

Douglas William Savage,  
491 No. 7 Road, Richmond.

Interviewed: May 10, 1973.

Born June 17, 1916 in hospital, Vancouver.

1912 - father John Savage came to Richmond . . . leased 240 acres estate at 1442 Cambie Road . . . handled by C.H. Trim but owned by Ontario people . . . Savage held the land till estate probated in 1946 when he bought it jointly with Savage's 3 sons.

Early farming was mixed, potatoes, grain (oats) hay, 60 head Guernsey dairy cattle . . . bottled own raw milk for 8 to 10 years . . . Savage Dairy - delivered milk to Vancouver . . . had retail store on Fraser St.

School - attended Mitchell School . . . bussed to Bridgeport School for 2 years . . . bussed to Richmond High School now called Cambie Junior High School . . . Mr. Dick drove the bus . . . graduated 1933 . . . came home farming . . . hard times - no spending money except from parents when going to school . . . everyone did chores . . . milked cows from age of 10 . . . no homework till after supper . . . drove horses in spring . . . spent weekends holidays ploughing, harrowing . . . envied friends with jobs . . . no wages till married after depression.

1942 - married Marjorie May.

Father Savage was a square dance caller . . . went to neighbors houses every two weeks to call . . . women brought food . . . East Richmond had own social life . . . close community.

1946 - partnership on family farm . . . increased dairying . . . milked 100 head cows in 2 herds gradually changed breed to Holstein

Holstein produce breed true to form.

1941 - father, brother Art and Doug bought extra 80 acres on east side of No. 7 Road which had been previously used in dairying.

1948 - built new barns, dairy buildings . . . brother Art married in 1946 and moved onto this farm.

1947 - Doug built house on No. 7 Road, had previously rented on No. 6 Road . . . Doug then municipal councillor. Incident re - Reeve Graver advising Doug to wait a year for prices to go down.

1951 - father retired . . . built mother present house on No. 7 Road . . . father died about 7 months later at nearly 70 years.

Used to grow a lot of oats in days of horses . . . doesn't pay to grow grain now in Richmond - cost of land is too high . . . oats grown now only to seed down grass.

Doug Savage's Beef Operation - handles 200 head . . . buys yearlings of 400 lbs. . . . winters through to grass stage . . . finish fattening on grain in fall (as compared to feed lot operation with faster turnover as done by Mays) . . . buys 800 lb. heavier animal, put straight on grain . . . operate year round . . . handle more animals (2,000 head) . . . breeds mainly Herefords, crosses of Charolais, Angus, Holstein . . . two brothers remain in dairying . . . one brother still on No. 7 Road.

1955 - started strawberries . . . 40 - 60 acres grown yearly . . . phasing out within 3 years - reason: price of berries isn't going up but costs are . . . labor, machinery, fertilizer. Has so much land that has not needed to return to growing on same land in 17 years . . . plant out new plantation every year on new land, but only 1/3 of size of operation . . . plant 20 acres a year on 60 acre operation. Strawberries bring in virus or boring disease so can

only be grown limited time on land . . . already experienced by others here. Canada will probably get strawberries entirely from U.S. and Mexico where labor is \$1.30 hourly compared to new B.C. Provincial rate of \$2.00. Savage sells strawberries to MacDonald Consolidated, wholesalers for Safeway . . . picking done by baskets into flats . . . shipped by crate to B.C. Blueberry Co-op . . . graded, weighed, reloaded by pallet to trailer trucks to wholesale now in Clearbrook, B.C. . . . North West type popular (from Washington State) but non-resistant to Red Stele . . . changed to Totem (from Assisiz, Federal Agriculture) stand frost better, resists Red Stele.

Potatoes - phasing out. Peak years 1958 - 1960, grew 1,000 to 12,000 tons. Potatoes good paying crop during and after World War 2. Outside competition sets price. California, Oregon, Washington grow three crops yearly, compete in sales . . . Alberta grows huge acreages, Richmond hasn't acreages . . . Alberta uses potato combine chooses sandy soil which sifts through so no labor . . . Richmond has clay lumps, high labor costs separating potatoes and same size lumps. Types - Netteed Gems standby . . . then Kennebec for processing (chip) . . . half of Savage crop now to chipping . . . started decreased growing . . . now grow 200 tons where previously 1000 tons . . . expect to hold there . . . neat and tidy processor - contract with no need to sack or grade . . . in tote box hauled to processor . . . cheap to handle . . . for eating Savage prefers Gems, Russet (U.S. name) or Idaho. Land not used for potatoes now raises beef. Milk or beef only viable things left. Grows no vegetables, but in 1972 tried crop of short cucumbers for dills - 20 acres - no market . . . crop half picked and Oregon, Washington crop

D. Savage

- 4 -

matured one week earlier, so Savage's rotted in fields . . . sold to Nalley's, Marine Drive, Vancouver (plant closing). Richmond agriculture tail-end supplier in all vegetables.

Orchard: Newly in . . . Bill Zalman No. 8 Road and Westminster Highway - 5 acres . . . roadside stand to sell own apples. Richmond has most progressive farmers in Canada . . . have to be hard working farmer to exist or taxed out . . . farmers here never accepted subsidies.

Bangs Disease. Early 1940 - affects cattle . . . transmitted through milk, becomes undulant fever.

c1950 - vaccination program started . . . started in Lower Mainland and went through dairy herds . . . then through beef on range . . . eventually province declared "Bangs free".

No reason to grow food on the land here till 2000 AD when world population doubles.

Family: 2 girls.

Has 4 riding horses - 2 of them used for herding cattle . . . cattle prefer horses among them to people on foot.

Steam Thresher Revived: Savage grew grain for old steam threshing machine which machinist bought from movie makers here . . . demonstration last fall (1972) . . . oats cut, bound, stoked, loaded and thrown in by hand similar to routine of his youth . . . ex-prairie people watched . . . Savage has old-time movie of family threshing . . . belongs to Potatoe Growers Assoc.

Cranberries.

c1967 - Norman Holmes persuaded Savage Bros. to buy 160 acres of bog cleared of peat belonging to Lulu Island Peat Company to plant in cranberries . . . takes 5 years for cranberry maturity . . .

D. Savare

- 5 -

first returns in 1972 . . . uses sprinkling system for frost protection . . . called Columbia Cranberry Company . . . Savage brothers shareholders, Dr. Mel, New Westminster and May family . . . venture more profitable than farming . . . cranberry bog sells for \$7,000 an acre . . . industry now built on original May land . . . Mays moved to land across No. 7 Road and big beef feed lot operation . . . cranberry growing on bogs won't "wear out" . . . 100 year old bogs in Massachusetts still producing cranberries better than ever.

Cranberries return twice as much to the acre at half the cost compared to strawberries . . . sell cranberries at 12 cents a pound but need to get 22 cents a pound to make strawberries pay due to mechanization . . . sell cranberries one-third price selling blueberries. More cranberries said marketed in North America than strawberries and blueberries combined.

Not on tape. Doug Savare's father loaded hay on barges which went into Vancouver . . . hay for horses and milk producers. Recalls old airport property on Garden City between Landsdowne Rd. and Cambie.

D. Cleland