

Working In Cannery Is Better But No Cinch

By Margaret Koch

Working in a cannery is no bed of roses, but for the 500 women who trim pears and shove hot string beans into canning machines at Stokely-Van Camp, it's a lot better today than it used to be.

They have coffee breaks. They have a cafeteria. They have a first aid room, complete with nurse. And they have an "esprit de corps" that would be hard to find in many other jobs involving such back-aching work.

How does it feel to be on the preparation end of 60 tons of green beans every 24 hours—or in the pear department where 200 tons of the highly perishable fruit go through the mill every day?

It feels pretty good, according to two women who have been on the job at Stokely's for almost 30 years apiece. And it may have seemed like a foolish question to be asking them.

Mrs. Josephine Silva and her co-worker in pears, Mrs. Minnie Pollastrini, agreed that it is a good place to work. Mrs. Pollastrini went on to recall she started work with Stokely's when she was 15 and child labor laws were not yet in force.

"There was a special table where only minors worked," she added, "and we attended school one day a week."

Mrs. Silva commented with obvious pride that the cannery has really grown in the years since then. What started as a small, hole-in-the-wall, shoe-string operation years ago, has bulged into being a noisy monster that takes up a square block of buildings, has a \$700-

000 annual payroll, employs 500 women and 250 men during the three summer months and 40 to 50 full-time year 'round employees.

Work methods also have changed since early days, reminisced the two women.

"Remember the first conveyor belt?" one said, and from the way they both laughed you could tell it had been a long-standing joke between them. It was a blessing for making the work easier and quicker, but it made them all seasick until they got used to working on it, they explained.

There was no first aid room or nurse then, but there are both now, and Genevieve Hamilton, RN, was on duty. But no one calls her that—She is Kelly to everyone, and she dispenses bandages, aspirin, lotion, and the long rubber gloves the women wear while working, in a small but cheerfully efficient first aid room.

There is a red leatherette couch along one wall, three bouquets of flowers from Kelly's home garden, medical cabinets, cupboards, a sterilizer, hot plate and coffee pot, and a bright blue parakeet in a cage.

Kelly said "hello" briefly over one starched shoulder as she continued to paint lotion on a girl's arm. When the patient pulled on her long rubber gloves and left, Kelly explained that some of the women are allergic to the fruits and vegetables, and their arms may break out with rashes.

Great care is taken to treat any suspicious spot promptly, and if a worker does actually break out, she is not allowed to work until her allergy rash clears up.

Kelly was a busy person but she did manage to say, between patients, that she was the first nurse hired at the cannery. She came there in August, 1941, and has been there ever since.

Before 1941 and before Kelly—what? This serious, gray-haired nurse smiled quietly and went on to say that in early cannery days one of the fore ladies had kept a box of aspirin,

baking soda, cotton and a few bandages, and that was it.

Leaving first aid headquarters, the doors of the green-painted cafeteria stand open on the hall. Then there is a long stretch down to the tremendous two-story brick "stove" pulsating with heat. It generates steam for cooking the fruits and vegetables and stands nearer the heart of the main canning operation.

The whole place clatters and bangs. And here at the door of the canning building, a solid sheet of sound came rolling out like a physical blow. There was the hiss of steam, the clanking of hundreds of empty, moving tin cans, and underneath all the thrum of powerful machinery. Unending, stretching, reaching out to every corner, the sound was a smothering thing. And because of it, the huge open building seemed airless.

It is a Rube Goldberg delight, that cannery.

The machinery is fantastic. It cuts, sorts, peels, cleans, washes, steams, cooks, cans, puts lids on cans, and even glues labels on them. You have to see it to believe it, and then you aren't sure.

The small army of plastic-aproned, gloved, galoshed and hair-netted women stand at tables and conveyor belts all over the place, feeding pears and string beans into hungry machines. Those are the only crops the cannery handled this year, although in the past it has run spinach and other crops.

Prospective employees at Stokely's are interviewed by a personnel officer, then are screened by the nurse. There are three shifts, the 6 a.m., the 1:30 p.m. and the one starting at 9 o'clock in the evening which is a favorite with mothers of small children who want to be home with their families during the day while father works.

Most of the men work in the warehouses where the cases of empty cans are waiting to be filled, the filled cans are waiting for labels, and the labeled cans are waiting to be sent to retail markets.

Back in the office of Superintendent John Butler, where the din was a distant rumble, he told us a little about some of the people who work at Stokely's. Some school teachers spend their summers working there; a small corps of mothers work there to put their children through college, and there is even a grandmother who is putting her granddaughter through school.

Cannery Work Appeals



These co-workers at the Stokely-Van Camp cannery, enjoying coffee together in the cafeteria, represent a lot of years in the Santa Cruz plant. Mrs. Mary Bertorelli, seated, has been with the cannery for more

than 35 years, while Miss Roberto Tefertiller represents the third generation of her family to be associated with the plant. Her grandmother, Mrs. Amy Sibley, and her mother, Mrs. Anna L. Tefertiller, also are employed at the cannery.

Registration Days Are Established For SLV Schools

Attention all students who plan to be enrolling in San Lorenzo valley schools for the first time this fall.

Here's how you register:

All students entering San Lorenzo valley unified schools will have to register on either September 2 or 3 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Elementary students in the Boulder Creek area will register at Boulder Creek elementary. Those in Ben Lomond and Felton will register at San Lorenzo elementary.

Students in grades seven through 12 will register at the high school.

Parents are requested to accompany their children. A birth certificate or other verification of birthdate must be presented for all kindergarten and first grade students enrolling for the first time.

N-K Engineering Firm Plant Gets Planner's Okay

Plans for an N-K Engineering company light industrial plant to be located at Delaware avenue and Swift street, were approved by the city planning commission Friday.

The proposed plant, which will be one story and tree lined, is the first industry to receive commission approval for operation in "Airport Industrial park."

The N-K Engineering company manufactures electronics products.

SHOP IN THE GREATER SANTA CRUZ TRADING AREA

from Otation...

World's Most Powerful

Eyeglass
HEARING AID

Operated
by the
SUN!

Reduce operating cost
by using the sun

TV Quiz Shows Must Answer Questioning

New York (AP). — An investigation into the integrity of the NBC television quiz show "21" focused Saturday on friends of Herbert Stempel, a former contestant