds the dock watchmen usually didn't bother to come looking for us. We'd approach the dock by canoe, scramble up from the waterside and saunter over to some deep-sea freighter. If there was no deck watch we'd troop aboard, three, four, five kids, and head back to the after-deck housing, which belonged to the crew. We'd poke our noses into the mess room and start up a conversation.

'Hello. Hi. Where's your ship from ?' (You just had to look at the flag to know.) 'We live over there', pointing vaguely through the side of the bulkhead. 'My names so and so. You been in Vancouver before?. And so on. Probably someone in the messroom would say. 'What are doing aboard? You're not supposed here. If the mate sees you he'll kick you off. You better get off. '

'Oh, that's alright, we always come on the boats Where ya coming from? You been down in the Philippines?' For some reason the Philippines were the Shangri-la of our imaginations. If you weren't tossed off within the first ten minutes you didn't have to worry.

There actually wasn't that much that visiting children could do on a freighter. All the booms and ropes and ladders which would have made a good playground were off limits because

roaring around on them would have attracted some officer's attention and would have gotten us thrown off the ship. So we usually just sat around the messroom or behind the afterhousing listening and talking to some of the crew members. No matter what ship it was there was always some crewmen who could speak English. Someone was usually willing to shoot the bull with kids for a while, almost invariably the messman would pass out coffee and cake. They were Norwegian and Swedish, Limejuicers and Panamanian-flag ships. American Mail Line boats kept port natives off entirely. But we considered Canadian ships, which were still around then, as 'our own' and marched on them with a certain proprietorial haughtiness. And were tossed off occasionally.

There was a certain escapism involved I suppose. All of us kids 'knew' somebody who 'had a friend whose friend' had allegedly stowed away in a lifeboat or in a rope locker or somewhere and had gotten away to sea, although we never met anyone first hand who had. But my father worked on coastal and deep-sea shipping during those years. as did a friend of the family. I always thought that I would go to sea at some time. But mainly, Terminal dock and the ships there were just a normal part of our backyard and that's how we considered them.

Some of my last memories of being a kid around Terminal dock are tied up with Canadian Seamen's Union strike. It was part of our waterfront. The strike must have come to a head in Vancouver during the late spring of 1949. I picked up something about its background from my father. Someone else will have to write a history of the C.S.U. strike and the forces involved. For us kids it was all very personalized.

Several Canadian ships with C.S.U. crews aboard were lying strikebound in Vancouver harbour, one tied up at the eastern end of Terminal dock on the inner berth. Maybe it was the *Rockside Park*. Strike placards hung from the deck and a twenty-four hour picket camp had been established at the gate to Terminal dock.

We kids had been over to the picket camp a few times. It was one of the places we used to play, under the arc light by the foot of the rail overpass. There were always a dozen pickets on duty, sometimes more. They'd built a low shed with railway ties and in the evening they had an open fire going to make coffee and provide some warmth, It was a cool, wet

summer. Commissioner Drive dead-ended just east of Terminal dock and any traffic headed to the dock would have to pass their camp. The pickets were edgy. They knew what we didn't: just what kind of a syndicate they were up against. Hal Banks had recently arrived in Vancouver and had ensconced himself in the S.I.U. (SeaFarers International Union) office on Beatty street, right across from the Sun Tower. C.S.U. picketers had already been attacked by goons and of course there is no police protection for strikers when they buck the system. Actually they didn't want any kids around their camp. But with the excitement and all, we couldn't easily be kept away. We just hung around listening, wandered off to play for a while and then returned to sit around the fire. It was sort of familial. Says one guy known for his salty language, 'Say, do you know what a scab is? A scab is a ...' 'Hey, now listen Phil, don't go telling your dirty stories around kids' says another guy. Sometimes they chased us away and sometimes they passed out coffee and cigarettes,

One day, it must have been around seven or eight on an overcast evening, we're down behind the picket camp skipping rocks over the water and we notice a growing turmoil and a taxi racing away, 'What the hell?' Guys are scurrying around, putting out the fire, stuffing scattered bedding and belongings into the shed, In the course of a couple of minutes a bunch more men come running up from the Princeton hotel, just half a mile away. One of the men who has just arrived notices us, he seems to be in charge. 'Get those kids out of here. They got no cause to be here in the first place'. One of the regular pickets who knows us comes over. 'You got to get out of here, right now. Go home. There's going to be trouble and you could get hurt'.

'I'm not afraid' 'Not me neither'. 'We're not scared' we chime in, beginning to wonder whether we should be scared or not. 'Clear the hell out when you're told -right now' and he shoos us up the overpass. I'm momentarily offended, being treated just like a kid.

We wait at the top of the overpass, thirty feet above Commissioner Drive. What's going to happen? Men coming to reinforce the picket line arrive all the time, piling out of packed taxis or cars. More come running down Commissioner Drive. Things begin to happen in quick succession.

A convoy of police cars and paddy wagons, dozens and dozens of them, rolls down Commission, by-passes the main gate and swarms through a side entrance headed for the struck ship. We notice that a launch had been coming across the harbour heading for the end of the dock. It turns out to be loaded with S.I.U. scabs. At this point there must have been over a hundred cops and many more seamen-pickets. The pickets break through the police cordon at the gates and within a minute or so there are guys running along the roof of Terminal dock yelling and cursing, trying to reach the ship. There are knots of picketers and police pushing and shoving each other. Here and there some punches are thrown and a few rocks sail through the air.

We bystanders are first amazed and then begin screaming encouragement. 'Don't let'm get away with it.' 'Bash'em one'.'Oh, you rats'. But it is too late. The main body of police have formed a cordon across the narrow groin of the dock and are waiting with batons ready. They're already aboard the ship and will soon be hauling off the arrested strikers. All of this has probably taken no more than ten minutes. There's still shouting, late reinforcements are still arriving, taunts and curses continue but only that. Later the ship is towed out to mid-channel and a scab crew put aboard.

I don't think that C.S.U. strike had much to do with my growing up. It was only one incident of many in that era. It didn't provide any startling new insights and it wasn't the main thing I remembered about Terminal dock. Afterwards we continued to hang around the ships, doing what we did before. But not for much longer. That same summer the No.20 streetcar line was closed and work began on removing the tracks. The following summer I began my first job - on a small coastal freighter.

Part Two Other Voices

9. Hauling Around Town *Frank White.*

Frank White grew up in Abbotsford, B.C., which in the 1920s was still largely a sawmill and farm service town. He began work as a truck driver hauling milk into Vancouver and freight around and out of the city during the early 1930s. With some variation, he did this for the better part of a decade. His descriptions of the people, feelings and locales along the Vancouver waterfront speak for themselves. Virtually all of the places and scenes he mentions were still present during the 1940s.

White's account also suggests how communities in the Fraser Valley were once linked to Vancouver in a manner comparable to that of coastal settlements. His story hints at the initial transformation of the Fraser Valley from a regions of distinct resource and farming communities into one of urban sprawl.

During the later 1940s and 50s White drove a logging truck for gypo operations around the margins of the Fraser Valley. He also hauled logs for while in up-coast camps and later operated his own small logging outfit on Nelson island. Frank White currently is the Pender Harbour District Waterworks Department.

I first started driving truck for a guy named Nelles in 1932, hauling milk from Abbotsford to Vancouver and freight back. The reason of why trucking sprung up all over the Fraser Valley was these milk runs. The Valley was still mainly stump ranches through the knolls but as the depression set in these stump ranchers dug in and started to produce milk - 'cause there were no other jobs for them. There was this pretty desperate fight between the Fraser Valley Milk Producers Co-op and the independent dairies. A lot of these old-style farmers were both producing more milk and getting squeezed out.

All the milk had been shipped by the B.C. Electric trams going into Vancouver. But truckers could sneak in with their trucks and pick up right on the farms, and haul the milk into town cheaper than the B.C. Electric because they could haul freight back. So right in the middle of the depression was this opportunity and trucking lines sprouted up all over the place. First they were hauling milk and then they were hauling everything.

We'd start picking up the milk around six or seven in the morning, seven days a week. Our area was mainly around Sumas Prairie. You'd hit fifteen, maybe twenty farms and then you'd beat it into Abbotsford, where we'd all meet and sort our loads of milk going to different dairies in town.

There'd always be so many guys wanting a ride to town that you had all the help you needed. One day I counted twenty-two people that got on and off the truck. They'd ride from here to there. We were on a schedule so it was almost like a bus line. You'd maybe get two-bits or four-bits if they were going into town. It sounds like small change now, but it all helped. They'd either give you something or they worked like hell.

There were no paved roads in the Valley to speak of except the Pacific Highway and we'd come rolling down that. No Patullo Bridge yet and you'd have to come across the river on the old railway bridge at New Westminster. It was the only bridge from the Valley and it'd just take one line of trucks at a time. Creep up the hill and over to Kingsway and into Vancouver. Those little '32 Fords we were driving were only four-cylinder jobs, but we hauled five and six tons on them at times. Crawling back and forth, you'd just stumble along, gearing up and gearing down all the time.

Those trucks had no goddam brakes worth the name. It was all mechanical brakes. You'd just have to use the gears to do most of the braking. You'd never be able to get away with it today. We just crawled through town. When they were just set up and working perfect these mechanical brakes were fine. But the brake rods would wear and wouldn't stay adjusted. After a couple of days you couldn't depend on them. Half the time they didn't work worth a damn. The first half-decent truck was the '36 Dodge - with hydraulic brakes - a really nice truck.

There were these bloody horrible fogs. Nobody thinks of the now. Now if it's foggy it only means you can't go fifty miles an hour, but at the times you couldn't go five. All the traffic

came in on Kingsway and somewhere before Fraser street you'd start running into low spots. Bloody huge fog banks. You'd follow the streetcar tracks right downtown and you'd develop a kind of sense where you should turn. Any time it was foggy it was always a big worry how to get off Kingsway onto Fraser without nailing somebody head on. Your horn wasn't any use because nobody would know where it was coming from.

We'd have to hire kids to go in front of us, to lead us through the fog in some of the worst spots. No, I'm not fooling. Lead us with flashlights and hollering. You couldn't see anything. A lot of kids would come down to Water street, around the truck depot, on a real foggy day just for that job. Usually you'd give them two-bits or so to get you out of there. And sometimes they'd lead you up on the sidewalk or off the road and laugh and laugh and run away. I had that trick played on me. Those fogs have disappeared no, but they were just yellow mud. I ran into a streetcar once and there was absolutely nothing that I saw until I hit it.

But what I really remember about those days is not the trucks and the driving so much as the people - the life down on Carrall and around Water street and out along Powell. That's what sticks in my mind. You got to know all sorts of people through there - drivers and shippers, longshoremen and storekeepers, well-known characters, working and hanging around down there. We all knew each other, somewhat anyway. It was a smaller city, you could keep it all in your mind.

Coming into town I'd pull into Turner's Dairy of Fraser and then the Crystal Dairy over on Commercial Drive. Then I'd beat it down to National Dairy and drop off the biggest part of the load, sixty or seventy cans there. It was on Glen Drive and just off the Hastings viaduct. That was my main dairy and I hung on to it. Louie Powell ran it; he was a Greek and he supplied the White Lunch and a lot of other Greek restaurants. You could always work out some sort of deal with Louie. We were always being approached by some of these small farmers to see if we couldn't get a buyer for their milk, 'cause often they just had no outlet.

At this time a hell of a lot of small farmers shipping milk were near destitute. Their milk often went into the pig trough. Farmers stuck without an outlet a lot of times had to give it

away for as low as four-fits or a dollar a can - a ten gallon can. Well, we'd bring them to town and go see Louie Powell about taking some extra milk from a new shipper. You'd go down and have a drink somewhere and Louie'd say, 'Well alright, bring it in'. Of course he wouldn't pay the regular rate. He didn't expect to do favours for nothing. But these farmers with no place to sell their Christly milk, at least you could get them some money. Not the going rate but something better than they'd get through trying to sell it themselves. And all we got out that was the haulage charges for bringing it in.

After seeing Louie it was over to Jersey Farms Dairy to drop off a load and then out to the cheese plant or to Clark's Dairy down in the West End. After that I'd beat it down to Gibson's Dairy that I carefully saved for the last. It'd usually be around lunch time. Gibson's Dairy was right beside the Rex theatre on Hastings and Carrall.

A lot of us drivers coming into Vancouver had arranged to meet down at the Rainier. You'd go out the back door of Gibson's Dairy, cross the alley and head into the Rainier hotel. We all had charge accounts there. That's where we'd have some drinks and arrange who was going to make what pickups around the city. When I was driving for Les McGarva we'd meet him there and he'd tell us, 'You've got this or that pickup to make'. Every couple of weeks he'd go around to the dairies and collect his money and then we'd get paid. Les'd deal our wages across the table at the Rainier and we'd settle up our bar bills there. Ernie Clark would be around to collect and he'd have to sent over a round.

Ernie Clark owned the Rainier then and he advertised himself as 'The Logger's Friend'. He had some money sunk in different logging camps and he staked quite a few loggers over the winter shutdown. We had our own table down there and it was pretty lively. There'd be any number of people hanging around asking if you knew of any jobs out in the Valley. There'd usually be some messages for me at the Rainier about some little deal or one haul of another.

We'd eat at the Baltimore cafe across the street or at the White Lunch off the alley on Columbia. At the White Lunch you'd grab a meal for two-bits and if you had to pay thirty-five cents it was pretty luxurious. Or we'd go over to Kings. That'd been a famous saloon in its times, a well known part of the scene. It wasn't a saloon any more but they had a tremendous

buffet laid out - steaks and pork chops and everything, so much a piece.

One thing about Vancouver then was you didn't have to go miles and miles to pick up every load. Everything was concentrated downtown. Our regular pickups were mainly along three blocks of Water street and out along Powell and from some of the docks. Arrow Transfer on Granville Island was the other hot spot. Up town, around Granville, there was nothing much of interest to us going on.

We spent a lot of time down on Water street picking up bulk orders from Kelly-Douglas, Malkin's, Swift's and the produce wholesalers for stores in Abbotsford. Three blocks of Water street was then a wholesalers' district, so plugged with trucks you couldn't hardly get through at times. You'd hand in the orders to Kelly-Douglas as soon as you got in. But there wasn't much point in waiting around because they would never be ready much before five o'clock. So we'd go making freight pickups.

We had to hang around Vancouver till at least six anyway for the last dispatches. So it was just some hours in the afternoon you had to yourself. Otherwise it was driving from morning to night. We'd head back and get into Abbotsford about eight, maybe nine, at night. We'd have to drop off the freight we'd brought out and switch our loads again so we'd have the right milk cans to take out next morning. It might be ten o'clock before you got home. So it was a pretty full day.

Some guys couldn't stand driving in the city; it wore them to a frazzle. But, I dunno, I liked it. It was different from today. The pace was set by the streetcars. In a way it was harder to drive deliveries than now. You had to work your way down alleys and around streetcars. You might get by one of them but there'd always be another one up ahead and a string of cars and trucks plugged up behind. Slow moving traffic.

Today traffic is so God damn adept. People are expert drivers today by comparison. But at the times most people really didn't know how to drive, they drove around the city like they were out on some country road. They hardly obeyed any rules. The few traffic lights in town were only on the main downtown corners. You just buffaloed your way across most corners, tried to get the jump on the other guy or you'd just sit there. With a truck you did a lot of bluffing. You just crawled ahead and hoped that the other guy would stop. You

wouldn'd dare do that today. The trouble was taxi drivers who wouldn't give anybody the right-of-way. It was like driving in Mexico today, where the guy that makes the biggest noise gets the right-of-way.

I'd often have a delivery down on [C.P.R.] pier D. That was something, a hell of a big place even by today's standards. It was always busy. You really had to know your way around that pier. Freight for all the places along the coast had their separate locations: Jordan River, Tofino and so forth. You had to know the freight sheds perfectly or you'd never come out right. We dropped off quite a few loads at the Union docks too, beef and spuds to ship up the coast.

We picked up a lot of stuff from the Mc&Mc warehouse on Columbia and Powell. It was the hardware supply house for the whole lower mainland. The you'd head out along Powell. That was all part of our beat - but it's kind of hard for me to recapture what it was like then. It wasn't a main artery like Hastings or Kingsway, it was more of a feeder street to the waterfront. It wasn't a truck route like you understand today, it was just an easy street to drive. I once picked up a donkey [engine] up in Harrison and hauled it into Arrow Transfer. It was over-width and overheight and it was miles overweight. So I hauled it down Powell.

Buckerfields was down there. They were a big distributor of feed for all through the Valley. The bigger dairy farmers started using mixed feed instead of growing their own oats. So we hauled a lot of that. A hundred, a hundred and twenty sacks of mixed feed a load. You'd back under chute in this shed alongside Buckerfields' elevator. Guys working on the second floor would fire these feed sacks down but you'd have to throw them into the back of the truck yourself. It was a bloody workhouse, the way they drove men was incredible. The men would try and grab a couple of minutes for a smoke between trucks.'Sh-sh', no talking while working was the rule there. Old Fred, the foreman, he'd be ranting and raving if you stopped two minutes, 'Come on, get that truck loaded and out of there. We gotta get trucks in here'

Trucking was really just getting organized. At first there wasn't any real control of loads. Anybody hauled damn near anything if they could get the job and figured they might handle it. It was a pretty freebooting situation. Later, when they got these conditions of load licensing and started to make

things stick, there was no more room for this jumping around from one thing to another.

For some years we had a lot of hauls taking equipment from logging outfits around Chehalis and Vedder Crossing, going down to the docks to be shipped up-coast somewhere. I always liked a load to the docks; I don't know how to describe it. We were still experimenting with hauling different loads. You'd have to puzzle out how to get something on or off best. It seemed like we were always trying something the first time. Now with big machines the load's on or off - zip[, nothing to it. But then it was all huffing and heaving and back power.

Those longshoremen, they were something. They their union and there weren't many unions around worth the name. Yes, there was a Teamsters union, but they didn't amount to a hill of beans. Us guys were always a little awed by longshoremen that earned real wages and worked eight hours a day. We didn't know what an eight hour day was. I had some good friends who were longshoremen.

Sure I enjoyed driving. But the way we worked could be condemned out of hand today. Do our regular hauling, hustle around and beat it back out to pick up an extra load. It often meant that you worked a stretch of thirty hours straight to earn some bucks.

There were big labour battles going on all around, going on in that part of Vancouver all through those years. I wasn't myself involved. Yet we were right there in the middle of it: the longshoremen's strike and the Post Office occupation. But we were working and this other stuff was just part of the scene. You'd wish them well and maybe drop some money into the can from time to time but that was about all.

Nelles was the first guy I worked for. He couldn't assure us regular wages but some of the freight was prepaid so we'd collect that much of our wages for sure. Later on I worked for Les McGarva and wages were a little more certain. But we had different angles of using the truck to make a little money on our own. Once you had covered what loads McGarva had lined up you could try and rake in something on the side for yourself. One thing about it, you never knew what would come next, always something different. We were always looking for a load somewhere without Les McGarva finding out.

There were about eight or ten of us drivers working all the angles we could, You'd maybe bring in a load for one of the

farmers. Or there'd be somebody moving or wanting something hauled cheap - we'd be right in there. What we made on the side might seem like small change today, but it all added up. Mostly all those deals came through our table at the Rainier. It seems strange now, but that's the way trucking was done then.

One deal I had going on the side was with this blacksmith. There were still quite a few blacksmith's around the Valley and they used a good deal of coke. Every so often I'd haul coke from the gas works down by the viaduct out to Harry William's blacksmith shop in Aldergrove. You'd duck into the gas works and throw ten sacks of coke on the tailgate and take it along on the way home. He'd always be in the market for steel from old axles or mainsprings or something. He turned out wedges and sledges and loading tongs and logging shackles. They were handmade and always sort of expensive. You'd trade this coke or steel for what you could get from him, then take it down to peddle to one of the hardware stores in town that handled that stuff. Whatever you made was velvet for the Driver.

Or another angle was the deal I had with the Mainland Foundry, a black-looking place with flames roaring inside. I was fascinated by it. They would always take some of this special foundry sand that was used as their floor. Just this side of Abbotsford was a bunch of sand that was just right as foundry sand. So if here was nothing else I could run out there and haul a load for them.

Other times I'd stop and pick up a load of lumber at the lumber yard on the corner of Wall and Powell. Maybe I'd have a beer with the shipper in the Princeton, which was around the corner. I'd haul loads of this third-grade lumber out to Abbotsford. I sold it for damn near peanuts and people would use it for barns or sheds or whatever.

Heading home, sometimes, I'd crive up Wall street just for change. I used to go out that way to get to the Barnet Highway. Two or three times a month we'd haul oil in drums from Union Oil on Barnet Highway. So I'd duck out east on Wall street. It was a sort of enclave, little houses, a lot of bush still. You'd see the inlet from the cliff; I'd cut up past the shingle mill at the end of Wall. That sawmill was always in trouble with its burner throwing up ash and sparks over everything around there.

Then back to Hastings and out to Union Oil below Burnaby Mountain. That was way out in the country then.

For a while we bootlegged spuds. See, there were a lot of Chinese market gardeners leasing five, ten acres of land on Lulu island and around Sumas Prairie growing early potatoes. When the Potato Marketing Board was brought in these Chinamen more or less were frozen out. That was part of the idea behind forming the Board in the first place. So the only way these Chinamen had of selling their spuds was to bootleg them. That must have been before the Patullo Bridge opened because I remember sneaking across the old railway bridge at night with loads of black market spuds.

Two Drivers would get together. With a five-ton truck we could make up to forty bucks a load on these bootleg spuds, which was really big money. My partner would take the milk cans in and pick up the freight and I'd duck into one of these Chinese farms, load up with spuds and run them in at night. We'd sneak the load off the Valley and into town and pull into some cafe or house or back alley in Chinatown with a load of spuds. It got to be pretty organized after a while. You'd pull in and twenty men would appear from nowhere and unload in no time flat.

