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THE OOWEKEENO BAND.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- General reminiscences about their lives.
- Gives English translation for certain Indian words.
David: Could we have that one again?

Hilda: (Indian). That's when a girl becomes a woman.

David: Was there a term used for boys when they entered
puberty?

Hilda: (Indian). Almost the same as (Indian) only it refers
to...

David: And were those special occasions, would they be
marked with a feast?

Hilda: Some of them would be marked with a potlatch, giving
away of stuff. And then they have a name for that period.

David: Oh, I see.

Hilda: And then another name too.

David: Oh, I see. So your name changed...

Hilda: As you grow older.

David: As you grew older, right, yeah.

Hilda: Until you're stuck with the last one. (laughs)

David: Say that again.

Hilda: (Indian). That was her last known name. Of course she was (Indian), too, but that's mine now.

David: Does the word (Indian) mean anything, (Indian)?

Hilda: (Indian) is welcome. To welcome someone (Indian) coming from another religion.

David: How about (Indian)?

Hilda: (Inaudible)

David: Right.

Hilda: Yeah. Madman.

David: The (inaudible) run fire around it, is it?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: Who's that?

Hilda: (Name) I think he's the leader of the song, that song. He's the leader of the singing, I think. He's going to dance. And it's (Indian). That means he's going to dance now, he's going to dance.

David: It's not a different dance from the Hamatsa dances? Or it is the Hamatsa dance, is it?

Hilda: (Indian) means that you're going to dance, or no, you are dancing. (Indian) that's telling him you're nobody, you got no, you got nothing, (Indian).

David: What does that mean in the terms of the dances? That he's never danced?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: Oh, I see.

Hilda: (Indian).

David: So the dances were obviously very important social...

Hilda: Yeah.

David: Yeah, status things.

Hilda: Yeah. My niece -- the one that lived in the condominium here -- she's got a name of being the crier. She can cry for anyone, no matter who it is, and still get away with it, because she's got the name for it.

David: So she could be a mourner then?

Hilda: Yeah. For anyone at all if she wishes.

David: Did you give me her name already?

Hilda: No. Gee, I can't remember it, she might remember. Yes, we do. Gee, I can't remember it. This ghost.

David: (Indian).

Hilda: (Indian). You got to get all those juices in your mouth and those... (laughs)

David: How about (Indian)?

Hilda: (Indian)?

David: What's that?

Hilda: Noise or curve -- must be there. Maybe that's it (Indian) means you go way back.

David: Oh, I see, yeah, that's a real (Indian).

Hilda: (Indian). That means we fall back. That's pertaining to the fish, (Indian) means fish. (Indian) is what it was. (laughs)

David: So you were born in Rivers Inlet, were you?

Man: No, I was born at Campbell River.

David: You were born in Campbell River. How long did you live in Campbell River?

Man: Oh, I don't know. Till about three years old, I guess. Then we moved away from there to (name) for two or three years. Then we went back up to Rivers Inlet. We stayed around there for maybe two years and then back down to Vancouver again. And after that I lost touch until about '42, I think. Went back up to...

David: Were most of the people living in the present village then in 1940, '42?

Man: There was no village. They were just starting to build the houses. You know the house there, beside where

Danny's present house is?

David: Yes.

Man: Well, there's a house right beside it, right close together.

David: An old house.

Man: Yeah. Well, they were just building them houses when I was up there.

David: How old would you be about then, around 1940?

Man: Ten years old.

David: Oh, I see. Did you then stay in Rivers for a while then?

Man: I think we stayed there for about a year. Yeah, about one year and then we went down to Vancouver.

David: Was your dad a fisherman?

Man: Yeah. I was a fisherman. Well, there was canneries, there was canneries all over Rivers Inlet at that time.

David: I just wonder why he moved around so much.

Man: Well, he moved around (inaudible). Well, he was logging at Campbell River at the same time. There's a place called (name). They had a camp there with... Well, it was supplemented by Indian Affairs. How long that lasted I don't know. It didn't interest me very much at that time. I was too young go understand it.

David: Where did you start going to school then?

Man: I started going to school at North Vancouver, Queen Mary. I was there for about three years.

David: Did you spend any time at all at Alert Bay, at the residential school?

Man: No, I was only... the school I went to -- residential school -- was in North Van. But that was just for day school, you know. We lived in North Van. And we used to go back and forth. We didn't live in the village, we were outside the village then. See, my father got off the reserve in 1933.

David: This is at Campbell River?

Man: Campbell River band. And we moved to Vancouver. He saved all his land, and his land possessions and claims, and houses, and...

David: He did, eh?

Man: Yeah.

David: Did he come from a big family?

Man: No, he had one brother and one sister.

David: Were they very... what was their position? Were they a very high-ranking family?

Man: Yeah.

David: They were, eh?

Man: Yeah, they were highest, I think. That I can remember they were. (Inaudible) He had land right between Campbell River and Campbellton, they call it -- went there. Well, his father was... there's a bridge there. Well, halfway between... His father owned land on the other side of the river, that creek, they lived on this side, the lower side of the creek. He cleared all that land there by, with blasting, a few horses, you know. Ever since that time I don't think nobody's cleared that place. It's all overgrown now with crabapple trees and alders, I guess. And there was my uncles (inaudible) train tracks coming down and (inaudible) timber. They used to come right down to Campbell River and they'd dump logs. Well, I guess we were salt water, high water, salt water... And from that time we moved until '42, that I can remember they went and stayed at Rivers Inlet for about another year after that.

David: So that was just during the... I guess the War was on then, eh?

Man: Yeah, the War was going on.

David: Did the War affect the people of Rivers very much? Did any of them go into the War or did it effect the economy very much up there?

Man: Well, most of us were too young at that time, I think. I really don't remember anybody who went to the Second World War from Rivers Inlet. The only one that I know of is Dave Bernard. That was the First World War, though.

David: Oh, I see, yeah. Did you then stay down Vancouver way for a while?

Man: Yeah, we stayed down in Vancouver. Well, not exactly, I didn't stay there myself. I moved around quite a bit. I went to a logging camp, you know. We went down at the States, done some logging down there, and berry picking.

David: Yeah.

Man: See, we didn't really actually stay there too long. I was travelling around quite a bit.

David: Your mother was Evelyn?

Man: That was Walker.

David: She was a Walker?

Man: Yeah. Well, she had a pretty high ranking position, up close to princess or something. And my father was chief down in Campbell River. I come from a large family, you know, but there's only the two of us left now. I have two nephews -- Danny and Harry -- they were my older sister's children.

David: Your older sister was Ivy?

Man: Ivy, yeah.

David: So Danny is your nephew then?

Man: Yeah, I call them my brothers -- Danny and Harry.

David: What happened to your other sister and brother?

Man: Oh, my brother died of some kind of concussion or something like that. Hit in the head, back of the head, and never quite recovered from that. Well, he was about fifty-three years old then when that happened. My sister, Ivy, she died from drinking too much. She used to be... well, I don't know, it's hard to say these things about my own sister, you know. Now the towns (inaudible) made her like that. Easy access to liquor and everything like that.

David: So you did mostly logging, did you?

Man: Until '59, I guess, and then I went fishing for a while. Oh, by this time Hilda and I had been together for about three years, I guess, '56.

David: So you went gill netting?

Man: Yeah. And I... Well, we made enough to live on. That's all we were worried about. We didn't have too much to worry about -- just two kids, you know. And whenever we wanted to go someplace we just packed up and go. Weren't stuck, you know, in one place -- didn't have no place to call home, you know. Took off when we felt like it, or stayed, you know. Didn't make any difference.

David: How long did you gill net for then?

Man: Pardon?

David: How many years did you fish?

Man: Well, I fished for... All the years you mean?

David: Yeah.

Man: Let's see, first outfit that I fished for was Canadian Fish at Kiltala Canneries in Rivers Inlet. And the second was Anglo-British Columbia, ABC, had a good cannery. Was using Columbia skiffs then, no engine of any kind, just oars.

David: That's when you get towed out and dropped off and then picked up again?

Man: Yeah. Well, I was about twelve or thirteen then, out by myself. And... well, I was twelve when I started. Kiltala canneries in Rivers Inlet. I don't know if I made it very much, I can't remember -- that's a while ago. And then I wound up in Nelson River, I was about sixteen, I guess, seventeen. Then B.C. Packers and then I quit fishing again -- I went back. I was logging, you see. And there till, well, I went to camps all over the coast. I even went down California to log redwoods. You know, experience, it's to learn something different. Well, I guess I did learn some, you know. I met lots of people, new people, and different ways and such. Then I, let's see... Then I work in cannery for quite a few years. I couldn't go canoe fishing since I worked right in the cannery.

