

# SPOT NEWS

## "Covid 19" Edition

WESTERN VANCOUVER ISLAND INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE SOCIETY

Address: 3250A- 9th Avenue  
Port Alberni, BC V9Y 4T2  
Tel. 250-723-4285

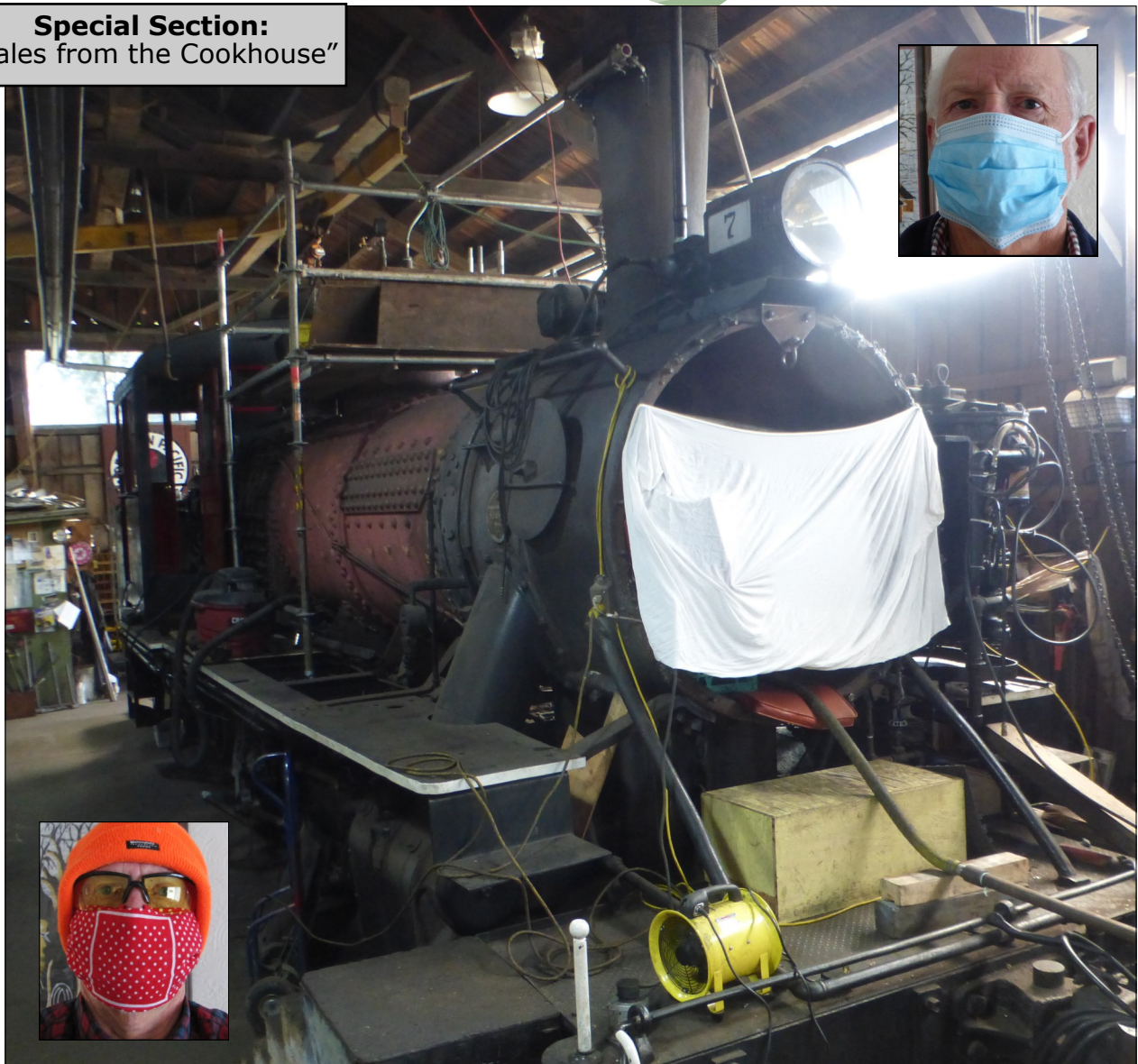
Website: [ihsporalberni.ca](http://ihsporalberni.ca)  
Facebook: Use our full name  
& Alberni Pacific Railway

Issue 74



May 2020

**Special Section:**  
"Tales from the Cookhouse"



**"No. 7" with "Covid 19" mask in place.**

-Page sponsored by "Southside Auto Supply "-

## A.P.R. ROUNDHOUSE in 'Covid Times'

After the middle of March, the main activities of the I.H.S. ground to a halt, along with the rest of the province. Repair work by the 'Boilermakers' on the "No. 7" Boiler rebuild had been proceeding successfully up till then, with all of the new tubes installed. They were readying to "put the squeeze" on the boiler when the "Covid" shut-down was announced.

