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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Discusses various native dances.

NOTE: The original tape of this interview was not available, and the transcribed text, in addition to being very difficult to read, did not contain the interviewer's questions. As such, there are places in the document where the dialogue is quite unclear and difficult to follow.

George: I think that feather idea is very interesting. Ours represented peace and meant peace whenever we showed the feather or the dog(?) -- it meant peace. Whereas in the Prairie Indians, their warbonnet with the feather was generally shown during war -- wars which is quite different from ours.

(question about Thunderbird)

Annie: Well, the Thunderbird was... it's a legendary... Our forefathers were the ones that saw it plainly, saw it and got

their songs and their anthems from it. And along with the Thunderbird was their sea serpent and that's why we have those sea serpent dances and sea serpent headdresses and the Thunderbird became our coats of arms.

(question about lighting)

Annie: And the lighting as you approach the longhouse. They had four big fires up, you know, during the... when they were planning for the potlatch they always gathered up a lot of oil from these whales and they put them in casks made out of sea lion skins. They make jugs out of these things -- enormous things and these contained gallons of oil which they used to keep these fires going. They always had men standing beside the fires with some sort of... what say a pail man and they kept feeding these fires with the oil to keep the fire up and keep the place lighted up. They kept this up all the time when they had the visitors in there so they could watch the dances with the light from the fires. In the daytime they kept these fires going too and also the opening at the top of the roof -- it was necessary to get the smoke out and get the light in.

(question about where the oil was put)

Annie: On the fire -- I mean the wood -- they usually used cedar. It was sort of a wick. They had kindling -- well, I would say about four feet in length and they piled these up and then poured the oil in them for the light there. They usually had a fire going at all times day and night. It gave a very bright fire.

(question about the welcoming dance)

George: The welcoming dance was always... Or you might say the welcoming song was always performed at the very beginning, after the welcoming speech had been delivered. The welcoming song or the welcoming dance would then be shown. The entire tribe would line up in one end of the hall and form a very imposing line in tiers, depending on the number of participants, and they would sing this welcome song to the visitors. Now the welcome song that we use today came from up the coast and I will let my sister explain it.

Annie: The welcome songs we sing now came from Sutka because generations back the Sutka and the Albernis had intermarriages with one another. Therefore, years later, when they... when Jack Clutesi met up with his friends up in Sutka they exchanged these songs. The one Jack Clutesi was singing approaching these Sutka Indians, well... These Sutka Indians were singing the ones we are singing now and they exchanged these songs at parting and the Sutka Indians must have the song that Jack had at the time and we sing the song that the Sutka Indians gave us back and that is the song they use now today.

(question about meaning of the song)

Annie: It's just a welcome song welcoming you to come sing with us and to rejoice with us and be happy with us.

George: It might be interesting to know that this welcome song had been forgotten for years and years and the Indians for a lengthy period ceased singing. And this song was more or less lost until Lord Willingdon visited the coast around 1929 -- around that period -- and as I know it perhaps on some other coasts this same welcome song was sung. But as I know it the Ucluelet Indians brought it out again and welcomed Lord Willingdon with this song which came down from Sutka. Now this also proves or shows that the coast Indians around the entire seaboard were very closely knit together and they were in good relations... One of the greatest privileges you could accord another tribe was to grant or give him one of your own songs and in return receive one from them and I think it's a wonderful thing that we are able to sing songs that come as far as Alaska, and that we have songs up there that they perhaps sing that came all the way from this southern part.

(question about another dance - Hinkeets(?) dance)

George: The Hinkeets dance I will let my sister describe in detail, what it means. But I think the Hinkeets -- which means the sea serpent dance -- is one of the most graceful dances along the entire coast of British Columbia. It's danced along the entire coastal area of this island and it is danced with very gaudy headdresses which resemble what they saw in the earlier days, and if you ever see a Hinkeets performed you will see this headdress. It's very, very colorful and it's a

wonderful headdress, I think. And the dancers must be supple, they must be. They must know what they are doing because the movements are so graceful. The dancers weave in and out in a pattern that describes a movement of a sea serpent on the sea.

(question about costumes)

George: The costume in the earlier days were always -- perhaps pretty nearly always -- from the sea otter pelt. There were other costumes but the chiefs who had the rights to kill a sea otter used that rope for the Hinkeets. It was a big long rope and it trailed on the floor as the dancers made the movements and it was a very, very imposing sight.

(question about meaning of the dance)

Annie: Well, the meaning of the dance, like I told you when... He got it, he got the songs when he... The Thunderbird, as I told you before, these sea serpents came with the Thunderbird and when they, when... started singing these anthems what he heard and these sea serpents quieted down and... Like he saw their heads, the way these headdresses are shaped now. And that's the, that's how the sea serpent dance came into being. When he went home he made these headdresses

just the way he saw them and then put up this potlatch to show what he got. Our ancestors the... maybe four, five or six generations back.