That produce was bought by the Chinese wholesalers; a lot of them bankrolled these Chinese farmers, put up the money for renting the land and getting seed and what not. There'd be labour contractors who'd arrange to bring out groups of Chinese women and men to do seasonal work on those farms. The spuds we brought in would go to the grocery stores or go out through Chinese pedlars in their black Model T trucks. There must have been quite some mechanics stuck away in Chinatown to keep them running because they just ran and ran. I didn't understand half the ins and outs of the politicking behind that Marketing Board and the black market trade. Our part of the deal was over when we delivered the spuds. They were quite happy to get them.

Our time off we'd spend in the Rainier or one of those other places around there, the Savoy hotel or the Columbia or the Stanley. There were lots of them. Everyone that you knew was down there. Each one of those hotels had its own atmosphere and regular clientele. Now I wonder how we had the time to get around to all the deliveries and pickups and still have time to sit in beer parlours. Dutch and old man Parbury, Les Groat

and his brother Bob, myself, Les McGarva and a bunch more. They're all gone now. Usually you had a fair amount of booze in you before you left for home.

Around Carrall street it was a sort of tenderloin district, yes. But different than people can imagine today. There'd always be people around talking. People stopped and talked to each other a hell of a lot more. Sure enough there were alcoholics around. But yet it was a friendly place, a place where loggers came to spend their stakes after working for two or three months in camp. They came down to Vancouver - which was Carrall street, 'Smokeytown.' Even if they were on their way home to Strawberry hill or somewhere they spend a bit of time down at the West or the Rainier or somewhere.

Some talk about how tough it was, but it wasn't. About the worst you could say was that there were people there who wanted to get drunk and there were others that wanted to get their money. True enough, if you went down the streets flashing money I suppose there'd be a good chance that you'd get rolled. But with normal care you never had to worry about your safety down there then.

Coming from a small town to drive truck around the city, well, that was *living* as far as I was concerned. Hauling into Vancouver, that was the real life I thought. Hell, what does a young feller want anyway? Just to keep roving and wrestling things up. I hauled into Vancouver for nine years steady, till '41. Then later, off and on, to help Les McGarva. I drove close to a million miles on that job. But I don't knowI liked it. But we were pretty hard-driven too. In truth you were driving or picking up all the time and what spare time you had was spent downtown. Of course, after I got married it didn't work out anymore. My wife got me off that job pretty quick. I started to drive logging trucks for Bill Schnare off Vedder Mountain about that time.

I used to spend so much time down around Carrall and along the waterfront. And yet it's hard for me to come up with a description of what it was really like and how things have changed. It used to be just a lively place where the action was. But today its sleazy, worse than sleazy. In the last twenty-five years those places have deteriorated so much that even the 'no goods' don't hang out there any more. Loggers don't come into town much now. They've got a family and a homes in some

place like Port Hardy. There's no friendliness in any of these places now, even when they take you money.

Vancouver is a new kind of clip joint town. It's not interested in logger's stakes anymore. It's the money of this swarm of businessmen and travellers with expense accounts that attracts the operators in Vancouver today. They spend two, three hundred a night on accommodation. Our stakes were peanuts compared to that.

I don't know if I can make it any clearer, I haven't resolved it yet. Thirty years before it had been the hub of town, it was the hub of our town. Now forty years later that world hardly exists any more. Certainly not down there.

10. In and Out of Camp *Ebe Koeppen*

Ebe Koeppen began working in coastal logging camps in 1940. He was then in his early thirties and had emigrated from Germany a dozen years earlier to become a homesteader in the Peace River region of Alberta. After the homestead failed he and his wife came to B.C. where they spent some three years during the end of the depression, often unemployed. Koeppen was briefly a handmucker in a small mine in the interior and later both he and his wife worked as migratory agricultural labourers in the Fraser Valley. They had just established themselves on a piece of logged-over land in the Columbia Valley before this account begins,

During the next fifteen years Koeppen worked in a series of logging and construction throughout B.C. In addition to his initial experiences in a coastal logging camp Koeppen's full memoir tells of a very different kind of gypo operation run by Oscar and Sidney Soderman. He describes a once fairly typical seasonality which circulated men into and out of camps. Koeppen was one of those campworkers who were not based in town but who migrated back and forth from camps to stump ranch farms. In doing so however, many passed through the employment agencies and hotels of the Vancouver logger's district. They too were an integral component of the people swirling through the city's downtown eastside. This extract in

taken from Stump Ranch Chronicles, 1977. Rolf Knight, pp. 88-94.

All the hiring for these camps was out of Vancouver. Things was opening up very slowly in 1940, still like the depression in some ways. The wages hadn't improved much. There were lots of employment offices down on Cordova street: that wasn't a skid row then you know. Some of the logging outfits had their own employment offices, other employment agencies did the hiring for twenty, thirty little camps. There was one really big one then, Black's Logging Employment, who were really hated by the loggers for all the dirty tricks they played, But if you were new and didn't know you way around Black's was the place to go, because they had contracts with the most companies and had the most jobs.

I went from office to office every day, to logging agencies and to mining employment offices. If you were there when the work came in and you looked all right to them, you got the job. If you weren't there, tough luck. Then one day one of these agents says, 'They want a bull cook and flunky for DeVeney's camp. Thirty dollars a month and room and board'. That was pretty poor wages even in them days. Besides, it was up in Simoon Sound, eighteen dollars fare on the Union (Steamships) boat. But I needed some money bad so I took it.

I went to Simoon Sound on the next boat going up the coast, it took endless time. Eventually we got to this one place, just a float wharf and a couple of houses, and they dumped us off there. Old DeVeney came along with a little gas boat and it took another four hours going up the inlet till we got to his camp. There were hundreds of those small outfits scattered along the coast.

I was in that camp, the first one I'd ever been in. DeVeney's wife did the cooking, There was her and DeVeney and only about thirteen or fourteen men in the woods crew. That was a pretty typical size for those small float camps. If the camps was making up a boom to send to the sawmill there'd be some boom men in the camp too. They were just there to help with the boom and after that was finished they'd get their fare back to Vancouver.

This was a haywire bunch of guys. DeVeney, I found out later, had a reputation along the coast as being one of the

worst outfits going. He wasn't doing too well and his equipment was all haywire and unsafe. He'd hire guys that couldn't get into other camps; most of them, wouldn't have been there if they had a choice. The worst part of it was that some of these little outfits couldn't pay their bills. They'd give you a cheque when you quit and when you come to town and try to cash that cheque it'd be no good. The you had to wait around and hope that the operator would get on his feet enough so that you could cash your cheque. You'd be broke and running up bills in the meantime.....

In them days the camps closed down in summertime; fire season was nearly always in effect by early July. Especially with steam donkeys, there was just too many sparks. They'd maybe have permission to work just early in the morning, but that didn't pay anyway. So the men would just pack up and close her down till early September. The camps would run until Christmas time, that was a pretty standard time to close down for the winter. Some of the big camps operated through the winter but not the small ones. It might be March or even early April till you could get out again to some of these camps. During the year a lot of the small ones would close down for one thing or another. That broke the year up.

The traditional logger went out and made a stake and wanted to be a logger and nothing else. He'd come down to town and blow his stake and go back into the woods. He never gets married and he never has anything to show for all the the years of terribly hard and dangerous work he did. Some of them eventually get involved with a girl and get married. But even then they don't have what you could call a real family life. But that type of logger was dying out even in my time.

It's true, you get accustomed to that camp life after a while. That happened to me too. Let's say you been out in camp for three, four months, completely cut off from a normal social life. No women around. When you come out with a stake in your pocket and hit town something astonishing happens to you. It even happened to me and I'm a comparatively stable individual. You just go off your rocker. Something takes place that's hard to explain. You go on a sort of a binge, sort of getting high with the need to socialize with other people. Its that long spell stuck away in camp. I sent my money home and I didn't much in my pockets when I landed in Vancouver. If I had I might have blown it in just like everybody else. That's

all gone today because not many of the logging camps are that isolated any more. Most of them are like villages, women and families and everything out there, And that's probably a pretty good thing.....

Logging crews were mainly all grown men. Only the whistle punk would be a pretty young kid just starting out. Whistle punk was a comparatively responsible job, signalling the donkey, he had men's lives in his hands. As soon as possible the whistle punk would try to get a job setting choker. Once guys started setting choker they either stayed with that or got on the loading crew. They usually gave you a chance to learn. The boss would say, 'Come on, give it a try'. If you do half-way well you stayed with that job. The fallers were something else again, because they were a closed bunch and I don't know where they got a start. And with high riggers, I can't understand how they caught on to that work. Just kind of tried it out I guess.

Guenther Light came down from the Peace River and managed to bluff his way into falling about that time. He was a neighbour and a close friend of mine up in the Peace River. He came down to Vancouver about a year after we did. Light had the nerve to go out into the logging camps as a faller when he had never in this life pulled one of the seven-foot falling saws. Oh, he cut down trees in the Peace River and did a bit of logging there. Even I did, logging for one of them two-by-four tie mills. But them were just match sticks compared to these huge trees you have here on the coast. It was just entirely different.

He goes down to one of them employment agencies and after a week or so gets a chance at falling. 'Are you experienced,?' they ask him. 'Oh sure, I been hand logging for years' he says. He didn't have a clue of what was required of him, and a faller is part of a team. There were usually three men together at the time, two men on the crosscut saw and a buckler. That was before chain saws came in. The fallers would work from spring boards, six, eight feet of the ground, bouncing around up there. Guenther had never even seen a spring board.

So he came out to camp where he meets these two other guys who he's going to work with. He starts talking to them and right away they know what's up. The next day they go out in the woods and Guenther doesn't know the first thing. But

they were pretty good sports, they tried to show him what to do. He lasted two days. By that time they said, 'This is impossible. I mean this this just wont do !' So he gets sent down to town. Then he went to another outfit and gets sent up to a big camp where somehow he manages to last two weeks before he is fired. From that he was able to pick up enough o falling and working in the woods that he was able to hold down a job in a logging camp. I pulled hat bluff myself on some jobs but I still don't know how he managed to get away with it falling.

Some of these fallers made pretty good money doing contract work. That is a mean, destructive system, in my estimation. It's really based on greed. Contract work drives men far beyond the point of endurance. These guys came in every day boasting about how much they'd cut that day, completely exhausted. A lot of these fallers would only work under contract, they didn't want to work any other way. It burnt a lot of them out, that system. Maybe some days the did twice as much work as anybody would do on a straight wage, which was hard enough anyway. The other jobs in the woods, like setting choker and the yarding crews and everything else was on a wage rate, so much per day. They would high ball too but hardly ever like in this contract work. There were a lots of accidents what happened due to that pressure.

I was working in some small gypo outfit behind Sechelt when I heard Guenther was getting married. Although I needed the money badly I said,'The hell with it' and went down to town to go to his wedding. So you see I was getting that logger's attitude.

11. Last Days on Powell Street *Ryuichi Yoshida*

Ryuichi Yoshida was born in Chiba Prefecture, Japan, in 1887. As a university student he was part of the ferment of modernism which boiled up in that country during the first decade of this century. He emigrated to Canada in 1910 and worked as a faller in the coastal logging camps and as a fisherman on the Skeena river during most of his active life.

During most of the twenties and thirties he was an organizer for the newly formed Japanese Labour Union (later known as the Japanese Camp and Millworkers Union) and a manager of their newspaper, the 'Daily People'.

This extract by-passes Yoshida's descriptions of life in the early fishing and logging industries in B.C., the struggle between progressive and conservative factions with the Japanese-Canadian community and some of the personalities hidden away along Powell street, such as Toshiko Tamura. We enter the account at the end of the 1920s when Yoshida was already married, when the conservative faction had regained ascendancy and when anti-orientalism had crystallized into legislated discrimination. The Labour Union was fighting a rear guard action when Yoshida returned to work as fisherman on the Skeena.

The account later deals with the internment of the Japanese-Canadian population in the spring of 1942, Later Yoshida and his wife moved to Toronto but returned to live and fish on the Skeena river. They are now retired and living in New Denver B.C., near the site of the wartime internment, This extract is drawn from A Man of Our Times, 1976. R.Knight and M. Koizumi, pp. 66-76.

We [the Japanese Labour Union] had the support of some loggers, some fishermen, sawmill workers, even some small merchants, all as individuals. But no teachers cooperated with us. They were usually on the side of the old Japanese Association. You know, a large number of the Japanese here then were bachelors. People who were parents were mainly on the side of the Japanese Association. Teachers were conscious of that tendency and of the opinions of the powerful people. People who are respected by society are usually the people who don't do anything. People who work and did something usually are not admired by society. That's the way it is.

During those years, until I started fishing again, we had great personal difficulties. My wife's heart condition got very bad for a time. I was afraid she would die. There was almost no heart beat sometimes. It lasted for about two years. She took digitalis, which is supposed to be good for a weak heart, but there was no particular treatment, just rest, Today she is fine

and I am much weakened. But in those days I was very healthy. If I had a fever or illness of some kind I would go to work and after working I would get better. I inherited a very precious thing from my parents; I received a very good body. If I hadn't worked at that steel mill I would probably be healthy even today.

Mrs. Yoshida.

For two years I was very sick. I didn't take much in the way of medicine. No medical insurance then. Doctors fees, three dollars a visit. There was rent to pay. So it was a very difficult time. My heart problem started after I had the child, my physical state got weakened. My heart got worse and worse, so when I was twenty-seven, twenty-eight, I could not do anything. My husband looked after everything, he took care of me and took care of the child. Our daughter had Scarlet fever and the other regular children's' diseases but apart from that she was healthy. Since I was sick my husband had to stay home and couldn't go to the Skeena. He did gardening in Vancouver, he cleaned the house and did the cooking. It was very hard for him I think.

Ryuichi Yoshida.

While my wife was sick I did the housework. We had a very tiny room on 4.th Avenue It wasn't so bad. Our daughter was only six or seven but she was very easy to look after. She was quiet and didn't cry. Some children are difficult to look after but our daughter was always smiling and friendly - as a child. Now she's quite nervous but as a child she was easy-going. It was alright. But I wasn't used to looking after a household. In those days men worked with men, outside, and women usually had their hands full with children and the home. That's the way it was.

During that time I did gardening work, for two years. Usually I worked in the construction of new gardens, building up banks and carrying soil and rocks and timbers. I got that kind of work because I was strong. One of my employers was a very rich man with a garden as big as small farm, in South Vancouver. I built that garden from cutting down the trees to putting in the soil and rocks and streams. But I did not like gardening. Handling flowers is not my style. I am more a fisherman or a logger.

I used to be able to make about eighty dollars a months when I was working as a gardener. As the depression got worse

people didn't pay me anymore. Fishing wasn't so badly affected it seems. Prices were low before and they stayed low. But at least you could make a living. So when my wife was a bit better I decided to go fishing again. I hadn't done fishing for a long time so I couldn't get a license at first. There was a quota on licenses for Japanese fishermen. I had been a Canadian citizen for almost twenty years then. I took out Canadian citizen's papers in 1914 because at the time they made the requirements more difficult. But still I could not get a fishing license like white fishermen. Only those Japanese who were veterans from World War 1 had the same rights as white fishermen. I worked as somebody's partner the first year. The next year I managed to get a license from a man who was quitting fishing.

There were sometimes fights between Japanese and white fishermen on the fishing grounds. I did not hear too much about such conflicts in the Skeena area but in No.1 district there were more troubles. Not in the Steveston area itself, but up the coast a bit, Japanese fishermen went to local places where no Japanese lived and the white fishermen there tried to exclude them from fishing. There were a few places like that.

Gas boats had already started to come in at the Skeena by 1930. White fishermen started to come in after the Japanese fishermen lost their licenses and they used engine fishing boats. The canneries had to change over to boats with gas engines. Most of the boats fishing on the Skeena still belonged to the canneries.

Those early gas boats were different from what you have today. In fact, I didn't like them too much; they were dangerous. You turned the engine by hand to start it and sometimes when you turned the engine it fired back. Fishermen often got their hands broken. Easthope engines and Palmer engines; Palmer engines came from the United States. The fishing gear was still about the same. No power drums, radios or that sort of thing. With those gas boats there was only one man to a boat. Also the numbers of fish weren't what they were before; 1,700 to 2,000 salmon was a pretty good season's catch. The canneries got bigger and our catch got smaller. Gradually fishing days dropped from six days a week to five days and then four days during the season. Still, I was a good fisherman and I did quite well.

Once I started fishing I became active in the Skeena Fishermen's Association again. I continued my visits to various fishing camps giving talks about the principles of the labour movement and the (Japanese) Labour Union. I was supposed to help with the *Daily People* when I was in town during the winter. I used to leave for the Skeena in the end of March to do net work for the canneries. I repaired nets, tied ropes and floats to the nets and so forth for wages. Then I fished on the Skeena all during the summer. I came down to town at the end of September. So my winter was not too long.....

My daughter was going to school then. She went through school without any trouble. We didn't have any trouble with her, she was very easy to raise. We didn't demand any special thing of her. She went to Japanese language school for about two years but that was all. She could understand and speak Japanese quite well but she couldn't read or write it much. She enjoyed playing more than study. We let her have her way.....

It is impossible to discard Japanese habits for our generation. But I did not think that the generation born here should not be indoctrinated with Japanese culture. It's not necessarily bad that the Nisei (Canadian born) drop Japanese customs when they live in Canada. So, in raising my daughter I did not insist that she adopt Japanese habits. That's difficult, you can't do much about that anyway. I have warm feelings about Japanese ways but I don't think that they are better than any other. They might be good to keep but if we have to discard them, it's alright for the next generation. Those generations born here are very different from us. We Issei (first generation immigrants) were basically Japanese. But the first generation born here are more than eighty percent Canadian in their outlook and life.

Well sure, discrimination affected our personal lives. It is difficult to pick out all the particular incidents and ways we were discriminated against. I always felt that in my personal life, it was a constant thing. Sometimes small things. Like a restaurant called the White Lunch. They didn't allow orientals to work or eat there for many years. Sure I was angry. Many Japanese people felt they couldn't do anything about it. Whenever I would say we should do this or that to fight racism people would say, 'No. I'm not going to stay here very long'.

That was always their excuse. But look, almost all who said the stayed in Canada the rest of their life and died here, leaving their children behind. I felt that even if I didn't stay in Canada forever we should still try to fight the discrimination against us. I did the best I could in trying to build up the the strength of the Labour Union.

I was still on the Skeena fishing when the war started with Germany in 1939. I stayed in Vancouver that winter. At that time the Vancouver Japanese were very much influenced by the Showa (period) militarism stemming from Japan. Only a small minority of Issei were not. Various troubles and factions divided the Issei. The Nisei were not much involved in these troubles. We still continued to publish the *Daily People* but we had hardly a thousand readers. Most people were hostile towards the Labour Union and our supporters. If I was not a fisherman I could not have made a living. Nobody would have hired me. People like me, who were known, especially came across much hostility.

The canneries became very busy in producing canned fish and energizers for military use. The cannery I worked for, B.C. Packers, had a cod liver oil plant at Lake Bay on Vancouver Island. After the fishing season in 1940 I got a job at that plant. There was a whole camp of Japanese working there. Later I had a job on a boat, a packer. That boat collected cod and dogfish and delivered them to Lake Bay to be made into cod liver oil and fertilizer. The Company was trying to increase production rapidly; that was why I was able to get a job on a packer. Before that there were no such jobs available.

I was on the Skeena in 1941 but it was a bad fishing year and I didn't even make the advance money. So I went straight from the Skeena to work on that packer again. I was working on that boat when the war broke out with Japan. The captain yelled for me to come up to the bridge to hear what the radio said. It was December 8, 1941, when we heard about it.

The next day we got into Nanaimo, where the captain was told that any boat with Japanese on it had to come into Vancouver. At Vancouver a Navy boat was waiting in the harbour. They took me off for investigation. They asked me when I entered Canada, what I had been doing up till that time. They asked me about my present job, about my family, if I knew anything about the war, what I thought about it. I told them I had been in Canada over thirty years. I was a

naturalized citizen for over twenty-five years and I had never been back to Japan. I said that war was between countries, that I had nothing to do with that. I had no idea about it. After that I was set free.

When I came home the Japanese community was in great confusion. All Japanese fishing boats were towed to an island near New Westminster, where they were tied up and later sold. There was a curfew on Japanese; we could not be out at night after eight. We stayed at home. People who looked suspicious had been arrested. People were afraid of another riot against the Japanese.

What I was afraid of was a riot like in 1907, but worse, because anti-Japanese feeling was much higher than ever before. I thought that if we did anything to provoke trouble something really horrible would happen. We could all get massacred, women and children too. But fortunately nothing violent happened before we moved out of Vancouver.

All the Japanese associations and groups were dissolved as soon as the war started - the fishermen's unions, the Labour Union, the Japanese Association, and so on. All the Japanese language newspapers were banned from publishing, only the *New Canadian* was excepted. I wrote an article in the *New Canadian* saying that people should stay calm and cooperate with the regulations. There were many rumors that the Japanese will have to do this or do that. Things did not remain calm. The Issei were very quiet but some Nisei were furious, protesting that it was unfair to treat them that way when they were born here. Different conflicts began to break out in the Japanese communityNothing was clear at first.

Then the government decided to collect all Japanese from the countryside together at Hastings Park. People in Vancouver were allowed to wait in their homes. In March [1942] the government issued the announcement that the Japanese had to move east, away from the coast. Younger Nisei men could go to the east to work. All other men and those Nisei who didn't want to leave their families were to go to road camps and their families to relocation camps. Soon after, the people at Hastings Park were sent away to camps. The R.C.M.P. went around to look for men eligible to work on road camps.

Ourselves, we stored our belongings and moved into a hotel on Powell street. We were allowed to take only 150 pounds of luggage with us to camp. Clothing, bedding, cooking utensils

and some food. One man we knew had a concrete warehouse in Vancouver. He said that our belongings would be safe there. I and about ten other families stored our things on the second floor of that building. Later, the watchman of the building sold or destroyed most of those things.

The situation was very complicated and in a state of disorder, with things happening all the time. I really didn't have time to feel very much. We didn't own anything, like a house or a boat or a shop. So we didn't have that to worry about. I thought that the only thing was to leave Vancouver as soon as possible. That as soon as we were away from the cities we would be safe.

