

This interview is with Allen Domaas, a retired river and port captain who worked on the Fraser River and held several positions with the Fraser River Harbour Commission. The major themes discussed are Queensborough, high school, the Fraser River Harbour Commission, the Vancouver Port Authority, and the Fraser River.

Interviewers: Peter Hall and Annika Airas

Interview Date: 20 January 2014

Date Range: 1930s - 2013

Sound Recording Length: 1:45:36

Allen Domaas was born and raised in Queensborough. He lived there from the 1950s to 1973, when he got married. Since then has lived in multiple locations in New Westminster. Throughout the interview Domaas tells many, often funny, stories about growing up and living in New Westminster. He attended the old Queen Elizabeth school in Queensborough. In 1963 he went to Vincent Massey High School. During high school he worked for Cascades Foods doing food processing at Pacific Coast Terminals (PCT) cold storage, and at Jackson Printing as the store sweeper. After high school he went to Douglas College for two years, and then transferred to University of British Columbia (UBC). However, he studied at UBC for one year because the relief deckhand position he had during the summer of 1973 turned into a permanent position. The Fraser River Harbour Commission (FRHC) hired him to do patrolling on the Fraser River, which he did until 1979. From 1979 to 1986 he was the first property supervisor for the FRHC. His grandfather was a boat finisher at Star Shipyards in Queensborough, and his father was a tender man (a fisherman who picks up fish from collection points and brings it to the canneries) for Canadian Fish and BC Packers. In this interview he also speaks enthusiastically about his Norwegian heritage and traveling to Norway.

Section 0:00 – 12:48

- In this section of the interview Domaas describes how he became a river captain on the Fraser River, and discusses his experience about growing up Queensborough. He describes Queensborough as having a “small town feeling within a small town,” that it was very agrarian, where everyone knew everyone. His family was one of the few families in his neighborhood that did not have chickens. He went to school with Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Italian, middle European, and Russian immigrants. He believed that everyone was treated equally and at school all that mattered amongst the children were one’s athletic capabilities.

Section 12:49 – 23:16

- In this section of the interview Domaas reflects upon the policies of the City of New Westminster, he believes that the City has not made the effort to integrate and that it has been insular in its policies. While growing up he recalls three community groups in New Westminster: “Queensborough folks,” “uptown folks”, and “Sapperton folks” unlike

today where he believes there are ten community groups. He discusses the area called D52 (along the river between New Westminster and Burnaby) which he describes as “no man’s land” until it joined New Westminster. He also describes the house that he grew up in, which his father purchased in 1948, his family background and work history, and talks more about growing up in Queensborough.

#### Section 23:17 – 31:03

- In this section of the interview Domaas talks about his father, a Norwegian who came to BC via Minnesota. Domaas’ mother came from Saskatchewan and grew up on a farm. Domaas describes visiting Norway with his father and meeting his relatives.

#### Section 31:04 – 39:22

- In this section of the interview Domaas enumerates the major companies that existed in Queensborough and along the New Westminster waterfront, such as Star Shipyards, Interfor sawmill, Martin Paper Products, MacMillan Bloedel, BC Packers, Scott Paper, and Royal City Cannery. He states that it was unfortunate that during the 1950s the industrial area around the Fraser River was used as a universal waste bin. When he joined the Fraser River Port Authority he remembers going past Scott Paper and he would see shades of blue and pink in the river, which corresponded to the color of toilet paper being produced.

#### Section 39:23 – 45:35

- In this section of the interview Domaas talks about Sather Boatworks, which was his favourite small business because as a child he enjoyed playing in the cedar wood shavings left from building wooden boats. He also describes the infrastructure of buildings in Queensborough and what his house looked like. While he was growing up he recalls there would be terror when fire truck sirens rang because all the houses were built of wood.

#### Section 45:36 – 56:50

- In this section of the interview Domaas talks about how he and his friends became the first users of the Queensborough Bridge when it opened in 1958\*, and his high school experiences. Domaas recalls the first day of high school as one of his most frightening days because he came from a school of 28 kids to a school with hundreds of kids. Students from Queensborough “weren’t worldly,” there was a sense they were different. Students from Sapperton and Queensborough were similar because they came from

---

\* The Queensborough Bridge actually opened in August 1960. In the recording Domaas also mistakenly claims that Premier W.A.B. Bennett attended the bridge ceremony.

working class backgrounds, whereas the students from Uptown came from upper class families whose parents would have been shop owners, doctors, and lawyers.

Section 56:51 – 1:02:02

- In this section of the interview Domaas discusses why he believes Queensborough is unlike the rest of New Westminster, and his work at Cascade Foods located in PCT cold storage. When he was 16 years old, his father told him that he was free to take care of his medical and dental expenses, and his family members told him to become a longshoreman. Domaas heard there were good jobs at the PCT cold storage. He went there and asked for a job and ended up doing food processing for \$1.35/hour instead of longshoring.

Section 1:02:02 – 1:09:06

- In this section of the interview Domaas describes his second job as the sweeper at Jackson Printing on Royal Avenue, and how he wanted to become an industrial design teacher. At Jackson Printing his duties were to sweep the shop after school for \$10/week. He spent two summers there and thought about becoming a printer's apprentice. Domaas attended Douglas College and then transferred to UBC. However, he completed only one year at UBC. Instead he went to work as a deckhand for the Fraser River Harbour Commission.

Section 1:09:07 – 1:21:21

- In this section of the interview Domaas discusses his duties as a deckhand, how he was hired by the FRHC to do patrolling and the issues he came across while working. The government gave the public wharfs to FRHC in 1984, and the FRHC decided to charge its users rental fees to tie up their boats. The greatest difficulty he experienced was convincing users to pay these dockage fees when they never had before. Afterwards, Domaas got promoted and started the first property department for the FRHC and became its supervisor. In this section he also describes the changes in the fishing industry from the 1940s-1970s and the changing focus of the FRHC to economic development.

Section 1:21:22 – 1:31:20

- In this section Domaas describes his duties as a property supervisor. He states that he was hired to "bring in some order," therefore; from 1979 to 1986 his team developed a base map to help keep track of port user's tenures. He discusses the close relationship between Canada Public Works and the FRHC and both had a mandate for economic development, however; the FRHC did not know that Canada Public Works was working in the interests of Transport Canada.

Section 1:31:21 – 1:45:36

- In this section of the interview Domaas talks about the different areas that he has lived in New Westminster since his marriage, describes the FRHC office located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the New Westminster Building. He recounts the history of Canadian ports and, and the differences between the Fraser River Harbour Commission and the Vancouver Port Authority. He takes pride that New Westminster is small but “has been home to some very big thinkers who act in the best interest of the country.” He believes that the FRHC should be respected, like the Canadian Pacific Railway, for supporting Canada’s economic growth as a trading nation.