David: So you were able to get your own boats eventually or did you use a company boat?

Man: Oh, I had my own boat after a while. It wasn't very big. It was just a small inlet boat, you know. Never did get any big kind of fishing in that. And, well, at Night's Inlet couldn't get a boat to go fishing so I used to have to stay in the cannery and worked in the cannery there for the whole season. I made out all right because there was a poor year for fishing at that time. Better than I would have if I had been fishing, you know. I'm just trying to think of some... I'm trying to think, like I can't (inaudible). Well, it was that year that her and I got together, eh, Hilda and I got together. I used to go up there for hunting trips, that's all. And for drying fish -- stuff like that.

David: Whereabouts would you go to dry your fish? At that Smokehouse Island still?

Man: Smokehouse Island. Oh, my uncle invited us up there, couldn't refuse. And he come up and say, "Come up and smoke some fish." Well, it was more of a command than asking, you know. That's the Indian ways of... I guess it's a politeness or something, I don't know. And we'd go up there. It seemed like everybody just wasn't interested in doing things like that after, you know. Like we were in between, it seems like always in between, you know, like they didn't want us socially to be accepted as an Indian in the reserve and they

didn't exactly accept us as a white person off the reserve. So we were just sort of right in the centre. There's no...

David: It was a very frustrating place to be then, was it?

Man: Really. Like when I talk to people my own age they say I'm lucky. (laughs) I don't understand it, why they call me lucky when we struggled for everything all the time we were growing up, you know.

David: Did you ever... Were you ever at any of the big feasts or any feasts at Rivers at all?

Man: Yeah. One I can remember was in Kiltala. Somebody had a big potlatch, '42, somewhere between '40 and '42, somewhere around in that area. Well, they had a real big feast, eh.

David: Who put that one on?

Man: I think it was my uncle Simon. Well, he put part of it up for his wife. I guess she died not too long ago, something like that.

David: So there would be dancing at that time as well?

Man: Oh, there was mask dances, and there was... Well, it was an affair that lasted pretty near a week, maybe two weeks, because they were fishing, you know. Passed the weekend fishing and then dancing, celebrations, and then the talking. And then after the chiefs of Rivers Inlet, they had their say first. And then the chiefs from different tribes from the coast, they got there and they said their piece. What they said, well, I couldn't tell you; I didn't understand it at that time. I didn't understand Indian at all. I mean, I was brought up mostly in English language.

David: Did they give out names then?

Man: Yeah. They give out names to quite a few of them, but I don't remember who or what the names were.

David: Was this held right in the cannery houses then? Or was it on a reserve, like?

Man: It was held in the cannery houses. They had dances right in (name). That's right beside the main cannery, Kiltala.

David: Was potlatching illegal at that time?

Man: No, well, there was still (inaudible).

David: No, I just... Hilda mentioned that and Ada -- I spoke with Ada in town. She mentioned something about a potlatch at Kiltala but I haven't gotten very many details about it, you know.

Man: Well, it was between '40 and '42. I know that because I remember being there.

David: Were there any other feasts then, after that, that you know of?

Man: I can't say for sure. There might have been. I can't say for sure. I think they were just starting to clamp down on the potlatches about that time too. Didn't want us to... Well, I don't see why. Why should we stop something that's been in our heritage for years, you know? But the law says it was illegal so they took all the dancing masks and blankets and everything of value -- they took it all. Our mother had an old blanket. It's still in Ottawa somewhere, museum there, wherever it is they took it to. No hopes of getting it back because I don't know, don't even know if it's under her name anymore, that's how long ago it was.

David: Was this a cedar blanket?

Man: No, it was a woolen blanket from mountain goat wool. It wasn't for dancing or anything like that. It was too heavy for dancing, it was just for play. Her crests and different names and stuff like that. Not painted or that, I guess it's woven right into the blanket itself. And the masks -- there were plenty of masks... Between Simon, my Uncle Simon, and my mother they had quite a bit of stuff that they took away, that I know of. I remember that big fire they had up there in Rivers Inlet, Smokehouse Island.

David: Yeah.

Man: Just vaguely.

David: You were there around that time, were you?

Man: Yeah. I was out fishing with my dad and we see these smoke and flames coming up. I didn't think anything of it. I figured somebody was burning something up there and...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Man: ... further up than it is right now, at a certain time, what they call oolachan ground now. I think that's where it was.

David: Right, the houses were there.

Man: Big smokehouses there, (inaudible).

David: What was the, what started the fire? Does anybody know how it got started?

Man: I couldn't tell you that. I wish I could remember, I just vaguely remember. I was just a foolish kid, you know, no interest in anything. (Inaudible) dances they used to have there. That's just the village itself. House to house there'd be, used to try out a new song or say hello to somebody that you haven't seen for a while. Give your greetings to somebody that just came through to the village, you see, who were passing by, you know.

David: Did you ever participate in any of the dances then?

Man: Pardon?

David: Did you ever do any of the dances yourself?

Man: No. I was going to but we moved out. We went and moved right out of there. We were already enfranchized, my father was. And I had no say if I could remain an Indian or become... Well, I had to follow my father because he was the head of the family, as it were, you know. And there was a few instances... I didn't dance, actually, I just stood there in front of... talk, what they talked about. Maybe some kind of name giving ceremony or something. Other than that I didn't join in any of the dances or anything. (Inaudible) Jack Johnson -- well, that was years later, around 1960, yeah, about there '62, '63.

David: Did he try to revive some of that dancing and things?

Man: Well, everybody, we were at Rivers Inlet, Oowekeeno village, at that time. He tried to get the young people

interested in it so it wouldn't completely die right out. It held their interest for a while, only a short while, you know, and then they... But it's too bad, you know. It would have been good. It's still there, they might have done it after we left, I don't know. But there's no carvers left, except for Frank, that I know of that's up there.

David: You do carving yourself, eh?

Man: Pardon?

David: Do you carve?

Man: Yeah. Yeah I do some carving. Not too much of it.

David: How long have you been carving?

Man: Let's see. Oh, around 1945, I guess, I started around. That's not, well, maybe one a year or two a year anyway, any carving at all I do.

David: Did you ever do any hand logging at Rivers at all?

Man: I did through my Uncle Simon

David: You did do some with him?

Man: Yeah. There was three of us, Percy, my Uncle Simon and myself. We were hand logging his property and (inaudible) in Owikeno Lake. We had, oh, we had an order for float sticks. I think he had about half a dozen float sticks to take to... I think we were making "A" frame or somebody wanted "A" frame poles out of fir, some got that. Just a minute.

David: So that was in '63, was it?

Man: Yeah.

David: You mentioned that he was doing his property. Does that mean that he had a part of...

Man: Yeah. Well, handed to him by his relatives at Rivers Inlet. I think every one of them has got a claim up there around the top or the bottom end of the lake.

David: For hand logging or for trapping?

Man: Yeah, well, for... not for trapping. Just, well... It's property that they own. It was given to them, you know, handed down.

David: Oh, I see, yeah.

Man: I don't know how. Well, it's hard for me to say because I can't remember that far back. Then the whole area up around there is all Indian property, you see, Crown Zellerbach they just wanted to put a road through there. They didn't have no claims to go to take, you know. Now I hear they got the right to the whole property right up to the, what do you call, (name).

David: Do they?

Man: That's what I heard. I can't tell you for sure, they might have, I don't know.

David: Oh, I didn't know that.

Man: I think it's Crown Zellerbach, but I...

David: Yeah, yeah. I think it is.

Man: Not for them. He didn't, my uncle didn't have no license of any... He owned land, he owned claim, eh.

David: Yeah, he just take off what he wanted, eh.

Man: Yeah, we had that float sticks, "A" frame logs. I think he got it for Vandel(?), somebody like that. I worked with them about a couple of weeks, I guess, hand log. And then some of us we were following one (inaudible) log. We're

drifting around, eh. The roots on it and everything. We beached it, cleared it, float that down.

David: During that time, like this is early '60s now, eh? Were there very many men commercial fishing then from the village?

Man: Yeah, everybody was.

David: Everybody was.

Man: Everybody that I can remember. They either worked in fishing itself or they were involved in cannery, fishing industry of some kind, like cannery work, you know, net making... The whole works, anybody that was eligible.

David: I was just wondering now... Like there's nobody there now that's a gill netter. How has it happened that, like, in the last... over a period of say ten years or so there's no... all the fishermen have gone like, everybody is logging or doing other things now?

