Gillette: ...used to say it was two times better than a home. If you were in the right company. Never get that deal in their homes. Go home, you do this, you do that, you do this. Never get your chance...

(Break in Tape)

Don: They never had a chance to do what they wanted then?

Gillette: Yeah, you never get the chance to do what you wanted to do. That's why I used to say it's better than a home here in the boat because you never stop in one place and, well, unless it's rough weather, you'll stay in one place one day. You travel here and there. Got different country to see. Well, the whole island, you'd say you met a good friend that you never know before. Wherever you go. That's fisherman's life. He's got to be good friends to get what they want, what they ordered that week.

Don: Did you have a lot of fishing regulations to follow in those days?

Gillette: It's the stores had the biggest problem, what the
fishermen want, they got to order that and you have that job when you get to town. That's why you never out of job in town. You go here and there. And if you don't get it, try to make it next door. So sometimes you're lucky, you buy that, you buy this and one place, he's got it. He's got the whole stock and you've got nothing else to do the next day you're in town.

Don: When you were an engineer, you were on a seiner?

Gillette: Yeah.

Don: And when you went out fishing, was there government regulations that said that your boat can only be so many miles from the next boat and these kind of regulations? Or how much fish you could catch?

Gillette: No. There was no regulations like it is today. You got to just get enough fish.

Don: You could catch any fish and as much as you can?

Gillette: Any amount. Any amount.

Don: So was it quite dangerous in those days?

Gillette: Pardon me?

Don: Fishing was dangerous in those days?

Gillette: Yeah. We were fishing pilchards beginning part of it. And when the pilchards was finished we fish dog salmon, coho. When the dog salmon and the coho finished, we'd go out for seining herrings. So we had nothing, no stoppage. I was lucky enough to get my two months every ten months to get home.

Don: What dangers were involved in fishing?

Gillette: The weather, mostly weather. Or if you got a rough skipper, it's the limits, dangers. You've got to say no, no matter how much you think it's a good chance to get in there, you've got to say no. If you don't understand him, if your skipper don't understand you in that proposition when you say no, get out of the way. Go to your bunk or do something.

Don: There was no union in those days to watch out for?

Gillette: Well, we're all unions, member of the Local #44. Each man on the seine boats or the packers all belong to the member of the union. If you're not a member, they chase you off as long as you are in port.

Don: Any strikes in those days?

Gillette: Oh yes, real heavy. Nothing to take comparison with. If you not a member of the union, soon as you port, you got a
boss there. You've got to join the union or get off. All you
got to do is get that man in the galley and then you talk to him
understandable and say, "Yes," and ask him what would $20.

Don: Were relations good between the management of the
fish company and the unions?

Gillette: Yes, yes, yes.

Don: No trouble, no strikes?

Gillette: No trouble. We started that union business, the
reason why we started it, me and Stevens, what do you call
that, union member in Vancouver now, he was a bookkeeper when
we started. And the whole trouble was there was too many
Indians then a member of the union, and didn't care whether he
sells his fish or not. And this was the trouble. I see it
when I was in for a while. When they don't sell their fish, they
give it to the village to smoke, their salmon. And some of
them just take the fish in the beach and the gulls get at it,
the seagulls, the eagles. None goes to the Indians. I seen it
lots of places like that. And I travelled here and there,
around the island but it wasn't good. It's good enough to get
it free but they didn't do the right thing. They wasted the
fish when they could give it to somebody else, pick one, pick
ten or twenty or a hundred, they are doing better that way.
(Phone rings) Instead of just letting go.

Don: Was the skipper of a fish packer under a lot of
pressure? More than the other crew?

Gillette: No, no. No, well, the skipper feels funny to
somebody else like you and me or somebody else don't like him,
say it out. Don't like that man or else the engineer don't
like that man, say it out in the galley when you all eating and
then there will be no hate in one another. They will all feel
home, safely. And nobody else lost a pin or socks on the boat
because they were told that way. Don't touch somebody else's
property, keep away from trouble. You looking for somebody
else's property, you ask for trouble. Not only that, you ask
for this.