Once "Social Distancing" had been proclaimed as the new



### "Rolling the Big Ones"

Barry Dobrensky & Sarah Smith use the biggest air tool to roll a 5' Super-heater Flue in the Boiler. These were the last new tubes to go in.

(r.) **Three Boilermakers**  
Matt Wallace, Tim Murphy, Michael Roxbrough—beside the "No. 7".

*Photos; D. Hooper*



way for people to work, some I.H.S. members found jobs at the Roundhouse that could still be done under this new regime. 1. Kevin Hunter worked on the tracks, digging out bad ties and inserting new ones; 2. Bert Simpson repaired the bathroom at the "Hilton" Crew Trailer.

3. Frank Holm put in hours weed-whacking and grubbing blackberry vines along the tracks, as well as continuing to work on the 1909 "CN" Caboose.

Given the virtual shut-down of tourism for the summer, it is most unlikely that there will be a steam train operating this summer.



2

## "TALES FROM THE COOKHOUSE"

*There were more than a dozen large logging camps operating in and around the Alberni Valley during the Twentieth Century and other smaller "Gyppo" camps along the Inlet. The "Alberni Pacific Lumber Company" alone operated nine Camps between 1917 and 1953. (Their last camp, the "New Camp One", was actually their ninth.) Rival company, "Bloedel, Stewart & Welch", ran four camps on their Franklin River claim and had five more at Great Central Lake. The Cookhouse was a central feature in all of them.*

*What follows is a selection of stories and memories from several Port Alberni loggers.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### ALAN BOYKO

The vast forests of North America appealed to many for the potential of profitably milling these trees into lumber. As forests were depleted adjacent to the mills, camps were established to shorten the distances the loggers had to travel to cut the trees.

Some companies were very concerned about the well-being of their workers, providing good food and comfortable accommodations. Others were not. This was true here in the Alberni Valley. There were many camps around the various locations being logged.

My father stayed in several of them and mentioned them: the first APL "Camp One", on 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, near Maquinna School; the "Weist Brothers" camp at the end of Anderson Avenue; Camp 3 at Egg Hill, Camp 6 at Lizard Lake; Camp 4 at Museum Creek; Camp 7 on the Thistle Mine Road – nearly all of the old "APL" camps – until he started work in the mid-1930s at the new "Somass Mill". It is a long list but, there was one person who was very prominent in every one – the Camp Cook.

His job was to provide good, wholesome meals to satisfy the hungry work force. Should he not meet the standards required, he would be looking for another job, for sure!

My father mentioned staying at Camp One in 1918. The food was very acceptable. The one thing in question was the Variety. The chicken was always tough, more than likely burnt-out laying hens.

In those days, the work schedule was either a six-day week, or five and a half. He mentioned that in that area, on the edge of the townsite, a lot of good rabbits were running loose. The guys would go bag several, clean them, then give them to the Cook for a change from those tough hens!



**COOKHOUSE—FRANKLIN RIVER 1938**

Feeding hundreds of hungry men was no small challenge!

*Photo from the Collection of Fred Boyko*



Cooks at APL Deep Lake Camp

*Photo courtesy of AVM PN15382*

Clive Brown always mentioned that when they were logging with oxen, when they got too old, or injured, you can guess where they ended up - the Cookhouse, for sure. Quite often, for variety, they would put down a young deer and enjoy the change.

I stayed at the APL Camp at the end of Deep Lake in 1952. The Cook was Leong Jap. He was very adept at accommodating the crew of 40-50 men. That Camp was the old-style, where all of the food was placed on the tables. The most senior employees always sat at the ends; the new men sat in the middle, opposite the food. The new men had to pass the plates back and forth, making their meals longer.

By 1950, Franklin River Camp B Cookhouse was "Cafeteria-style". The Kitchen staff served the food. Should one want more, you had to go to the counter for seconds. The seating was 4 men to a table—eat, no chatting—much like the Military.

One of the best Cookhouses I ever ate in was in Port Hardy, in



### COOKHOUSE KITCHENS

Check out the number of coffee pots hanging (above); Note the number of persons on the Kitchen Staff. (right).  
Photos from the Fred Boyko Collection.