Man: Well, the main reason for that is that because the Inlet closed down. There's no more commercial fishing in Rivers Inlet. The people there that used to fish are moved out to where the fishing grounds are open. Because right now they have to travel about eighty, ninety miles an hour, I mean eighty or ninety miles to get to the fishing grounds that's open. And they can't. See, there are only two or three days' fishing in any specified area, like, you know. Say you go up here, you've only got forty-eight hours fishing and you travel 100 miles up here just to get forty-eight hours fishing and travel back to the village. You see, that's part of the reason why everybody moved. They either moved or they just quit fishing altogether, you know. Because of the involvement of... Well, you can't always depend on the weather, you know.

David: Did the, did they have any problems, like financing their boats, and keeping their boats up and going? Was that part of the problem too?

Man: In some cases, yeah. But not all of them looked after their boats pretty good. So that's the reason why, I think, they all packed up and left -- it was too far away to go to get to fishing grounds. You had to be involved in the company in order to get your gear, your food... an independent fisherman can't come and use the float -- B.C. Packer's float -- and take the gear off and mend his net, or can't go to ABC or Canadian Fish -- any one of them, you know, because they're independent. Got to have his own float and own repair, own repair shop, engineers. You deliver your fish to one certain company. Have your class of independent fishermen, you'd get more money for the price of your fish, more for the sale of

your fish than you would if you were obligated to that company. Like they rent you the boat and everything like that.

David: So were most of the men from the village then would be working for companies?

Man: Some of them would be independent. But like I told you, you can't get no place to dry your net or hang it or store or anything, you know.

David: Well, right now there's some sort of derelict boats in the river, you know, just in the village there. Who owns those boats, do you know?

Man: Well, there's one that belongs to Bobby Hanuse, and one I guess belongs to old Henry Hanuse. There's one that belongs to Clifford (name). There's one that belongs to Johnny Hanuse, then there was one that belonged to me. And one more... Rivers Inlet is a beautiful place.

David: Yeah, yeah, it is. So most of the people just went into the logging, eh, when these logging camps moved in?

Man: Yeah.

David: When did the camp at R.I.C. start up as a logging camp?

Man: B.C. Packers sold their cannery and they sold the whole works to some kind of a... Just a minute, I can't... No, they sold out, they sold it to that, what's the name of the river, the name of that (inaudible)?

Hilda: That's what Glen was saying. What was his name?

Man: Paul Finch.

Hilda: The other guy that was there. Didn't he say he owned R.I.C.?

Man: The old guy with glasses on?

Hilda: I think so.

Man: Yeah, well, I'm just trying to think of his name. What was his last name? He was a big Swede anyway, or Finlander.

Hilda: It was after we left Namu and went back to Rivers?

Man: No, we were living in R.I.C. then. That's how we come to know...

Hilda: Oh, that was just, I think, a year before we came to Port Hardy -- '64.

Man: Two years.

Hilda: '63, we were there for two years.

Man: No, '60. Well, it wasn't in the '50s.

Hilda: No, '63 or '64. That was before we came here. We went anyways, to pick up scraps. We dealt with that guy.

Man: Yeah. These people are going to make a resort out of it, R.I.C. And it was in '62 or '63, something, because we were

living right there in R.I.C. at that time. So we wanted to visit anybody, we had to jump in a canoe and get the motor started and go up to the village. And then sometimes stay up there for a night, a week, two days. It's not there anymore.

David: Yeah, I saw a photograph of that. Whatever happened to that canoe then? I saw a photograph of it.

Man: Went, drifted away.

Hilda: When we first moved to Port Hardy.

Man: Franky was supposed to look after it.

Hilda: And our rowboat.

Man: Well, everything we had, boats and motor. Because we figured we were going to be back the next year, you know.

Hilda: We did go back, we had nothing when we got back.

David: Really?

Man: We had nothing left.

Hilda: Our home was gone, our rowboat was gone.

Man: Broke into the house and the furniture was gone, television was gone.

David: Really?

Man: Everything was gone.

David: You had a house on a float then, eh?

Man: No. We were staying in her brother's place.

David: Oh, I see.

Man: Yeah. Well, he was patting himself on the back because everybody else locked their houses up and he says, "They all fall apart," he says. "I left mine," you know, let him use it. They keep it up, you know, make it a liveable place like, you know.

David: Which house was this?

Man: Right beside the big boat house up there.

Hilda: Right beside the red house, Bobby's house. They said they had a hard time getting rid of that house, but they put dynamite underneath it twice before to get rid of it.

David: Who owns the boat house there?

Man: Who owns it now?

David: Yeah.

Man: The village, I guess.

David: And you said the boat house was that partly built boat?

Man: Yeah.

Hilda: Oh, he gave it to him. Then he tried to give it to John, but they never went and got it.

David: So technically it belongs to William now?

Man: The new boat house down there was never completed.

David: Whereabouts was that at?

Man: Right in front of where the school is now.

David: Oh yeah.

Man: Right directly below that. You can still see the posts standing there and part of the deck.

David: Yeah.

Man: And that was the end of that. I don't know, I guess everybody just moved away that time. I don't know why the project stopped -- lack of funds or something, I don't know.

David: So why did people move away?

Man: Well, the reason we left, or I left, is because the school -- there was no school facilities there. And I have four kids, two school-aged kids and two preschool now. And, well, we tried to ship them all, get somebody in Vancouver to look after them while they're going to school and we stayed in Rivers Inlet. Tried to send them to Bella Bella but it didn't seem to be doing any good, to either us or them, you know. And

we resorted to correspondence courses. And then, you know, they're not too far apart in age difference, you see. And you try and teach two school-age kids about school, you know, "Sit there and study," while two other children are just maybe ten feet away or so. Try to teach them how to "A,B,C," but it

can't be done. Just too much distraction.

David: Was there also some difficulty, like getting a house in the village? Was that a problem?

Man: No, there was no difficulty in getting a house there because there was plenty of houses. There was nobody living there. Like there was only one family, there was only two families there -- it was myself and Hanuse for quite a while. And then Simon's, and then Jack Johnson. Well, they left before and then the others started coming.

David: Oh, I see, yeah.

Man: That's when the jobs were starting to roll in. They built the road. They cleared the lot and then a logging camp opened up that's when the people came back.

David: So this would be mid-'60s now, around there?

Man: Well, that's about it, yeah, that's about the '60s. Can't comment on that because I had, didn't do me any good, they didn't... Well, I had nothing to do with the village anyway. I was just a visitor there. But when they did, when they did (inaudible) on my part I did go and say my piece there. They didn't kick me out or anything like that, they attracted(?) me. Well, there wasn't very much there, people there that they can pick and choose, you know. (laughs) They

said you're there, eh, and... Well, after I didn't want to go back there again, that's all.

Yeah, I had been given other names from my mother, some from my father's side, but I can't remember them right now. I was given the name in Rivers Inlet. What year was it -- '64, '65?

Hilda: '67.

Man: '67, yeah. We put up a... well, I remember it's a potlatch for Robert Shaw.

David: Was that sort of a small village fair or was it a pretty big one?

Man: Well, not really, because we try to call some people from Smith's Inlet and Bella Bella -- the busy season, busy time. And... well, a few from Smith's Inlet came and Bella Bella's, there was a few of them, and Rivers Inlet. I gave a potlatch because we were given, well, I guess custody of Robert Shaw for the summer. So we took him out for the summer out of school. Unfortunately he fell overboard and drowned. I got... well, it hurt quite a bit but there was nothing we could do about it, so we put up a potlatch. Hired a crier to sing his death song. It took quite a while, took us about two weeks to organize the whole thing. And my Uncle Simon was the spokesman there. He wrote names to all the kids and then he gave out... First he gave out the name of the departed one, you know. And

then the rest of the kids. And then one for himself. You know, with the names, I can't remember them all. I don't even remember one of them. Every one of his kids, even grandchildren, got a name. The old community hall.

David: Oh yeah, right. That community hall burned down?

Man: No, it collapsed. Too much snow on the roof. That's the only time we ever (inaudible) after you retired, I guess you call it, too old to get around anymore on his own. When my mother was still alive they used to come up and visit us just about every year, you know, for about a month. So, well, we wanted them to stay with us for the year round. We built a little smokehouse across from R.I.C. on that little island. We had a whole bunch of fish we cooked there for winter, and they wanted to stay right in the smokehouse. They didn't want to go back to across (laughs)... They wanted to stay right there and cook the fish, or watch the fish, you know, so that... I says, "What if a bear come around?" And he says, "Oh, we got fire here, he says we'll just throw the fire sticks at him." I didn't think of that myself. (laughs) If you get somewhere to thinking about their own way, a long time ago, well I guess they didn't have no rifles -- not too much protection.

