

AGRICULTURE - - Chickens (Second tape on Agriculture)

Mrs. Katie Bissett
914 No. 4 Road, Richmond, B.C.

Interviewed: March 22, 1973.

c1937 - Husband -to-be Bill Bissett left school, Grade 10 at age of 17 . . . bought 200 chickens . . . raised baby chicks from eggs . . . incubator in basement . . . sold baby chicks to farms . . . eggs selling then at 19¢ a dozen . . . feed was \$4 a ton . . .

wheat for feed came from prairies through Grain Board . . . never allowed to bring wheat from own farm in Peace River for feed here.

c1938 - As Bill grew older he increased stock, added to barns . . . from 2,000 to 3,000 chicks . . . supplied half of Richmond with chicken manure for gardens at \$1.00 per truck load (5 yards) . . . price now \$30.00.

1941 - Bill and Katie got married . . . built first barn at present site . . . no electricity - had to bring it in by poles . . . built house and small hatchery . . . bought Buckeye incubator to hold 3,000 eggs . . . Katie handled chickens at present location . . . Bill handled chickens at mother's home . . . enlarged own barns . . . had space for 25,000 chickens . . . supplied Richmond, North Vancouver to Squamish. Frank Napier also in poultry here, now in Langley - still raising, selling baby chicks.

Katie learned to sex baby chicks from poultry inspector from Vancouver who inspected premises, proper growth, raising of chicks . . . attended lectures nights with husband at U.B.C. learning new methods.

Inoculation against "Newcastle" English diseases - Trichiosis and Coccidiosis first injecting live virus and bringing up immunization, then dead virus which succeeded. Respiratory diseases . . . Dr. Lomas, Vet., came out to Richmond then, the vaccines in their fridge.

Flea problems - little and black - bit many humans . . . peat on floor then cedar shavings but found poisonous to chick . . . then fir shavings on floor . . . better for bird . . . no cages.

When chickens hatched out they were kept in battery brooders on floor for 3 weeks . . . at 8 or 9 weeks old, put outside in coops houses in field . . . did well except for dogs running in packs . . . 200 destroyed.

Pedigreed chickens: Leghorn, Rhode Island Reds, New Hampshire, Barred Rocks . . . mostly Leghorn, excellent layers . . . got from Fraser Valley . . . sometimes paid \$1.00 a chick.

If they had too many Leghorn cockerels that they couldn't sell they had to drown them - took too long to get meat on white Leghorn . . . if they raised cockerels got \$4.00 per 100 now get \$12.00. Sold pullet chicks then for \$15.00 per 100.

In poultry business took in \$27,000 with \$25,000 going back for feed, equipment, price of eggs very low.

1947 - Raised Peking ducks . . . 200 geese . . . Toulouse and Emden Chinese types . . . good watch dogs . . . story about Old Bill looking after the goslings for the mother . . . geese eating grass . . . husband bought up lettuce, cabbage from Chinese stores, day old bread at 20 for 10¢, grain . . . sold goslings at three weeks

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old . . . young gosling up to two months old dies of pneumonia if out in rain . . . sold at \$1.50 apiece - grew to 20 - 30 pounds . . . shipped to Peace River, Vancouver Island, and Richmond's large European population wanted ducks, geese, chickens in own yard . . . confining . . . continued ducks, geese for 5 - 10 years.

World War 2 husband stayed on farm . . . all eggs went to Britain under agreement . . . got 29 cents a dozen while in U.S. eggs sold for \$1.00 a dozen . . . Britain "dropped" Canadian egg market at end of war . . . Bissett's into fryers, roaster chickens "no sale" 10,000 on hand - phoned all Richmond butchers . . . Grauers first to buy chickens but only plucked and drawn . . . poultry inspector taught her to cut jugular vein . . . success , . . Woodward's taught course on cutting, wrapping chickens in cryovac so opened outlet in their basement . . . inspectors required sump to operate this depot . . . now in Richmond law says chicken or bird sold only live weight from farms THEN farmer can chop off head.

At night took chickens live to Jewish rabbi to Kosher kill, bless them, wet pluck under cold water then into boxes . . . lucrative.

1963
c10 years ago . . . Marketing Board for poultry in Bissetts were free enterprisers, paid bills . . . so quit poultry after 25 years, husband 33 years in poultry, and into blueberry business . . . had sexed baby chicks all day at home barns, then at night in Fraser Valley sexing chicks with husband . . . now in Richmond can keep 12 pullets and one rooster . . . cost of providing a box to deliver 12 chicks rose from 50 cents to \$1.00.

Methods changed - feed came in sacks, then in blowers to blow mash

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into barn . . . at first straw went on floor but a mess so added fresh shavings which kept floor warm by building up floor . . . fed chickens vegetables . . . put mangels on spike on wall which chickens pecked at, also turnips, beets too red. Learned to de-beak chickens . . . electrical instrument with blade seared bottom part of beak off . . . kept birds three years, then didn't lay enough, then to market. Removed testicles by operation cutting through ribs, sear off, squeeze air out till healed, result: rooster grew bigger. (capon)

Taught chick sexing: Mrs. Jamison, Miracle Feeds; brother, others, charged \$125.00 for lessons . . . description of sexing.

New Westminster Market: colored baby chick cockerels . . . dip in rubbing alcohol then food coloring, beautifully colored, as feathers grew in looked strange . . . husband never worked for anyone except once putting fertilizer on strawberries for McKim , . . great reader.

Rabbits raised one year result of giving one to daughter . . . 200 rabbits resulted . . . sold them . . . then daughter Karen interested in horses, now operates K and L Ranch with 17 horses, Steveston Highway, next to overpass.

D. Cleland