I was not that worried but at the last moment Morii [a local gangster and rightwing community leader] denounced me to the police as a leader of the trouble-makers. Not many years later he was charged himself for bribing the police. Although that was never proved in court, with the investigation he finally lost all his power and was not heard from again. An R.C.M.P. officer came to the office where I used to spend the days. I suddenly thought something bad was going to happen to me and I went into hiding. Since there were not so many places I could go I soon saw that I could not hide long. So I turned myself in. The police didn't question me or anything. They just put me in a cell at Hastings Park. It was quite a comfortable jail because the warden was an old drinking mate of mine and he used to sneak in some liquor for me. My wife did not have a chance to visit me because she was just then being sent to Kaslo camp herself. About a week later they sent me to a road camp.

We left Vancouver at the end of May. All Japanese were gone by the beginning of November.

12. On the Docks *Alex Will*

Alex Will was born in Scotland but, 'since 1913 when we came to this country, we lived within a mile of the waterfront, so I more or less gravitated there at an early age.' He began working on the Vancouver docks in 1923, first as a spare,

loading general cargo, and then for forty years as a grain handler. Here he relates something of working conditions during a period when union organization had been crushed and of social relations on the job. His account tells of the compromises and humiliations as well as of friendships. It recalls the triumph of making a living under such conditions and also alludes to the tenacity which ultimately led to unionization and made the docks a fit place to work. The extract here is drawn from passages in Man Along the Shore (pp 43, 62-66, 96, 82, 75, 112) and deals with the period from the late 1920s to the early 1940s.

Alex Will retired from the Vancouver docks in 1970; he died in 1974.

A number of times I got a job at Terminal Dock, which we called the Terrible Dock in those days and quite rightly so because it was a lot different than it is today. All the planking was a very rough nature, and walking over that, even without a hand truck, was quite a feat.

I remember one job in particular that I got down there. There was a ship called the *Arizona Maru* and it was at the very far end of Terminal Dock. A part of the cargo that was going on that ship was 750 tons of salted herring, in 200-pound cases. And this had to be trucked by hand on hand trucks from where you entered Terminal Dock on the west end right down to the very far end where the *Arizona Maru* was. That was one of the grimmest jobs that I ever had in my life. It was in winter time and there was sleet coming down and there was about half an inch of slush on the dock, which didn't help matters. There was a continual parade of dock men going back and forward. And all you could see was one man stopping his truck to help another man load on the case of herring that had fallen off his truck. In my case it was particularly hard, being a short person, trying to balance this great weight on the truck. I can remember many times the muscles in my mouth kind of twitching, trying to balance the load and push through the snow. It was really a grim situation . . .

Will recounts something of the social life revolving around the longshore 'hiring hall' on Dunlevy and Alexander during the early 1930s. These dispatch offices were then effectively

run by agents of the stevedoring companies who invoked a host of niggling restrictions. The 'Monty' mentioned here was a minor dispatch functionary and the 'law' was a rule that longshoremen awaiting a possible job were not supposed to leave the basement of the hall. Siderunners were the foremen of longshore gangs.

. . . The stupid thing about this was that we were not allowed out to shoot a game of pool or watch them shoot pool. We used to disobey this law. But we would be sitting, watching some guy about to make a critical shot, and again the cold, heavy hand of Monty would send us scurrying back like a kid who has been caught stealing cookies. And like every grim situation, it gets a little comical. We used to have look-outs posted for Monty. When he would come down the stairs there would a great scurrying back to our hole. Just absolutely unreal.

We spent a great deal of time outside, where the Empire Stevedoring building is now. It was just an empty lot then. Many hours in the summer were spent playing horseshoes between the dispatches. And it got so that when a situation is grim like that, it is a kind of every man for himself basis. They would get to know that a dispatch was going on and the guys would still be playing horseshoes and nobody would tell them because the less men that were there, the better the chances of getting picked. Many a horseshoe game was broken up with a lot of swearing and cursing about missing the possibility of making a two-hour job out at the Pool Elevator or over at the North Shore.

The wheat men for many years, up until 1931, were picked at the discretion of the siderunners and naturally this led to all kinds of abuses . . . I remember many times lining up there. Monty would come down. He had a little cubby hole of an office and he would be the dispatcher in the sense that he took down the names and the ship and the dock where you were going, but only after the men had been picked by the siderunner with the number of brass chips that he required that day. For example, if he had a twelve man pick - it could be eight or twenty-four or sixty - he would take the twelve chips from Monty's little office and then he would make the rounds. He would very often trickle these chips like some men have the habit of juggling silver in their pockets. This particular

siderunner had the habit of clinking these chips up and down in his hands and swinging on one foot and looking as important as he could and making every second of his importance last. He would very often slowly reach to what a man thought was going to be a chip. The man would put his hand out to receive this chip, but the siderunner would slip it right over his shoulder to the man behind. Now this man that he by-passed was a guy that the siderunner didn't like, or (he'd by-pass him) for other reasons. Who knows what goes on in the minds of someone who holds the great power to say whether you are going to eat or not?

I can also remember a siderunner for the V&V Stevedoring Company. He had just been made a siderunner; a very fair-minded man, a real good guy. Bill Cross was his name. The V&V wanted twenty-four men for a job. He got twenty-four chips from Monty and he looked very uncomfortable with this handful of chips. He looked around, here and there, with a very agitated expression. He thought that he would solve this problem by throwing his hand up and letting the chips fall where they may. Well, you have seen or heard of diving for coins in those native countries. This is what the mad scramble looked like to get those chips. I said, 'Boys, for Christ sake, let's stop. Let's try to retain a little bit of human dignity here. This is really degrading. Let's stop.' And with that, everyone stopped and threw their chips back on the floor. Bill Cross appealed to me, practically with tears in his eyes, and he asked me what he could do now. I told him that, whatever he did, not to try to solve the problem that way, because we were in a bad situation and not to make it worse. He picked the chips up and then he gave them to the first twenty-four men that he could reach.

Eventually I got to be pretty sure of going out. Which was very good. Being of a rebel mind, which I was then, I was never obligated to the boss for anything, but I did work like hell. So did everyone else, but I worked so hard it was unbelievable. But I was able to work myself up without the assistance of bribery or the boss. That sounds kind of feeble, "working myself up"; what I mean is getting myself into the position of being more or less sure of being picked . . .

We used to get the occasional job and it would be at one of the places that was a real dread. The Columbia Elevator: they had no dryers in those days and we would be sitting in the

grain, shovelling, and very often till ten or eleven o'clock at night from early morning. Your knees would be real cold because you could hear, coming down the spouts, not only the sound of grain but the sound of ice clicking against the sides of the spout and very often you would raise your knee a bit and remove a chunk of ice. The boys had all sorts of burlap sacking wrapped around their bodies and there would be the click, click, click of shovels going. You didn't stop for very long. The only stop you got was to change hands from the left side to the right side. The siderunner was sitting in there. One of the things that they had would be a ship with two sides working in one hatch. Naturally the two siderunners were competing, and no matter how hard you worked one side was bound to get a bit of a list on it; then your siderunner or the other siderunner would go into a panic. 'Hey, shovel harder, boys, the ship is getting a list.' And this was really something else. There was no sign of any let-up . . .

I guess that you have heard about unsafe conditions on the waterfront. I can remember many times, for example, going down to Lapointe. The bulk of the grain was handled at Lapointe at that time. Shortly after that time the Pool Elevator was built and then the Midland Pacific. When a ship is in ballast it is quite a high thing. And there would be a ladder, not a gang plank but a ladder, from the dock to the ship, and we had to go up this ladder to get aboard the ship. No safety net. Go up this latter with a shovel, and many times the opening in the handle of the shovel would not be sufficient to put your hand through it and grab it properly, so you would have to manipulate the shovel as best you could along with your lunch can or your lunch bag and it took a bit of doing to get up the ladder and over the rail. I can remember one of the trimmers, Charlie Chatters. A wonderful old guy. He had been trimming for many years. But he had a hook because his hand had been amputated. He had this hook and I can remember him with his lunch can and the hook and the shovel, trying to manipulate the ladder. It was quite a thing and it is a wonder that there weren't more accidents than there were . . .

Talking about the North Shore, we always went over by ferry. Very few men had cars in those days, and even if they did have there was no way of getting over except by ferry. When you did get over to the North Shore it was a good mile walk from the foot of Lonsdale to the Midland Pacific, a good mile. So you

can imagine how many times we have arrived at the Midland, soaking wet and then having to go down in the dusty wheat and what it felt like finishing at night. Maybe nine or ten o'clock and coming up and walking back to the ferry and it would still be pouring. Getting on the ferry and getting home. Trying to get all this uniform you had on, your coveralls and that, in condition to get back to the Hall the next morning. But what I have to say about getting over to the North Shore is that it cost a nickle to get through the turnstiles. I can remember many a time, being small, getting a piggy-back on top of a guy's shoulders and both of us going through the turnstile for one nickle. There used to be a lot of real comical episodes that helped take away the gloom . . .

I remember Paddy Fitzpatrick very well. Now this guy had a real odd sense of humour. We were eventually able to get up to the top floor where the dispatch was at 45 Dunlevy Avenue. There were a lot of card games going on then and a lot of rummy was being played for a cent a point. And one of the regular players was Bobby Ray. A wonderful guy but he didn't have too much control over his temper, and one of the things that this Fitzpatrick would do would be to get behind Bobby Ray and when Bobby's hand was bad Fitzpatrick would tell him that he was not having much luck and so forth and he would keep it up. One time Bobby turned and said, 'You have got the whole god damned hall and you have to stand right behind me. Bigger off! Get the hell out of here!' Fitzpatrick was a guy who could really bug you . . .

One of the things that I did, to try and turn the tables on this Fitzpatrick - there was a coffee shop run by a Japanese couple just up at the corner where Charlie Moore (a blacklisted ex-longshoreman) used to have his coffee shop and where we used to go to get the streetcar. Fitzpatrick and a number of others went up there to get coffee, so I arranged a fake dispatch slip. We had a lookout to tell us when Fitzpatrick and his gang were coming back from the coffee shop up on Powell Street, and we arranged that when they got down around Alexander Street, six or eight of us would come out and one guy would have the fake dispatch slip and this would indicate to Fitzpatrick, who was under the gun, that he had missed a dispatch. I got carried away with the situation and I grabbed a lunch can, which I never carried. I always used a paper sack. We walked up there and brought tears to Fitzpatrick's eyes. Me

with a lunch can, you know. When you never see a guy packing a lunch can and then all of a sudden he is packing one. That was enough. That joke didn't go anywhere at all . . .

There were lots of funny things. I can remember one time that they brought in new shovels. They were coal shovels and they were so heavy that just an empty shovel was a real effort. We worked on a Griffith ship one night until nine o'clock and there were twenty-four of us. They had these shovels and we were just about dead. It was a foggy night and I was at the head of the twenty-four men coming off the ship because I had a plan. When we got down to Lapointe Pier, where you turn right at the corner - SPLASH - there were twenty-four splashes made by the coal shovels, and I guess that they are still down there. That ended the episode of the coal shovels. It was stupid from their point of view because the heavier they were - you know, if you get a nice light shovel there is nothing to it. We never heard anything about it but we got much better shovels than the ones we had.

The struggle to resurrect true union organization on the Vancouver docks before and after the failure of the bitter 1935 strike often involved a necessarily quiet heroism. To accomplish that entailed hundreds of rank and file incidents like the following.

I can remember one time in particular when we were thinking of organizing because the union we had then was a company union. We had no conditions whatever. We were trying to organize and we had what we called block committees, and I was trying to get Wally Ross, a great friend of mine who started just a year or two after I did, into this block meeting to try and get a slate of progressive candidates to topple this company union. But Wally was naturally hesitant because it was quite a thing if you were suspected of trying to get a stronger union. Any signs of what they called radicalism (meant) instant dismissal. You had no appeal . . . A fellow by the name of Cook, who was the source of so much trouble, was the employer's representative. He had his own gangs and he was more or less a dictator sort of guy. He was there in the capacity of Labour Relations, which was a hell of a poor name for a hell of a poor guy for the job. He asked Wally and I to come in and have coffee. He was an outgoing sort of a guy.

You know what I mean. We went in and had coffee with him and he told us about the undercurrent of unionization that was going on, not knowing that he was talking to one of the real bad actors on his right, where I was sitting. He told us that he had smashed lots of unions and that he would smash this one before it even got started. Since he was buying the coffee and since he also had the power of life and death over us, we had to give a sickly smile and I for one was just hoping that he didn't know what I was thinking about.

We had to watch all these things, and like I was saying, I was trying to get Wally to join this group, but he was a little hesitant until one time on the North Shore, where we were sacking. Wally and I always worked together. I was the scooper and Wally was the bag holder and we would talk almost as though we were in a cell. The ship was not too far away from sailing and Charlie Horn was getting a little pressure, but he didn't know how to handle his gang. Charlie Horn, foreman for the Empire and a real high rigging guy who just lacked a whip, looked down from the coaming, and this is what he said. "Come on you bastards," and he started to give it to us. Needless to say, Wally was at the meeting the next night. I remember saying through the side of my mouth when Horn had stopped yelling, "You see what I mean, Wally, you just have to join us," and Wally said, "Yes, I see what you mean."

In 1949 Alex Will and others like him were still in their middle age. He might have been one of the longshoreman riding on the No. 20. It was later that he remembered the course of mechanization on the Vancouver docks.

We would put about 8,000 tons of grain on the average freighter. About 300,000 bushels on a Liberty Ship. As they got better ships and trimming machines, they were able to do away with a lot of the men because the sacking was no longer a big thing; except once in a while they might sack the odd ship fore and aft, but there were no big sacking jobs as we used to know them . . . I remember one ship, the *Mim* at Ballentyne pier (in the 1930s), there were 120 men on the ship sacking. And that was just a 9,000-ton ship. I worked with Jack Pike on another ship many years later and it was 130,000 tons. It came into the Pool Elevator and it was so big that it looked

as though it was coming in sideways. And there were six men (longshoring) on that ship.

13. About the Shipyards *Bill White*

Bill White (no relation to Frank White) was born in Ontario in 1905. After a stint of casual labour on Saskatchewan farms in the late 1920s he joined the R.C.M.P. and shipped aboard the St. Roch to do a tour of duty in the high Arctic. He mustered out of the force and returned to Vancouver at the end of the 1930s to pursue a variety of jobs.

White began working in the North Vancouver shipyards in early 1941, at a time when they were being transformed from local industries into the major war industry of the west coast. The small craft unions within the yards were gradually refashioned into the Marine Workers and Boilermakers Union, which became the single largest industrial union in the Vancouver area during those years. It was riven by various factions, and a substantial portion of the recently incorporated shipyard workers were probably not particularly union-conscious.

White rose to become president of that union between 1944 and 1955 - a very long dozen years. He was often the centre of controversy, both internal and external to the union. The account here deals mainly with the conditions of work in the Burrard Shipyards during their expansion. It is extracted from Raining Red-Hot Rivets, an as yet unpublished autobiography by Bill and Howard White (Harbour Publishing).

In Vancouver (at the end of 1940) there was only three yards working in steel: Burrard Drydock and North Van Ship Repairs in North Vancouver, and B.C. Marine down by the north foot of Victoria Drive, and none of these was ready to build 10,000-ton freighters. B.C. Marine never did get into the big stuff, but two more yards got started up later: South Burrard, owned by the same family as North Burrard, the Wallaces, and West Coast Shipbuilders, which was started

down on False Creek by a tough old Scotsman named W.P. McLaren. North Van, which later became Pacific Drydock and still later a part of Burrard, was owned by the Burdicks.

It was a real good time to be in the shipyard business, especially if you had good connections with the Liberal Party. The government paid you all the costs of getting set up and they gave you all the work you could handle at a guaranteed profit. All the war-work as far as I know was basically cost plus 10 percent, but the smart ones made a lot more than 10 percent.

It was the spring of '41 I started to work at North Van. They weren't in high gear yet by any means. They had a contract they were working on for several Corvettes, and they were just getting underway on that. I remember the first one, when they went to launch; it hung up on the ways and they had to push the damn thing into the water with jacks.

I think there was one other burner besides myself on the second shift and we got used mainly on specialty work. Welding and burning hadn't come in at this time the way they did later on. It was there, but the old shipbuilding techniques were still being used much the way they'd been since the nineteenth century - steel was cut mostly by sheering and joined mostly by riveting. I guess in the two years that followed there was more progress in shipbuilding than in the fifty years before that.

Blowing rivets was one of the big burning jobs. Every rivet was inspected and any one that didn't look good they'd chalk it to be done over. I blowed thousands and thousands of rivets. There was quite a knack to it. What I done, I'd use quite a big tip on the torch because it was fast, you know. Lots of pressure. I'd get the rivet pretty damn hot before I give her any air, I'd put a quick "X" on it, just in maybe a quarter of an inch, then I'd put that torch in the centre, open her up, and soon as she started to blow I'd drag the tip back, just give it to her, whoof! She'd just blow right out - WHOOF!

Another pretty tricky job was burning the stay-bolts out of boilers. The stay-bolts are screwed into the boiler plate and you burn them out, take all the threads out, but don't touch the threads in the parent metal. It's pretty doggone tricky. You take a thread - comes right up to a knife edge - and you gotta singe that outta there, the one without touching the other. I got a little too good at it for my own good because every time

they got some really rotten old boiler in the shop they'd come hunting for me . . .

Another time they wanted me to cut a hole in a bulkhead for a watertight door. I was very busy and a gang of fitters were already standing around waiting for me to finish the job I was on before I started the door. I hardly had my torch turned off before they yanked my outfit away to the bulkhead where this door cut was chalked out.

'Did anybody check to see if it's clear on the other side?' I said. Somebody said, 'Oh yeah, don't worry,' so I started the cut. I cut across the top and down the side and was cutting across the bottom next to the floor when I started to smell toast. This wasn't too unusual because quite often you'd see the riveting gang toast their sandwiches over a coke pot. It kept getting stronger though, and finally I shut off my torch and went around to the other side of the bulkhead to take a look. There was a lunchbucket sitting there on the floor tight against the bulkhead and I'd cut right through it. A caulker was working not too far off so I asked him, 'Hey, do you know whose gutbucket this is here?' He took one look and come walking over to pick it up. It fell in two pieces and his sandwiches all burst into flames. 'It was my goddam lunchbucket,' he growled and flung it over the side of the ship. 'How was I to know?' I said. 'Most guys prefer a hot lunch.'

No matter what happens, the bosses try to turn it to their own advantage. When the economy fell on its ass in '29 they said, well, the solution is for workers to tighten their belts, work hard, and give business everything it likes so it can get back on its feet and save the country. Later on the historians decided that what had caused the Great Crash in the first place was business having *too* free a hand and not being controlled enough. But that didn't make no difference; when the war came along they said, well, the solution here is for workers to work extra hard, peg wages down, and give business a free hand so it can produce a lot of war goods and save the goddam country. And today that's what they're saying again, if you look at it. Telling us to lower our expectations and big businessmen to raise theirs. In a boom economy or a bust economy their prescription is always the same: take less for yourself and give us more! And the bloody working stiff, he gets took in every time by the same damn line. You talk about those who forget their history having to repeat it, now!

One of the big hoaxes they had going during the war was the Dollar-A-Year Men - these fellas, big shots, that went to work for the government for a dollar a year to help save the country. They didn't quit their regular jobs, mind you. They did them both at the same time so you had a real hand-in-glove thing going on between the war administration and big business. A lot of guys in the course of serving the country managed to set themselves up pretty good, like H.R. MacMillan. He lent himself to the government for a dollar a year and by the end of the war MacMillan Export Co. had British Columbia's share of the world export market in wood products sewed up and locked in a box. And there were hundreds of others, waving the flag and filling their boots for all they were worth.

It took them a while to realize what they had a hold of I think. They started off the war kind of cautious, doing things just the regular way. Like when I first went into yards, there was only two burners doing the work of about six. That's your normal situation you see, giving the employee always more work than he can handle so the boss knows he's getting good stretch on his labour dollar. Christ, at first we didn't even have helpers. These big dollies on small iron wheels with all the tanks and hoses and torches and tools, you'd be dragging them all over the yard by yourself, pulling your guts out trying to plough through this goddam loose gravel they'd put down.

Well, somebody put their thinking cap on somewhere along the way and decided that the wartime situation with its cost plus called for a different method of doing business, and there should be six guys doing the work of two. Jesus, before we knew it that place was jammed with bodies. Over 7,000 at the peak, in a yard half the size of a city block. Just like an anthill

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The deal was, y'see, the shipyard got 10 percent on every dollar that was spent, so the more expenditures and waste there was the richer they got. The more cost the more plus. Now what made me so damn mad was that while these guys was plundering the country from inside, us working stiffs was frozen on the job, our wages was pegged and we was being forced to work under conditions that was plain inhuman.

You picture it now. You've got a ship going up. You've got your riveting gangs. Firepots, coke firepots like a forge, you've got all these all over inside the hull. And the heater is there

with his rivets in a line, turning them over the heat, like roasting chestnuts, moving the line along, and when he's got one just right, he takes it in his tongs and - phtt - he flings it up to where they're riveting and the passer catches it - often the passer was a woman. This red-hot rivet comes just like a bullet and she's to catch it in this cup, like a funnel with a handle, then quick pick it out and pop it into its hole with tongs. Then the bucker-up gets his dolly on it, the riveter gets his airgun and batters the rivet down, and the caulker comes along with another airgun and hammers the hell out of the plate to work the metal up around the rivet and cinch her tight. Well, just picture all this - you can't see the guy next to you because of the smoke from the goddam pots, there's red-hot rivets raining through the air on all sides of you, there's three-ton plates swinging around overhead, it's so goddam noisy from the guns you couldn't hear a warning even if the guy was shouting it in your goddam ear, you've got all these people swarming around, most of whom don't know the sharp end from the blunt end. You can't imaging the disorganization there was. I don't know how they got anything done at all.