David: Yeah, right.

Man: So they say, "There's lots of fire anyway." "Well, it's cold and damp on the ground." He says, "We'll fix it." They didn't stay there...

(END OF SIDE B)

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THE OOWEKEENO BAND.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- General reminiscences about her life.
- Describes certain customs associated with death.

Hilda: Maybe that's why I've become a Christian again.

David: Was there any conflict in your mind then, like between what you had at home in terms of religion and what you got at school? Did you have any difficulties with that?

Hilda: Well, never had no religion at home. Of course I used to hear my mother praying in her own way asking (Indian) -- means the Great Chief from up there -- to watch over us when we're going to travel.

David: So the old people did have some religious ideas and other concepts that they...

Hilda: Yeah. My mother used to often tell me about her grandmother praying whenever they went somewhere, because my mother had to be eyes for my grandmother. But she was... My mother says she was very sharp in her hearing. I guess sometimes my mother used to try and sneak home. Sure enough, grandmother would say, "Is that you dear?" (laughs) So we

(Indian), "Is that you?" Well, she calls her name.

David: Those dances, like the Hamatsa dances and so on, were they seen by the people as having religious significance as well?

Hilda: Not that I know of.

David: What do understand then by the Hamatsa? What was it, what was the idea behind the dance?

Hilda: They... From what I heard about it, in order to go in to be a Hamatsa you had to be away from the village, away from the people and go into hiding. I don't know if they called it hiding, or go and be trained to learn how to respect yourself and cleanse yourself of every evil. I think that's what it was for. From what I can gather from my mother was that you, how did she used to call that, you're supposed to go by yourself and you have no food whatsoever and you just... and I think there's... I don't know if there's one person goes with you to teach you what you are supposed to be like.

David: So it's fasting then, cleansing yourself?

Hilda: Yes. You don't have nothing to eat, just maybe water.

David: Did you understand that the person who did this was then looking for power or got power in some way? Did the Hamatsa dancers, did they have the power?

Hilda: Maybe that's what they were looking for, I don't know. But mostly I think it was for self-respect, or maybe respect from your fellow man to be able to, not to eat and everything. And when you come back to civilization, as it were... But I think the reason why they have all that noise and boeing, and what you call it when they come back, is to show people that they've accomplished something. I remember watching Lila and Pete Chamberlain -- Pete Chamberlain was just a teenager then. Oh, what a noise they make when they got into the big house. And they... The way I saw it, they pretended to be wild because they just came from the bushes, eh. But I don't know whether they really stayed there or not. That I don't know. They might have been just staying in the lean-to

or something. I don't know if it was a month or four days or something like that, everything had to be four. When they go around that big fire they have to go around there four times.

David: So then when they would come in wild, the dance was in effect a taming of the wildness, was it?

Hilda: Yeah, they had a bunch of men all in their blankets trying to hold him down so he wouldn't hurt people; he was that wild. I can't really see how Lila used to be able to do it -- she was so tiny. I think she was even tinier than Evelyn is

now.

David: But the whole dance series then... There were a series of dances that you worked your way up through to be a Hamatsa and so on. Did the other people see them as in a religious terms, as a way of connecting them with, you know, with spirits and with power and so on?

Hilda: There might have been. I really don't know. But the thing is, you know, when you live, when you come to live your everyday life after you've been dancing, there's a lot of respect for that person. And even today if a person gives potlatch, that person becomes respected as a giver of things and stuff like that, even if he doesn't know very much about it.

David: So then when you started going to school the Christian religion didn't... How did it seem to you, that it was a good thing to take hold of?

Hilda: It was to me, it was to me. I liked going to church. I even went to... They used to have Bible studies every Saturday night, I think it was. I can't remember now. But it was your own choice whether you wanted to go or not.

David: It was, eh?

Hilda: You weren't forced to go. And I used to go all the time.

David: So you went to school then for five years, was it?

Hilda: Four.

David: Four years. And then what happened after you left school?

Hilda: Went back to my mother. I was home maybe about... I was fifteen when I left school, so you see I didn't have much schooling. They gave me a choice -- Standfield his name was, was the principal at the time -- he gave me a choice, "Either come back if you want to or graduate now and give some other child a chance to come to school." Well, what choice did I have when he put it that way? I thought with my, the way I always think, give somebody else a chance. So I said, "Okay, I'll graduate," which I was very sorry. I realized that I could have used more education. That's the only thing that I regret is having an education.

David: Well, so when you went back home did you work at all, or did you stay with your mother and help her?

Hilda: Oh yes, I started working that same year I went out, at twenty-five cents an hour.

David: What were you doing?

Hilda: I was filling needles for the people who are getting nets ready for the summer. That was around March/April. We have to move down to Goose Bay.

David: Who moved to Goose Bay? Was it just your family or did most of the village go together to one cannery? Or how did...?

Hilda: Some of them went to Kiltala. I think we were the only ones that went to Goose Bay. And Dave's mother, when she was still alive. I worked there for... I worked in the net loft in the springtime, then summertime I moved to the cannery. And then if they needed I learned how to mend nets for my mother. If they needed menders on the floats on the weekends I used to work in the cannery, get so many cans and go down the floats and do mending. Which was a little bit more than twenty-five cents an hour, I think thirty-five. (laughs)

David: And how long did you do this working in the cannery? Were you still into moving up to up the lake in the winter or had that stopped then?

Hilda: That had stopped when my stepfather got that big house in Rivers -- that one burned down. It used to stand where the big boat house is, outside Bobby Hanuse's house now.

David: Oh yeah.

Hilda: That's where the big house is, Dave's house used to be. It was quite a bit bigger than (inaudible) because he built it himself. And I used to help him, giving him lumber when he needed it from the ground. That was when I was fifteen, sixteen.

David: So by this time trapping was no longer the main occupation in winter?

Hilda: No, no. If they did any trapping only the men went. We stayed behind in the... Then we had, you know, houses to look after. So the men used to go just by themselves and they did good too. They would go beaver trapping way up Sheemahant somewhere. They'd have to take the canoe overlands in some places, you know, where there was a drop. I guess they couldn't go up.

David: Right, portage it.

Hilda: Yeah. They did still trap, but then it was gradually dying out.

David: So why was that? Were the prices going down?

Hilda: The prices and... I think mostly the prices went down, and then the logging went up there. Then most of them turned to logging.

David: I see. There was more money in logging then?

Hilda: More money in logging then.

David: You mean in that way working for the company, or do you mean hand logging?

Hilda: Well, some of them hand logged.

David: They did, eh?

Hilda: Yeah. And some worked for the company, the one that put through the roads there. Years from the time I left school and the time I was married was working, working, working. (laughs) Canneries, I was working, and the net loft. I still helped with smoking. I should tell you about my... when I used to pole up the river with my grandmother.

David: Oh yeah.

Hilda: That was when I was -- after I left school -- was a teenager then. There was no kickers those days, you have to pole up the river if you want to go up there. And we went up there to do some fishing before my mother and my stepfather went up. There was no Katit then, so Dave asked to do some smoking in the buildings and the hatchery that was there.

David: Oh yeah.

Hilda: The big stove was there, cooking stove, and we made a smokehouse of the boat house. So it was quite huge, maybe about as wide as this.

David: Really?

Hilda: And we can make a long fire and roast about ten sticks on each side.

David: That's big.

Hilda: Yeah. So my grandmother and I had to go pole up.

David: Just the two of you?

Hilda: Imagine. I never poled up there before.

David: How did you get over the rapids?

Hilda: She showed me how. She just told me, "I'll just yell at you what to do, which side to go." But then when you're on the canoe you soon learn what side you're going to be on -- either the right or the left -- because you had to steady the canoe from going.

David: Was the river up high that time of year?

Hilda: During the winter months, around about now, not too much. So it wasn't... didn't seem to be that swift. But oh boy, when you're only a teenager, first time you're up there, oh...

David: Yeah, that's quite a feat.

Hilda: Yeah. And we used to go up and catch salmon, just the two of us.

David: With a net?

Hilda: With a net.

David: Yeah.

Hilda: Just outside the hatchery.

David: Right.

Hilda: And then we take it ashore and put it up where my mother and my grandmother and myself would cut it up for it to dry. One time we got a big spring salmon and couldn't get it into the canoe, we just had to tow it in. And the wind was coming up. Oh boy, was I ever scared.

David: How big was the spring?

Hilda: I don't know, but it would be maybe almost from this. We couldn't get it on anyway.

David: Big as this table then?

Hilda: Yeah. As long as this table.

David: Did you get it in?