(question)

Annie: It's a chant, but there's words connected to it.
(question) The words meant that he had acquired the

Thunderbird as his... let's say his coat of arms in English. It is mine now -- that's what the song says. (question) They claimed that the sea serpent was the one that made the lightning, the thunder. The Thunderbird formed the thunder and the sea serpent the lightning. (question) ...along with the sea serpent...

(question about the war dance)

George: The war dance is among the very few who are... perhaps can be described as borrowed, Bob. It came from the southern... our southern brothers across the border in the United States... Yakem(?) I believe it was or from that general area and it was given to one of the men here. I think it was given to Jackson Dan and he has the rights. He has the full rights to perform the war dance and we dance it here with his blessings and full approval. He has of course descendents and we always try to have them or her present whenever we perform the war dance. The war dance is performed with the feathered war bonnet and it's very spirited and it is a movement that will excite you to a great extent. The movements, even though they are... It's very wild in its movements. Nevertheless each movement and every movement is controlled by the beat of the drum and it is not done in a haphazard, wild manner. It is a dance to that extent that it is controlled. Every movement is controlled by the beat of the drum at all times.

(question about war dances of this coast)

Annie: War dances were always used during war times. Not this dance that we're going to see... But when the last war that they had along this coast was the... (?) war between the (?) and the (?). And when the warriors were sent out they

always put up a war cry -- a war moaning cry -- and the women kept this up at night, all night, when their warriors went off. And when they came home they put up a victory dance and this, when the warriors came home... Well, in this case they won and they put up this dance.

(question - if they lost?)

Annie: There would be a dance of lamentation but the song that these warriors were sent out with was more a dance of lamentation. The women kept this chanting all night and beat their sticks together at the back of the longhouse and they used to keep this up night after night until their warriors

came home which usually (laughs) was always a victorious one. They wiped out the tribe of Long Beach, so the (?) have that now through a war like that.

George: Was this chant a sort of a prayer?

Annie: It was a sort of a prayer, yes. And this song they sang at the time they went out was a... Well, it was a curse on the other tribe, like, and they talked in this singing, cursing that other tribe so the warriors may win and bring home the scalp and bring home the slaves. That's how the song went.

(question - could this song be revived?)

Annie: I think it could be revived.

(question - about the celebration dance)

George: The celebration dance is comparatively new, Bob, because it was not done in the too distant days. It's a dance full of vigor, full of rhythm and full of rejoicing. In fact, it's a dance of rejoicing. It is, it was pretty nearly danced

by two dancers and these dancers tried to express their feelings, tried to show in their movements their victory over fear -- fear of self more rather than any other thing. It was a movement. It was a dance to express the gladness in his heart. He... These movements expressed his extreme and his... that great development of his body... And it expressed his inner feelings, the pureness of his heart rather than any thought of victory over strife or war. It was a dance where he tried to make the other onlookers happy. It was in a sense a dance of gladness, a dance of rejoicing. The movements were very, very fast and very expressive and yet very slow in a lot of executions.

(questions -- "there's a story behind this dance?")

Annie: Yes, this dance was more of a visionary dance. Our Uncle, Jack Clutesi, went out seal hunting and he felt tired as the storm came up. This was down here in Barkley Sound. He went into a house, a deserted house, and when he got in there he heard singing. It was afar off and he didn't know where this singing was coming from and he closed the door. He got scared. He put a prop against that old door, you know. He laid down and he thought he went to sleep. He says he wasn't and he saw someone coming through the door and this person was singing. And the second person came in he was all white and he was naked and he was a wild man. He started singing and gyrating and dancing to the song of this first one and pretty soon the little house was just filled with people and they were all dancing the... There were women and men; boys. And in a short time -- in about ten minutes time -- they finished ten songs. And when Jack Clutesi got up he took up his gun and shot the door. He got scared of this wild man and that's when

he came back to his senses. There was no one there but... And this is where he got these songs from, what they used to use. But now today they only use one.

(question about boy who dances this)

(question about farewell dance)

George: After the celebrations are over the entire tribe would get up one at a time in a very, very orderly fashion and perhaps go to the next room or go to an anteroom and a song would be struck up immediately, a very spirited song. Now this would be the farewell song, Bob. In this dance -- the entire tribe participated in this dance -- and the first dancer would appear from the anteroom or from the outside, whatever the case may be. And the singers would be singing this farewell dance and the dance was very, very fast although it wasn't furious. It was executed in a serpentine manner and it was very, very wonderful to see. Just to see the entire tribe faces would make you happy and want to join. So it was not uncommon for the neighboring tribes to also get in the line and they would circle the great hall, doing this farewell song -- farewell dance -- and it made a very impressive sight. Now that was to say that... it was to say goodbye to their guests. (question) It was not uncommon for the guests to join in too because of the feeling that created and the very, very...

