

This recording is an interview with Alice (pronounced Alysse) LaRose (a pseudonym), a woman who lived and worked in New Westminster for a significant period of her life, and worked at Fraser Mills, Pacific Veneer and Edmonds & Walker (BC Packers). The major themes in the interview are her life as a mill worker, her employment at Edmonds & Walker, and general observations of New Westminster during the 1930s and 40s.

Interviewer: Pamela Stern and Michelle La

Also present: the interviewee's daughter and son-in-law. The son-in-law poses some questions.

Interview date: 30 July 2013

Date Range: 1930s – 1950s

Sound Recording Length: 58:17

Alice LaRose was a part of a FrancoCanadian family of eight who migrated from Alberta to British Columbia in the late 1930s. Her father was a carpenter, and she reports that they put their children to work early. Both Alice and an older sister worked at Fraser Mills during summer holidays, and Alice later worked at Pacific Veneer and Edmonds & Walker. She describes the life of a working girl at the mills and the daily life of living in Queensborough and working in New Westminster. Two of her brothers worked as longshoremen in New Westminster. Alice married in the 1940s and moved to Quesnel.

Section 00:00 – 05:41

In this portion of the interview, LaRose talks about how her family moved from Alberta to Coquitlam when she was a teenager. She and her sister worked in the plywood division at Fraser Mills during the summers when they were high school. During WWII, LaRose also worked at Pacific Veneer, taping cedar veneer that would eventually become plywood. She talks about how she learned on the job, and reports that the work was relatively easy.

Section 05:42 – 08:54

In this portion of the interview, LaRose talks her previous employment Edmonds & Walker after graduating high school. She did office work for them, and reports that she was nervous walking to the bank on Columbia St to deposit money because of all the different sailors. She worked at Edmonds & Walker for four years, and quit when the company relocated to Vancouver.

Section 08:55 – 13:47

In this portion of the interview, LaRose talks about Edmonds & Walker. The company rented boats and sold ice to fishermen. In addition the company sold aprons and gloves, and processed fish on the dock, before freezing them. The foreman would often give her fresh fish to her take home to her family.

Section 13:48 – 22:24

In this portion of the interview, LaRose talks about her work at Pacific Veneer in New Westminster. She worked there for three years before she got married, and did a job called patching, and later sanded doors. At the time, the company did not provide gloves. She did not join the union, and was never asked to join one. The company paid the workers around 65 cents an hour, and paid the men and women the same wage. At the factory, there were no immigrants, but some First Nations women.

Section 22:25 – 30:03

In this portion of the interview, LaRose talks about how her work changed when she moved from the office job to the manufacturing job, and how it was standing up for 8 hours a day. She describes several jobs including one in a garden of a hospital in Alberta. At Fraser Mills workers were given two pairs of white coveralls, and at Pacific Veneer she would wear jeans and t-shirts. She describes how the girls would stick together and have lunch together.

Section 30:04 – 35:44

In this portion of the interview, she talks about how she lived on Lulu Island, but later moved back to Coquitlam. She describes separate sections of bars for men and for women with escorts.

Section 35:45 – 44:36

In this portion of the interview, she talks about how the longshoremen would buy alcohol from the foreign sailors. She did not need to do that, as her mother would make dandelion wine. She describes her family.

Section 44:37 – 50:54

In this portion of the interview, LaRose returns to talk about her time at Pacific Veneer. At the time, they had a good foreman, and Pacific Veneer was a good employer, as they would not mind if she was a little late. The buses were not necessarily reliable, and they would be overloaded, which could lead to workers being late. It was noisy in the factory, so you could not talk at work. She talks about the train arriving on Front St with soldiers after the war, and how she knew her brother was coming home from overseas.

Section 50:55 – 58:17

In this portion of the interview, LaRose talks about how she was not bothered by the smell from the fish processing at Edmonds & Walkers. One of her duties while working there was to control the loading of ice onto fishing boats. Each boat had a quota, so she had to check the name and the boat to see that no one took more ice than they should. She ends the interview by talking about how the sailors would whistle at her on Columbia St., and the process of making sure she got her unemployment insurance sticker at the post office after each paycheck.