Hilda: We got it in to the beach and that's where my stepfather took it from. We made (Indian) out of it. Spring salmon makes good (Indian). And we used to stay in that old hatchery, my grandmother and myself. She used to tell me stories about a long time ago. It's funny, just the two of us in that big building, we used to never get scared. She used to tell me, "As long as we got this light on nobody will come and bother us." Little old gas, not gas lamp, coal oil lamp. The last thing she would do is light up an old pipe.

David: She had a pipe, eh?

Hilda: Old Chum. And we did quite a bit of barbecuing fish and smoking fish, just the two of us. We'd go out and (Indian). (Indian) means picking up driftwood. Put it in the... fill up the old canoe, go across, take it up to the smokehouse. Day's work in itself, especially if we're just one old lady and one teenager. (laughs) And talk about coming

down the river, just her and I too, with full of smoked salmon and barbecued.

David: So this would have been like in October or thereabouts?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: And you'd stay up there maybe what, a month?

Hilda: Yeah. That was after we didn't go up to the lakes anymore, we just went as far as the hatchery. And my grandmother and myself did most of the work.

David: I'm wondering if it might be a good idea to have a break here.

Hilda: I never told you about that dance my brother did. They went down to the beach and got one of these fish that had been dead there for, you know, maybe a month or so. And you know how they are -- just gray and all puffy. You can hardly grab them to hold them. But they were stiff because they were frozen, eh. And Benny Hanuse was the one that went to get it,

him and Ned Wesley. Ned Wesley was Pete's uncle, I think, or grandfather. And they went, they came up from the beach. I still remember because I hadn't gone hiding yet. And they went around the smokehouse four times showing everybody that rotten old fish. Yeah, so everybody looked at it. They went and laid it down on a bear skin and my kid brother had to dance some kind of a dance over it, which was Johnny Hanuse was doing it. Dance a few times around it. I'll be darned! That fish started wiggling around, moving around. My mother told me how it was done. (laughs)

David: How did they do it?

Hilda: Well, they had holes through the... There was some boards on each side of the fire, right, and they somehow got underneath there, not very high, and bored two holes through there. When the fish was laid, the fish had to be laid down just so, and the guys downstairs -- or underneath -- I don't know what they did, if they went like this. Told them the sticks come up and they wiggled it around like that. (laughs) That was, I don't know if it was before or after my brother was poked through from one side to the other. And when the other end came out it was squirting blood. I don't know what they used for blood, ketchup most likely.

David: So that was pretty effective then, was it, to see the fish starting to move?

Hilda: Oh yeah. Well, nobody knew how it was done except my mother knew about it and I asked her. Well, it was years later I asked her how it was done.

David: Was the effect of that, like, did the dance... Was that part of the dance? The dancer was making that happen?

Hilda: Yeah. I don't know what kind of a dance it was. Made the fish come alive. (laughs) I don't know what they did, if they went and changed the fish to make it look new, too, you know, once it started.

David: Could you tell me again about Ada's dance? You said you recall her dancing.

Hilda: Yeah, she was. I remember seeing her being put in this big storage box, (Indian), and they had some water in there somehow. And she was dancing around on top, supposedly on top of the water, but I don't know how it was done.

David: You don't know how?

Hilda: No.

David: Yeah, when I spoke with Ada she said something to the effect that she couldn't recall her story, but she said that you probably could recall her story or her song. Do you know it?

Hilda: If only my mother was alive, she'd likely know. Oh, if she would have spoke to me it would have refreshed my memory.

David: Yeah, it would come back to you.

Hilda: Yeah. The only thing is I remember is when she was dancing on top of the water. Before she was put there they

pushed (Indian) on top of it. (Indian) is from the insides of... close to the skin of the ducks or geese or whatever.

David: Pinfeathers?

Hilda: Feathers, but they are very... you go like this and...

David: Yeah.

Hilda: But see, they put some of it on top of that water. I guess that's supposed to have kept her up, something did keep her up.

David: Oh, I see.

Hilda: With a little pumping I guess I could remember it. Maybe Roy would, Roy Hanuse would. Gee, it's too bad you came just a little bit late. You'd have got lots from old Jack Johnson too. He used to keep us dancing up there. Made some masks.

David: He did, eh?

Hilda: Yeah. And all the men used to go Indian dancing, you know, just to practise. He was trying to keep it, yeah, he was trying to keep going. And he was trying to ask some young fellows to go sit with him and he would teach them how to (Indian), to be a song leader, you know.

David: Oh, I see.

Hilda: But none of them took it up. I think there was only one willing -- that was Mathew Johnson. He's not at home, I think he's down in Vancouver.

David: How old would Mathew be?

Hilda: He must be close to forty. How old is Chris? Chris is older than him.

David: I don't know, Chris would be in his late forties, I would think.

Hilda: Mathew must be younger. You never... did you get anything from Agnes?

David: No.

Hilda: No.

David: He did most of the talking.

Hilda: Old Janet Foss?

David: Janet was kind of shy. She didn't want to talk, but I think if go up again, I'll go and see her again, you know, and I think maybe the second time she might be a little more willing to talk. So when you got married, did you stay in Rivers after you were married, or did you leave Rivers?

Hilda: I was there for a while. I was there until my third, fourth child. We had a float house. As a matter of fact one of my girls was born in there, right in the float house in

Dardanelles. You know, that little opening between the island and R.I.C.?

David: Yes.

Hilda: Yeah, that one. We had our float house tied along the beach there where you could get water easy. And my husband was working in log camp. And my second girl -- that's Joan, she lives a couple of doors down -- she was born there. We lived in Rivers Inlet till I had four kids, I think. Then we moved down to Vancouver.

David: And how long did you live down there?

Hilda: Oh, we lived down there till 1956, no '57, then we moved back to Namu where I worked for years.

David: Your stay in Richmond then was cannery work mostly, was it?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: Same thing in Namu?

Hilda: Same thing at Namu. I hired on as a cannery worker. When they found out that I could work on nets they put me in the net loft. I worked there until we left there in '61 and went to Rivers Inlet. That was when I was with Tom then.

David: Right. You went back to Rivers for a little while then?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: What was Rivers like when you went back?

Hilda: Quite a bit different. When we were living in Smokehouse Island, next to Katit, I remember the men used to go out hunting or fishing. Hunting mostly in the wintertime. They came back with a deer or two, they cut it up. They never kept much for themselves, give it out to everybody. Everybody helped...

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Hilda: I think that the only one that tried to keep it up was Danny, Danny Walker. He tried to keep it up.

David: So when you went back the practice of sharing in the hunt had pretty well disappeared?

Hilda: Yes.

David: Why was that, do you think?

Hilda: Too much white man's way, I guess. And I remember there was no borrowing. If you needed something it was just given to you, as long as you'd do the same to somebody else who's going to pass it on, you know. Some day you'd probably need it, that person just gives it to you, don't borrow it. Something that you don't see these days.

David: Yeah, right. So that had all gone too, eh?

Hilda: Yes.

David: What prompted the move from Rivers Inlet to Port Hardy then?

Hilda: My kids had no school. They couldn't go to school. There was no school there till the year we left there, then we heard the school went in. They had been promising and promising the school's coming this year, and we tried to give Jeanette and Alex a correspondence. We couldn't get nowhere with it. Well, Tom hasn't had much education, neither did I, and trying to teach two kids right on the same table wasn't...

David: Yeah, quite a problem.

Hilda: Yeah, right. So we just decided we better move somewhere where the kids can go to school. And Tom said either Prince Rupert or Port Hardy and this was closest, so we came just across.

David: Right.

Hilda: We had no way... Didn't know where we were going to live, how we were going to make out, we didn't have much money. But Winnie Bernard had a sister at Fort Rupert, which was Dusty's wife, Dusty Kenwold. She told us to go and look him up and when we came, sure enough, he opened his door and we lived in his basement for a few months before we got a little shack. You might have seen some stories about me in The Province or The Sun about, maybe about four years ago. And this is when these houses were going to be built for non-status people.

David: Oh, I see, yeah.

Hilda: And I was in the housing committee.

David: When was that again, about four years ago?

Hilda: It's about four, three, four years ago now. Yeah, about four years ago.

David: You were on the housing committee, were you?

Hilda: Yeah. For the non-status people.

David: Were there non-status people organized here...

Hilda: We were that year. We were trying to do something about our plight -- not being able to get free medication and stuff like that, or hospitalization, or whatever. We were neither white nor Indian. (laughs) And yet you couldn't change your color.

David: Did you make some progress in those areas?

Hilda: The reason, the result was these houses. There's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven houses were built for the non-status people.