There's no safety precautions, nobody's wearing a hardhat, and the life of a working stiff just isn't worth stopping to think about. I remember an incident there; they had a fella welding at an outfitting dock. They launched each hull as soon as she'd float and finished working on her tied up at an outfitting dock. They had this fella down over the side on swing staging, like a window washer, but the hull sheered in and the staging hung straight so he was dangling out about six feet from the job.

One of the foremen - a real company stooge he was, too - decided to pull the staging against the hull with a rope through one of the portholes, but instead of going up and getting a good piece of rope he took a broken-off end that was lying there. It was a big heavy piece of manilla rope that had been broken off at one end, and the other end had been seized with cord to keep it from unravelling. It wasn't long enough, so what this foreman did was he split it, unwound a strand out of it and tied that to the staging, and led the other two strands in the porthole and around a stanchion. This doubled the length, but all that was holding the rope together in the middle was this cord seizing.

The welder hardly got started before the damn thing parted and the staging swung out. He was leaning forward, all loaded

up with his gear, and he just dropped into the chuck. Lawrence Shorter was the diver that brought him up. He said you could see where his two feet hit the mud and he took one step and that was all. Lawrence found him resting on about a 45-degree angle with his heels on the bottom, and a crab sitting on his face, starting in to work on him.

I was there just after it happened and here this foreman was trying to get rid of the staging and rope, but I wouldn't let him. I grabbed it and when the cops came I demanded they impound it. I could see what the hell happened right away. This damned old piece of unravelled rope had come apart just where you'd expect and this foreman was actually guilty of criminal negligence. But nothing came of it. The coroner just ruled it death by misadventure, no blame attached.

This was par for the course, you see. A working stiff's life hung by a string often as not because that's all the value was put on it. Fellas would drop into holds, plates fell on them, they'd get burnt up or asphyxiated working in some confined space. There were lots and lots of things that happened. And people took this as normal. It didn't occur to them it was all unnecessary. I just got so goddamed mad, I was always kicking. But, you see, you were completely frustrated. You couldn't get any support . . . The fellas themselves weren't union-conscious; they'd put you up to beef about some deal but then when the heat come on they'd wilt. Then you got shit. The foreman got it in for you. He'd ride you to beat hell, give you all the dirty rotten jobs. Like one time he put me 'in purgatory', way off by myself so I wouldn't have contact with the other guys.

It maybe don't make sense to say it, but in spite of all the real things a guy had to worry about, like doing absolutely miserable work or getting killed, the thing that got a guy most was just the attitude of the bosses. There was a thing in those days, like a master and slave. The minute some gutless sadsack got appointed strawboss he suddenly changed into an iron-fisted tyrant with power of life and death over his former workmates. There was a scornful arrogance coming down from the upper management and it was just there for him to put on like a fright mask. The tone of voice they used to give orders was like the voice cops use on you when you're in jail; there's a rasp to it that tells you you're nothing, you're shit on

their boots . . . I was so frustrated, I was just desperate for
some way to get back at these bastards.

14. In the Plate Shop *Jean Trebett*

Jean Trebett grew up on a small dairy farm on the edge of Sumas Prairie, in the centre of the Fraser Valley. She says, 'I guess we grew up during the depression, but we never really noticed it as kids living on a farm. It was something we heard about happening somewhere else in Canada, or in Vancouver.'

Here she tells something of her first job in the Canadian Fish Co. cannery. But the account is mainly about two years (1943 and 1944) spent working in the huge South Burrard shipyards off Powell Street. She was one of thousands of women workers who poured into such industries, adjusted to them quickly and well, and then found themselves laid off. Her reminiscence catches the vitality of youth and the resilience of ordinary working men and women. It also suggests the marginal relationship of many new industrial workers to the union movement.

After the shipyards, Trebett did a stint of poorly paid factory work around Vancouver and then switched to cooking in logging camps for the next twenty years. She currently works as a 'homemaker' in a government program which allows incapacitated and elderly people to remain in their own homes.

I could hardly wait to get away from home. My brother was the first of us five children to leave; he joined the U.S. Navy. My older sister was away married by then, too. I guess I was the third one to go. I didn't want to hang around no dreary old farm and get married. So I moved right into Vancouver.

It wasn't hard to get jobs then. The war was on and I was, I guess, eighteen then. First I worked in a cannery at the foot of Gore Avenue, the Canadian Fishing Company. I took to it like a duck to water. I don't know, but for some reason I was always attracted to big industry. There was always a heavy season for

sockeye salmon. We'd work ten-, twelve-hour shifts when the big run came in. They did everything at that cannery, from canning salmon to making those little cod liver oil capsules. They did smoking and we handled tuna. In the winter, during the herring season, we worked all night canning those oval tins of food herring that were sent abroad.

The women worked on filleting and on scaling fish. We called it 'slimeing' them. We'd be standing in rows along these long production lines. The men did all the other jobs. The fish had already been butchered by a machine they called 'the Iron Chink,' from the days when the fish butchers were all Chinese men. Chinese women working there? No, there weren't any there then. Maybe they did later. But there were a lot of Chinese bachelors from the old country. Many of them had worked there for years. At Steveston there were some Indian women working in the cannery but not at Canadian Fish. It was mainly white labour, mainly all young women. There were a few older women from Scotland who were sort of foreladies. Anyway, that was my first job off the farm. It was the end of 1941.

I hate to tell you the wage - forty cents an hour. Still depression wages, almost. That wasn't an organized plant then, no way. B.C. Packers were paying five and then ten cents more per hour. Well, we thought we should get the same wage. We said, 'We must have that.' So one day we just walked off the job and went to our lunch room. The men didn't join that. They were getting the proper wages so maybe they were satisfied. It wasn't like a strike really, but the company officials came down and talked to us. We got a bit of a raise, but there was no union while I worked there.

I wasn't used to this factory scene in the cannery, but wasn't intimidated by it at all. None of us were. We were always joking and you'd be talking to whoever was working beside you. You'd make good friendships. I always had a close relationship with my co-workers. I was living in a rooming house on Georgia Street. It was clean, a nice place, and it was all my own. I could be on my own. I used to eat in a cafe down on Gore just off the docks. They had a fabulous cook and I'd get a meal for a quarter or so. I thought that was great.

Sometimes when we were working nights there wouldn't be enough fish to last out the shift so we were let go. In the middle of the night we'd head up to Hastings Street on our way

home, straggling along in twos and threes, maybe at four o'clock in the morning. We changed from our smocks and work clothes and had our winter coats on, but that herring smell is really strong and that would be on us. Sometimes the police cruisers would pull alongside and start questioning us about what we were doing. But that herring smell was obvious. So I don't know what they were after. We didn't think too much of the police.

I worked at the Canadian Fish cannery for about a year. Then one day my older sister came to town and said that we should go get jobs in the war plants. I said, 'Well, sure, they pay better money, let's go.' And I quit the cannery. She got a jog in Boeing's out on Sea Island and I went into the South Burrard shipyards.

I didn't know anybody at the shipyards, but I knew that the wages were about double what we got in the cannery. Men and women got a dollar an hour on regular jobs, helpers got less. I also knew that if you were under twenty-one you got a slightly lower rate. At the time you didn't have to produce proof of age and all those papers and stuff. So I put myself down as twenty-two; I thought twenty-one might look a bit fishy. There were no questions. I was nineteen going on twenty the end of February 1943; close enough anyway.

South Burrard was at the foot of McLean Drive, right beside Burns. It was a new yard that had been set up since 1940. There were all kinds of young women and young boys. They hired a lot of sixteen-year-old boys and they got a lesser rate. Quite a number of thirtyish men worked there, guys that hadn't been called up yet or had a deferment. At the peak I'd guess there were up to two thousand people per shift working in South Burrard, maybe not quite so many on the graveyard shift. There were three shifts - day shift, swing shift and graveyard shift - and we'd change shift every two weeks.

My first job at South Burrard, they set me going under the staging along the sides of the hulls they were building to pick up bolts dropped by people working above. There'd be all these bolters fitting on the plates and sometimes they'd drop the bolts. I'd be going around with this bucket to gather them up. Oh my, that was a come-down. 'What a menial job,' I thought. Here I was coming into war production and they had me creeping under the hulls with this bucket. So after a few days I saw this foreman walking around the dock and I says to

him, 'Say, what'd I have to do to get a job in that shop?' and I pointed to the first shop I saw. 'I really hate this job. I don't like it at all.' He says, 'You don't, eh? Well, come along with me then.' And he marched into the plate shop, with me following him, and put me to work as a fitter's helper. Just like that.

The plate shop was where they prepared the steel for the hulls, and the angle bars and channel bars for the superstructure and stuff. I worked in No. 1 plate shop, and there was also No. 2 and No. 3, and other shops as well. There were more women and young boys there than men. Those places were like great big barns of corrugated iron with no doors on them and in winter they were terribly cold and drafty.

The plates were the easiest to work on. They were brought in and taken away by a huge overhead crane. They'd be laid on the floor, a piece of steel, say about twenty-five by twelve feet, maybe three-quarters of an inch thick. They varied. The ship fitter would put on the markings in soapstone chalk, like what piece it was and the pattern number and whether it was for the starboard or port side and also the hull number. Because there were often four hulls going up at the same time. Then you'd get up on the plate and clamp on the template and mark it off. The templates were patterns made out of light plywood and they'd mark out where the rivet holes should be cut through, different size holes in different places depending on what the plate was. You'd go over it with a dauber and mark in the rivet holes with yellow enamel. The prepared plates would go to another shop where they punched out the holes with these huge powerful presses or they might do some cutting with acetylene torches. From there they'd go to the holding racks until that certain hull was ready for them.

When they were needed the plates would go out to the hull at the docks. A crane would lift the plates into place and the bolters would bolt down every other hole. You see? The riveting gangs would rivet the empty holes and then they'd take out the bolts used to hold it in place and put in the rest of the rivets. There were the bolters-up and reamers and buckers-up. The bucker-up was usually a man and it was usually men that were riveters. These rivet guns in the shipyards were really heavy. This 'Rosie the Riveter' stuff, that was mainly in the aircraft plants, where everything was much lighter.

Out on the hulls the red-hot rivets were tossed to where the riveters were working and a catcher would catch them in a cone. Usually boys worked as rivet passers, girls were catchers. I'd say about half the bolters-up were women. There were lots of women welders. They said that women overhead-welders were very good, too. There were some women cutting with torches and there were women (steel) heaters. I tried that, but I didn't care for it. I figured that I was better off inside.

How did women get along with those jobs? Well, look, the women knew just as much about it as most of the men there. There were some old timers who were foremen or were working as instructors. But we were all mostly new to it. If you were interested in some job you'd ask a foreman if you could get on. There was a training period for all those jobs and you worked as a helper for a while. And everything was laid out in simple, very specific jobs. It wasn't so complicated; you knew exactly what to do. Those ten thousand ton freighters, that's mainly what we turned out there. We were mostly all young and you learn fast at that time of life. We were young, but we did our jobs perfectly adequate - that may sound like boasting, but we did.

They were trying to improve the safety record in the yards and they'd put up the number of injuries or deaths on big cards where everybody could see them. But not the causes. There weren't too many deaths, about a dozen in the time I was there, but there were lots of injuries. People fell or got knocked off the staging around the hulls, a lot of that. You couldn't use safety belts because you were moving all the time. Some were quite serious accidents and people were crippled. I saw things that happened around the hulls and that was one of the reasons I preferred working in the plate shop. Of course there were serious accidents even there. This one guy fell off a crane boom he was working on and came down almost beside me. Jesus! He was killed right there.

There were these steam cranes outside, running on tracks set in the blacktop. They were silent things, you'd just hear a whiss-whiss once in a while. With these fluorescent lights we had on night shift there were shadows everywhere, and with the noise and all there was no way you'd hear those steam cranes creeping up on you. Not with the horrendous din

everywhere. We figured that if we came to our end here, it was going to be by one of those steam cranes.

There were some maniacs running these Hysters and the overhead cranes dropping off and picking up the plates. We drove one crane operator right out of there by calling him names. He was pretty erratic. When we had the chain blocks on the angle irons we'd signal him by hand, but he'd often do the opposite. Everybody would have to jump to get out of the way. We thought that somebody was going to get killed for sure. We'd stand at the side and spell out with our lips what we thought of him. Oh, we were real cheeky. We'd call him an 'old farmer' or a 'stubble jumper' or worse. Well yeah, I'd come from a farm myself, but that was different than being a 'stubble jumper.'

For greenhorns there are always some jokes they'd play. For instance, every piece of steel had a centre line - an imaginary line of balance. You'd mark it off in chalk and score it with a line of dots with a hand punch. So when I first came into the shop some of the men sent me up to the tool loft: 'Bring us back fifty yards of centre line. Don't let'm tell you they run out of it.' Okay, so up I go. I ask the man handing out the tools and stuff for this centre line. 'Oh, just a minute,' he says, and then called over another half-dozen guys to see this helper who wanted fifty yards of centre line, and they looked me up and down, smirking. That was supposed to be a big joke. I worked as a helper about one year.

The fitter I was working with, he had some kind of uncontrollable temper. He'd had a lot of helpers that walked off before me. Guys said to me, 'Watch out for that guy, be careful, he's a screwball.' 'Well, he doesn't look very big to me,' I said. He only got mad at me once and I didn't even care. We'd often tease each other. He had this routine making fun of 'fruits hanging around the Vancouver Hotel.' Well, I didn't think that was any of his business and I was getting a little tired of it, so to get back at him I said something like, 'Well, how come you know what it's all about anyway?' 'You don't think I'm that way, do you?' he says. 'Well, I was kind'a thinking that maybe...' He just got furious and started to chase me around. I couldn't stop laughing even after he caught up with me and gave me a couple of really hefty smacks on the rear. But a charge hand (foreman) saw him and came over. I didn't care, but this foreman took me away and told me I

didn't have to work with a screwball like that anymore. I knew enough by that time to be a fitter myself and that's when I moved up to that job.

I was a ship's fitter working on angle bars and channel bars, for the superstructure. That was on the other side of the plate shop. I'd go up to the loft to pick out the right templates and bring them down. I'd check the templates and check the work order. I'd mark the instructions on the steel. The helper would do all the work of painting and when he'd finished I'd check it over to see that it was all right and then order to have it hauled away. My first helper was a sixteen-year-old boy. The first thing he did when he came on the job was hit his thumb with a hammer, hit it on the steel. And he fainted right into my arms. Oh, was he embarrassed.

We sort of yelled over this horrendous din. Some of the men that were around would drift over and try bugging us. You'd try and keep a straight face. Yeah, sexual humour, sort of. Young guys coming over to the girls to tease us, say about our measurements, which we didn't like in those days. Well sure, there were some women there that did like being flirted with. They ate it up, they thrived on it. There was one who wore the zipper of her coverall right down to here, down to her belt darn near. There were some really sharp-looking women working there, too. Most young women in those days wore cosmetics even to work and most of us were sort of vain about our appearance. There were lots of men, married men and single, chasing all these beautiful young women there. There were some that used to go out with all the guys, too. I never went out with them because, well, either they were married or they were going to be called up. Besides I had some other friends I went out with who didn't work in the shipyards.

But I had a lot of fun with my co-workers from the yards, too. There was liquor rationing but we'd go out to the beer parlours. Whether I was old enough to get in or not, I got in. Somebody would say, 'Oh, I heard of one that's open down on Cambie and Powell.' After work a whole bunch of us, as many as could pile into somebody's car, we'd rush off there. We had our beer and enjoyed ourselves and we couldn't have cared less even if the place was a dump. There was a girl younger than me, only about seventeen, and there was an older woman, already about thirty-five - that's what we considered old then. We went around together.

We could put on the dog when we wanted, we dressed well when we got dressed up. I made sure that I bought the best for going out. Like I'd get an outfit once in a while in George Straiths, a very exclusive place. Sometimes we'd all meet each other in our best clothes. 'Oh, where did you get those threads. Jeez!' We'd admire each other's outfits and go out to some fancy restaurant once in a while.

But we would go anywhere in our work clothes, too. There were just armies of us. We never thought anything of going anywhere in our paint-spattered overalls. Masses of women in striped and white coveralls during the day and even at midnight. Going to work or coming from work or downtown shopping. When we first started appearing from the plants, going downtown, all these middle-aged housewives would turn and look at us. No, not looking down their noses; just beaming at us. You can understand that we would be sort of proud. I was working every day and earning my way and I was buying bonds and bagging some money and it was thought to be kind'a patriotic, too.

The quitting whistle at the yards was always blown fifteen minutes before actual quitting time. All the tools got put away and everybody got ready to leave. We were all crowded up at the shop doors. One time I turned around - and I was fairly tall - nothing but hard hats and kerchiefed heads pressed around me. Acres of them behind you and acres of them in front of you. We started to edge half-way up to the yard gate. There was this supervisor who'd be up at the gate waving us back into the shops - 'Get back, get back,' he was waving. We surged forward because there were masses behind us - whoosh! The thundering herd. He just barely escaped being trampled.

Surging through the turnstile, click-click-click-click. Rushing for the streetcars along Powell Street, some going that way, some going this way. I went up to Hastings Street to catch my line. We'd pile on those streetcars - just fill them up from one end to the other. So many would pile on that sometimes the driver couldn't close the doors. People still trying to push on. 'That's all, get off,' the driver would yell. 'No, no,' we'd answer, 'there's room for a few more, hold on.' We'd be jammed in like sardines, no thought of ever getting a seat by that time. And oh, the driver would be disgusted with that crowding, day in, day out.

Just for mischief we sometimes wouldn't put in our tickets. It wasn't the seven cents, we just wanted to bug the conductor. You'd pass your hand over the ticket box as you crowded in. There was nothing he could do with all that mob. 'Hey you, you didn't put your ticket in, and you and you.' By that time you were squeezed in down the aisle somewhere. 'Oh yeah, that was the guy ahead of me. Well, I can't help that.' The driver would go damn near crazy because this happened every shift. There was nothing but laughing on the streetcar. About anything, we were just happy to be getting off shift and going home.

I didn't feel in any way unusual for working in the shipyards. After a short while we all took it pretty well in stride. Maybe if there'd been only a few women doing that, you'd have felt a bit strange, but there were hundreds, thousands of us in the shipyards. But we knew that this shipbuilding wasn't going to last forever. It was a war industry. After a few years they got a surplus of ships built - the inlet was filled with them. They started to cut back. They started to weed out the people working in the yards. Say you were a woman and young and single, they would say, 'We can let her go, and we can let so and so go.' All the young boys were laid off. They kept on the family men at first. That started in the fall, and in December 1944 I was laid off too. Most of the women were let go.

The layoffs didn't go by seniority and some individual women contested that. But they were totally ignored by the company. There were some women that took it up with the union; that was the Boilermakers Union we all belonged to. There was this lady shop steward who worked on the floor, but she sided with the men. The union went along with it, so I don't think they did anything for us in the way of job security. What we women did wrong is that most of us never went to union meetings. I went once and it was filled mainly with men from other shops I'd never seen and it was deadly dull. We developed no real voice in the union, we just paid our dues, wore our union button and that was about it. So over a few months we were laid off, we just all left. You'd think, 'I was here when you needed me and now you throw me out like a dirty shirt.' But I guess we did sort of accept it because there was no real fight over it.

Really, we did feel that working in the shipyards was a man's job and now that the war was soon going to be over the jobs

should go back to the men. We'd been doing men's jobs and there was complete equality in pay and work and danger and everything. But that was just for the duration, we felt. In a way I still kind of think that was men's work, although we did it. We did it as well as anybody. But maybe we shouldn't have given in that easy.

In '45 I got jobs in some factories around Vancouver because I liked big industry. When I went back outside the yards I found that these jobs were still paying fifty cents an hour or less. Those jobs paying fifty-five cents an hour, "the big money", had been cornered by those people that never left to work in the war industries. Haw . . . I felt like a snob in these cheap-paying jobs. I'd been earning a dollar an hour and then had to go down to forty or fifty cents an hour. I figured, 'I'm worth more than this.' That's when I decided to look for a job cooking in the logging camps.

15. Around Home and Night Shift at Burns *Phyllis Knight*

Phyllis Knight was born in a working-class district of Berlin in 1901 and emigrated to Canada with her husband in the late 1920s. The account opens with a description of the semi-rural nature of life 'around home' in one section of Vancouver East in the early and mid-1940s. While this enclave was not really typical of Vancouver as a whole, it was however quite usual for a number of districts which clustered around the margins of the city proper.

The following fragment deals with night shift work at Burns packing plant during 1948 and 1949. Phyllis was then no longer young and the sense of hope and vitality which one finds in her accounts of factory work twenty years previously is absent here. The late 1940s were marked by a lingering recession which greatly reduced jobs available for women, many of whom had recently been industrial workers. The jobs generally available to working women were neither challenging nor particularly liberating, nor did they pay adequately. It was factory work, pure and simple - usually ununionized.

By the time she was working in Burns Phyllis Knight had already lived through two world wars and a defeated revolution, through a famine and a plague and through an extraordinarily destructive inflation. She had witnessed the rise of fascism and a long, drawn-out resistance to it. She and her husband had been through a decade of migratory work and unemployment in Western Canada during the great depression. And she had seen the eclipse of the world she had once known. Her account of these earlier experiences can be found in A Very Ordinary Life, Rolf Knight, from which this extract is drawn (pp. 210-218 and 237-239).

Living in our part of Hastings East, down by the water, was still a little like living in the country at that time. Much of Burnaby was still bush and little farmlets. We hiked up the Lynn Valley a number of times. Over the Second Narrows Bridge, up the Mountain Highway, over an old logging bridge that used to cross the creek, and then another mile or two up the valley to where some friends of ours lived. There were still deer and bear and all sorts of wild animals roaming around up there then. It must have been seven or eight miles. That area is all closed off now, part of the Vancouver water district - until some developer gets his fingers on it.

For shorter walks we'd walk up Seymour Creek. Whenever they had a picnic or festival at the Swedish Park we went there. A good friend of ours used to direct their choir. That area was still pretty open; kids used to camp where now there are all housing tracts. All the North Shore was beautiful at that time. Everywhere you went there was open space and country . . .

