

Harold Smith, Interview

By Roger Sherman

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Tapped interview was held at Harold's home (Good Beach on Madrona Way) near Coupeville, Washington.

Q-Roger----Harold, when were you born?

A-Harold----1916, August the 16th, in Portland Oregon.

Q-Roger----What stage of the game then did your dad move here?

A-Harold----My mother passed away when I was six years old. She passed away and dad moved up here in 25. After we were here a couple of months, he married Ethel. She was living where Darrel Franzen used to out there by LeSourds (Ebey Rd.). My stepmother (Ethel) was a Coates.

Q-Roger----How did Ed (Smith) make a living?

A-Harold----Before we moved up here, he worked for the Port of Portland. He was a ships carpenter. He came up here and went fishing with Frank and Alva???and Ralph.

Q-Roger----Ok, now, how was he related to them? Were they all brothers?

A-Harold----Brothers, yeah, Frank was the oldest, then dad, then Alva, then Ralph.

Q-Roger----What kind of fishing was that?

A-Harold----Smelt

Q-Roger----He did that for a living?

A-Harold----Yeah, he had those cabins here on the beach and then he fished the rest of the time.

Q-Roger----Now these cabins down here. Did he own all of that property?

A-Harold----Yeah, he bought this property from, Priest, was his name. Dad bought it just before we moved up, I guess. Six cabins, used to rent out. Then he built two cabins afterwards.

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Q-Roger----Did he own this property here that Pratt owned.

A-Harold----No, Pratt still had it, to the edge of our place. 210 feet I think it was.

Q-Roger----And your dad owned the rest of it?

A-Harold----Yeah.

Q-Roger----You said that your dad and his brothers made a living fishing smelt?

A-Harold----Yeah, Ralph, he use to farm a little bit.

Q-Roger----Did you get to see any of Theresa Trebon's slide shows?

A-Harold----Just one with Herb Pickard, something at the school.

Q-Roger----She had a picture. I don't know if she showed it there or not, but somebody had built a kind of a watch tower, kind of a pole type thing that stuck out over the beach? They'd climb up that thing and look for smelt?

A-Harold----Right, we had three of them. One was right in here where the _____????? where Richards house is, one stand there and one on the other side of Ostlings place. There was three of them.

Q-Roger----And you were in on putting those things up?

A-Harold----Just the one here. They repaired it. It fell down.

Q-Roger----They didn't look very darned safe. That was really a neat picture. I need to get a copy of that. When you moved back here, you started doing some smelting yourself?

A-Harold----After I went to Alaska for three years, ran a tender for salmon. Took the smelt into Seattle, sometimes up to Bellingham.

Q-Roger----Latter on then, you were selling it here locally. Did you just fish enough then to keep the customers happy here?

A-Harold----I fished all the time, whenever you didn't have enough to go to town, I'd sell them here in a little shack on the end of the place there that had three refrigerators in there. I'd bag up the fish, mark the weight on them, how much it was and leave them in the refrigerator. Then, I had a container with money in it so people could help themselves.

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Q-Roger----Yeah, we used to come down and get them. That was great.

A-Harold----I seen one bunch spawning here this year. That's all I've seen spawning.

Q-Roger----Are you really watching for it much anymore?

A-Harold----Whenever the weather is decent, I sit out on the porch and watch for them all the time.

Q-Roger----Ok, so you don't think there's many around anymore?

A-Harold----No, there isn't.

Q-Roger----What do you attribute that to?

A-Harold----They aern't out on the coast like they used to be, the oceans. There used to be quite a few. Cornett Bay, there used to be lots of them. _____??????? After I had my first stroke, I haven't fished much since then. Maybe because I wasn't fishing they were gone.

Harold was talking about someone smelting down at the springs (East Coupeville). Not very legible. Whoever it was, worked at the grocery store.

Q-Roger----Now, Edwin----How is Edwin related to you?

A-Harold----He's my cousin.

Q-Roger----Ok, he's a cousin, now, I talked to him when they had this big Ebey reserve party out at Smiths. I'm going to go up. I've got his phone number and stuff. I'm going to go up and talk to him. He said that he used to do a lot of dragging out here in Penn Cove.

A-Harold----_____?????? fished year round, some up in Bellingham, _____????, don't know where all he fished.

Q-Roger----Well, what kind of a boat did he have?

A-Harold----A pretty good sized boat---I don't know what you would call it. He had one for purse seining and he got rid of that and got one on the Columbia River, Astoria Packer used that. The Criscoula boys used to bottom fish in here a lot too.

Q-Roger----Who is Wally (Smith). Is he your brother?

A-Harold----Another cousin, Edwins brother.

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Q-Roger----Wally was around for quite a few years too, dragging out here. They used to have draggers out in Saratoga passage quite a bit. I don't know, environmentalists don't like those guys.

A-Harold----I don't either anymore.

Q-Roger----I don't see any of them out there anymore. Did they make it illegal?

A-Harold----Yes

Q-Roger----Because Wally would come into the dock down there (Coupeville) and he would sort his catch and God, he had dead fish all over hell down there. He'd just throw them over the side, you know, God what a waste. They were little guys, I guess they weren't worth anything but still maybe they would have grown up someday to become big guys.

A-Harold----That's right

Q-Roger----You gave me the name of another boat, was it the Reeves?

A-Harold----It was down in Silverdale, _____????, it would come up when the Atalanta was in dry dock and take its place on this run.

Q-Roger----Ok, so it was kind of a relief boat here then.

A-Harold----Yes

Q-Roger----Do you remember ever riding on the Atalanta?