David: And how about things like medical care and so on? Did you make some progress there?

Hilda: No, we still have to pay for our... if we need medicine, which is expensive. We have to pay for it, glasses, teeth and so on. Whereas some people on the reserve they just put a little bit down and it's theirs. But I think we're

learning how to stand on our own two feet, which we have been doing for years, especially with these houses. You see sometimes it's only me that's working and Tom's out of a job. But we still manage \$150 a month plus utilities and stuff like that.

David: Well, I gather then that Tom was non-status as well?

Hilda: Yes, he's... maybe he can tell you himself.

David: Yeah, okay. What, it was fairly difficult then for non-status people here in Port Hardy was it, for a while?

Hilda: Yes, really we were one... Well, when we got together and formed a local, hence these houses. I think that if we hadn't started... The people that really started are gone now, they moved out to Vancouver -- Larry Alger and Clara Alger. Clara came from this village here and I don't know where Larry came from -- up Rupert way somewhere. Anyway, when we formed a local here we heard about the housing that they might build if we could do something about it. So I went to some meetings and they call it assemblies. I went to one meeting in Penticton and I went to Courtney quite a bit for these houses. So I've learned quite a bit from it.

David: Yeah, you're fairly active in it, eh?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: Where's that at today, the non-status organization?

Hilda: Oh, the non-status broke up because of, what happened now? Well, we just barely got through with these houses and then they broke up. I don't know what they're doing now, if it's under another name. They used to call it McKenzie(?). One of Tom's... well, he always calls him brother but he's really his nephew, Daniel Smith. Do you know him?

David: Yes, I met Danny, yeah.

Hilda: Well, he came up here and was asking about this -- what we think about, what was it, becoming recognized just as ourselves and never mind non-status. So we would have been throwing back and forth, we don't know what we are. (laughs) The only thing we really know for sure is we're Indians and that's it.

David: Yeah. And where you came from.

Hilda: Yeah. I know Mike had (inaudible) daughter, the one

that is down in the States, you know, she's had problems. They don't believe her that she's part Indian and I said, "I don't see why." I said, "You should just show them a picture of me or, one look at me." She says, "But Mom, I can't bring you down here." (laughs)

David: I got some names of people that have come up in conversations I had with Peter and with Evelyn, and I'm just going to ask you if you can tell me who they are and what their connection is. You mentioned Ned Wesley already, who was Ned Wesley?

Hilda: Ned Wesley was, he was kind of a taught, self-taught man. He knew how to read and write and I don't think he went to school.

David: Where did he come from?

Hilda: He's from Rivers.

David: Well, where does the name Wesley come from? What's his native name?

Hilda: I don't know. It might have... Most of the people that have last names have been taken from either from a doctor -- Thomas Crosby sort of thing -- or from, what do you call them others, the fishery office, or the hatchery -- people used to work in the hatchery. When the people had to have last names, they took some of theirs, you know. Or the Indian Agent just, well, "We'll call you so and so." You're friends with him and stuff like that.

David: Why did they have to have last names?

Hilda: I don't know.

David: For Indian Affairs?

Hilda: For something to do with census or something.

David: Oh, I see, yeah.

Hilda: Most Indians just had either their first name or their Indian name.

David: So this Ned Wesley, who would his relatives be then? Did you know who his parents were?

Hilda: Isn't he, didn't Pete say he was related to him?

David: Yeah, he did.

Hilda: Yeah, he's...

David: Well, he didn't actually, he just said, "You know a Ned Wesley?" He said that to Evelyn and Evelyn told a story about him. And who is Ned Wesley? I have never heard of him.

Hilda: Oh. Well, Ned was related to my dad too, or to my mother, I can't remember which now. But he used to be a great storyteller, I hear. My brother might have mentioned him -- John.

David: So which family would he be closer to, the Thompson family then?

Hilda: The Thompson family and the Chamberlains.

David: And the Chamberlains. So he would be in there, eh?

Hilda: Yeah. He was hard of hearing little guy, but kind of a comical guy too, as far as I can gather from what my mother used to tell me about him. I guess he used to tell stories to my brother John when he was just a small kid. And I hear my brother used to want and sleep at his house just so he can tell him stories. (laughs) No T.V.s, no radios at those times.

David: Right. Another name that Peter used was (Indian) to refer to I believe it was one of his uncles, or his great-uncles. Who was (Indian)?

Hilda: (Indian) must have been one of his uncles or his dad. I thought it was his dad.

David: Maybe it was.

Hilda: Or one of his uncles.

David: Was there a... was Lewis one of his uncles?

Hilda: Lewis...

David: Or Louis, Lewis, I think he called him.

Hilda: Louis Lewis, that was my dad's uncle or older brother. (Indian) was one of Pete's uncles or even his father. I thought Pete was (Indian) right now. Didn't he tell you?

David: He may be, but he didn't say that.

Hilda: I think he's (Indian).

David: He is now, eh?

Hilda: Yeah. (Indian) means four, four times over. (laughs)

David: Oh yeah. He also told us a story of Huntley Quanis. Do you know that story?

Hilda: Who?

David: Huntley Quanis.

Hilda: Huntley Quanis. Is that about a little bird? I've heard it but I can't remember. Huntley Quanis was one with a bow and arrow.

David: Yeah.

Hilda: That's who, no his name was... Huntley Quanis, he was good with his bow and arrow. I think that's the story. It sounds like it but I really don't know the whole story. It touches onto everything that you live on or something, the reason why you're alive or to help one another. I think that's the moral of the story.

David: Yeah. There's also another name mentioned in the one that (name) did, (Indian). Does that name mean anything to you, (Indian)?

Hilda: (Indian), isn't that (name) Thomas?

David: Yeah. Is there a story that goes with that?

Hilda: I wouldn't know.

David: I got another name here that I think refers to, it might be your father's name, (Indian).

Hilda: (Indian), say it again. That must, that sounds like my dad or his dad. I think...

David: It might be your grandfather then, eh?

Hilda: Yeah. I think that's been taken for... When one of John's daughters got married again, Elsie, that name was taken and given to her husband when they got married. I think she's married to Larry (name). No, what's his name? Have you ever met Elsie Jackson? She's my niece. Well, she married again because Jimmy died about two or three years ago, and when she remarried my brother phoned here with, together with Pete, wanting to know what name they can give to Elsie's husband to be from my brother's side, or our family. And that's the name they gave him, (Indian). I think that's, that was either my grandfather or it was my dad.

David: Another person that Peter mentioned is somebody called Lake Joe. Who was that referring to?

Hilda: Lake Joe.

David: Is that Joe Chamberlain he's talking about?

Hilda: I think that's Chamberlain.

David: Because it sounded like it was somebody different from Joe Chamberlain, that's why I asked. Because if there was some other person called Lake Joe, it wasn't quite clear.

Hilda: That must have been, I think it's Chamberlain.

David: It would be one and the same person, would it?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: How about the name Old Sampson? Is there somebody named Sampson that you know?

Hilda: Yeah, he was... He must have had some kind of... He must have had polio or something at one time. He used to drag one leg. You know, at least it didn't seem to be, I barely remember him.

David: Who was he related to? What family did he belong to?

Hilda: Old Sampson must have been belonged to (Indian), I guess that's Nora. She's another a person you could see, Nora Webber.

David: Lisa was asking Ada about Nora and she still is not... it's still not clear to me where Nora fits into the picture. Who would she...?

Hilda: Nora Webber was Johnny Carol's granddaughter. And somehow Johnny Carol borrowed some money from some people that used to go up to Kitala for the summer. And Johnny borrowed money from them, Johnny Carol borrowed money from them. They came back the following year and they wanted him to pay the money back and he didn't have the money so he asked, "Could you take my daughter, granddaughter?" So these people took her, and she grew up, gee, I don't know where it is, across Alert Bay or...

David: So she was pretty young when that happened, eh?

Hilda: Yeah. Her mother was my mother's cousin, I think. I used to have pictures of them. I don't know what happened to them -- we moved around so much.

David: Yeah, yeah. So would Nora know much about Rivers then or...?

Hilda: Well, she would know her father's name, her mother's name, what relation they were to my dad or to my mother.

David: Right. Does the name Charlie Edwards mean anything?

Hilda: Charlie Edwards.

David: He's another person that Peter mentioned in passing and telling a story. It was Charlie Edward's boat, he said. Maybe I can go back and check with Peter some time, I just thought maybe you might know.

Hilda: Yeah. I've heard that name, I think my mother mentioned him. I think he was one of the Bella Coolas that stayed up at Rivers or...

David: Yeah, I see.

