

Wednesday July 10/85

Interview with CORA GREY

I was born in Oceanic Cannery when my mother was working down there. In 1922, she was working at Oceanic Cannery when I was born. It no longer exists, now, you know because when I filled in my form for registering myself, I had to put Oceanic Cannery. I was originally from Hazelton.

DO YOU HAVE ANY BROTHERS OR SISTERS?

The ones that are alive today?

ALL OF THEM?

Annie died in 1938. I think she died in '38, she was one of my sisters. Then I have Martha Ritzdale, Tommy died too, and Smokey and I have John, now too. Charlotte. You mean all my real brothers and sisters. Johnny Wilson was another one. And Tommy he died Tommy and Johnny was Smokey's brother, Johnny died long time ago. I couldn't remember the year that he died.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CHILDREN?

Yes, George, Beatrice, and Les

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF?

Just like any ordinary human being (laughter) Is that what you mean, like a busy person. Oh I'm just busy all the time. I'm involved in everything. When there is something is going on at the church, we donate a whole bunch of things. When there is something going on at Gitanmaax and like right now. So we just keep ourselves. If we are not here, we are up at the trapline building a trapper's cabin.

We were working for many years. I think in 1940, we were working at the cannery. Then during the years we moved to Port Edward and then I worked in the kitchen there. I think it was 1944 when I started working as a flunkie for 15 people that were eating in the cookhouse and I worked there for awhile and in 1950 I went down to Namoo I cooked there for 19 girls for about two months.

WHAT IS NAMOO?

Namoo is a cannery down the coast halfway from Vancouver and Prince Rupert that's where it is. It is no longer exists now either. Nobody works there. People stop there for mending nets and stuff like that but I don't think anybody goes there now. I cooked there for two months and I started at the hospital I've been working at the Hospital, I started in 1949 and then I left the hospital then I went down to Port Edward.

DID YOU COOK DOWN IN PORT EDWARD TOO?

Yes, I worked down there for I worked there as a flunkie.

WHAT DOES A FLUNKIE DO?

Well, they help in the kitchen and they set up like we did the vegetables and we cleaned up the dining room and we washed dishes after everybody ate. Then we helped cook and prepare for the vegetables for the next day. There is a lot of work involved.

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD? WHAT DID YOU DO?

As a child, oh, that was quite a ways back, I couldn't really remember. The only thing I remember was I was in the first old hospital, I guess that's when I had my tonsils that was in 1930 and I remember I didn't know how to speak English and I couldn't tell the nurse that the next person on the next bed kept on pouring water on my bed and she'd ring for the nurse, you know, and I'd get a licking. I think that's the only reason I can remember, because I'd get a spanking everytime this other person would throw water on my bed, that was in the 1930's I moved to Edmonton for 4 years and we came back after the flood in 1937.

WHAT KIND OF GAMES DID YOU PLAY?

We played a lot of softball. We called ourselves the Hazelton Home Team. I played 1st Base all the time. That was such a long way back I can't remember either.

DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE PLAYERS?

Yes, Vi Smith, Hazel Blackstock, Alice Muldoe (Nox (mother) Maggie Wright, Emma Hilbach (our catcher), Hazel Brown (our pitcher) Alice Fox (shortstop) and then there was Vi Smith I don't remember playing with Vi too much, but she was on the team too.

WHO DID YOU GUYS PLAY?

We played Moricetown, Cedarvale, Kitwanga, yes, we went to different villages, we played Kispiox and Irene Courneyer and Violet Brown used to play for the Kispiox Team. And we used to play out by Kispiox, Moricetown, Kitwanga, Cedarvale and Skeena Crossing.

We used to be the same way you are now (referring to travelling to tournaments) I don't remember Kitwancool having any sports or Glenvowell either.

WHAT KIND OF EQUIPMENT DID YOU USE?

Yes we had our own equipment, we had gloves-but hardly anyone had gloves because there wasn't too much money in those days. We didn't even wear gloves when we were playing ball maybe just the catcher had a whole outfit, as long as she was protected. That was Emma and she was real good, Emma Hilbach

DID YOU HAVE BALLS AND BATS?

Yes, we did have balls and bats, we had our own equipment. Sometimes Charles Patsy used to coach us. Charles use to coach us mostly.

SO IT WAS UP THERE FOR A LONG TIME(BALLPARK)?

Yes, it was donated by the chief councillor, I forget who was chief councillor when they donated that land to John Smith, Charlie Clifford and I couldn't remember who the other person was when they donated that piece of land that was open for the whole of Hazelton, including the people from Hazelton village and the people of Gitanmaax village. It was open for everyone for sports.

They called it Totem Park since the construction?

(Refers to her mother) No, I don't think it was always Totem Park. It was from the time they moved the Totem Poles up there, that they called it that,

WHERE DID THEY MOVE THE TOTEM POLES FROM?