During those years I spent a lot of time on a garden. I really built it up from scratch. At first only hops and morning glory, quack grass and some trees grew well. That was nice, too, in a wild sort of way. Everything was grown over. Everything was shady in that lot even on the most brilliant summer day. But I wanted a real garden. So I started to root out the quack grass and morning glory and the hops. That's some task, let me tell you. We cut down a few of the trees so we'd get a little sunlight, although there were still plenty left. We left quite a few mountain alders because they have bunch upon bunch of orange berries which birds just love. The place was always swarming with birds.

Then I started in earnest to improve the garden. We dug in peat moss and lime and all sorts of Buckerfields' fertilizer and soil conditioners when we could afford it. We put on wheelbarrows full of soil and turf which the city cleaned out of ditches in the neighbourhood each year. And I was constantly raking rocks - there seemed to be an endless supply of them. After the course of a couple of years the garden really began to flourish. I could grow almost any kind of plant.

For the first few years we had a big vegetable garden. It was a big lot by today's standards and the house didn't take up too much space on it. I grew corn, tomatoes, peas, beans and carrots, and onions and radishes, in fact every vegetable we ever ate. My whole life I wanted to have a good sized garden and time to grow whatever interested me and now I did it with a vengeance.

There were all kinds of tricks in gardening and canning which I learned from acquaintances or by reading, and a lot by trial and error. I used to can beans and a ready made green bean goulash by the dozens of jars. We ate that all year round. I used to preserve rhubarb, corn and mixed peas and carrots, turnips. You name it and I had it. Potatoes and tomatoes were so plentiful we didn't know what to do with them. And the same with all of the salad vegetables. The garden provided fresh vegetables during the summer and fall, with enough canned stuff for most of the winter. We rarely bought any tinned food.

In some ways, things were really pretty old fashioned. Not like living in a city at all. There was no television of course, although we did have a good short-wave radio. We couldn't afford a car and for many years we didn't have a telephone. No fridge, not even an ice box. There wasn't a single electrical appliance, other than the lights. For a while I even used irons which you heated on top of the stove to press the clothes. Actually the wiring was so old and flimsy in that shack that you couldn't have loaded it with anything anyway.

And like I said, for a few years we had a miniature version farm and rabbit ranch in our backyard. All in the city, mind you. For quite a few years we still used a latrine on Wall Street, a regular one holer outhouse set down in the gulch. For bathing we had a big zinc tub. I'd set all the pots I had full of water on the stove to take a bath. I did the laundry each week in a big copper bottomed laundry kettle they used to sell just

for that purpose. That and a scrub board and wash tub and hanging clothes on the line. Dreadful . . . The people who buy that junk in antique stores these days should have to work with it for a couple of months. 'Junk the stuff,' I say.

For heating we had a big McClary kitchen stove which burned just about anything - wood, coal, coke, everything. There was a conversion unit to sawdust that we put on when other fuel was difficult to get. We also had a pot-bellied stove in the back room. We'd use six or eight cords of wood in a winter, plus coal. Coal was delivered in sacks. 'McLeod Hard' from Alberta was the best, but sometimes you could only get a poor quality soft coal. Then you would have to build a roaring fire before the coal would burn right; otherwise you'd get smoked out of house and home. As for sawdust, you might as well burn peat moss - miserable stuff that never burns hot. A nice wood and coal fire is pretty hard to beat, and that was a great stove I had. But there was always the carrying and chopping and stoking and starting the fire and cleaning out the ashes. Years later, when we built a new house we finally got an electric stove and fridge and an oil furnace. It was like a dream come true, although after a while you get to take it for granted.

During those years, until well after the war, there was a steady procession of pedlars who went from door to door. There were Chinese vegetable men who had old T model Fords, trucks, who came around from house to house twice a week. The black Model T truck was their trademark. Each had his own district and it would always be the same guy who came around. They had everything, everything that was in season, and every kind of vegetable imaginable. I mainly bought fruit. It was good quality produce, as wide a selection as you could get anywhere and usually cheaper. The man would come to the door and ask what you needed that day. Maybe he would say he had some very good pears or onions or whatever. Then you could ask for so much of this or that, or you might go out to the truck to see what they were like. They would often give you a baker's dozen worth too. If you paid for a pound it would often be a little over; they would weigh it right in front of you. It was usually 'on the cuff' too, once he knew you. 'Okay, put it on the cuff today.' They had an account for each customer and after the next pay day you'd pay him off, a week's worth or two weeks'. They didn't try to force anything

on you. It was sort of personal, you got to know each one somewhat. One had our route for three, almost four years, then he sold out to another guy who had the business for two or three years more.

There was another guy who came around by truck twice a week selling fish. He stopped every half a block and rang his bell, something like an ice cream vendor. If you wanted fish you'd go out with a container and he'd cut off however much you wanted and flop it in your dish. There was also a man who came around selling eggs from a truck. Some bakeries delivered from door to door every morning, bread and donuts mainly. I didn't like their bread so I'd usually get my bakery stuff on shopping day.

Then there was the milkman. For many years they still used horses and wagons. The horses knew the route all by themselves and the milkmen would just get in and out of the wagon to get the bottles. They came very early in the morning before most people got up. You would leave money in the bottle. But there were too many kids raiding the milk bottles for spending money so the dairies switched to using milk tickets. The only other people who still used horses were the junk men. They would travel around the streets and back alleys on their old farm wagons pulled by a single horse. They used to be pretty broken down looking horses and I often felt sorry for them. The junk man would drive along slowly, calling out, 'Junk. Junk,' in a certain set call. If you had any stuff you wanted to get rid of they would usually buy it - rags, old metals, bottles, whatever . . .

. . . Ali used to call me the salesman's dream. I always bought something even if I didn't need it. I thought, 'They work pretty hard for their money and they are always coming around, so buy some small thing.' 'Live and Let Live' is my motto. If any of those salesmen was a high pressure, Soapy Sam type, slick, he soon got frozen out. I and most other people would close the door when we saw the guy coming. There were just a couple of salesmen like that and they didn't last long . . .

You also got a pretty constant stream of people coming around begging, in a polite sort of way. There were always partly disabled people coming around selling stuff like shoe laces. That was just a way of asking for a hand out, which I always gave. Not very much but maybe a dime or so. There were also always guys coming along looking for a meal or a

hand out. Some guys just off the freights. Many of them were down on their luck but some were real hoboes. Still I always gave them at least a good thick sandwich or a dime; sometimes a quarter if they looked like they really needed it. We were near one of the spots where people would drop off the freights. That might happen once a week, or two or three days in succession, or not for a month. Sometimes I gave them a hot meal if food was ready. You couldn't do that anymore, I'd be afraid to ask them in . . .

Ali then worked painting office buildings for Bochard's. They used to work on hanging scaffolds ten and more storeys up. I never did like that. Safety precautions were bad. Ali quit after there had been a number of accidents in town and after one man was killed in a crew that was working with them. He got a job spray painting in the shipyards, mainly in North Vancouver. He stuck that out for almost two years, during 1943 and 1944. The pay wasn't great but it was regular.

Ali felt like he was working his life away with no results, with no end in sight. He wanted to build up a stake so he could get away from that dreary run. But how could he, how could anybody? Then, he started to get sick from the paint. A lot of painters got that. It was a slow form of lead poisoning, I suppose. It was especially bad when they were painting in the holds. The respirators they wore weren't much help. Towards the end he was sick almost all the time; he lost weight and he actually began to look green. So he gave up painting and went back to baking.

He worked in the big bakeries, Weston's and a few others. It was deadening assembly-line work. Ali was a master baker, that was what he had apprenticed at, and machine baking or factory work in general was something he didn't like. You did one or two operations and had to keep up with the machines. He was always dead tired when he came home, and the pay was pitiful. Well, what can you say? It was work, come home and go to work again. There's no romance in jobs. At least not those jobs. Nothing happened. People counted as great events the various half days and small outings and the few hours they had free, maybe in total a few days over months. A day's picnic at Wigwam Inn, a boat trip to Bowen Island, maybe a movie and a meal out in a restaurant with the family. They stood out because otherwise it was work, work, work . . .

Jobs were pretty hard to get, at least for women, but I finally managed to get one in Burns packing plant, working night shift, making sausages. We got about fifty cents an hour. There must have been about two hundred girls on that shift. We worked in a big hall, although that's not the correct term. Well, anybody who's worked in a factory knows the sort of thing I mean. The smell was terrible. You could smell the ammonia and rotting offal from the fertilizer plant that was in the basement four floors below. Talk about pollution. Working in that plant was ten times as bad as any air pollution.

At first I thought I'd never be able to stand it, the hard work, the night shift, the cold. It was in the winter. You had to be pretty fast, as in any factory. Slowly I got used to it, to an extent anyway. But for the first couple of months I could hardly drag myself home after work. I wasn't that young anymore and I really began to feel my age.

We worked in the sausage room, making baloney, Polish sausage, wieners and pork sausages and various other things like that. I was a tyer, that's what my job was called. We used long sharp knives that we were constantly sharpening and I was always afraid that I would cut off a finger. There were racks of meat and fat and hearts that went into the sausages; intestines and stomach lining and all sorts of things that you would never suspect. Every time you looked around there was another load of ice being ground up and blended with the sausage mixture.

They made a lot of effort to save a few cents of wages, like seeing you didn't take twelve minutes instead of a ten-minute break for coffee. But it was a pretty haphazard operation. On the one hand there were government inspectors who would check the meat racks three or four times in a shift. If they found the slightest spot or other imperfection in any of the meat they condemned the whole load. Hundreds and hundreds of pounds of meat. That all went into the fertilizer plant then .

. . .

The (sausage) casings were still made out of intestines then, they didn't have those plastic peelings. They were in barrels, pickled in a salty brine. We had to wash the casings out in ice-cold water. You stood there soaking wet, your hands in cold water, hour after hour. Some of the work was pretty heavy, too, like lifting racks of baloney. I had intended to work at Burns for a couple of years if possible so that we could save up

enough money to finish off the house. But I just couldn't stick it out that long. I had colds and coughs and aches and pains of one sort or another for the entire time I worked there.

Usually I walked to work. I'd leave from our house about an hour before the shift was to start. We started at ten-thirty at night and worked through until seven in the morning, with a half-hour break for lunch around three. We worked pretty steadily too. That was all right because it made the time pass more quickly. The really bad thing about it was the cold drafts and the water. You had to wear knee-high rubber boots and a big rubber apron that covered your whole front, and then you still got wet. The pay was pretty poor too. I think I cleared about twenty-two fifty a week. Just after I left, that place was unionized and the women got about fifteen or twenty cents more an hour - still not very much.

Nevertheless, there were some compensating factors in getting out to meet people and feeling that you had a little extra money on hand. I could occasionally buy some things that I otherwise wouldn't. Nothing special, mind you, just some clothes or some pastry. Most of it went into the savings for the house.

I made a few new friends at Burns and met an old acquaintance from Lillooet days, Kay Dahl, who had grown up on a rancheria near Texas Creek, right in the heart of rattlesnake country. Boy, did she have some stories to tell! Many mornings Kay and I and a few of the others who worked on the night shift would go across Powell Street, near Commercial Drive, have donuts and coffee and talk a while. Then I would take the old No. 20 streetcar home. Sometimes Kay would come over to our place and have breakfast. Sometimes we would just meet Ali as he was going to work.

There were a few quarrels I had at work. I remember one woman there, we didn't get on right from the very beginning for some reason. We just rubbed each other the wrong way. I and a few of the other girls used to take some of the salami or Ukrainian sausage and eat it during our shift break. The supervisors didn't really care as long as you didn't eat it in front of them. The stuff wasn't worth more than a few dimes anyway. But this one woman told a supervisor that we were eating the sausage, and I overheard her. So after he was gone I walked over and stood in front of her and when she moved I gave her a good hard slap; open-handed but she felt it. I was

boiling mad. 'That's for sneaking around and telling on us.' At first she started to fight, but the others that were around separated us. Later on she came and apologized and said it was a stupid thing for her to do. Actually, we became friends before I left.

Finally I got so ill that I had to quit. Always wet and cold and drafty and with your hands covered in brine; walking in and out of cold lockers. Still, there were five women ready to take the job for anyone who quit.

16. Home Port, Vancouver *Ken Barker*

Ken Barker was born in Vancouver in 1933. His family moved around a great deal and Barker remembers his school days as an amalgam of rebelliousness and some extraordinary bullying by some teachers. He was expelled from school in the seventh grade and began a series of 'boy's jobs' - delivery boy, telegraph boy, pin setter, hawker of sports programs and so forth.

'It was difficult for me to get work,' he says. 'I had only completed grade six, I only weighed 110 pounds and stood a shade under five foot one. And I sure didn't look more than my fourteen years. Nobody would hire me. What the hell was I supposed to do? When I think of it, it was just by chance that I didn't wind up in crime.'

Barker's grandmother, who ran the cigar stand at the Western Sports Club, where he was becoming a promising young boxer, lined up a job for him as messboy on a Canadian merchant ship. Two months before his fifteenth birthday he was signed on the Lake Chilliwack and spent most of the next five years working deep sea, with interludes back in Vancouver. He witnessed the destruction of the Canadian Seamen's Union and the end of Canadian deep-sea shipping. Following an interlude when he trained and contended for the Golden Gloves boxing title, and a period when he was 'on the beach,' unemployed, Barker started working in B.C. coastal shipping and on tugs operating out of Vancouver.

Ken Barker now works in a pulp mill near Gibsons, B.C., where he lives with his wife and children. He has been a rank and file union leader there, is active in the local N.D.P. organization and is the manager of an excellent co-op bookstore.

I joined the *Lake Chilliwack* as a messboy on September 28, 1948. She was lying down at Terminal Dock, a ten thousand tonner built during the war, one of the first to be turned out in Prince Rupert. Originally she'd been named the *Earl's Court Park* and had been built for and owned by the Canadian government. But after the war they had practically given all them ships to private companies.

That trip we were taking on coal for Hokkaido. Our main load we picked up at Nanaimo and up at Union Bay, over on the Island. Though the mines were closed there was still a hell of a pile of coal lying at Union Bay yet. Then we came back to Terminal Dock in Vancouver and topped off with Alberta coal. That was the mixture of coal wanted by the Japanese steel mills.

Just before we were to sail I was going downtown for the last time, and coming up over the overpass at Nanaimo (Street) I started to run to catch the streetcar. Somehow I tripped and twisted my ankle so bad that I couldn't walk. Ray Murray, one of the firemen from the ship, an old left-winger, came along and packed me back aboard. So I didn't make a very good first impression.

It was my first trip and I was a kid so I was the butt of quite a few pranks by some of the crew. Some of it was just the usual tricks they play on anybody that's green. For instance, once they told me that the mail boat was coming alongside so to write whatever letters I was intending to for the next month. I went down to the cabin and poured out my heart in a four-page letter to my mother and father, telling them what a bunch of bastards some of these guys were, and named names. Somebody came along with a sack that he said was the last mailbag going off. But it was just a trick and there wasn't any mail boat. Then I was really in shit. Everybody had a big laugh and those that were named got an added incentive 'cause I'd taken the bait.

To start off with, we got into bad weather as soon as we hit Cape Flattery and we went into it all the way over. The seas were something out of this world. I never encountered anything like it in all the years I was at sea. To be honest with you, I was scared stiff and I was so seasick that for the first while I was of absolutely no value to anybody.

We were going to Muroran with a full load of coal and those bloody big seas were just coming over us. At one point the winds were close to a hundred miles an hour. What we were afraid of was the ship taking a dive at the same time one of those big forty foot high waves comes down and going under. There's water coming at you from all directions it seems. The colour of it - it's a bilish looking green - with white foam whipped up everywhere and just as mean looking as can be. It scares the shit out of you. The ship is twisting and bouncing and diving and every damn thing. You get thrown around when you try to walk. Work becomes near impossible; you're hanging on for dear life.

Not only was the ship dipping and diving and staggering but every so often she would give a kind of a twist to one side, a lurch not a roll. Your heart would seem to stop for that few moments. I had towels laid on the mess table to help stop the dishes from sliding a bit. I had the benches lashed to the table which was bolted to the deck. But this once the ship gave a lurch as some guys were trying to eat. It tore the benches right away from the table and threw them on the deck.

It took us twenty-one days to get to Japan from the west coast, which is more than seven days longer than it should have. Part way across, the storms were so bad that in three days we actually lost 200 miles - we were driven back two hundred miles in three days' steaming. But finally we made it to Japan. Going over we went the northern route. Coming back, the skipper figured he'd better try the southern route. It was even worse. We had some rock and sand ballast in number three hatch and we took on as much oil as we could carry in Yokohama. But we were light. We rolled even more. When the ship was doing her dipping and diving her stern might come right out of the water. The propeller would spin around, the steering gear would flap around loose and go clack-clack-clack, the steam would be releasing and the ship would shudder and shake. The first four days nobody could sleep, we

were getting tossed around so much. But finally you fall asleep from sheer exhaustion.

We had gone to Muroran on the northern island. The biggest steel mill in the Orient was there. During my first trip conditions were still very bad in Japan. The American Army had sealed off just a couple of blocks of the town down by the docks, like a red light area, which was the only place we seamen were allowed to go. Japan was just starting to rebuild. Actually, it was almost like a famine. We used to throw away quite a bit of food from our mess. Once I had this big bundle of fried herring that was going to be tossed over the side. So, as messboy, I thought I might as well give it to some of these Japanese longshoremen, even if they were 'the enemy'.

From all the propaganda I'd picked up in the movies and comics and newspapers as a kid during the war, I was naturally sort of hostile. Suspicious of the Japs and a little afraid they might be waiting around the corner with daggers for us when we went ashore. But the next trip I was in Japan, about a year later, things had begun to change. I was beginning to change myself. I began to suspect that the stuff I had picked up during the war was a bunch of bullshit.

At the end of my first trip, back in Vancouver, I wasn't a regular member of the union yet. I had to get the recommendation from the crew meeting to be accepted. But I was very young and a lot of the crew were trying to discourage me from going to sea. I wasn't too sure about whether I wanted to continue or even if I'd be allowed to continue, what with all the time I'd been seasick and in trouble with some of the crew. The captain gave me a double 'D.R.' after the trip. What's that? That's not good. I had to make two more trips before I got a permanent union card.

As a matter of fact, that first trip I was treated pretty badly by some members of the crew. I took it for a while then I started fighting back. That made it even worse. There were some guys on ships, like anywhere, that are just plain mean. I didn't squeal on them, but some of the better union men aboard raised hell about it in crew meetings and back in Vancouver with the union.

Actually, when I think of it, it was only a handful of guys that made it so miserable. But there were also some very good guys too. Some of them gave me books to read and talked to me. Some of these books I read on board, and the crew meetings

we had, got me to a new way of thinking about things. I had been someone who had just been interested in boxing and sports and I don't think I'd read a dozen real books, apart from school books, in my life till then. For someone like me, it was the beginning of my real education.

My second trip was on the *Lake Atlin*. We left from Vancouver going down through the Panama Canal to the Dutch West Indies and over to Hull, England. From there to Rotterdam, back to Newport News in Virginia, through the Panama Canal again to Honolulu and over to Japan. From there we headed back to Vancouver to sign off. While I was no longer a child I wasn't yet sixteen, a kid living in a man's world. But it was good for me in many ways. For me now it was the ship and the sea and the work. I could see some direction in my life and what I wanted to do. I probably learned more by going to sea than I ever would have any other way.

We used to have a crew meeting seven o'clock every Sunday night at sea, a regular union meeting where we'd talk about various problems. I learned a lot about having to give way a certain amount. On ship it's not like going to work and then coming home again. We'd deal with haywire types on board that got crazy drunk or who were squealers or who were just a danger for the rest of the crew. The hard cases we'd vote off the ship when we got back into Vancouver. Usually these types would get the message before that. Nobody would have anything to do with them, hardly anybody would talk to them off duty, nobody would invite them to sit down to a game of cards. But the majority of seamen were amongst the best people I've ever known. Generous, loyal to their friends and shipmates, loyal to their union.

The whole process of getting a job through the union was thoroughly democratic. You started on the shipping list at the bottom after your trip and worked your way up as guys above you either took the jobs open or passed them up. Your name would be in a slot on the board under the work you were classified for. The berths would go to the guys at the top of the list who bid. It was all up there on the shipping board, open for anybody to see. It's a lot fairer than the way you get a job in most industries, I'll tell you.

The Canadian Seamen's Union was already then under the gun. But our people in Vancouver were really good. I appreciate that better now than I did then. Whenever I think of

good union leaders I think of our officers in Vancouver - Jim Thompson and Jack Rockendale and Don Rinder and Digger Smith and those guys. I'd like to think that all union leaders were like that, although I know they're not. Those guys were the best.

Christ, a ship wasn't tied up alongside the dock in Vancouver for ten minutes when 'Rocky,' Jack Rockendale, would come aboard and we'd set up a ship's meeting. Our (union) officers did the very best they could for us on contract issues but they didn't try to bullshit us. If something was bad, or if they'd made a mistake, they told us. They'd tell us, 'We're facing such and such a problem and we're going to try and handle it this way.' They didn't pretend that everything was fine. The C.S.U. believed in political education too and we had a fine union newspaper, the *Searchlight*. It was a union to be proud of.

During that trip (in spring 1949) while we were in England, our ship went on a sympathy strike with a bunch of our other ships which had been locked out by the shipping companies on the east coast. That's what you have to remember, that it was basically a lockout to break the C.S.U. that was responsible for the strike. It wasn't certain if we had the legal right to go out in support. I was on the first picket shift with George Allen, who was a fireman, and we were standing at the top of the gangplank. We were then on Canadian territory and the British police couldn't arrest us for picketing there. The chief mate came down a little while later and ordered us to remove our picket. But George told him to bugger off or he'd wrap the picket sign around his head. As I recall now, 'Stringer' McDonald was one of the union representatives on the *Lake Atlin* too.