Hilda: I think, I'm not sure.

David: Another name that was mentioned two or three times was Beans, Wally Beans.

Hilda: Oh yeah.

David: And who would he be? Who was he?

Hilda: He was related to... he was... he used to call me (Indian). (Indian) means sister, so he may have been related to us too.

David: Where would he come from?

Hilda: I know who his mother was. Her name was (Indian). I don't know her white name. I think her name was Susie or Kitty or Alice. (laughs)

David: And did he have any, did he marry and did he have children and so on?

Hilda: He was married to Edie, Edith Johnson, but they never had no children.

David: When you were living in Rivers did burial customs change much over the years?

Hilda: Oh, quite a bit. But they still give a feast after the funeral. Sometimes not as elaborate, but some of them... You seen what they did at Bella Bella?

David: Yeah. That was common at Owikeno too, was it, to burn food for the departed one?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: What is the reason for doing that? Is there a story that goes with doing that or...?

Hilda: Well, they... Well, when you go from one place to another you're not accustomed to what they have, eh. So they say you should take some with you until you do get accustomed to what you eat after, because they believe in after, life

after death. And the only way you can get it is through burning it.

David: Right. So it's to help the one who has passed on into, sort of, the spirit world?

Hilda: Yeah. I remember one time my mother was... She doesn't know whether she was really sleeping or not but she heard my sister calling her. (Indian), we used to call her (Indian). It was just a loving name. And she was (Indian) to everybody up there. She woke up one night, well, she thinks she woke up and she heard my sister calling her. Right away the next morning she came to our door and told me that, "We have to get together some food and burn it, because your sister was here. She was asking for something. I don't know what it is but we better burn some food." So I had to do it right away.

David: Well, usually is it done like four times after... following of the death?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: And this is still done then today at Rivers, is it?

Hilda: Yes, it's still done if someone's, you know, responsible enough to go and do it.

David: I see, so it has to be somebody who's close to the departed one, eh?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: Is there a name for that ceremony, that burning of food? Is there a name for it?

Hilda: They just call it (Indian). (Indian) means burn. And you just know what it means when they say (Indian). (Indian), we're going to burn. You know right away what it means.

David: I see. Would they use that same word if they said they're going to burn some old papers or garbage or something?

Hilda: Yes, but you name what you're going to burn.

David: Oh I see. Are there any other customs associated with funerals besides the burning?

Hilda: When you burn it you have to go around four times before you put it down. Some people put it upside down, but I've been taught to just put mine (Indian), just put it on top of the fire with the plate and all. But I've seen some Bella Bellas, they turn theirs over.

David: Turn theirs over, yeah. Another thing that happened there was Beatrice bathed.

Hilda: Yeah, that has to be done four times.

David: That's a common custom as well, is it, for the widow, say, to have to bathe?

Hilda: It is supposed to be for both. If the wife should die the man would do it too, but I think he does it on his own. But one being so young and... Well, how long was she with him?

David: Two years.

Hilda: Two years? I guess it's long enough for them to do it.

David: So that would be four days in a row, in the morning?

Hilda: Early in the morning. They didn't do it in the house before, they used to go out in the woods. And what you use when you're bathing you just leave it, the whole thing there.

David: Oh, I see.

Hilda: You don't bring it with you. That's completely giving all that was of you, in you.

David: Oh, I see. Well, was there any fasting associated with that, not eating? Are you supposed to fast?

Hilda: Not that I know.

David: Oh, I see.

Hilda: I know my mother had to. She had to go and bath out in the cold.

David: Was there a name for that? For bathing to cleanse yourself like that?

Hilda: (Indian). (Indian) means complete wash.

David: Would you use the same term, like if a man were cleansing himself for hunting, would he use the same term?

Hilda: No, there's another word for it.

David: Was it common for men before they went hunting to do the bathing thing?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: Like for four mornings or whatever?

Hilda: You have to dip in the water four times, not in four mornings.

David: No, but four times you've got to wash.

Hilda: Four times in the water. As a matter of fact I seen an old man used to do it, old Louis Lewis.

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DIRECTOR, OOWEKEENO HISTORY PROJECT OR THE CHIEF COUNSELOR OF
THE OOWEKEENO BAND.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Gives Indian words for a variety of English terms.
- Discusses family relationships with the interviewer.

David: Was there a name for when a couple were engaged?

Hilda: (Indian).

David: Can you say that again?

Hilda: (Indian). I think it really means courting. You mean (Indian)?

David: Yeah, (Indian).

Hilda: (Indian) means yes, (Indian) means to give to the person you're going to marry, some gifts, and it's called (Indian).

David: And this would be done by the groom to the bride's family, would it?

Hilda: Yes. Or if the bride is higher than the man then I think she does it.

David: Oh, I see. It works the other way.

Hilda: Yeah. I think so.

David: What was that word you used for courting again?

Hilda: Courting? (Indian).

David: Do you have a name then for the marriage ceremony itself?

Hilda: (Indian). Either one.

David: Say that again, please.

Hilda: (Indian). That's the word I used for courting.

David: Is there a special name for the wedding feast, feast to celebrate the wedding?

Hilda: I don't know. There must be a word but I just can't think of it now. Must have something to do with (Indian).

David: Is there a term used for what we were talking about earlier, buying yourself out?

Hilda: (Indian).

David: And that would be where the bride pays back what was originally paid plus a hundred percent?

Hilda: Yeah. That's a real high class. (laughs) (Indian) to me. That was what my mother'd say but I can't really know what it meant. The only word I know is (Indian). That means the parents could go to the other parents, (Indian) was their daughter.

David: Is there a term for when the husband and wife are living together?

Hilda: Husband and wife living together? (laughs) Don't they live...?

David: When you say you're married, how would you say that?

Hilda: (Indian), you mean I've been married?

David: Yeah.

Hilda: (Indian), that means... And the other, (Indian), that's another term of saying we get married or (Indian), they are married.

David: (Indian)?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: Yeah. Could you describe that, what's that all about?

Hilda: I've never really seen it or really understood what it meant, but my brother was in it once. He thought that all the boys were supposed to make that climb, but they were just supposed to fool around and pretend to go. He lives over here. Louie Walker was supposed to have done it for his wife. They got married in Indian way. And my brother thought, "Oh gee, this is easy. I'm going to climb over that." And here he wasn't supposed to. That's what they meant I guess.

David: What happens in that case where these suitors makes it and you're not supposed to make it?

Hilda: I guess you just had to make an exception, explain it. (Indian).

David: When a couple separates.

Hilda: Yeah. My oldest sister, Patsy, they made an arrangement for her to be married to a chief, although he had a wife already.

David: I see. And this was so that the chief would what, get access to what, titles or rank?

Hilda: I really don't know what was, what it was for. But it built up my sister-in-law.

David: Oh I see. It was to her advantage?

Hilda: It must have been. I know my mother had to (Indian) from Albert Harry, he was the chief of that. And his wife used to pretend to be jealous, insanely jealous, of my sister, and she was just a little girl.

David: How would your sister have been at that time?

Hilda: Gee, I don't know. I think she was supposed to have been still married to him ten years before she actually married Norman Johnson.

David: Would that Norman's first wife then?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: Oh, I see.

Hilda: That's all... those are my nephews and nieces...

David: When she would marry Norman, then, would that have

been... What kind of a marriage would that have been?

Hilda: Well, I think she was a lot higher than him.

David: And so what would her relation be to the first marriage if she got married again? Her first marriage was arranged...

Hilda: Yeah.

David: ...and she was just a child.

Hilda: Yeah.

David: Now in order for her to marry, like for real, would she have buy herself out?

Hilda: Yes, she did.

David: Oh, I see. She did that, and she's then free to make another marriage?

Hilda: Yes.

David: I see, and that was Norman's first wife?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: And did they have any children?

Hilda: Yes, they had eight, seven.

David: Who were they?

Hilda: There's Cecil, Jimmy, Patsy, Sharon, Babs, and my sister had one before she was married. She lives over here right now, older niece.

David: Okay, the term you would use for twins?

Hilda: (Indian).

David: Were twins considered lucky, special?

Hilda: Yes. Especially if you're born someplace, you know, along the coast. If there was twins born maybe around here there'd be lots of fish out here in the summertime.

David: What does that refer to then, (Indian)? Would that be a song, any special song?

Hilda: Yeah, (Indian) is a lament that you sing. Whenever you can make it, because a feast or potlatch will have to go out with it.

David: Oh, I see.

Hilda: You see, that's what that Dorothy and them are doing, going to be doing this spring. See, they don't (Indian) right away, they (Indian) later on.