A-Harold----Oh yes, quite a few times.

Q-Roger----Do you remember the Calista?

A-Harold----I remember it, but I never rode on it.

Q-Roger----Do you remember any of the stories about the Atalanta or any of the steam boats that you rode on, just human interest type stuff?

A-Harold----No, Dad had a fish box and they'd go out and load the fish up. They'd be too late to get to the dock and unload to catch the Atalanta. So they would just slow down (Atalanta) and pass the fish over for shipment to Seattle.

Q-Roger----Your dad was a shipwright. Did he ever have anything to do with building the boats around here?

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A-Harold----He built several boats, right here where the gravel bunkers used to be. He built one for Hobart?? Chambers. He used it for bottom fishing, for dragging, about 45 feet. He built three boats like that here. That he rebuilt one _____????

Q-Roger----Do you remember the names of any of the boats he built?

A-Harold----Evelyn C was one. He used to steam all of the stuff that went on the boat. He had me doing that most of the time.

Q-Roger----What did he use for fuel on that? Was it oil?

A-Harold----Wood

Q-Roger----When the navy came in, when they were building Ault Field and the Seaplane Base, did they buy property where they built the screening plant?

A-Harold----Dad, they just got the gravel, _____???? because they had a dock there and it went through the _____???out to the-----

Q-Roger----I can remember the screening plant because every time mom would turn her back, we would go over and play on that thing. But the barges actually came in right on the beach then?

A-Harold----No, dad built a little dock right out there. That they would tie up on there and then they would bring the screening belts out to load it.

Harold and Maryon have an old ships clock that rings ship bell time. It just rang 1430.

Harold----Mayons dad was _____???? on boats. Went up to Alaska and California. She got that (clock). After he passed away, she got it.

Roger----They still make those, they make new ones, that's a Chelsea and Seth Thomas made a lot of them to for the Navy and the Navy ones are quite similar to that but of course they don't make them anymore because the guys steal them, so they make different types.

Q-Roger----Did you ever hear of any boats being built in San de Fuca?

A-Harold----No

Q-Roger----There was one built over there, but I haven't been able to get any information about that thing except that there was one built, but it seems like a pretty crappy place to build one, with the exposure and the high bank there. Pratt had this property here for a long time, old Frank Pratt.

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A-Harold----The piece he had, he bought the tide lands for all along here, Priest did, I mean Frank Pratt bought the tide lands and Priest gave him this property when he bought it.

Q-Roger----I don't know when it was, but Frank used to anchor his boat down here. Do you remember that thing, or did your dad remember it?

A-Harold----The Suva was the name of it. (spelling is correct) He had it built in _____ and shipped over. Had it rebuilt here in the states, someplace.

Q-Roger----Do you know what ever happened to it?

A-Harold----He gave it to some doctor in Seattle for a dollar.

Q-Roger----Do you remember how big it was or anything?

A-Harold----About 60 foot long, about the same size as the one out here, Bill Smith's. (Bill Smith's boat is 40 feet). Si??? Neal was caretaker for the boat.

Tape on side A ended.

Q-Roger----Do you have any pictures or memorabilia of your dad's, or stuff that you've got, like of his boats or any of the boats that were local, or any of the steamers or anything to do with the water is what I'm interested in?

A-Harold----Probably someplace, but I don't know, haven't looked at any albums in a long time.

Q-Roger----Well, maybe I could ask Maryon that. Those boats that you used to fish in, were they called dories?

A-Harold----No, there's a picture of one on the wall.

Q-Roger----Those things don't really look like a dory, a dory was more rounded. You used to row that thing standing up, didn't you?

A-Harold----Oh yeah.

Q-Roger----I remember your dad doing that all the time. Do you remember the ferry, the boat that used to run between Oak Harbor and Utsalady?

A-Harold----Yeah, I rode it a few times.

Q-Roger----Did you ever ride the one from Hoypus point to Dewey beach?

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A-Harold----Oh yeah. The CCCs, when they built the bridge, they used to have to ride the ferry across and hike clear up the, what did they call that? I can't remember nothing anymore. The CCCs, there was three of us on the island over there and I got ahold of an old skiff. Leaked like hell. We'd come over here on the weekends. We'd put the boat ashore on Cranberry Lake and hike home if we couldn't catch a ride. One time, we were a little bit late on the tide, took us through the pass. This one guy was bailing like hell because it leaked so much and it was half full of water by the time we got down to Cornett Bay.

Q-Roger----Well, the ferry over there, somebody said that the thing was a barge?

A-Harold----That's what they used to have, Deception Pass over to Dewey. It was a tug, cost us a dime to go across.

Roger asked about landing sight on Fidalgo side, but confused Smilk with Dewey beach (Harold called it Dewey).

Harold----Past Cornett Bay, follow that road, come to the end of the road there. That's where the ferry used to come in. If you wanted to go across, you had to raise the flag up and they would come and get you.

Q-Roger----What do you think of the muscle rafts out here?

A-Harold----I think they're not doing anything right now.

Q-Roger----Do you mind those things? Do you kind of wish they would all disappear? Or do you support that industry?

A-Harold----I can't say one way or the other. One time I'd wish the hell they weren't there and the next time I don't care.

Q-Roger----Do you remember any stories about, on the water, interesting things that you've had smelting, or anything like that? Pictures? Call me or I'll talk to you.

This ended the interview. I deleted quite a bit, some of it rambling, some of it so soft, I just couldn't pull it out. The tape is available if anyone wants to borrow it. This was not to long after Harold had his second stroke. He did pretty well, but had a hard time remembering some things.