Don: Yeah.

Gillette: Maybe just one person, maybe every other fellow will
feel the same way. You get two persons then on your face. So
it's no use. My toothpick in the cabin, you're welcome to it.

Don: How did you navigate in those, when you were fishing?

Gillette: Well, when I was young fellow, my dad had a sailing
boat, one of those calinbear (?) boats, flat bottoms, we used to
go around the island, go to Horseshoe Bay, Vancouver, Nanaimo,
all over, Sechelt Islands.
Don: Did you use compass?

Gillette: He had a compass, yeah. That's why he knew the road pretty good beforehand because he used to tell me, my dad used to tell me which road to take at that point. Try to remember it, oh geez, and sometimes he used to don't care for it, what the hell he's talking about. Believe me boy, never care for it and I knew that, by gosh, I need that. I can't get it because he's dead. It's too late to find out, it was too late to find out and I'm sorry to say I don't care. What I needed when I was too old what I should have, what I should know and I never used to care for it. Well, I'm laying the point right where it... maybe I'll never need it but there's days we need it, very much. I wouldn't say we're satisfied today, disappeared. We need more than that because we need our protection. I may say it, the right word, I guess we need the bread more than anything else. No matter how much you think you got that bread in your house, you need some more, every day. So that's why the old people just say, "Be careful what you're doing. Be careful where you're going." And that means a million words, not only one thing, you got to be careful. Got to watch where you're going, got to watch who you're talking to. You never can tell what, you never can tell. It's more important to that poor person, what he's doing, what he's got in mind, something you don't know. Because we peoples in this world today, we can't read a person's mind. I don't care how rich you are, how poor you are, it's just the same. Can't read a person's mind.

No matter if a man is healthy, no matter how fat he is, no matter how skinny he is, you can't read that person's mind. No matter if he's rich, can't buy it.

Don: Altogether, did you enjoy your career, fishing? You liked it?

Gillette: Yeah. Oh, I used to love that fishing.

Don: You never wanted to do something else?

Gillette: When I work on something else, I set my heart into it and do it. I don't do it like people does, I can do this, I can do that, yes. It's true we can do it but how long? Might be short time, might be just set time and you'll get it.

Don: What have you been doing since you retired from fishing?

Gillette: Well, when I retired from fishing, I been trying to get my kids educated. That's why I moved to Victoria area. When my boys grow old, I need to have education for my boys so they went through school. Most of them older boys I got didn't go through. They take a different thing up. They want to make money. And they never finished whatever they do. They quit again. Only one boy, my youngest son, went through the carpenter's work. He's still working it. And the son I'm
talking about, oh, he'll never make it. That's what I used to say. "You'll never make it." If the brothers didn't make it what they're doing then the youngster can't do that. That was in my mind. I even said it, said the words, "You'll never make it." And the little fellow, skinny fellow, by God, he made it.

He been doing it for two years now. Got out with the certificate, carpenter, he's all right. He's still working there.

Don: Do any of your children speak Nitinat? Did they learn their language?

Gillette: No, I don't, I hardly think the Nitinat language is used at all on account of English. All I see, nothing but the kids in Nitinat Lake now, today, never speak their own language. English mostly.

Don: Are there still the old stories in Nitinat that the people tell?

Gillette: Yeah.

Don: The old generation tell them to the young ones. Do you ever remember any stories of the first white man coming to Vancouver Island?

Gillette: Yeah.

Don: Could you tell me some of those?

Gillette: All right, I'm going to tell you about the first white man appeared in Nootka Sound. The first white man I saw... These Indians were dancing around the island, they call it the island, seen a red face white man. They said he entered the cove. Pale face white man, they said it was a dog salmon. (laughs) And oh, that's a spring salmon I think. They said it was the Spanish. Dark colored white man in their schooner.

And this island, because big trees on it. Big trees on it. This Indian doctor goes out there singing a song, find out, tried to find out what it is. Rattling their rattles around the canoe, go around and see another white man standing beside. Goes on the other side, seeing all kinds of white man with all different kinds of faces. Maybe it was the same men on the other side when they go around the other side. Be the same person but different places.