The support we got was international, the C.S.U. had support around the world. But the support we got from the Aussies, from their seamen's union and longshoremen and other unions, they were absolutely the best. Later, when I was on the *Wairuna*, we put into Melbourne and I saw the *Haligonian Duke* tied up at dockside there. She was a runaway Canadian ship. The owners had changed registry, paid off the Canadian crew and then tried to put aboard a crew of Panamanians. Our union raised hell about it with the Aussies and the company couldn't get a tug or a pilot or a longshoreman to touch it. It sat there for almost three years.

Anyway, after the *Lake Atlin* I got on the *Wairuna* and was on her for two years. She was on the run from the west coast here to Australia and New Zealand, carrying lumber and newsprint mainly. By then I had gotten on deck as a seaman. Later I sailed on the *Waitomo* and *Waikawa*. It was during that time that the Canadian Seamen's Union was completely smashed. That's a story that someone will have to tell.

The C.S.U. had made some headway in organizing coastal shipping in B.C., which was a good thing, because it got so that after the strike you could hardly ship out deep-sea. There were getting to be fewer and fewer Canadian ships left. Finally we had only two deep-sea ships left and then none.

I started working the coast in September of 1955 on the *P.W.*, a small coastal freighter that was rigged out with towing gear. It was run by Packer steamships, a subsidiary of B.C. Packers. We were based at the foot of Campbell Avenue beside the fish docks, next to York Towing, so there was always plenty of activity going on even when the ship was just lying alongside the wharf. There were always fish boats putting in there for all these fish companies working around the dock.

The *P.W.* was an old wooden vessel which was originally called the *Peter Wallace* and built to run hay from Barnston Island in the Fraser River to Victoria for the horse and buggy trade. She was a tough old boat but terrible hard to steer because of the flat bottom on her. She'd be maybe forty to fifty years old then, and the crew's quarters were pretty poor. They were a long step backwards from the deep-sea vessels I'd worked on. Coastal shipping still allowed foc'slehead crew accommodation, which had been done away with on deep-sea ships. That's what we had on the *P.W.* I always caused as much unrest about that as I could, I preached the end of foc'slehead accommodation. In rough weather you get tossed around a lot. And it's potentially deadly, especially in cabins below decks. If the ship should hit something, everything in the bow section can be thrown out of plumb and the doors and hatches can jam tight and may trap you.

In the early spring, before the start of the fishing season, we'd make separate runs into the bigger canneries - to Klemtu say, or to Bella Bella - with cans and freight and equipment to get that cannery ready. Then during the fishing season we'd be mainly on a supply run to service the fish camps and the canneries as far as Smith's Inlet and Namu. The first stop was

usually Alert Bay, maybe over to Sointula, then into Port Hardy and from there up to Rivers Inlet. There were no operating canneries on Rivers Inlet but they were using a number of old canneries as fishing camps and net lofts during the season. There was Duncanby Landing, which was mainly a fuel station with a small store. The first big American tourist boats with all their fancy gear would put in there. Then there was a small place called Dawson's Landing run by one family of old settlers.

We'd put in at Wadhams and at Good Hope and I believe there was an old North Pacific cannery used as a net loft as well. Then across the inlet into Goose Bay and over to a place called Beaver. The country around there was just beautiful. There were a bunch more whose names I've forgotten now.

We'd drop off freight and nets and equipment and, oh yes, the mail. Every time you'd hit one of those wharfs there'd be ten or fifteen people waiting there for their mail. Sometimes, if there was a closure, there might be thirty, forty fishermen hanging around waiting.

From Rivers Inlet we'd head up into Smith's Inlet and over to Nalos Landing. That was just a big float with an open shed on it. Quite often you'd arrive and there'd be nobody there, but within ten minutes the bloody place was just swamped with people. It looked so deserted, but they would just come out of the woodwork. They'd be coming in tug boats and in packers, they'd come in fish boats of all description, in launches and high-powered motor boats from fish camps and little logging companies scattered around. We'd have boom chains for them, parts for trucks and cats, supplies for their camps. We carried some general freight for these stops along the coast as well as loads for B.C. Packers. They called it the jungle run. Union Steamships had just then given up servicing these out of the way places.

The winter run was mainly between Vancouver and Prince Rupert, towing the reefer barge, a round trip of ten days. We'd make a run around to the Skeena canneries and camps like Sunnyside and Cassiar and Balmoral while they were loading the barge in Seal Cove. Then back to Vancouver. Some of those cold, wet winter days with gales blowing out of Kitimat and down the Inside Passage, you didn't waste any time on the deck sightseeing. Coming into Vancouver harbour, coming up to

Lion's Gate Bridge, it sure can look beautiful. It always made you feel good, you knew that better things were ahead.

Going through those First Narrows is never very easy and if you're on the wheel you're pretty preoccupied with trying to keep the ship in some reasonable kind of course. We'd shorten up the tow line if we were towing, there'd be a man on the (tow gear) brake to slack the line off in case we ran into tide surges or some difficulties with other vessels coming by. On deck, we'd get the heaving lines out of the lockers and get our mooring lines ready. You'd raise the booms so that when you put into the wharf there was no chance of hitting anything. We'd prepare them to lift cargo. If we were towing a barge, we'd bring that up and secure it to the side of the ship so that when we were laying at dock the barge would be alongside us. Then we'd tie up at our berth down at Campbell Avenue. So, while you had a good feeling about coming in, you were usually too busy to think too much about it.

Unless it was really late at night, we'd all head off home after we were tied up. Some men were married and went home to their wives and family, others were single and lived in different places around town. We all went our more or less individual ways.

There was a crew of ten on the *P.W.*, six of us unlicensed crewmen. There were usually one or two spares on the boat, working as replacements for somebody who was off. Now these were the kind of seamen who generally did live down near the waterfront. There were some staying in the Anchor Hotel on Columbia and a lot of them had rooms in the New World Hotel up beside the Powell Street Grounds. That was not a bad hotel, with clean, good-sized rooms. If you could get a room overlooking the Grounds, it was quite nice. A few more lived in the Drake, a few blocks east. That was all longshoremen and waterfront workers of some sort there. And a couple of guys lived all the way out in the Princeton Hotel. It was sort of out in the sticks but handy to Northland Navigation.

The (union) hiring hall was a place that you always hit if you were in town for a while. It was a place where you could meet some of the boys. I had this regular job on the *P.W.* so I'd just drop down for a visit. For a long time the hall was near the corner of Columbia and Cordova, on the second floor of an old brick building. It got to be decked out pretty good. There was

a reading room with books and magazines where you could wait and there'd always be a couple of card games going on.

Some guys were really artists at playing jokes, laying traps, and there were others who would take the bait almost every time. You really can't explain these jokes because they'd develop out of situations that have been going on for years, and the joke was just funny if you knew the characters involved and what all else they'd done. There was a lot of drinking and some fights, sure. But there was also a lot of people helping other people in these little backstairs rooms. Lots of seamen knew when a friend was down and out and they'd slip him a few dollars and see that the rent was paid on a room.

The C.S.U. had been destroyed completely on the east coast and the S.I.U. (Seamen's International Union) had taken over what was left. On the west coast we survived under the name of the West Coast Seamen's Union. That way we kept the initials anyway - W.C.S.U. We'd signed up about half the tugboats on the coast, a couple of the Standard Oil tankers and later Northland Navigation. We didn't have any union contract with the government ships sailing out of Victoria, like the weatherships and the cable layer, but most of the men on them had books in the W.C.S.U.

The W.C.S.U. survived until about 1956 when it was destroyed by an unholy alliance of the Canadian Labour Congress, the Vancouver Port Council and the S.I.U. The W.C.S.U. was not an affiliate of the C.L.C. although it would liked to have gotten in. We were able to exist as a bona fide union as long as the shipyard workers and coastal longshoremen would back us up and not handle any ship that the owners put a scab crew on. We could survive with that alliance between decent trade unions, regardless of whether we were inside or outside the so-called 'House of Labour'.

But these other unions were under pressure from the C.L.C., which had decided that there was going to be only one seamen's union and that would be the S.I.U. We'd have to accept being absorbed by the S.I.U. or face the consequences of being raided and scabbed upon with the blessings of the C.L.C. I'm a little bitter about this as you can see, 'cause I've seen this so many times in my life. We voted on that merger, and seeing what the option was a majority supported going into the S.I.U., as long as we could get book for book as full

members. A number of our people couldn't stomach the S.I.U. and just quit sailing.

But there were some advantages in that merger, the two or three years we were in the S.I.U. we made gains. That had nothing to do with the S.I.U. officers; it was just that with one union we had more clout. We didn't have to look over our shoulders and worry about being raided all the time.

We were all W.C.S.U. men on the *P.W.*, a good bunch of guys. There was Jimmy Cox, an Australian, who was a guy who could bring out the best in anybody he worked with, a kind of guy you'd never forget, a fine union man. It was really a first class crew. Not this competition and friction I've seen between members of the crew on some boats. It was a spot where for once in my life I saw everybody cooperating and I learned how much a difference that can make, what can be accomplished when people stick together, and how good it is.

About three years after the W.C.S.U. had been merged into the S.I.U. there was a change in the C.L.C. thinking. They and the longshore unions began to have second thoughts; because there was a growing suspicion that the Teamsters along with the S.I.U. were going to try and take over the whole waterfront, which some figured was just part of a bigger plan to get control of all transportation. The C.L.C. finally decided that the S.I.U. was just getting too bloody dangerous. So they decided that the C.B.R.T. (Canadian Brotherhood of Railway and Transport Workers) was going to be the vehicle for reorganizing shipping under a C.L.C. union.

The C.B.R.T. seamen's section organized a lot of the tugboats in these small companies which had never been unionized before. At that stage we got all our men together. We signed up the majority of the coastal oil tankers, we got most of the tugboats, we got Northland Navigation. The C.P.R. remained with the S.I.U. and so did Straits Towing and Gulf of Georgia.

About that time I started working on the towboats. Vic Johnson and I got berths on the *Johnstone Straits* through the Towboat Agency. That was a hiring system set up by the towboat companies to get crew men through 'night calls' after the union office had closed. We were organizing for the Brotherhood (C.B.R.T.) from within the S.I.U. Well, when the S.I.U. patrolman found out that we had got aboard that tug he went right up to the company head office. A message came down that I and Vic were to be let go immediately.

A bit later I got on the *Gill Spray*, Gilley Brothers Towing, and after that on a number of different tugs. I worked on the *Gill King* bringing cement barges from Bamberton to False Creek. We did a lot of towing from Howe Sound to Burrard Inlet and we'd often tie up and lay over at the Evans-Colman-Evans Dock by the foot of Carrall. It was more like a regular job where you worked through the week and had your weekends off.

I was on the *Marpole* and *Protective* yarding gravel barges around from Mary Hill and from Hillside over to Vancouver harbour. There's an awful lot of hard work involved. You're always looking at different situations, depending upon the tide and the weather and wind and the type of operation. You're always shifting and working with those barges, because they're short runs. Many of these tugs had very light, poor gear. You were busting a gut trying to get the job done and lots of times your life was in jeopardy because of the nature of how they were doing things. The deckhands were often not so much seamen as married guys with a little land in the Fraser Valley who got on through connections through the owner. A lot of them saw the union only as something that took a part of their wages away from them.

Actually, most of the crew on the *Marpole* and the *Protective* were okay. But some of the skippers there were just something else. I never found a single officer on any deep-sea or coastal freighter anything like some of these towboat skippers. They were throwbacks. The food was good and the accommodations were okay on the *Marpole* but we were working under conditions which Australian seamen hadn't seen in forty years. I felt like I'd gone backward from where I started twelve years before.

The last skipper was one of the biggest and also the meanest son of a bitch I ever worked under. He would panic if things didn't go exactly right and he would run up and down screaming and waving and cursing and whatnot. This one day he was threatening and insulting and getting everything balled up. He started yelling at me and instead of handing him the (tow line) bridals, I just hauled off and threw these heavy steel bridals at his head. I was scared of the guy but I was so mad I didn't care. I told him what I thought of him and to make my time up when we got into dock.

When I stepped off that tug I knew it wasn't just this vessel I was leaving but that I'd made a complete break with going to

sea, which had been my life since I was fourteen. I was not long married and with my background and everything I didn't know where I might end up, what kind of a job I could land, if any. I phoned my wife and told her what I'd done. There was a moment of dead silence and I thought, 'Oh, oh, here it comes.' Then she said, 'Well . . . good. It'll probably be the best thing that could happen for the two of us.' And it was.

17. Dolls, Rollerskates and Dockyards *Lorraine Brander*

Lorraine Brander's reminiscences of growing up near the Vancouver dockyards are presented here as a complement to my own earlier account of the same general area during approximately the same period.

Her account captures something of the minor jealousies and resentments of childhood, but also reflects a certain spirited buoyancy. Her allusions to being poor, yet not really knowing it, are noteworthy and are a tribute to her mother and stepfather.

Brander incorporated few of the militant working-class traditions of the district. In some ways her husband, Jens (a Norwegian seaman who arrived in Canada in the mid-fifties and lived a number of years in the former loggers' district before he became a fisherman) developed a greater appreciation of those traditions than did many who grew up here. His experiences were surprisingly similar to those of immigrants, such as Brander's stepfather, a quarter-century earlier

Lorraine Brander worked for twenty-odd years in a host of small factories around Vancouver, finally as a seasonal employee in fish canneries until her job was mechanized out of existence.

I wasn't born in Vancouver; we came here when I was nine, after my father died. My dad had been in the war and had a bad heart from serving in the army. He used to come down from Osoyoos, where we lived, to go to Shaughnessy Veterans'

Hospital and he died here in the Abbotsford Hotel. I guess it was early in 1946. It took about eight years before Mum got any of her veteran's widow pension. So she had to go to work to support us two kids.

Originally her family were from back east on the Prairies but most of them had moved to Vancouver. Her father, my grandfather, was here and her brother. She didn't want to stay in Osoyoos where everything reminded her of Dad, and she couldn't make a living there anyway. So we came to Vancouver and she got a job as a chambermaid. It didn't pay very much. She rented this big old house on Cordova Street East so she could take in boarders to make ends meet. They would help pay the rent. That's how she met my stepfather. I went to Seymour school, but coming from a one-room school they put me back a year so I was only in grade two.

What was it like as a kid moving from a small town into that neighbourhood? It was a lot of fun - playing in the alleys, playing kick-the-can and other games. Kick-the-can? That's like hide and seek, only you have a can that's 'home free' and you try and sneak past the person who's looking for you and kick the can before they can spot you and call out your name. That game was most fun after it was dark, hiding around the woodsheds and backyards and along the alleys when you were supposed to be getting ready for bed.

We used to play the same games as boys at that age. Like making forts out of cardboard boxes and scraps of lumber in vacant lots. We'd dig holes - our backyard was full of holes we'd dug for some game or other - and we'd make bonfires to roast wieners and potatoes. There were these flats down by Buckerfields that were all wild; and we'd play around the water a lot of times and get lickings for it.

There was a big open area underneath and beside the Hastings viaduct that was all boggy, about where they later built the Raymuir Housing project. People used to graze their horses there, junkmen's horses or I don't know whose. I used to love to go and watch them. There was even a swampy vacant lot beside the Francis Fay Rooms, right on Hastings Street, where you'd hear frogs groaking away.

A big gang of us used to do things together when I was nine and ten or eleven. Let's see, there was Tommy and Jimmy Brinkman and their little sister Gladys. God, I can't remember most of their names now, four or five boys and about the same

number of girls. We were mainly from the houses within two or three blocks.

Around Cordova and Glen Drive, when we lived there, it was more than two-thirds houses. There were some vacant lots, some warehouses and a few small factories. There were two sets of duplexes on our block, like row houses, about ten apartments. There there was a low sort of wooden apartment building that had a little restaurant on the ground floor where some of the older boys hung out. And on the far corner of the block were two big houses; one was beside a patch of bramble bush and across from that was the Active scrapyard.

On the other side of the street there was an old warehouse, with its doors wide open during the day. It had a cement floor, the only good flat cement surface for rollerskating around, and that's where we'd go. We used to rollerskate in there even when the men were working. It didn't seem to bother them; they didn't pay any attention to us and we stayed more or less away from where they were loading. They hardly ever chased us out.

Right across from us was a man who lived in an old house with a great big yard. That was about the only place that had trees and a nice lawn. He let us play in his yard and we'd go there to have play picnics with our dolls. We'd climb his plum tree and a cherry tree and eat the cherries. Our own backyards were dirt and stacked with firewood.

We used to play the same games as boys did, we did all the same things together. Of course, there would also be times when we girls played with our dolls too. I didn't have a wagon but I had a doll carriage and we would push that up and down the streets. Sometimes the boys would come along to annoy you, but they used to play hopscotch and skip rope with us too. And we'd go all over the place together.

My sister was three years younger than me so she used to tag along with us. Mum always used to say, 'Wait for your sister. Take Darleen along.' I'd take her along so far and then beat it fast and leave her behind. And I had to wait for her after school to go home together. Oh, that was a real cross to bear, I thought then.

Mum was working as a chambermaid at the Olympic Hotel and the Grand Hotel and later at the Lotus. My sister and me came home for lunch and had to make our own lunch. I'd have to look after her until Mum came home. I remember Mum's

usual day off was on Wednesday. Gee it was nice coming down the alley and seeing the clothes hanging out on the wash line. You knew that she was home. We used to run all the way down the alley to get home.

There was a huge dump yard beside the Hastings Street viaduct. When we first moved into the neighbourhood there were wrecked jeeps and army planes and things on that dump. And we'd play in around there. Oh, I got a heck of a spanking once for that. My mother caught us once when we were right up on top of the pile in one of those planes. All of a sudden there she was, down below, hollering her head off for us to come down. She smacked Darleen and me all the way home, because that scrap could have tipped over and we'd have been trapped under it. Our whole gang was climbing around in there.

Sometimes our bunch could be just plain brats too. There was a Japanese family living near our place when I was about ten and our gang used to bug them, what with the war just being over. You know what kids are like. This one time we knocked over their woodpile, me and my sister and this bunch of us. But my mother heard about that and, oh, we caught it at home. She marched us down the street by the scruff of the neck, one in each hand, down to their house. We had to go up to the door and apologize. We apologized and Mum apologized for us and she said, 'They're going to pile it back up.' I remember the man saying, 'Oh no, that's all right,' that he'd do it. But Mum said, 'No, they knocked it down so they'll pile it up.' It took us two days and sometimes our friends came by to laugh at us. We didn't think it was fair. Afterwards, that family invited us for supper and we were a little ashamed because we thought they were quite nice. Actually, I'm not even sure if they were Japanese, maybe they were Chinese, because we didn't know the difference.

Around that time I started to run away from home. I guess I was ten. There was a big vacant, grassy lot at the end of the block, and that's where I ran away to once. I must have gotten bawled out over something so I packed my dolls and went across the street and just sat in that lot all day. Bill - my stepfather - watched me from our house to see that everything was all right, but they wouldn't come and get me. So finally I came home around suppertime.

I was very jealous when Mum started going out with Bill and I did everything to get him out of the house, like inviting all my

girlfriends over for the night when he was going to be coming in. He was working on the C.P.R. barges running from Ladysmith to Vancouver then and I would lock the door from the inside so he couldn't get in when he came back. I ran away from home all the time for a while. I'd head over to my uncle's place and a few times I went to stay overnight with my grandfather, who was then the caretaker for the Astoria Hotel, that I'd pass on the way to school. I think the idea behind it was that if Mum knew I'd run away from home she'd get rid of Bill. I just was going to make them feel sorry.

Raising us two kids on what she made as a chambermaid was pretty hard on my mother. She was a young woman yet, only thirty-five at the time. She didn't get married again but she lived common law with my stepfather; he would have been in his mid-forties then. It was a pretty good thing that they didn't marry because if they had my Mum would have lost that little pension she finally got. Bill died quite a few years ago, but my mother is still getting her pension, which is some help anyway.

While I was growing up I never felt that we were all that poor. One thing, almost everybody around there was no better off so you didn't feel it so much. You don't mix much with people outside your own neighbourhood as a kid. The one thing I remember about not having money is shoes. Shoes were always quite expensive and I just had two pairs, one pair for school and one pair for play. We'd sometimes have to line the holes in the soles with cardboard till payday, when we were able to take them down to the shoe repair shop.

Sometimes we kids would go down to Campbell Avenue Wharf to get free fish. Lion's Gate Fish was one place. You'd go down with a tin bucket and they'd send down a line that you'd tie the bucket to. They'd haul it up to the second floor and send it back down to you with fish in it. Mainly it was left-over, already cooked, salmon cuts that they couldn't can. Whoever got there first would get some. There'd be a rumor that, say tomorrow, they were going to give away fish and you'd go down. Sometimes you'd get canned salmon in dented cans that they couldn't sell. The fish was pretty good. Now they don't give anything away; they'd rather throw it away than give it away if they can't use it.

We moved to Franklin and Victoria Drive, just up from the Princeton Hotel, a little before I turned thirteen, so I wasn't a kid around there too long. Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years of

age - when you grow up but you can still be a child at times. There was a boy who lived near us called Mervyn and he had a rowboat tied up by Sterling shipyard. We'd go out in that. Other times we'd build rafts with the boys from wood lying around the waterfront. We were always going to build one to go across to the North Shore, but we never did. You'd paddle and pole them around a bit, but the real fun was in building them. Then we'd go fishing bullheads; at least I only caught bullheads. Everybody else seemed to catch shiners or the occasional rock cod, but I never did. Somebody or another always had a shrimp net and we'd go shrimping off the docks.

In the summertime we might swim in the harbour; cross the tracks and head out Commissioner a ways to near B.C. Cold Storage. The water seemed clean enough, just that it was so cold. We'd splash around and lie on those big rocks that had been dumped there. It was only a few blocks from our place on Victoria Drive and I swam there from the time I was thirteen till I was almost fifteen. I was almost like a fish in the water at that time.

