

This recording is an interview with Bernie Jebson, a structural engineer for Fraser River Pile & Dredge. Major themes include dredging, unions within FRPD, and changes to the work and equipment over time.

Interviewer: Kate Petrusa

Interview Date: November 12, 2014

Date Range: 1981 - 2014

Sound Recording Length: 1:10:56

Bernie Jebson started working on the waterfront June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1981. He worked on the waterfront as a high school student, and graduated from BCIT. He talks at length about the equipment he has worked with on the job, with a significant portion of the interview spent viewing photos from the job with the interview. He worked with his father on the job, and currently works with his own son. He feels one of the most significant changes to the waterfront is the increased regulation by Environment Canada.

Section 00:00 – 05:43

In the first portion of the interview, Bernie discusses the history of Fraser River Pile & Dredge on the Fraser River, and describes other industries that used to exist alongside it. He talks about how he got started on the waterfront. His dad was a foreman, and he worked several summers as a high school student at FRPD. The union stopped the practice of hiring students. His first job was as a surveyor for a dock being built for BC Forest Products. He travelled back and forth to Squamish for work for almost two years.

Section 05:44 – 10:44

In this section, Bernie describes labour unrest within the company around the year 1986. The company locked out the unions, but he was able to keep working, as he was management. He describes other jobs over the years, and says he worked a lot of weekends. He lists former mills on the Fraser River.

Section 10:45 – 17:10

In this section, Bernie describes why lumber, pulp, and paper mills are some of the most common customers of Fraser River Pile & Dredge, as the bark and wood waste needs to be dredged, and disposed of at Point Grey. Areas near bridges also require a lot of dredging.

Section 17:11 - 18:00

In this section, Bernie tells a story about working underwater, referencing a photograph.

Section 18:01 - 19:12

In this section, Bernie describes the areas along the Fraser River where the company works.

Section 19:13 – 23:35

In this portion of the interview, Bernie describes what constitutes an “emergency dredge,” such as when a gravel barge tips over. Dredged river sediment is pumped directly ashore, and is often

used for “pre-ground” (pre-load) in construction. He describes various leases held by the company.

#### Section 23:36 – 26:45

In this section, Bernie describes the various unions at FRPD, including Bridgemen & Wharfmen Dockbuilders Union 2404, Operating Engineers Union 115, Guild, SIU, and a Teamster Union for those who work in the warehouses. He describes doing estimates on projects. He keeps hard copies of all the records.

#### Section 26:46 – 28:01

In this portion of the interview, Bernie describes how work has changed with the closure of the mills along the Fraser River. He says that the day-to-day might have slowed down, but they do more major projects on the river and work on Vancouver Island now.

#### Section 28:02 – 29:50

In this section, Bernie talks about the contracts held by Fraser River Pile & Dredge. They continue to dredge all but 2 of the remaining mills on the river.

#### Section 29:51 – 33:22

In this section, Bernie describes one of the biggest changes on the river, which he feels is the increased regulations by Environment Canada. However, he says that Fisheries is becoming easier to get approval from, since there are no Port Authorities outside of Metro Vancouver. He claims that he has never seen a dead fish while working, as they all swim away. Clamshell work has been discontinued in certain parts of the year, to protect the decreasing eulachon stocks in the river.

#### Section 33:23 – 35:18

In this portion of the interview, Bernie talks about how he works with his son, and how he used to work with his father on the job. He describes various other families who work at FRPD.

#### Section 35:19 – 40:22

In this section, Bernie describes the old office, on Sixth Street in New Westminster. FRPD’s office has been at current location during his career. He talks about recent dredging at Westshore, and mandatory testing that is now required by Environment Canada. He feels that the Fraser River is much cleaner now than it was in the past.

#### Section 40:23 – 44:25

In this portion, Bernie says that everything about the job is getting bigger – referring to both projects and equipment. He also says that there is less maintenance dredging.

#### Section 44:26 – 46:55

In this portion, Bernie speaks to the idea of a “working waterfront.” He points out that even the parts of the river that are still industrial rarely use the water as a part of their operations anymore. He has seen an overall decrease in industry.

Section 46:56 – 01:03:10

In this section, Bernie talks about the required equipment and types of barges for various jobs, and describes the process of the work, from start to finish. He references and describes photos at the same time, including specific features of the equipment pictured.

Section 01:03:11 – 01:04:45

In this section, Bernie talks about the use of flat barges, which may be used based on water depth.

Section 01:04:46 – 01:08:08

In this portion of the interview, Bernie talks about what he would like people to know about the river. He says that it is a very easy form of transportation, and points out that if there is ever an earthquake, the bridges will collapse. This makes rivers even more essential. He also feels that most people do not appreciate the power of the water. He tells the story about rescuing a towboat skipper from the river.

Section 01:08:09 – 01:10:56

In the last section of the interview, Bernie describes another photo, depicting a sawmill job. He also talks about hiring divers from outside companies, and salvaging vessels.