1964. I had been working as a Hooktender at Sproat Lake Division but, due to all local Camps being shut down by a strike at the Paper Mill, I headed up-Island, looking for work. There was a Greek family catering the food in the Cookhouse. It was very good, with at least three items for the dinner Entrees. The first evening meal there, I took my Thermos, to have some tea for later on. The flunky at the door told me there was a "Mug-up" at 8 p.m. and that I didn't need the Thermos. Their Dessert counter would have put the Hotel Vancouver to shame!



**TED MAURICE**— *Ted lived in several Camps but also lived to see fleets of "crummies" picking up Crews in town in the early morning, heading to work in the woods.*—**A MEMORY:**

"I see in the local rag that they have finally torn down the old Arrowview Hotel. Brings back a memory.

I came over to Alberni in early March, 1954. I had been working at Northwest Bay, but we had been snowed out in November, and they were still full of snow, and I needed to make some money, because I had gotten engaged at Christmas. In those days, MB had a big multi- purpose building at the corner of Third and Dunbar, and that is where I went to apply for a job. I had been hoping to go to Franklin River, Camp B, but they needed a head loader at Camp A, so that is where I went. Camp A involved staying in town, and riding the crummy, so I found a copy of the local paper, and found an ad, offering room and board in a house at 11th or 12th and Bute St., a family named Hemmingson.

I would catch the crummy at 10th and Bute every morning, with an old Swede named Helmer Soderlund, and we would swing down through town, picking up a couple more guys, and then stop at the "Arrowview", where there were three more young single guys living.

After about a month, along comes Easter- four day weekend. Tuesday morning, we stopped at the Arrowview- nobody standing on the sidewalk. After a few seconds, there was a loud "bang" on the roof of the crummy, and then a few more loud bangs- the silly buggers were throwing beer bottles down from their third story window! The crummy drove away, and carried on out to the woods. Wednesday morning we got one of the three, badly hung over; Thursday we got two; and Friday we finally got all three of them. I expected Barney Bordeleau, the foreman, to fire some or all of them for being AWOL, but he didn't. He just seemed to join in the general "Haw Haw" about what a party it must have been."



*Photo: D. Hooper*

**IN MEMORIAM**

**KEN McDONALD 1949-2020**

We are saddened to announce Ken's passing in "Ty Watson House", after a long struggle with cancer. Ken was a Longshoreman who worked on the Alberni waterfront for many years.

In retirement, he became active with the I.H.S. and became a proud and valued crew member at the Industrial Heritage Centre. He looked after the Lunchroom, keeping it clean, as well as the main floor of the Centre. He kept the trucks looking good and was a welcoming Guide to visitors. He also took part in our various big Events and Expeditions and was always a cheerful companion. He made many good friends.

There will be a Celebration of Ken's life after the 'Covid'. "REST in PEACE"



**CEC BARRETT**

Cec was 'the I.H.S. member for Saskatchewan'.

A lifetime employee of the CN Railroad, he had a passion for everything 'rail'. He discovered the APR and came to Port Alberni for parts of three winters to help Frank Holm restore the 1909 "CN" wooden caboose, with carpentry and painting.

Even after his health failed, his interest and support for the Caboose restoration continued. Cec was a member of the "CN Retired Employees Association" and he organized the donation of more than \$8000 from the "CN Community Grants Fund" towards the Caboose Project. We are thankful for his friendship and for his encouragement.

R.I.P., CEC.



**"SPOT NEWS"**

—is published thrice yearly and is one benefit of membership in the I.H.S.... and you are supporting the preservation of industrial heritage on Vancouver Island. Send queries or material to: D. Hooper. E-mail: dshooper@telus.net

**MEMBERSHIP IN THE W.V.I.I.H.S.**

\$20 / year. Cash or cheque to Barry Miller  
c/o W.V.I.I.H.S, 3250A-Ninth Ave.,  
Port Alberni, BC V9Y 4T2

**JACK JAMES— Memories from the 1940s**

Jack James was born in Saskatchewan in the "Dirty Thirties". In the late 1930s, his Dad, Roy, was running a small sawmill to support the family, when he got the offer in 1939 to run a sawmill at a new logging camp in the Nimpkish Valley of northern Vancouver Island. He jumped at the chance to double his pay for doing the same job.

The James family joined him in 1941, after a rail journey from a brutal Prairie winter to the mild rain of Vancouver by "Union Steamship" to ride to "Camp L" at the head of the lake and a boat ride to the truck-logging camp at hacked out of the forest.