They moved it from where the Gitanmaax hall used to be (on the hill above the Anglican Church) They used to be on the edge of the hill all lined up on the river bank-which was washed out by the big flood.

HOW FAR UP DID THE RIVER GET IN HAZELTON?

To the street down here(Government Street) There was a lot of houses down there (where the other street used to be) (where the river is now)

THE STREET WAS WASHED AWAY?

Yes and all the houses that were down there got washed except for Jeff Wilson's house, used to be the Hudson Bay house. It used to be down by the river they moved it during the flood to where it is now. There was two houses saved-Jeff Wilson and Jim Otters. That was the only big building they saved. (The Anglican church was always there?)

Yes the church was always there and no the river never came up that high.

HOW DID THIS RELATE TO A DISASTER THAT WOULD HAPPEN NOW?

Well, if it happened now the impact would be if one whole road was to be washed away (I just wanted to have a relationship

of how extreme this disaster was). It won't happen again because of the program where they installed a rock barrier, along the river bank. If you go down to the river you could see the rock piles.

WHAT KIND OF BUILDINGS WERE ALONG THE RIVER?

It was their own homes along the river(asks her mother)
Yes just homes.

ANY STORES?

Well that was where the old Hudson Bay used to be, on the other side of the street. That was where the Hudson Bay used to be.

DO YOU REMEMBER THE OLD HUDSON BAY'S STORING PLACE? GUNS AND AMMUNITION?

Oh the one with store wall, I don't remember maybe my mother. Yes there was a store house and they did keep there ammunition and guns and liquor, they didn't have a liquor store back then. It was a warehouse.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE HOW IT WAS TO LIVE HERE AS OPPOSED TO LIVING NOW WITH ALL OUR CONVENIENCES?

Like long time ago, Yes, well it used to be without electricity or running water. We had to pack our water from the river.

We had coal oil lamps, gas lamps, gas iron and we used to that kind of living. I dreamed of electricity that time just the rich people could afford that. It wasn't too long ago when Sargent's had their own plant.

WAS IT LIKE THE ONES (GENERATOR) IN FRONT OF THE BANK AND TOWN OFFICE?

YES, but those are from the old plant Mr. Sargent's generator was behind Lee Cheung's laundromat. That's when they picked up in electricity, after Sargent's Plant was put down by the river. Down by Helen Eng's place. So you should take a picture of it, it is a historical site. It's still there. After the electricity came in, that's when Le Chung started the laundry business. It used to be where Sunrise Cafe is now. That's where he had his laundry. I used to work for Lee Chung. I ironed towels, sheets, pillows (cover) for a dollar a day, that was in 1942, between 40-42. With the heavy cast irons. They used to have them all around the stove.

WHAT DID YOU USED TO BUY? WITH THE DOLLAR A DAY?

No, we never bought anything. We would give our money to Mom

and Mom would look after the things we'd have to buy. She'd buy food with it, cause money was scarce back those days. Whatever we made down the cannery, and I'd work for about two months and I'd clear about 95 dollars. We used to give our money to Mom cause she would buy the things we'd need. And we never got any help from the government. Our dad deserted us when we were small and we had to grow up to look after ourselves. Whatever we made we'd give to Mom, Smokey, Tommy, and all of us. We'd work during the summer and make enough for the winter. We had potatoes, carrots, all the vegetables in a big garden. And Mom had one with black currants, strawberries, and rhubarb. Mom would preserve them to get us through the winter.

WHAT OTHER FOODS DID YOU EAT?

Oh we ate the way we still do. Wild meat, if someone gave us some. Moosemeat and Mother would jar that too. Because we didn't have a deep freeze back then. We would buy a whole half of beef from across the river near Neil John Sterritt lives now. I canned that for the winter, no deep freeze. No nothing. We eat about the same that we do now, I work so hard for my children (Cora's mom speaking) I didn't want to see them go hungry.

WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

Edmonton. I only went there for about 3 years, then I came back. I only went to grade 4. I earned as I grew up. (You didn't attend La-Jak school) My sister, Martha, went there. She and Tommy got to grade 8. That's as far as they could go and they could go and they wouldn't educate them anymore. I tried hard to get them into high school, but they wouldn't let them. It was just lately that they built this school here. It took meetings and meetings all the time to try to get the people to give up their land for the school. That's all reserve land where the school is now. They finally let them build a school there. So our kids could go to school with them. They finally let them build a school there. So our kids could go to school with the white children.

WHERE WAS THE SCHOOLS BEFORE?

It was right over here, by the church. The other one was where Rosie Morrison stays. We called it Day school, beside the church and it was run by the Anglican minister. The public school was at Rosie's but it was down on the Hudson Bay corner before, it was a small log cabin (mother of Cora speaking). We used to have pencils and paper, but I didn't go to school, too long, my mother died when I was 11, so I didn't go anymore. After my Mother died, my aunt took me out to the trapline. My auntie was married to a trapper, so we were out at the trapline most of the time. Before Christmas, and, after New Years, we'd go out.