I wanted a bicycle so badly, but they were relatively expensive. Mum finally got me this second-hand bike and a bunch of us would ride down the side streets and along Commissioner, down a path beside the tracks, out to Windermere Pool in the summer. We'd take our bikes and ride on the docks, especially on Sundays. This one day we were having a little race on - what's the name of the elevator beside Buckerfields? Union Grain Growers. Well, the brakes weren't working so good on this old bike. There's a low timber curb around the edge of the pier and I hit that and went flying over the handlebars, over the side and down into the water. It was about twenty, twenty-five feet down. My bike must have somersaulted because it came down behind me. I was lucky that I didn't hit the boom logs they have along the pilings. It happened so fast that all I could think was, 'Oh, oily water, I'm going to get dirty.' And right after that I worried about my bike.

I really didn't start thinking till I'd come up to the surface and then I started paddling for the boom logs but they were slippery and I couldn't pull myself out. No, I wasn't afraid. I never had any fear of the water. The dock watchman and some guys off a ship came running down the dock, but none of them jumped in to save me though. This watchman came down the

ladder and pulled me out, but the bike is still down there I guess. Actually, I was more embarrassed than anything else. All the sailors from the boat were looking at me and I was at that age when you get embarrassed about everything.

That was the last bike I got. Yes, I guess my mother was quaking in her boots when she heard how I'd lost it. But you don't think about that when you're that age. 'No more bikes,' she said.

In 1949, when I was twelve going on thirteen, we were still playing together, a mix of boys and girls, but were just beginning to get interested in sex. We'd play post office in some old building with the boy next door. Nothing serious, just kissing and necking. But we might still go down to the water and hammer in nails into a raft with one of the boys at another time. I started going out on regular dates with the boy who lived across the alley. His father owned a drugstore and he used to bring me a box of candy or sometimes flowers and took me downtown to a movie and paid the way. I was thirteen and I thought it was great. Just so thrilling. I was real grown up then, I figured.

The next year I got sort of fussy and started doing my own laundry. And I didn't want my sister around me when I was with my friends. She was an old tattletale - that's what sisters always think - and I didn't want my mother to know everything I was doing. I was smoking then, but I still kept my dolls.

My best friend was Irene. We'd known each other and disliked one another in school. But we met once when we were both out walking alone in the rain and we became good friends. A bit later on the two of us would sneak off to a dance hall on Powell near the Drake Hotel and flirt with the sailors. We'd stand around outside the door and make eyes at these sailors going in and coming out. We were too scared to go out with any of them but we liked flirting with them. I think if any of them would really have approached us we would have run like rabbits. 'Oh, isn't he cute,' we'd say and stand there and giggle. No, I wasn't physically mature at all; I was almost fourteen but skinny as a rake. I used to wear my Mum's bra and put toilet paper inside to fill it out.

The only thing that I hated as the second-hand clothes we wore. I hated that ! Clothes, that was the one thing that I really wanted and felt embarrassed about. I remember one Christmas my grandfather took us downtown and bought my sister and

me a brand-new dress each for going out. It was the only one I'd ever had. I wore that dress to every party and date and then carefully put it away. Once this one boy asked me, 'Don't you have another dress to wear?' I could have sunk right through the floor.

I never noticed it as a kid, but in my teens I started to think that it was getting rough around there. There were some gang wars at the time, 1951 and 1952. I started to feel a little ashamed about living down there. If people didn't know me and I met them somewhere else I'd tell them I lived in the West End. But that didn't come up very often.

But I think I was a normal kid. I didn't have any hangups about dating or anything. I never felt unloved - we always had lots of that. Maybe I was a brat, sometimes I know I was. But I was never very sad or worried or anything. Just the normal things.

I left school at sixteen and got my first real job at Suzanne's Sportswear, a garment shop on the third floor of an old building across from the Dominion Bank Building. I was what they called a 'utility girl'; I trimmed off the loose threads from garments after sewing. Twenty dollars a week was the wage. Oh, I thought I was rich. I'd never had that much money before. I went clothes crazy; that's where all my pay went. I was supposed to pay ten dollars a week board at home but often I was broke before the next paycheque so I had to borrow it back again from Mum. That happened so often that she finally said, 'All right, you keep your money but you have to pay your own bus fare and expenses. I won't ask for board unless I really need it.' But I still never had any left at the end of the week.

I lived at home for years after I was already working, so I guess I wasn't so desperate to get away. Once I moved into a place of my own, but after I paid the rent there was hardly anything left, and I was sort of lonely. So I thought I might as well move back home. I was living with Mum and Bill when I first met Jens.

I really only began to listen to my stepdad after I started going out with Jens. They'd be sitting in the front room talking about politics and my ears started to perk up; I guess I was already twenty-five, twenty-six. I said to Jens, 'Jeez I think my dad's a communist.' And he says, 'Didn't you know that?' We'd never talked politics with Bill, but he had a real social

conscience. Like in the *Province* strike, for years after that he wouldn't take that paper. And he made sure we knew about scabs all right. Once, long after, when this Lenkurt strike was on, for a joke I said, 'Maybe I should go down there and apply for a job.' He just about hit the roof. 'If you take a job there you don't have to come back here.' And I was only joking.

My stepfather had gone to work at twelve as a waterboy in the coal mines in Wales and he'd been a seaman for a while before he came to Canada. He'd talk sometimes about how they'd rode the freights during the depression, travelling around, working on farms for food, heading up to the coal mines on the chance of getting a few days' work. But that wasn't the sort of things we wanted to hear about. As kids we were more interested in having him take us to the hockey games, so that's what he did. He used to sing 'The Red Flag' when he got drunk sometimes, and you know, for years, I thought that was the national anthem of Wales.

Well, he was my father actually, William Pugh, he's the one that helped raise us. He was sixty-four when he died of cancer - that's over ten years ago now. After he died I thought, 'Gee, I missed a lot that I could have learned.' You know what I mean? My mother is still alive today, but she's pretty sick. No, as a young woman I didn't have any sense of pride about coming from that part of town. I do now, thinking of all the people I knew and how decent they were.

Part Three Some Loose Ends

18. What We Didn't Know

Growing up during the 1940s, most of us knew very little about the history of the places around us. In school, teachers made a cursory (largely mythological) pass at Captain Vancouver, mentioned Colonel Moody of the Royal Engineers and Governor Douglas of the H.B. C., saluted the C.P.R. and let it go at that. In retrospect maybe it was just as well. But there was an awful lot about our own backyard which we had never heard of. If we knew something about more recent events along the Vancouver waterfront we certainly didn't know anything about the context in which they took place. We saw the city as always having been much as we knew it - and that is the way I have written these reminiscences. But now it's time to look at the historical developments which produced the urban environment of the 1940s

Don't look here for an urban history which documents the trajectories of industries and districts throughout the city or an analysis of the controlling and contending interest in city politics. I won't try to tabulate the changing population of Vancouver by ethnicity, occupation, schooling or voting patterns. I wish someone would pull together the studies already available and write such a history. When it is written presumably it will not come to a dead stop at the boundaries of Vancouver East and will hopefully rise above the treatment which working class districts often receive.

By the end of the 1860s Burrard inlet was an anchorage for lumber barques waiting to load at the recently established sawmills there. The forerunner of what would become Vancouver was merely a shantytown clustered around the Stamp (later Hastings) sawmill on the waterfront near the foot of present-day Jackson Avenue. A quarter mile west a scraggly collection of saloons and similar emporia was beginning to rise as a not very touristy 'Gastown'. It would later become the centre of the logger's district at Water and Carrall streets.

New Westminster, on the banks of the muddy Fraser river, was originally planned to be the economic and political locus of the lower B.C. mainland. The first overland connection to Burrard inlet was the Douglas road, cut from New Westminster

to New Brighton near the Second Narrows in 1876. A tote road had been Driven from New Brighton to Gastown by 1881. The wilds of what were to become Vancouver East were still working timber limits. The road from New Brighton ran west on the crest of a bank along present-day Wall street to Powell and then on to the Hastings sawmill complex. This road traced much of the route over which the No.20 streetcar line would run. But to us kids, New Brighton was a place to catch crabs and go swimming in summer. We knew beans about first roads or initial settlements, and cared less.

Apart from the labour of a few hundred thousand working people, Vancouver was the creation of the C.P.R. Locating the western terminus of that railway on the Burrard inlet harbour changed a sawmill hamlet into a booming boosterville and then into the major Canadian port on the Pacific.

Not counting earlier surveys and false starts, the primary construction of the Canadian Pacific through B.C lasted from 1881 to 1885. The first trains reached Burrard inlet in 1886 and the first transcontinental passenger service chugged into Vancouver in May 1887. While this lured real estate and commission agents, resource investors and similar fish large and small, the C.P.R did set in motion the massive and irreversible settlement of the southern portion of B.C. A stream of working people from both eastern Canada and more distant lands began flowing into the province bringing with them the wild dream of actually earning a decent living in this western Avalon.

The vast blocks of crown lands transferred to the C.P.R, as a subsidy for its construction, were gradually sold or held as an investment by that company. Whatever the degree of C.P.R. dominance it continued to be the largest private landholder in the city. This fact was mirrored in a riddle which made the rounds of Hastings grade school in the mid 1940s. It went like this. Question: 'What's the difference between the C.N.R. and the C.P.R. ?' Answer: 'Canada owns the C.N.R. but the C.P.R. owns Canada.!' It was an old saw which presumably had filtered down through somebody's parents. Yet even school children knew that railways were more than just trains and engineers sitting at the windows of the locomotives. But that's getting ahead of the story.

Back in 1889, a brief three years after the arrival of the first train, some of the original brick commercial buildings which

were to characterize the downtown eastside throughout the 1940s were already rising along Hastings and Cordova streets. The tracks of the first streetcar line, running in a U from False Creek down through the city core and back again, were laid the same year. In the following year, 1890, tracks were laid running east on Powell street.

False-fronted stores, wooden apartment blocks, private homes and varied commercial establishments mushroomed east along Powell and the surrounding side streets to engulf the bunkhouses already strung along the waterfront. Most of the houses which still dominated 'Powell street' fifty later were built during the 1890s. South of Hastings street the Strathcona district arose as a residential area,

By 1895 the Powell street line had reached Campbell Avenue, then near the eastern limits of the docks and waterfront industry. Three years later the original Rogers' Sugar refinery, one of the largest factories in the city, was built on the waterfront nearby. A few lumber and shingle were scattered as far east as Cedar Cove. The Powell streetcar line was then allegedly the best paying route in the system. Along the route were many of the city's mills, operating full tilt. The only comparable area was around False Creek, which was also bustling with sawmills and housing.

The recurrent economic depressions which swept through North America (a half-dozen between the late 1870s and 1930) periodically curtailed the growth of the resource industries but only briefly checked the expansion of Vancouver. A truly frenetic series of resource and development booms began to course through B.C. by the later 1890s. Apart from a single brief recession they proceeded until shortly before World War 1. Unprecedented amounts of capital poured into the resource and primary processing industries; into fish canning, mining, logging and sawmilling, into new rail lines, docks and comparable facilities. In the course of twenty-five years, from 1890 to 1915, most of the infrastructure which would characterize B.C. until the late 1940s was laid down.

This development boom had a special relevance to Vancouver. By the turn of the century the city had become the predominant centre of commercial and financial capital in the province. Agents and branch offices of distant consortiums, both Canadian and foreign, began to multiply. Two main waves

of building created the face of the city core. The first was a continuation of the initial construction boom, which slackened but did not stop during the 1894 depression. Brick commercial buildings in late Victorian Gothic steadily replaced the original structures of the inner city during the course of the early 1900s. Here and there the original wooden stores survived, like the one housing the Universal Bookstore on Hastings near Main.

Most corporate construction came to a standstill during the brief but sharp recession in the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century. Following this, the construction of office and bank buildings occurred at an unprecedented pace. The structures which arose during this period - the Dominion Bank building, the Cotton-Carter building, the Rogers' building and others - were of a new scale and design. Despite corbelled arches, columns and marble decorations, they were among the most advanced buildings of their time. Like the Sun Tower, they used steel girders and concrete as basics. They remained, well into the 1940s, the 'modern buildings' of downtown Vancouver.

Most of the loggers' hotels and commercial buildings of the downtown eastside were also raised between the turn of the century and World War I. The downtown city and its skyline was largely complete by the end of 1912. Vancouver was a modern, late Edwardian, city which remained cast in that mould for almost two generations.

As with the buildings, so too with much of the industry and infrastructure; initially very modern it gradually became anachronistic. All of the major shipping companies, their docks, and even a number of the self-same ships which were in service in 1913, were still in operation in 1949. Many of the initial companies, like Rogers' Sugar Refinery, still operated in the same (sometimes only slightly changed) factories by mid-century. The trams and streetcars which clanged their way through town in the 1940s were often of the same design, and sometimes were even the same cars, which had been around at the beginning of the First World War. And out in the coastal logging camps and up-country work places, the same or similar machines and skills and experiences of the previous era had only just begun to give way during the Second World War.

The Powell Street line reached Cedar Cove, at Victoria and Powell, in 1906. There the Heaps sawmill constituted the easternmost limit of waterfront industry. There already was a crescent of private houses and bunkhouses nearby. An outrider of downtown brick buildings, centering around the Princeton Hotel, sprung up around the streetcar terminus during the next few years.

In 1909 the Vancouver City Council extended the eastern boundary of Vancouver from Nanaimo to Renfrew Street, incorporating the whole of the district into what was to become the first streetcar suburb in the city. A feeding frenzy of real estate dealing and development burst through the district. That same year the Powell Street line (rechristened the No. 20 line) was extended from Cedar Cove, switchbacked up the low domed hill which constituted the Highland district, and tracked out to its eastern terminus at Renfrew and Eton. Here the initial development of Hastings Park was underway. At the downtown end of the line the tracks were looped from Cambie to Granville and then back east on Cordova. By the end of 1909, the No. 20 line as it was to operate until it closed down in 1949 had been completed.

By 1910 the residential areas in and around the downtown core, those in Strathcona, and even the slopes overlooking False Creek, were becoming filled. Shortly after the completion of the No. 20 line other streetcar routes were extended along Hastings Street and up Commercial Drive to open up additional sections of Vancouver East as streetcar suburbs. These new tracts drew off much of the speculative interest in the Highland district, leaving many blocks only half built up.

Almost immediately, most of these suburbs were fully serviced with road grids, piped water and sewer mains, electricity and telephone lines. They were the offspring of the new urban planning. They were zoned almost exclusively for single family dwellings. Zoning regulations ruled out not only industries and work places but also bunkhouse apartments, hotels, beer parlours and indeed most of the non-residential accoutrements of city life. Thus, housing was removed from work, from most shops and from what went to make up the Vancouver of migrant campworkers. Residents of the new suburbs were expected to, and did, travel back and forth from work and town by streetcar. Streetcar suburbs were indeed the

forerunners of present-day suburbs, differing mainly in their proximity to the downtown core.

A gradually deepening recession again gripped B.C. shortly before the advent of the First World War. It coincided with the approaching completion of much of the transport and industrial infrastructure in the province. Vancouver's economy, as distinct from that of many other regions, did continue to expand, however spasmodically, owing to the war industries and manufacturing concentrated in the city. The second generation of dockside facilities, the Great Northern Pier, Pier D, and Lapointe Pier, that massive grain elevator complex at the eastern edge of the harbour, were completed by 1915.

Vancouver's thrust to becoming a major world port was given a boost by the opening of the Panama Canal after World War I. Shipping rates dropped sufficiently to allow semi-processed goods from B.C., especially lumber, to enter markets on the eastern seaboard and even in western Europe. Elevator and dock facilities to ship grain and lumber were considerably expanded. Terminal dock was built - almost a mile east of the main dockyard area - in 1926. That constituted the tail end of the dock expansion, with the exception of the grain elevators. Grain elevators continued to be built or expanded throughout the decade and into the next, both on the Vancouver and North Shore sides of Burrard Inlet. The huge Alberta Wheat Pool silos near the Second Narrows were begun at the end of the twenties.

While shingle and sawmills, with their associated log booming grounds, continued to lace the eastern and northern shores of the inlet, while lumber mills continued to whine away around False Creek, this original industrial base was already being transferred outside the city by the late twenties. Hastings sawmill, the biggest mill in the city at the beginning of the decade, was closed in 1926 and its yards at the foot of Jackson Avenue converted to secondary manufacturing plants. While total lumber exports continued to rise dramatically, Vancouver was becoming predominantly a centre for transshipment, a locus of secondary industry and of service facilities.

Unlike a number of the smaller industrial and mining towns of the B.C. coast and interior, Vancouver did not develop as a solidly working-class city. Its waterfront sections and

campworker district were, in part, an extension of the resource industries stretching throughout the province. To a certain extent these districts were an anomaly in the changing city.

After the working-class radicalism which attended the decade ending with 1919, the 1920s in Vancouver (and throughout North America) were a period of intense political and social reaction. 'Onward Christian Soldiers' replaced 'Hold the Fort' as the drumbeat of the decade. Much of the recently vibrant union organizations were smashed; anti-orientalism, legislated racism and reaction witnessed electoral triumph. It was a great time for investors, or so it must have seemed in the early spring of 1929.

During the eleven years of the great depression very little construction took place in Vancouver. There were some additions to the waterfront facilities -the Campbell Avenue fish wharf was built in the early thirties, and some grain elevators were expanded. There were also a handful of prestige developments which could be built on the cheap by investors with substantial reserves. The new Vancouver Hotel, the Marine Building, a couple of high rise bank buildings and the Lion's Gate Bridge went up during that decade of unemployment and belt-tightening. A new city mausoleum was also raised at Twelfth and Cambie. They were projects which captured the imagination of postcard photographers but had little to do with everyday life in the city.

While the physical growth of the city came to a general standstill during the great depression, the apparent political somnolence of the twenties was broken. As desperate as the times were - partly because of this desperation - men and women in unprecedented numbers began taking the first costly steps toward forming unions and other organizations which could defend them. Some of the echoes of that, the more human component of Vancouver East's history, form the theme of the following chapter.

There was an actual retrogression in the physical landscape of the city in some districts during the 1930s as various industrial plants stood idle and decayed, as shops closed up and as building lots returned to dense brush. It's possible that parts of Vancouver were more rural at the beginning of the 1940s than they were in the 1920s.

Only in the middle of the Second World War did Vancouver begin to stagger into its next phase of growth, however disjointedly at first. Massive war industries such as the shipyards arose almost overnight, often adjacent to swaths of open wasteland and abandoned sawmills. Men and women workers poured into the city from everywhere. Yet after the spring of 1942, with the deportation of the Japanese-Canadian population, a long stretch of Powell Street became virtually depopulated. This then was the Vancouver I first knew.

Life along the No. 20 line, in fact, was not really typical of the city as a whole by the 1940s. There were smaller counterparts elsewhere, like the area around False Creek, the North Vancouver waterfront east of Lonsdale, and the Marpole district along the North Arm of the Fraser. But by then the bulk of Vancouver's population was already well removed from direct involvement with docks and harbour traffic, rail lines and scrapyards. Already, the rattle of freight trains, the whine of boom winches and the clunkering of beehive slab burners were probably exotic (or just annoying) sounds to many. The loggers and miners, retired prospectors, campworkers and seamen who made up so large a proportion of our city were really a small minority. But they made up most of the adults I knew then.

That Vancouver was not a series of 'urban villages'; it was not like the stereotyped folksy and colourful working-class districts portrayed in some accounts. People were not members of some 'neighbourhood community', they did not necessarily agree in basic beliefs and they did not usually know what their neighbours were doing or thinking. Many of those living in the area had shaken loose the dust of distant parishes and left behind the bucolic charms of small home towns and custom-ridden shires. One of the appealing features of urban life was indeed the degree of anonymity possible. The City was a place to which people came not only for jobs but to escape the fetters of parochial restrictions.

Many of those who lived and worked along the Vancouver waterfront and those who passed through from camps came from a wide variety of backgrounds. It was a polyglot population. Local allegiances often went hand in hand with supra-national loyalties. If there were often contradictions in these enthusiasms, they were certainly more vital and more

outward looking than the colonial patriotism officially promulgated.

Some adopted Vancouverites brought with them experiences of situations and struggles sometimes more advanced than those which yet existed locally. While there were those whose interests extended only to their front porches, there were other people whose worlds ranged from their next door neighbours to the Ultima Thule. Native born and immigrant, many were a cosmopolitan lot.

Despite certain anachronisms and contradictions, despite the existence of some *real* ghettos, Vancouver was an international seaport on the resource frontier. Today, a part of the current enthusiasms about ethnic traditions seem to be a retrogressive response to worsening times, of a longing for a world of warm, assured personal relationships. I doubt that there ever were any ethnic communities like that. Incredible as it may seem to some today, numbers of immigrants once felt that their 'inherited' national and ethnic traditions were not the most crucial things in their own lives or in the world around them. Maybe this wasn't a typical Canadian community.

Before we end, let us return to the downtown end of the No. 20 line in 1949 and board it for a ride back to where we started. There is an aspect of the Vancouver waterfront which still has to be heard from.

19. Even the Stones Have Voices

At the downtown end of the No. 20 line the streetcars rest on the slope of Cambie in the shadow of the Dominion Bank building. Across the street, on the benches lining Victory Square, sit aging men (and a few women) who, in 1949, could tell of events from before the turn of the century they had experienced as already active adults. Some of their accounts might have astonished us - had they talked and had we listened. But, despite what follows, we kids weren't much interested. Knowledge of working-class struggles which had occurred along the line was mainly the result of osmosis and

of normal inattention. It was part of a general background. It wasn't *history*.

Among many working people in Vancouver then, all you had to do was mention the epithet 'Gerry McGeer' and the story spilled out of how Mayor McGeer had read the riot act and unleashed a mob of waiting police against a rally of unemployed men at Victory Square during the depression. It had happened fourteen years before, but many remembered it as if it happened last month. They talked of how the riot squad came charging out of the alleys swinging their clubs, bloodying heads and arresting men unable to disperse quickly enough. They told of men who regrouped and marched on the police station to demand the release of their arrested comrades. Gerry McGeer gained a certain historical permanence through the still-verdant hatred of men and women who had been there and of others who were with them in spirit. But by 1949 events like these had been purged from official history.