Don: Yeah, yeah.

Gillette: That's what I think, myself. So, anyway, they seen lots of cohos aboard that boat. (laughs) Red face man, (laughs) big nose. And so they decided it was a coho. That was the first white man appeared in Nootka Sound in the schooner.
Don: They were Spanish, you said?

Gillette: Some of them were Spanish, yes.

Don: Was that Captain Cook's crew?

Gillette: Yes.

Don: Yeah.

Gillette: Dance around, dance around. Invite them people in. So Captain Cook and his engineer and his cook and, I think it was two sailors with him, go ashore. Because Chief Maquinna called them in. Although those days there was nothing but Chinook as we call it, and big English, boy. They called them in and Captain Cook said all right. So they got in then, in a big house, looking in this house, big smokehouse, it was a big one. A lot of people go in there and they start dancing and eating. That's where they learn that bread. It's a biscuit. They are called biscuit. First time they seen it. They didn't know what the heck to do with it. Some people used to pack in their bag for a good luck charm. (laughs) Because it had lots of holes on it. And they figured that was the bad luck piece of word that comes to you, goes through that hole so they have it, never eat it. And that's the first time they have find out this biscuit was eatable, when Captain Cook brought some ashore to the people to show them you can chew them. And some Indians says, "There must be poison on it. Don't eat it, don't eat it." A lot of people never ate it, believed that man. Just like what you see on the Bible. One (laughs) bad man that doesn't agree, whatever you say. (laughs) So a lot of people saved that biscuit because they were scared it was poisoned. And they start dancing in the smokehouse, a lot of people. Oh, it worked throughout. In the day, towards in the morning, you are (Indian) going to sleep half of the ways, all that dancing in the smokehouse, they had to sleep. Don't know what to do with it. Can't get the man out. Because Captain Cook says, "Wait, wait. It's not finished yet." He was right. He wasn't called for only a short time, got to wait until it's finished. So danced all night towards in the morning and then they finished, the band finished because there was lots of band in that Nootka, you know. From all parts of the inlet, all chiefs got to finish singing.

Don: Captain Cook sat through all this.

Gillette: Yeah. (laughs) Anyway, I guess they had a good time. Captain Cook, so the way Captain meet, I think he was, no, he wasn't in the meet. He was a blacksmith, Captain Tom. Yes, he was a blacksmith for the schooner. That's what he was. And it cost them all night and most of them people on the schooner saying, "Let's go see," towards the morning, "What's going on." Well, the meet, wherever it was, said, "It's no use. They'll come out when they're finished." And most of them said, "They're dead, kill them." Because they seen the
warriors coming on the schooner with their rattlers. (laughs) Yeah. And they seen a coho and dog salmon and dogfish (laughs). It's the old timers thinking when they saw this face, what he was. He didn't say it was human. (laughs) They didn't know what it was, that schooner. All they know this island, island drifting. Because they seen three sticks, no knots on it though. (laughs)

Don: Were they scared?

Gillette: No, no. They were not scared. All their warriors in the village were ready. Halfways canoe down, getting ready all the time, the warriors.

Don: They knew it was coming for quite a while, the schooner?

Gillette: They seen it towards the morning coming in. This island coming in slow. They seen it, they were getting ready in the beach. Because warriors never wait, never wait.

Don: Otherwise too late.

Gillette: (Laughs) All they wait is for the chief, what say go, we go. (laughs)

(Break in Tape)

Don: Today is December 2, 1977. Continuing the recording with Mr. Chipps about Captain Cook, et cetera.

Last week you mentioned that you knew a story about Captain Cook joining with the Hudson's Bay?

Gillette: Yeah, yeah.

Don: Can you give me some details?