Roy got young house, for something to do during the War, there was an ex- His job was to get up the fire going in the Cookhouse, filling the wood-pile, getting it going good,

After several weeks into the routine of early boardwalk from their the Bunkhouses, to the work.



**LOGGER SPORTS BUDDIES**  
Jack James (l.) with Alan Boyko

ver, followed by a trip "Englewood", a speeder foot of Nimpkish Lake head of the lake, to the Anutz Lake, newly-"Remote" was the word! Jack a job in the Cookhouse. Because of the tremende labour shortage. before 5 a.m., to get stove – splitting kin-box, setting the fire and ready for the Cooks. weeks, Jack had got rising, following the house in the dark, past Cookhouse and going to

Then, one fateful morning, Jack met the bear. Jack was walking along the boardwalk, rounding the corner to enter the Cookhouse, when he met a black bear, coming from the opposite direction. And they crashed together, falling to the ground in a heap of frantically flailing arms and legs. When he got untangled, Jack was off like a rocket for home! Rounding the corner of the next building, he ran straight into a stream of hot urine, from a logger relieving himself out the back door of the Bunkhouse. Talk about insult to injury!

Jack never went back to that job.

A year or two later, Jack got a job as a "Flunky" at the Cookhouse. It was a 'sit-down" style of Dining Room, with all of the crockery and serving dishes on the tables. The Flunkies were supposed to make sure to keep the table loaded with food and drink.

A Faller took a notion to 'ride' the young Flunky. "Hey kid! More coffee; my cup's empty!" "Hurry up! I don't have all day." After several days of this, Jack finally lost it. The Faller demanded, "Hey kid! More gravy! What's the matter with you?" Jack brought the gravy..... and poured it in his lap..... then, ran for it! That was the end of that job.

When he left Anutz Lake camp, Jack moved to the newly-opened Camp at Woss in 1946. The Cookhouse was the largest on Vancouver Island, feeding 420 workers at a sitting.

**DOUG HARRISON – Childhood Memories of APL "Camp One" - 1940s**

*Doug Harrison grew up at the APL New "Camp One" at the end of Beaver Creek Road, north of Port Alberni. It was the last of the big rail logging camps in the Valley, established by H.R. Macmillan to access the Ash River timber block that he had purchased from the Rockefeller's of New York. It operated till 1953.*

\* \* \* \* \*

In the 1940s, there were more than 600 employees working at Camp One, including 300 living in the Bunkhouses. There were several Company buses, as well as "Island Coach Lines" buses bringing the "Homeguards" from town every morning.

There was a big Cookhouse for the Bunkhouse men, with a Head Cook, Leong Jap, in charge, with a Second Cook, Baker, Butcher, Dishwashers and 'Flunkies' – more than 20 people – all Chinese. They lived in an Annex off the Cookhouse.

Most of the Kitchen Staff could speak at least some English and they all dressed in white, looking very professional. The Food supplies came in from Vancouver.

The Bakery was on the other side of the Cookhouse. 300 men eat a lot of bread but Doug remembered the pies, "lovely pies, stacked on shelves in the Bake Shop." One day, Doug, his brother and some other small boys, sneaked in to 'borrow' some. A Chinese Cook happened by at that moment and chased them out, waving a cleaver! The boys ran for it, but hung on to their pies.

Being small boys of little imagination, they headed for the nearest quiet spot, which happened to be the Manager's garden, to enjoy their loot. Rod Moore came home to find the criminals with their purloined pies in his back yard. He spanked the lot of them and sent them home, where they got a second 'treatment'!

The Dining Room was a 'sit-down' operation, with crockery and cutlery on the tables. The 'flunkies' brought food and drink to the tables but, you served yourself. You were expected to 'mind your manners.'



"APL Camp One" Kitchen ca. 1945  
Chinese Cooks preparing Turkeys for a special Dinner.  
*From the Collection of the AVM PN 18044*

Meals were served in shifts as they could not serve all 300 men at the same time. Certain tables were designated for Fallers; others for Train Crew and the Shop Crew. There was a sort of self-segregation by nationalities: - Scandinavian fallers, Japanese fallers, Shop and Train Crew tended to be English/Scots/Italian. There were no First Nations. Train crew often worked late, so they ate late. But the food was ready for them.

The 20-30 man "Section Gang" was all Chinese and they had their own Quarters, with Kitchen and Gardens on the edge of the Camp. They mostly did not speak English and kept to themselves. They took their meals in their own Dining Room.