(question -- would you like to describe the dance)

Annie: Well, this farewell dance, like George says, it used to be performed by all. The first participant that went up would go up to the visiting tribes and pick up one they knew

was their friend and they would all dance together until the whole room would get up, you know. They had their partners just like the dances of today, modern dances, and they would dance with one another and just circle the hall until everybody was on their feet. It was really wonderful. (question)

George: There are several songs...

Annie: There are several songs.

George: Each tribe has his own or their own song, or each household, for that matter.

Annie: This song that we used to sing, it goes like this. We sang this last night and it goes like this. "Why I am dance this is what you will see I am dancing because I happen to be the chief or the chief dancer and everybody will dance with me. This is why I am dancing so I could do this these crazy things and put crazy thoughts into you and we will dance together. This is why I am dancing so always see I am dancing." And this is (singing)... And the words, you know, they come... There are a lot of words to it because it gives... even what I said now is I am dancing so you will join in my acting and put the

crazy thoughts into you and we will dance together in happiness. And so on, you know. It gives different meanings to each verse.

George: I might add, you know, that words may be described as, "I am dancing because the powers that be makes me or enables me to give this performance," and there was generally always three. We might, we might say that potlatch or any feast or any gathering were divided into three categories. The welcoming and the more important aspect of the show, the

potlatch, and then there was a period where you were licensed to do anything you wanted. You were licensed to act and be ridiculous if you wanted to be. You could do anything in this period. You were given a day or two, or whatever the case may be, to do anything that you thought would be entertaining. And that's what Annie meant when she said, "When I put crazy thoughts into your head." It means that you were licensed to act and to clown. Yes, to clown if you felt like it, but after that period that was cut off again and you resumed where you left off and the more important aspects of the whole potlatch.

(questions)

Annie: Well, the scene of the going would be... Well, they'd have a song to these visitors when they'd leave. They'd go down to their canoes with their possessions now that they had received; their gifts, gifts of food, clothing, including blubber. That was their main things -- and costumes and things were never given away. They sang their own paddle song.

(questions)

He... I might add to that. In the potlatches the history or the rights, including the family tree of that particular host or the man or the house giving the potlatch, was repeated during a special... perhaps during the end of the potlatch. And in this way the Indians or the particular man was reminded of their own standing. That was one way of keeping in mind the social status of each house. We must remember and try to understand that the West Coast Indians were in houses. They described themselves as Clans or Houses, very much like the Scottish clans. And they had their own sub-chief which was

very much in control of that particular house. And now, because... because of these later influence of outside where the Indian began to destroy and began to misuse the proper concept of the whole philosophy, it became expedient that they stop it. Now it was banned absolutely by law and no Indian, in fact, Bob, no Indian could sing his own song in front of the white man. It became unlawful for any of us to sing our song in front of any what you might say "public"... or to dance, for that matter. And I think it was very, very unwise. I think it should have been controlled instead and I think there would have been no problem in that respect. And I think that it

should not have been cut off entirely because each nation -- I don't care where and I don't care how great they are -- they live in the circle of their social environment. Take that environment away from them and you pull them out by their very roots. They die inside. When we lost our songs and when we lost our dances we were a dead people. And in order to be happy, Bob, we must sing, we must give praises to whatever God we believe in. That is what we done in the earlier day. We gave continual praise to Him who created us and he who created all nature and when this potlatch as we know it today was suppressed, well our spirits were... Life was suppressed too and in a very short period of time we were... we became a dead people. But we didn't die, Bob, we have come back to life.

(question about mission Schools)

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INDEX

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
CEREMONIALISM				
-dancing	IH-BC.31A	CLUTESI 1A	174	2-12
CEREMONIALISM				
-paraphernalia	IH-BC.31A	CLUTESI 1A	174	4,5
CEREMONIES				
-potlatch	IH-BC.31A	CLUTESI 1A	174	2,10,11
DANCES AND DANCING				
-acquisition of	IH-BC.31A	CLUTESI 1A	174	3,5,6,8,9
SPIRITS				
-Thunderbird (Pacific Coast)	IH-BC.31A	CLUTESI 1A	174	2,5,6
	PROPER NAME	INDEX		
PROPER NAME	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
WILLINGDON, GOV. GEN.	IH-BC.31A	CLUTESI 1A	174	4