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Gillette: Yes. Captain Cook, when he appeared in the coast, he bought some skins off the Indians. Regardless of what kind it is, maybe it land otter or deer, as long as it's a skin. Minks and all that. Fur sale, hair sale, all over the coast, travel all over the coast. Stopped here and stopped there but the Indians wanted the gun most of all. They didn't care for money because money was no good to them. And what they knew was the gun would feed them all the time because it would kill something, some animals, a deer or bear or anything. That was in their head. But money wouldn't do that. So they didn't take the money. They just take the gun or axe, anything, knife, anything that's sharp and the Indians were offered the gun. All right, and they had to stack up the floor to the top
of the gun before they gets a gun. If they don't reach the top of the gun, they don't get the gun.

Don: Stack up with furs.

Gillette: Yes. On the floor to the top of the gun. They don't get... (phone rings).

Don: Keep going.

Gillette: And if they haven't got much fur, well, they get the axe or a knife. Of course, they can reach it in time, the height. And I think it was lots of furs before around Vancouver Island, all kinds. Indians were making deadfall trap for minks or coon, they get them, all the time. They get it at night or they get it in the daytime. Soon as they finish that trap, I think. It was quite a few animals then. Mostly the deadfall trap would go the mink or coon would be in there before they go a little ways. On account of the beat they had and on the wall soon as they jig that bait the trap is down. There was nothing to it for them. And what they had to fall was all kinds of rocks on top of that wall trap. Lots of weight so it don't waste a minute. It just collapsed. Only the land otter take a long time to skin but the rest of the animals were easy. Like mink and coon, don't take any more than two minutes to get them all, the hide. All you got to do is cut the right angle to the butt, the end of the animal, and then just pull it. Just pull it.

Don: Pulls apart.

Gillette: Therefore when you do that, everything is done right because you stretch the fur with it. As you pull the skin off, you stretch everything. The mink got larger size than it was because this man pull it. You step on the feet and pull it up. I seen my uncle, my dad do it, and it didn't take them any more than two minutes, it was done. All he had was the skin instead of the meat to pack. Don't know what they were doing but they were doing right all the way through.

Don: And those furs they traded to Captain Cook?

Gillette: Yeah. Oh, a lot of times they try to give them money but they didn't agree. Until my father's race, well, it changed from the old fashioned way. They cared for the money then. But in the early days, no, they didn't want no money. Because they don't know what it is. That was the whole thing. They didn't know what the money was for. Because they didn't buy the seafood, they just wait for the low water to get them. So they thought that money would be no use at all. And Captain Cook buys the skin off the Indians whether it is a land otter or, what do you call them things in the water?

Don: Fur seal?
Gillette: Fur seal. Give them five dollars a skin, that's all. I think that's why the Hudson's Bay Company got rich pretty quick, yeah. And this sea otter, they give them little amount of money too. What we hear about the sea otter, cost lots of money for skin and the Indians used to get a little bit. Sometimes changes of flour or anything important stuff you know. We Indians think this was really bought what we got, really paid for it. Just one reason why they were doing it, they didn't know where to go to spend the money if they get the money. There was nothing in the village. No store. No store. So I think the money looks useless altogether.

Don: Was there much trading when Captain Cook first met the Indians?

Gillette: There was no trading at all before Captain Cook arrived because the Indians didn't know what it was for. And on the other hand, they didn't have the gun, they didn't have the axe, nothing at all. Captain Cook brought the knife on account of blacksmith Tom on the ship. He made the knife and showed them what it is for and showed them how to sharpen it and so the Indian saw that very much.

So years going by, Captain Cook went away and he brought in the Hudson's Bay Company with him. And then they make a good deal out of that. Because they get a Hudson's Bay Company and give them the blankets; green ones and white ones and red ones. Really sick, so they start getting furs for the Hudson's Bay Company. Made a good deal out of it because people understand money a little bit then. They can use it elsewhere. And before that, when Captain Cook arrived, well, no money was used, had no use for it altogether, didn't know what it is for. Absolutely, whether it was silver or paper, they didn't know what it was. Not like me today, I know what a penny is. (laughs)

So they went around the east coast and west coast when Hudson's Bay was with them. On Sound, all over the coast there, just buying some furs. I think Captain Cook arrived Vancouver Island with three masts and the Indians called that "big island with the tree on it." Old Dan brought the warriors out when they first time seen this. And witch doctor and everything, whatever, in the village, that's sing a song, find out what it is because they don't know what it is.