The Section Gang had a special arrangement for lunch on working days. The deal was that they insisted on a hot lunch so, the Cook would prepare a big rice dish in a huge cauldron. Towards mid-day, a Speeder would stop at the Cookhouse, towing a small rail car with a charcoal brazier. The big cauldron was hoisted aboard, tied down, and off they went with the "Hot Lunch" to wherever the Gang was working that day. It was expected to arrive promptly at noon, and it usually did.

Running a successful Cookhouse was all about keeping the Crew happy.

## **DOUG HARRISON - "JUSKATLA" CAMP MEMORIES – 1970s**

By the 1970's, many of the big logging camps had been shut down on the Coast. The surviving camps were in the Nimpkish Valley (CANFOR) – Woss Camp, etc., Kelsey Bay (MB), Franklin River (MB), Port Renfrew and Caycuse (BCFP). They were all closed by the 1980s, with Franklin River closing that year. "MB's" Juskatla Camp, on Haida Gwaii, was the "last one standing", shutting down in 1990.

In the 1970s, Doug went to Juskatla. "Macmillan-Bloedel" had 700 loggers on the Islands then—500 at Juskatla, at the North end of the Islands and 200 in a Contractor's camp at Alliford Bay, near Sandspit. (Doug was preceded by Tibor Jando, who also had a Port Alberni connection.)

In those days, there were 300 to 340 men in the Cookhouse, which operated "Cafeteria-style". Ie. The men served themselves at the Counter.

The Head Cook was Gabriel ("Gabe") Ferreau – a Frenchman with an extensive culinary pedigree. He had been Head Chef on the "P&O" luxury ocean liner, "Oriana". The ship had docked in Vancouver for major repairs in drydock so, Gabe was looking for temporary employment to stay occupied. Tibor Jando signed him up on the spot as they were always having trouble keeping the Cookhouse staffed at Juskatla. The "Oriana" eventually left Vancouver but Gabe stayed on at Juskatla.

"He was an arrogant "SOB", remembers Doug, "A real prima donna... but a great cook" who ran one of the best Cookhouses on the Coast, making it the most efficient and well-run operation, while serving fantastic meals. Doug remembers that, by the 1970s, "Cookhouse Loss" was a big and growing concern for logging companies and one of the reasons for the eventual demise of the old-style Camps.

Loggers used to pay \$2.50/day for Room and Board and this never changed from around 1950, when the I.W.A. Union negotiated this Working Condition, into the 1970s. "Cookhouse Loss" grew to \$15-20 per man/ per day by the 1970s. By 1977, the average Loss was \$20/day in the other camps while Gabe held the cost to \$14/day .... all the while serving remarkable meals! "He was just so efficient!"

In those days, there were one or two "Boeing 737s" arriving every day at Sandspit and that is how food supplies arrived for the Camp. Gabe had all the suppliers lined up in Vancouver. Very organized

The Managers treated Gabe like a prima donna. When visitors came, they would get him to lay a spread and he did not disappoint. - The best French wines and champagne, with a phenomenal Menu. He had the connections in Vancouver and knew how to find any ingredient required.

Doug said that Gabe was always getting in a snit and quitting, or threatening to quit. Doug said that he just ignored the threats and things always worked out and Gabe stayed on and everyone was happy. He was receiving a huge pay cheque that Doug once figured out to be twice as big as his own salary as the Manager in charge of the Camp!. Gabe was on hourly rate but for 24 hours a day, with 'time and a half', "Double-time" as the hours added up, as per the IWA contract.

The Cookhouse finally closed down in the early 1990s. When Gabe finally left, he moved to Nelson, where he opened a high-end restaurant – the kind that gets "Michelin" stars.

### **"THERE'S A BEAR IN THE COOKHOUSE!"**

*Bears often feature in stories about cookhouses. With all of the kitchen garbage generated in facilities feeding hundreds of men, this meant, in 21<sup>st</sup> Century jargon, lots of "Bear Attractants". Doug remembered this incident in the Juskatla Cookhouse.*

The Cookhouse also served as a Social Centre in the evenings. The Cooks would put out pie, cookies and other snacks and crew would gather to play cards, smoke and generally BS.

That particular evening, around 8 p.m., the phone rang in Doug's quarters. "Hey, there's a bear in the Dining Room. You better come down." So Doug called the Foreman, Ken Buxton, and went down to investigate. Ken brought his "30-30", just in case.



year old – was doing .... ‘Self-serve’ - helping himself to pie and other goodies, just like a regular.

