

MARY OREB

in 2-11-08 interview by CSU Fullerton student, Taran Schindler

Remembers the Cannery Process

MO: First of all, we talk about the production

The fish came in, in the back, in the back of the plant from the boats. It was unloaded on conveyors and into the cutting-- butchering room. In there the Filipino boys they did all the cutting, all the gutting. And the heads and put it in baskets in big racks, according to size. Racks were used. Some were four in a basket, some were three to a basket, some were 1 in a basket they were so huge, they had to cut them in half they were so large.

After that was all butchered, they also saved all the liver to be processed and put in great big 5-gallon cans and that's where our vitamins came from. We produced vitamin and different types-- out of the fish oil, out of the fish livers. That all went to different labs, to a regular—to drug labs, to a different processing plant. All the livers were shipped to different processing plants, like pharmaceutical companies. Cooked them down and made pills out of them. Olive oil, not olive oil, the little pills, vitamin E and stuff like that.

After the fish was cooked, they put them in the cookers and cooked them for so long, after so many hours, the fish was all cooked according to size. Then they take them out of there after they were cooked. They stayed overnight in there to cool, cool down, like a 24 hour cool down.

[Short discussion between interviewer and narrator about a delicious that a tuna sandwich]

After that the next morning, at 7 o'clock, the fish come rolling out of the butcher room into the packing room. The fish are distributed to the women, every woman on the tables gets fish to clean.

TS: So they've been gutted, they've been cooked—

MO: Now they're ready to be cleaned and taken the bone out and skinned. When they're clean, they're put on conveyors. When they are all clean they go down to the packing machines down there. And the cutting machine, we also had a machine to cut the heads and the fill the cans up. There were two types of packing, one for the chunk and then they had a solid. That's a solid can. Two different types of machine, one for chunk and one for solid

TS: Who is sorting?

MO: The fish came down on the line. The women in charge of packing the solid pack pulled the fish to the side, and what was for chunk keep right on going. The only thing held back was the solid pack.

After that's done, down at the end of the line, there are two women on each side looking for weight. They have a scale. Pick up the cans, if there's enough water, or if it's broth, sometimes we have vegetable oil, and broth and the salt all comes down automatically.

If they are light weight or something they pick them out and stop the machine, pick them out and redo them, it's a continuous thing. Make sure that the weight-- pick up the can and they weigh it Every once in a while they take a can away. That's the quality control department. That's quality control does that, weight and water, and salt and all that.

Then Straight down they're under a sealing machine, they're being packed and they're being sealed. And after going down into-- a man is standing there with a great big container and all the cans are dropping in.

Completely full [cans], then when they do that, once again into retorts, another cooking process. Once more cooking, another cooking process. And then after that, cool off, 24 hour cool off then they're labeled.