WERE THERE ANY SPECIAL EVENTS? THAT TOOK PLACE, SPORTS AND THAT. PIONEER DAYS?

No. that was just recently. They did celebrate July 1st down on that street down here.

REMEMBRANCE DAY?

That was just recently. After the 1944 War.

WHAT ABOUT MAY DAY?

The hospital used to celebrate May Day. May 12. They used to invite people up there and have a display outside the hospital. When I first started at the Wrinch Hospital, you know they used to have the whites in front and the Indians in the back. And they had a double doors and we couldn't go through the door. I used to peek through to see what was on the other side. The natives went through the back door and the whites through the front entrance.

HOW WAS THE SALARY?

I was making 30¢ an hour. When I was working for the hospital, I was paid \$104.00, that's what was making (every week or 2 weeks?) No that was for a whole month. Until they hired some white people there, and they were making 115.00, and I was still making \$104. So I went right in there-you know I used to speak up for myself then. I'm doing the same work, I don't see why I don't get the same pay. Well, she said starting next payday you'll be getting five dollars raise every month till it gets to the same pay. I don't know how it happened, but I was put in their same pay. I don't know how it happened, but I was put in their same place. two white ladies, they just walked off the job. They never came back cause they put me in their place. They never came back.

WERE YOU WORKING EVER SINCE THEN?

Yes I worked there for 34 years till about a year ago. February '83 when I retired. But before that, then, when, Dr. Whiting came in 1953 we started our hymn sing. The same thing happened all over again. The whites would stand on one side and the natives on the other side. Then they ask me why I didn't go to hymn sing. I said I don't see why I should go, you are standing there and we're standing here. After that we stand together. The same thing with the dining room we had. We had Blue plastic and they had pink plastic dishes. They put us in one little room there was 16 of us natives, as domestic workers. They had us in this little room, and I don't know how many troubles they had in their dining room. They'd separate our dishes and we'd eat apart until Dr. Whiting said we'll eat together. I didn't know what to think, cause it felt like we were always pushed aside. I fought my way through that. (laughs)

SO DR. WHITING WAS VERY UNDERSTANDING?

Oh, he was a wonderful man. He was a good person. He was your doctor, when you were born. (laughter)

One year when we were having a picnic, we had big cans or bowls of potato salad and lots of cold cuts. Dr. Evans

was there, I don't remember the year. Well Dr. Whiting said, 'Don't forget the cooks, Dr. Evens said 'Oh no they don't matter.' Dr. Whiting said 'you know they are the most important, cause they are handling the food, were eating, they are the most important. They are feeding our patients.'

DID YOU MAKE YOUR OWN CLOTHING?

No, mother used to take care of our clothing. No I never did make my own clothing. When I made enough money, I tried to buy my own clothes.

DID YOU ATTEND ANY DANCES?

Oh yes, I just loved dancing. We went to the old Gitanmaax Hall and the old Hagwilget hall.

WHO WAS PLAYING?

Either the Wildwood or the Happy Six. The Happy Six was Hazelton and David Green was with the band, George Simpson he died, and Bob Simpson that's Mercy Loring's dad. William Wale and I forgot the other two (EDnote-Phillip Turner was one of the members too)

That was the Happy Six.

Then Roy Wilson, her ran the Wildwood Orchestra, that was the hall used to be.

WHAT DID YOU USED TO DO WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG? WHAT OTHER ACTIVITIES?

Well we had our meetings for the Hazelton Home Team and we went to church. The Church Army and had a lot of bake Sales, you know to raise money for the church, you know like we do today. We used to dig potatoes for a dollar a day, and ironing for Lee for a dollar a day.

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE CHURCH ARMY? IT WASN'T CALLED THE SALVATION ARMY YET?

No, there was a Salvation Army and a Church Army. The church Army used to be up by Arthur Mowatt's old place, that's where the Church Army used to be. Mother used to belong to the White Cross, that's the name of the group. The White Cross was like the Salvation Army's Home League. My mother used to help them all the time.

DID YOU USED TO WATCH BASEBALL TOO?

Oh yes, really good games, Charlie Smith, Simon Muldoe, Wally Danes but that was later.

DID THEY USE THE AIR PORT UP HERE?

That was just lately, hey mom, Yes (mom replies) that was just lately. Bill Sargant owned a plane and used this strip

DID YOU HAVE TO PAY FOR SCHOOL?

No, the government sent us to different school. Martha went to Lee-Jack, Vi Smith went to Port Alberni, they sent me to Edmonton. I cried all the way I missed the mountains, I don't remember what grades.