David: When the people used to go up the lake in the winter and you were trapping and so on, was that done... it was in the family, right, as families? But did they work together? Did the men get together and, say, log or trap?

Hilda: You mean where there's (inaudible) beside the river?

David: No, before.

Hilda: Before.

David: Yeah. I was wondering if they cooperated in any way with, like for hand logging or...

Hilda: Yeah, they did some hand logging but I don't know how it was. Fred Anderson, foreman Fred used to hand log with my dad. That's how my dad died, he got a snag through his knee and there was no way of getting him to a hospital. And he thought, "Oh, I'm strong enough, I'm young enough to beat it." But it turned to gangrene. By the time they finally got him to Bella Bella, with an old putt-putt of Fred Anderson's -- one of those things that you flip over and it just "putt-putt, putt-putt," and it would take a long time to get to Bella Bella. By the time he got there it was, well, pretty well into his leg. And Dr. Darby wanted to cut his leg off and he said, "No, I'd rather die whole." If that's courage, I don't know. If it was foolhardy, I don't know. But he made the arrangements for us kids before he died. Told my... Left my mother home because she was big with child, told her to stay home with us, "Kitty will come with me." That was his sister, my aunt. They told my aunt to take me so my mother wouldn't have too many little ones to look after, so that's how come I stayed with my aunt. And if my dad had taken his leg off maybe he would have been alive today.

David: Yeah.

Hilda: He was a young fellow when he died, twenty-four.

David: Really?

Hilda: Yeah. They had a lot of words, I think. As a matter of fact I think Dave was the first councillor.

David: He was?

Hilda: Yeah. Elected council, they never had, everything was done by what the chief said.

David: Yeah.

Hilda: Before that. But then with the white man's way coming in they had to change. And they elected someone who had some knowledge of white man's ways, as it were, which was Dave. He was quite qualified to be a spokesman for the people.

David: So when they started electing a council that posed some problems did it?

Hilda: Yeah. I guess you've heard there've been many of the religious where they say, "Oh, he's taking some money out of the village money and just using it on..." That's what they said about my stepfather because he had a bigger house than anybody else. And yet we just all pitched in a helped to make it big, make it bigger for the lumber, for the money to go further, than if the carpenter did it all himself.

David: So really, from the very first, the council... there were problems with the council?

Hilda: Yeah. With the people.

David: Yeah. And in the past most of those decisions would have been by the chief?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: He would make those decisions? Another thing I was going to ask you about is the saw mill across from R.I.C. Do you recall the saw mill at all?

Hilda: No.

David: Was it gone when you were a little girl?

Hilda: Part that... just the houses were there when I came to... As a matter of fact I have a picture of my aunt and Tommy (name) and I think my mother's brother in a picture with the saw mill in the background smoking.

David: Oh, you do have a picture, do you?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: Could I have a look at it?

Hilda: Yes.

David: So was the... When the saw mill started it had houses and a school?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: And the school was run by the Salvation Army?

Hilda: Salvation Army, yeah.

David: And then it all burned down?

Hilda: All burned down and that was end of my mother's education.

David: Oh, I see.

Hilda: She went there, her grandmother used to try and send her.

David: That would be quite a while ago then, eh?

Hilda: Oh yeah. I think (inaudible) (Indian) is across R.I.C., the little island.

David: What did you call it again?

Hilda: (Indian). That's the one that Danny was asking you for. Out of school. I didn't know that I was living on the reserve -- that was just home for me. Home was where we happened to be at the moment, which was quite a few different places. We used to move... You know where the houses are now along the river? That's where we were, (name). That was when the oolachans came. Everybody used to move, they used to have smokehouses along there. As a matter of fact I think there was two houses there, you know, with a stove and everything, smokehouses. And we used to all move up there, take what we need. Things like clothing, bedding, and whatever we needed for food. But we lived mostly on oolachans when they came. Never mind whatever, anything else we had on hand. My mother used to wake me up early in the morning when they first catch the first load of, canoe load of oolachans. She used to tell me to, "(Indian)." (Indian), means welcome. And we eat oolachans. They were my bacon and eggs, or mush, whatever.

David: You had them for breakfast, eh?

Hilda: Yeah. And that was, get up early in the morning, never mind waking up ten, twelve o'clock.

David: There were houses at Oolachan Town then, were there?

Hilda: Smokehouses, yeah.

David: How much time would you spend up there when the oolachans were running?

Hilda: Well, as long as it took for the grease to be done and all the smoking, salting was done. Drying, most of it was drying.

David: Did they use... What did they use to make the grease in the early days?

Hilda: (Indian). Evelyn and them have one made out of big planks of cedar.

David: Is it a box, cedar box?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: How big would it be?

Hilda: About so long from here to there and about so wide. Then you can put gallons of water and oolachans in there.

David: And then what do you do? Do you heat it and boil it?

Hilda: You can fry underneath it and it's made so that it wouldn't burn.

David: Yeah, that's what I'm curious about. How do you do that?

Hilda: I don't know how they did it a long time ago, but they have a galvanized piece that they tack onto the bottom and up to the sides a little bit. But you were never to let the fire flame up on each side because you might burn the, (inaudible) itself. It had to be through the...

David: Maybe we could have a look at the map.

(Break in Tape)

Hilda: Smoking, drying halibut.

David: (Indian name)?

Hilda: (Indian name).

David: There was a smokehouse there?

Hilda: Yeah. It's the one mother used to talk about.

David: That's right on Schooner Retreat, eh?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: What time of year would that be used?

Hilda: Oh, that would be around May, I think. When they finished doing the (Indian), that's in April. (Indian), that's Oolachan Town. When that's done they go out to the... out there for seaweed and drying halibut.

David: I see. How about (Indian)?

Hilda: (Indian), I think my mother used to mention that too. I think those places are for picking plants too.

David: Yeah.

Hilda: Oh, and the chief's sons were inside the whale, home made whale and it had, you know, everything, fins and tails. And the only way they could make the whale come up and go down again in the water, in the lake, was for these, all these chief's sons went in it and they had rocks. Packed rocks from end to the other to make the whale come up and down. And somehow they couldn't go up again and one of the ups and downs it just sank with all those chief's sons. They never did get up.

David: No, I've never heard that story.

Hilda: I remember they often told me about it. I don't know if they've got a name, though, for that tragedy, I guess you'd call it.

David: Why would they be in the whale in the first place?

Hilda: Well, I guess they were... They must have been having a potlatch or something and they were doing the thing with the whale and somehow they couldn't get it back up to the other end and it sank. There was no way they could get them. They don't know how deep that is. It must be pretty deep.

David: Yeah, I imagine.

Hilda: I remember going through these narrows past that (Indian). The water used to be so low sometimes my stepfather used to get me to use one of those long poles -- oar -- and break the ice as we're going. It used to ice up. And then there's nothing to eat there, the snow had come down so far.

David: Yeah.

Hilda: I guess the reason why we moved up there is when it snows all the animals come down closer to the water line and that's when we did all kinds of... the trapping was good. Oh, it used to be cold.

David: Lots of snow?

Hilda: Lots of... too much snow. You know they don't seem to get much up there, unless I'm just not there to see it. (laughs) As soon as he left school he joined the army and I guess he was in England for quite a while. As a matter of fact some of his words are very English. He'd talk very different from people over here when he came back.

David: What years would he have been in the army then?

Hilda: Must have been...

David: Was it during he War?

Hilda: During World War One. So he was over there towards the end of it, I guess. My brother has a picture of him in his

uniform, very tight, tight pants. I'm just wondering if my brother would remember some things -- William Bernard.

David: William, yeah. I was wondering if maybe I could see him.

Hilda: Somebody can dance (inaudible).

David: (Inaudible)?

Hilda: Yeah.

David: And Susan Johnson also had (Indian). And this is the name for Mary Walker. And another name for Captain Johnson was (Indian). Yeah, it was Queenie Hanuse.

Hilda: She was Norman Johnson's mother's sister.

David: Norman Johnson.

Hilda: She's Agnes Chamberlain's, Janet (name)'s mother. They used to call her Queenie because they didn't have no other name to give her.

David: And she was Queenie, but was she named after somebody else named Queen?

Hilda: I don't know. I thought that she was just her white name.

David: Oh, I see. Yeah, so did I until I saw it written down here.

Hilda: That was the grandmother of Queenie.

David: Oh, I see.

Hilda: Queenie's father was Charlie Walker. Evelyn doesn't know she's related to Agnes and them?

David: Oh yeah, I think so.

Hilda: I remember Lizzie calling her granddaughter. Found it was her granddaughter. (Indian) is girl. (Indian) is boy.

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