You didn't have to go back a dozen years. The printing plant of the Vancouver *Province* flanked Victory Square, and in 1947 and 1948 it was enmeshed in a struggle which heralded the post-war attack on labour. The paper had broken off negotiations with its printers, had locked them out and had attempted to run the presses with imported strikebreakers. Delivery trucks carrying the first issues of the scab-produced *Province* were halted by the strikers and the copies seized. This assault on 'freedom of the press' and similar high principles brought out squads of Chief Mulligan's finest. Paddy wagons fringed the picket lines for some months. The strike dragged on for almost two years.

One of the most telling aspects of the *Province* strike was the massive boycott of that newspaper by working people throughout Vancouver. Previously the largest circulation daily in the city, the paper lost nearly a half of its readership; even more in Vancouver East. Although the strike ultimately failed, the *Province* was so weakened that it was later absorbed by Pacific Press - no real improvement. But it was a rather remarkable achievement for a largely spontaneous boycott by working people throughout the city. Such responses were a part of Vancouver East during the late 1940s.

From the Dominion Bank Building the No. 20 swings west in a loop up Hastings, making its first stop at Homer. Two blocks south, across from the Alcazar Hotel, stands what had once

been the Vancouver Labour Temple. Some friends don't like the conjunction of 'temple' with 'labour'; it truckles to Masonic Lodge religiosity and respectability. Leo Paulcer has a tale about the place. According to him, during the First World War, as the dead and the profits began to pile up, many working people in Vancouver began to vocally oppose conscription. There were mass rallies and something of a general protest strike against the war. It was broken up by patriotic vigilantes who also wrecked the Labour Temple and beat up strike leaders like Ernie Winch.

Actually, that is not exactly the way it happened. I don't think that Leo had heard of Ginger Goodwin or his murder, which sparked that 'anti-war' strike in July 1918. And he had that confrontation mixed up with the sympathy strikes which swept Vancouver in the spring of 1919, in support of the Winnipeg General Strike. It all seemed somewhat improbable to me as a kid. But in fact, the history of the B.C. labour movement during that long distant decade was even more dramatic and improbable than that related to me. How Leo knew of those events I'll never know. It was the kind of compressed, partly refashioned, oral history which some scholars dismiss.

Three blocks further west at Hastings and Granville, the No. 20 turns north past Vancouver's main post office and brakes down the hill to Cordova. Only a decade before, some hundreds of men led by the 'Union of the Unemployed' (Relief Camp Workers Union) had occupied that post office in an attempt to pressure the government to begin a program of public works for wages. After a six-week occupation they were forced out with tear gas and had to run a gauntlet of club-swinging police. Some fled down Hastings street, others were carried to the Ukrainian Labour Temple in the East End, where they received first aid. Later the same day a mass rally of Vancouver citizens overflowed the Powell Street Grounds and surrounding streets in angry defense of the post office sitdowners.

It really didn't seem like history. One family friend had been a camp delegate for the Relief Camp Workers Union while another had thrown open his basement rooms to men fleeing the attack on the post office. My parents had canvassed for contributions for the sitdowners, who they visited in the post office. At the same time they were themselves barely eking out

an existence in a Pender Street rooming house, unemployed and with a two-year-old kid and a dog. Today the post office occupation is a fairly well-known page of Canadian labour history, but thirty years ago it was still another of those official non-events. While one can only hail its re-emergence into the light of day, it is not likely that school lessons will ever capture the power of having it told to you in person by friends who were there.

Making the turn onto Cordova you can see beyond the C.P.R. docks the stark form of the Immigration Building, an isolated four-storey oblong of dirty brown brick. Walking by it you might sometimes see incarcerated aliens awaiting 'trial' or deportation after some star chamber hearings. They appeared as heads and arms stretched through the iron bars of top-floor windows. The building always had an aura of the midnight knock on the door about it.

The No. 20 rolls round past the C.P.R. rail terminal. It rumbles back east along Cordova past a vista of rail yards and harbour at the rear of Spencer's, east past Cambie and into the loggers' district at Abbott. In the next block, wedged between beer parlours, beaneries and loggers' hotels, is 60 West Cordova. It's an unremarkable old brick building which had been a centre of labour militancy from before World War I. It had been the I.W.W. meeting hall in Vancouver and housed its lending library. During the 1920s it served as the offices of the Lumberworkers Industrial Union (O.B.U.), and in the early 1930s it became the regional headquarters of the Workers Unity League. Organizers and supporters of who knows how many organizational campaigns and rallies had known it. Harvey Murphy and Arthur Evans and dozens of other once-'notorious agitators' and labour organizers had passed through here.

Down the block, at the corner of Carrall and Cordova, soap box speakers such as Sam Scarlett and Bill Bennett and others, already long ago, had held forth. Hjalmar Bergren, Ernie Dalskog and other early organizers of the I.W.A. had circulated around here in their time. At the foot of Carrall, a block away and over the tracks, Frank Rogers, a pioneer Socialist Labour leader, had been shot and killed by 'unidentified' regulators during the C.P.R. strike over forty years before. But in 1949 I saw and knew only a loggers' district, then just beginning to decline into a Bowery.

Between Carrall and Gore the C.P.R. tracks ran parallel to the No. 20 line. Not so long ago, men had caught the outward-bound freights along this stretch, off chasing the hope of a job somewhere. And in 1935 the initial contingents of an army of thousands of unemployed boarded boxcars here, bound on the On-to-Ottawa Trek. Everybody knows about that, don't they ?

The streetcar rolls east past Main through the former Japanese district to Dunlevy and the Powell Street Grounds. It's a quiet, dusty square of summer baseball games. Yet this square had been the locale of free-speech fights and mass demonstrations and working-class rallies from before World War I and on. In the thirties there had been a near-continual round of hunger marches, mass meetings to support the Canadian volunteers fighting in Spain and defense rallies for the boys in the post office. Until the mid-1950s many of the May Day parades formed up here for their march to Stanley Park.

The Grounds are still a backyard to longshoremen from the neighbouring dispatch halls. You might see Fred Mattersdorfer sitting on his porch, or in the park, playing classical guitar. Raised in the vortex of the Kootenay mining towns in the terrible twenties, veteran of the battlefields of Spain in the International Brigades, he now works on the docks. He and his family live across the alley on Alexander street.

A half-block east on Powell we pass the former hall of the Japanese Camp and Millworkers Union. For twenty years they issued their newspaper, the *Daily People*, from here and organized educationals and political meetings among the Japanese-Canadian population. They had struggled with the bosses in their own community and had attempted to organize and link up Japanese workers with the wider, sometimes hostile, union movement.

One day shortly after the Second World War had ended, my father pointed out the offices of the Japanese Campworkers Union to me. The building was deserted and Japanese-Canadians were still barred from returning to coastal B.C. In effect, he said that most 'Japanese' were also working people and that I should know of the kind of Japanese who had once congregated around here. I think now that he was trying to say something else to me as well, which he couldn't put into words. In fact he pointed out the Japanese Hall over on Alexander Street, which had actually been the centre of those

elements in the Japanese community opposed to the Union. It was merely a two-minute comment to an unresponsive ten-year-old. That's often the way of such accounts; less than accurate but nevertheless important.

We're passing the Drake Hotel on Princess now, still a longshoremen's hangout. Down the street and a block north across the tracks is Ballantyne pier. Supposedly J.S. Woodsworth had worked on the docks around here sometime in the early twenties, but that's sort of apocryphal. 'Bloody Ballantyne,' however, was a widely known part of local history. Many people had reminiscences of how, 'in the depression,' the longshoremen had reorganized and struck for wages and union recognition. Somehow, the fact that scabs had to be brought in by boat to reach the docks stuck in people's minds. But the most powerful accounts were of how the R.C.M.P. had been brought in to smash the picket lines and how they had ridden down men who fled through the side streets and back alleys near the waterfront, pursuing their quarry even onto the porches of the surrounding houses. Oh yeah, we knew about that. But the story about police machine guns being set up at the dockyard gate seemed rather exaggerated. 'Not in Canada,' I thought, incorrectly.

A family acquaintance told an anecdote about how he and a couple of other guys had hightailed it down the tracks from Ballantyne that day and had gotten as far as Princess street with the cops right behind them. They made it into the Drake Hotel, scrambled out a back exit, over some back fences and from there to the comparative safety of Hastings street. It was something he always remembered whenever he went to the Drake for a beer.

We've passed Heatley and are going past Hawks. Three blocks south, on the edge of the Strathcona district, is the Ukrainian Labour Temple, an undistinguished-looking hall of just another fraternal order, so it seems. But the Ukrainian Labour Temple didn't revolve around ethnic nationalism. True enough, they had their share of dances and festivities and food for the belly as well as for the mind. Yet if you had a listing of all the benefits, memorials, and organizations which had held rallies in that hall since it was established, you would have a roster of much of what moved progressive people in Vancouver over the past fifty years. Makar Potrebenko, witness to the Russian revolution, ex-homesteader, and

confirmed folk historian, might be at one of their dos, or over in the Russian Peoples' Hall two blocks away, when he was in town for a breather from rock drilling around Franklin River camp.

We're coming around the curve at Campbell Avenue, past the Oriental Hospital. That was a place full of experiences quite unknown to us. Apart from the Chinese green grocers and cafe operators we saw, there'd been Chinese coal and hard rock miners, smelterworkers, loggers and sawmill workers, railway section hands and cannery workers. We knew little of them and less still about men like Joe Eng and the part they played in events like the Blubber Bay strike. Oral traditions do have their limits.

Beyond Rogers' Sugar Refinery are the Tar Flats. This was a 'hobo' jungle housing unemployed men in makeshift shelters during the start of the hungry thirties. Before the relief camps were instituted, gentlemen of the city relief agencies sporadically doled out slices of bread and the odd potato to the 'transients' here. Some men wouldn't take the treatment handed out, no matter how hungry they were. More than a decade later, others remembered with tight-lipped bitterness less the desperation of those desperate times than the indignities and calumny heaped upon the unemployed. But that was something which few men would express openly, especially around their own children.

We pass Burns packing plant, where my mother worked. Pat Burns has now entered the pantheon of 'pioneer, self-made Canadian entrepreneurs. Already long dead, Burns is remembered a little differently by some who had had dealings with his outfit. 'He was a cheesely, chisely son of a bitch anyways,' says one guy. There have been attempts to unionize that plant throughout the 1930s and 1940s, all of them broken so far.

Two blocks east, at Salisbury, the entrance to Lapointe pier is about to be blocked by pickets of the Canadian Seamen's Union. In the spring and summer of 1949 they are facing the coordinated assault of the ship owners, the St. Laurent government, and the courts. The Shipping Federation, a notorious combination of the major waterfront employers, has recently imported Hal Banks and the Seafarers International Union with the tacit approval of the true-blue labour movement. It will prove to be too much for the Canadian seamen. It is near the end of deep-sea shipping flying the

Canadian flag anyway. But that story is more connected with Terminal dock in my memory.

We roll past Cedar Cove, past Wall Street, and begin to climb the hill up Dundas. Two blocks east is Ernie Winch's house; he is still with us in '49. There are any number of parables about him. 'Never even owned a car and only had one old suit when he went into the legislature.' Stories revolving around once-important symbols of egalitarianism. Less widely known is Malcolm Bruce, who until recently had lived two blocks away near Wall street. A contemporary of Tim Buck, one of the founders of the Communist Party of Canada, a political prisoner during the early thirties - an already forgotten historical figure.

Near Templeton Drive stand a couple of houses which were part of the last anti-eviction action in the district. In the middle of the Second Great War the family of a Canadian soldier living in one of those houses was ejected for non-payment of rent. Their furniture and belongings were piled onto the sidewalk in the rain. It remained there for two, maybe three days, at which time a group of neighbours broke into the locked house, moved the family back in and mounted a picket to block further eviction. The police arrived but backed off. There had been dozens of similar actions some years earlier, but this was a serviceman's family, not just some unemployed worker's. It became a cause celebre. Finally the city fathers came across with the lease of a bordering vacant lot and local volunteers built a cottage for the evicted family there. All right, good enough.

The bitterly ironic prelude to this anti-eviction action was the internment of the entire Japanese-Canadian population and the later confiscation of their properties - all quite legal of course. Canadians of Japanese ancestry were members of an 'enemy race' don't you know. It's a sobering comment that almost all progressive and working-class organizations bowed to the hysteria of the times.

A Japanese-Canadian family owned that small grocery store across the way. In the spring of 1942 they were interned. I remember that particular scene because we came by the day the family was being moved out. They were out in the street, boarding over the windows of the store and packing some personal belongings into the back of a truck. It looked to me like a camp being closed up, except that this was a family, not

a crew of loggers. Of course, no child could truly understand what was involved.

At the end of the No. 20 line you could see newly strung barbed wire fences surrounding Hastings Park. Over ten thousand Japanese-Canadians passed through the packed exhibition buildings there, on their way to internment camps in the interior. Men, then women and children, carrying as much of a lifetime of work and savings as a 150 pound bundle might contain. Among them was the family who lived across the way on Wall Street and their two boys my own age who I'd played with.

A few times on the way home my mother and I made a detour past Hastings Park. Despite the many people who must have been there the park was ominously quiet, with only a few children playing, far back from the fences. Some others were crowded on a small second-floor balcony of the Food Building, looking out over the nearby golf course where caddies trailed around behind sportsmen at their games. And then they were all gone.

Of course, in 1949, events of seven years before were already in the distant past for me. Much of the rest was in the realm of oral tradition. And naturally, people didn't rake up the past indiscriminately or systematically recall all the events mentioned here as they rode along the line. I'd only seen or walked by or played around the places with figured in many of these stories. And some I learned of only later. But the accounts were sufficiently alive so that personal experiences, such as that of the C.S.U. strike at Terminal dock, fitted into them very smoothly.

There's a dormancy, if also a certain durability, to oral traditions. And in youth there is often a bumptious pride bordering on arrogance. For instance, about the times I started my first job I also began ransacking the downtown library on whatever materials it had on the Spanish civil war. Incredibly. I had the sure conception that my interests and unformed understandings were arrived at quite independently.

While the sweep of paleo-conservatism during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s was general, it was not uncontested nor was it universal. But I am still unable to decide on the *substantive* significance of the tradition of working-class internationalism and militancy in B.C. Was it important of not the in 1948, or so, we 'knew' that dockworkers in eastern

Canada had refused to handle arms bound for the Royal Greek army colonels then engaged in saving Greece from the Greeks? Was it of any significance that Vancouver longshoremen, at about the same time, once refused to load Bren gun carriers being shipped to Deng Kai Shek? Sitting in the Olympia theatre at the beginning to the 1950s watching a newsreel clip of the apparent French Reconquista of Tonkin China, was it of any real consequence that a short staccato of booing arose from members of a suburban, working-class audience ? And during the Korean war, when the St. Laurent government had sent Canadian troops to help make the world a safer place for the Syngman Rhee, was there really anybody watching when walls along Powell street sprouted messages of 'No Conscription'? Maybe there was. Because during the height of the cold war, in 1954, some twenty thousand working people turned up at the Blaine Peace Arch to hear Paul Robeson, then barred from leaving the Great Republic, sing for a peace rally organized by the Mine, Mill and Smelterworkers Union. The 1950s were not populated exclusively by habitues of sockhops, platter parties or the comparable juvenilia dished up in media nostalgia.

20. Goodbye To All That

Despite ongoing changes there was a certain coherence to Vancouver for almost two generations. But the mid-twentieth century ushered in a transformation which rapidly eliminated much of that earlier world, for better and for worse.

The No.20 line was closed down in July of 1949 and most of the remaining streetcar lines in the city were dismantled over the next few years. A minor enough change in itself but one indicative of a more fundamental transformation then beginning to take place. Vancouver as it had existed more or less from World War 1 began to be rebuilt during the 1950s.

The boathouses which lined parts of Burrard inlet were all demolished during the early 1950s. The remaining mud beaches and open stretches of shoreline where we once played were bulldozed over to become the sites of chemical factories,

coal and sulphur dumps or, much later, guarded private marinas. The Tar Flats and other patches of harbourside wasteland have disappeared, replaced by fenced off storage yards emblazoned with the 'No Trespassing' signs which, along with the omnipresent 'security guards', have become emblematic of the current Vancouver waterfront. Everywhere the vacant lots which once sustained a profusion of weeds and berry bush and willow tangle have all been 'developed'. And everywhere house crowds upon house.

Most of the industrial infrastructure mentioned in these reminiscences is gone, torn down a near generation ago of just yesterday. South Burrard and almost all the other shipyards on the south shore of Burrard inlet are long gone. So too is Burn's packing plant and the Mainland Foundry, virtually all of the sawmills and most of the small engineering shops which catered to marine traffic are also gone. Even the older grain elevators, which seemed as solid and massive as the mountains, have fallen to the wrecking hammer; the Columbia elevator on Wall street, the old grain elevator west of Campbell Avenue dock and Buckerfields.

The coastal passenger and freight docks have followed the demise of the ships: the Union Steamships dock, Evans-Colman-Evans and also the slips which once harboured pods of work boats. The C.N. Steamship dock has been torn down while the C.P.R. docks have been rebuilt to service the summer cruise ship tours. Ballentyne pier and Terminal dock continue [until the mid 1980s] in use by deep sea freighters but have fallen into the last stages of decrepitude. In 1980 the Campbell Avenue wharf, with its swirling fish boats and little canneries, persists [until demolished in the late 1990s] as one of the few relatively unchanged locales along the shore. The glowering mass of the Rogers Sugar Refinery also still stands little altered, a salient reminder that life and work along the earlier waterfront was far from rosy.

Gone too are the family homes and pensioners' bunkhouses which were entwined with the workshops and plants along the No.20 line. They and the people who lived there have been replaced by a solid mass of light industry which now forms a cordon separating the downtown eastside from the residential districts of Vancouver East. By mid-century, the first waves of car-shod working-class families had begun to flow into the tract housing beyond the city's margin. Who can dispute their

search for more liveable environs? Yet, as a result, the formerly separate farming communities of the Fraser Valley have become melded into a single, huge, urban sprawl which increasingly takes on the character of a northern Los Angeles.

In any case, few working-class families today have any reasonable expectation of acquiring a home in Vancouver proper. Wall street, once an urban backwater, is now packed with new and old houses which have soared in price to the hundreds of thousands of dollar figure [c.\$350,000-\$400,000 by 2003] As older working class families sell off or die they are largely replaced by other kinds of residents. If fortunate, working people may find an apartment in the new tenements which have gradually replaced homes through much of the district.

Traffic has played havoc with much of the area. The former route of the No.20 lines has been turned into an expressway for trucks and cars swarming in over the Second Narrows bridge and from the eastern suburbs. Commuters' cars pour through the district in their mad rush, beeping and jostling down Powell, screeching through the side streets we wandered along. You cross at your own peril. It's a recurrent fate of many older working class areas.

The metropolitan Vancouver region, of course, has grown tremendously in the last thirty years. It has changed internally and in its relation to the rest of the province. It has become a more or less 'self-sustaining' megalopolis which might be found almost anywhere in North America. For most Vancouverites today the resource industries, the harbour and the coast are a colourful but extraneous backdrop to the real business of making a living in the city. Vancouver is no longer the 'town' through which people circulate to and from work 'up-coast' or the 'interior'

Whatever the ultimate bases of wealth, the last quarter-century has witnessed a massive expansion of the financial-commercial and related service sectors of Vancouver. It has generated shoals of executives, junior and senior, marketing advisors and public relations consultants, convention hotel keepers and similar entrepreneurs and their employees in unprecedented numbers. Some of what this new middle class hath wrought or brought in its wake has made Vancouver a more urbane place, if you have the price to pay for it. But it has also spawned a raucous kleagledom of demagogues who

earn their keep by disseminating a sometimes suave and at other times rabid hostility towards working people, their interests and their organizations. Complemented by resurgent Bible Belt views and sometimes joined by members of groups which themselves were the objects of attack in the recent past, this frumpy Babbitry has both fed upon and helped to entrench the deepening reaction which marks the past decade.

Most recently, a social decay of American proportions has come to fasten itself onto the life of Vancouver. Hoodlumism threatens to become endemic and the aged, the poor and the great majority of decent people in the inner core and elsewhere throughout the city now face the unchecked ravages of a corrosive hoodlum scum in their midst. And from the crevices and crannies of our town rises the stink of unfettered political reaction. It is particularly ominous given the dissipation of the working class consciousness which, in degree, once existed.

Whatever the ideological trajectory of the labour movement since the purges of the late 1940s and early 1950s, whatever the changes in self-perception by working people, the underlying bases of our economic and political system as a whole have not fundamentally altered. The struggles necessary to gain and retain even a modicum of security have proceeded during the past three decades as they did earlier. The thrust of rank-and-file union activists attempting to wrest some equity from the system is no longer limited to industrial workers. It now includes clerical workers, service workers, government employees and others.

Possibly the most symbolic change along the No.20 line has been in the former loggers' district, where the physical structure has changed but little. You'd be hard pressed to find a working logger, miner or campworker around Carrall and Cordova today. Part of the district has become a touristy 'Gastown', much of the rest a skid row. A remnant of retired men who knew the area in it's prime may still be around. But now kids and their parents who pass through the district often do so with a mixture of smugness and contempt for 'those bums and drunks' they believe they see everywhere. But was it data managers and hairstylists who raised this city?

It is probably unavoidable that a note of nostalgia has crept into the foregoing chapters. It can be savoured or discounted as a quality of reminiscence about youth. Certainly that earlier

Vancouver wasn't all *that* great. Certainly the city had its share of know-nothingism, of petty narrow-mindedness, of its own Mr. and Mrs. Blocks and of assorted other failings. If any counterbalancing provisos are needed the accounts by men and women already employed around the city industries during the 1940s make clear that work was not necessarily rewarding nor life particularly equitable. Still, it was somehow different from today; it had an aura of hope for a different, a better, world in the making. That hope of rising as a class and not as an individual is now largely gone.

As readers will have gathered, the ramshackle, the vital strip of Vancouver along the industrial waterfront could inspire a good deal of affection, sometimes bordering on a local chauvinism. That region *was* Vancouver as far as I was concerned.