WAS PREJUDISM BAD BACK THEN?

Oh yes, it was pretty bad, I had to keep myself working because Allen had just left me, I don't even know why he left me, he just took off and he took Chubby (George) with him. I went to Port Edward, I worked there to raise money to find George. I went to Vancouver and found George in a Catholic School. I raised about 400 dollars and went down by plane, it cost \$58 one way.

WHAT KIND OF TRANSPORTATION WAS USED AROUND HERE?

Train and cars maybe the only person to have a taxi was old Pop Benson, not Allen Benson, his dad, he ran the taxi. It was big car, a station wagon. It got fancier as the years go by. Wagons were used we went out to 4 mile, on wagons to pick potatoes. Ben Wale Gordan Smith worked out there; we we got a dollar a day, but we never got the money until they sold everything. When they sold everything. When they sold everything (potatoes) we'd get paid. Joe Stephens worked out there too. We hitched hiked out to work on wagons it wasn't easy.

HOW DID YOU GET TO KISPIOX WHEN YOU PLAYED SOFTBALL?

Ward Marshall? Marshall Bros. had a transport truck and it had canvass on it to cover. The baseball players used it too. As long as we had 25 cents each, we used to get excited. We'd all wash our slacks and running shoes, to get ready for sports. We didn't run to the store to buy new this and that, we just washed our slacks. He used to wait for us all day. We packed our lunches too. Sometimes our club would make the men sandwiches. We'd all stop by the creek or something. We had the Maple Leafs, we had the Hometeam and the Buckskins and the Hometeam had a Men's team too. I hardly remember soccer that was just recently. It was just baseball and softball

DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT THE SIMON GUNNANOOT STORY?

No that was too long ago. Maybe Mom knows. No that was too long ago. I remember when he gave himself up.

WHAT DID THEY DO TO HIM?

They gave him a trial I think "that's what happened" What was the verdict He had a lawyer, he's free, he wasn't guilty, I was read it somewhere (news paper back then)

WERE YOU SAD TO SEE THE OLD HOSPITAL GO?

I was really sad I used to feel sad to see an old chunk of it, at the arena, where they dumped it off. And the old wood stove sticking out of the junk pile. At first it was an old wood and coal stove then they made into a oil stove, never got a new stove. I never got a new stove till the new hospital I used the same stove and the same no crack lids on top, and it baked really good.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU REMEMBER AT THE OLD HOSPITAL?

Oh we used to have lots of fun.

A LOT OF PRACTICAL JOKES?

Especially Mary Smith. You know Harold had his rubbers he always takes them off at the back door. I didn't know Mary had nailed them to the floor. Harold put them on and couldn't move. Nailed them to the floor and couldn't move.

Another time was when I had 8 or 11 pies, Frank Pipe came along and said "Dare me to do it" And I said "I dare you too" I was just cleaning myself up and he picked one up and he threw it all over my face. Then Mary Moore came around and she scooped up one and ran after Frank outside and we caught him and rubbed it in his face.

Another time they were operating a patient and he died on the table. I forgot who was the nurse on the floor, she had to deliver a tray. So the doctor told her to put the patient on fluids... she just dropped the tray and ran out, when she saw the body was covered. We did some crazy things

WHAT KIND OF SALARY DID YOU HAVE? HOW HIGH WAS IT.

I think about 1200 I still have the old stubs. You know they never believed me when I told them how long I was working I had my old stubs and pictures of me in uniform, then they put me down in 1950 when I stated. I was there in 1949 Emma Hilbach and Martha was working there.

OTHER CHANGES?

Like when Public Works was here before it moved up to New Town. Well it used to be where Fanny and Charlie Smith live now. They had a building there, then they moved it to New Town. That was a change and Alice's store on the corner used to be the Dawson's Hotel he had Apartments and Hotels. I think he might have a clothing store too. The Police Station was always there, but I think it used to be at Sams' Store (Sunrise) One officer. Hazelton was a little bit smaller I remember one Halloween night, Neil painted the policeman's horse that was white-black. They used to have lots of fun.

WHAT KIND OF POLITICS WAS AROUND?

CCF, that was like the NDP. I remember Charles Patsy used

to attend all the meetings. You know he couldn't vote. He was interested in politics and what was going. I think the CCF helped this area.

WAS THERE A BAND COUNCIL, WHO RAN THE RESERVE?

i think they were called directors I think they did the same job as councillors anyway.

T.V., RADIOS, TELEPHONE* DID IT HELP OR HAMPER YOU?

Well we used to listen to the radio. We listen to music-mostly country and western. They had radio shows and music. Then we had Hank Evans who came twice a year maybe once, at the Gitanmaax Hall.

AW WHEN DID THE FIRST MOVIE COME TO HAZELTON?

Before Beertemas, DeBears owned the show hall. But I don't remember too much about the movies.