Ken Buxton raised his rifle. A Faller interrupted his card game to say, “You touch that bear and we go on strike. Leave our bear alone!” And he returned to his cards.

What to do?

Doug told the guys, “You guys get rid of him, if he’s your friend. He’ll be shot if he’s still around tomorrow.”

The Camp had just bought a small garbage truck with hydraulic side doors for taking kitchen waste to the Dump. It was parked beside the Cookhouse back door.

The guys put three steaks inside one of the truck’s side bins. The Bear had a sniff, hopped into the bin and the guys shut the doors and drove off to the end of the logging road 15-10 miles West.

The bear was back next morning. Now, the heat was on. Three more steaks went into the side bin of the garbage truck and again, the bear obligingly climbed aboard. This time, the guys drove all the way South to Queen Charlotte City, about 70 miles South. The bear was released on the lawn of the Woods Foreman, Sonny Talman.

They never saw that bear again.

### **DON WATT- CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF FRANKLIN RIVER CAMP “B”**

*Don lived in the Married Quarters with his parents and siblings in the late 1940s and Fifties, then came back to work as an adult, living in Married Quarters in his turn, until just before the Camp was closed down in 1980.*

\*\*\*\*\*

The Camp kids moved around in groups, looking for entertainment and action. The Cookhouse was one of the places in Camp on their ‘trapline’. Certain days were better than others to get treats at the Cookhouse, altho' they were eating at their homes in the M.Q. Who ever heard of a kid that couldn't eat just a little bit more? For example, Thursday was “Ice Cream night” and the kids would show up at the back door of the Cookhouse with bowls, looking hopeful. They got to eat all of the leftover ice cream!

Another source of treats came from the Cookhouse bakery. Kids would show up looking hopeful if they heard that donuts were on the menu in the Cookhouse that day.

The Cookhouse was big as they were feeding 350 loggers staying in the Bunkhouses. Food was plentiful and the guys were only paying \$2.50/day for room and board and that rate lasted through to the closure of the camp. There was a big staff and there was even a Bakery attached to the operation. All the food was shipped in on the CPR boat, the “Princess Maquinna”, out of Victoria. It was landed at Camp “A”, loaded into a boxcar for transport up to Camp “B”.

Legendary Camp Foreman, Jack Bell, used to have supper in the Cookhouse, saying, “If it's good enough for me, it's good enough for the men.”

Camp “B” moved twice before it ended up at it's final location. The bunkhouses and sheds were all moved on rail cars but the Cookhouse was too big so, a new one was built in 1946, when the final Camp “B” was being set up. Don's Mom spent some time as a “Flunkey” in the Cookhouse. It was a way for some of the women in the Married Quarters to earn extra money and to have something to do.

Don remembers with fondness the big dinners that “Bloedel Stewart & Welch” used to put on for the people in the 'Married Quarters’ every Christmas – 'Turkey with all the fixin's!’ he said.



**“Big Pots for Big Appetites.”**

Pots lined up on the stove. Photo: F. Boyko Collection

The Cookhouse employed a lot of people, as well as the Cooks. There were the “flunkeys” who set the tables, served and cleared the tables, the Dishwashers, of course. Pots, plates and cutlery for 350 men equals a lot of dirty dishes! Don remembers one Dishwasher who really stood out – the “Duke”. He was well-connected in Vancouver but just “not quite all there”, says Don. Maybe his family wanted him out of the way.? He lived at Camp for several years and he was famous for how he dressed to go to town – Port Alberni. He dressed up elegantly, even to putting a flower in his lapel and the Beaufort Hotel was always his first 'port of call'.

Don remembers how abundant the food was and how much some of the fellows wasted. On “Steak Night”, some fellows would take four or five steaks and just eat a bit of each and leave the rest. Loggers used to make their own lunches after breakfast and some fellows took way more than they could possibly eat.... just because it was there.



The late Pete Huysmans worked at Franklin River when he first arrived in Canada in 1951. He could not get over the abundance of the food in Camp, compared to the hunger in post-War Holland. Watching fellows just taking a bite out of a sandwich, then tossing it into the bush, was past his comprehension.

**“STEAK NIGHT”**

Tubs of steaks on the counter in the Kitchen. Note all of the large Utensils and Serving Jugs hanging on the hooks from the ceiling.

*Photos: Fred Boyko Collection.*



**“FLAPJACKS FOR BREAKFAST!:**