Don: You said they brought out the wires?

Gillette: Warriors.

Don: Warriors, I see. Excuse me.

Gillette: Because they don't want and they is scared and might as well be prepared for it, what action they'll get into.
Don: Right.

Gillette: And they gave them the hardtack. Well, the Indians didn't know what it was for. And some of them, well, I think it was lots of different nationalities on that ship. Whether it was Spanish or didn't know what to say about how to do the biscuit. Some of them keep it for medicine and they make a good luck charm and that much they didn't know what the hardtack was for. They tried to teach them to chew and it was too hard for them.

Don: Oh, I see.

Gillette: They couldn't make it. Some people crack it in the floor, step on it, and then get the little piece and put it in the mouth and they find out it melts in their mouth. And they understand after that it's edible. (laughs) And all the time the warriors are having it on their neck so they find out later it was food. (laughs) I think they had a lot of very good times. Otherwise, when they don't understand anything at all, they have great fun with it. You don't know what to do, what to say.

Don: Did you hear any stories concerning what the Indians thought of Captain Cook after he left the first time?

Gillette: Well, they didn't know what Captain Cook was, altogether. And I think he was a red nose, a little bit or something in the nose, so they thought he was a coho.

Don: Oh, I see.

Gillette: Yeah. No, when they hook-nose gets red at the time in the rivers, put the hook onto it.

Don: So you think he has a hook nose?

Gillette: Yeah.

Don: Red.

Gillette: Red. So that's what they thought. Well, all that nationality, whether it was Spanish or Frenchmen, the face didn't compare one another. So they didn't know what they were. Spring salmon or coho or dog salmon, even the old witch doctors are singing the best songs around their ship. Didn't know what they'd find, they didn't find anything at all. So when the warriors came ashore and asked them what they find in the smokehouse, a big, a lot of people in there and start singing this song and can't find nothing yet. (laughs) Around the house, singing all these songs, going around the big smokehouse. Never find anything. So they don't know what it is. It's an island drifting around. That's what they called the schooner, island drifting around. Apparently Chief Maquinna, I think it is Chief Maquinna's grandfather was
invited aboard the ship and go in, down the hall, looking at it, a big house that. Go to the forward, didn't know what to make of it in the forward. As you go forward just getting narrower and narrower and narrower, what, really high. So he didn't know what it was, couldn't make it out when he was aboard the ship. And when he come in, when he come in the smokehouse he told the people, "I don't know what it is, a big house in there. All different kinds." So they give him a rice and pilot bread, take home.

Don: Captain Cook's men?

Gillette: Yeah.

Don: Gave to Maquinna.

Gillette: So, he invite the peoples to have a feast with him. They cooked the rice. Some pots got burned -- didn't know how long to keep it on the open fire. Some come off real good. I tried to find out the rice was really a good food. Some people tried just steam boil it, you know, like potatoes.

Don: Yes.

Gillette: Come out good, not just dump it in the boiling water, just steam it, try it that way. And they find out it was real good then. You can boil them, you can steam them, which is good for to boil potatoes. (laughs) In the olden times they didn't know what the potatoes are. They call it, with the skin on, bread. And when they bake it they find out it was just like a bread so they call them bread. Gets soft, it gets soft as it is cooked. Bake them in the sand, open fire, get the hot sand out and put the potatoes in it. Real good baked that way. The open fire.

Don: You're making me hungry. (laughs)

Gillette: (laughs) And one ship came to Nootka Sound before Captain Cook come back. Maybe it was flour and they didn't know what the flour was for. Wash ashore, the whole ship wash ashore outside of Nootka.

Don: Washed ashore?

Gillette: I think it was a stormy day. I think so. So the Indians went aboard the ship and then this crew was scared, the Indians was hiding, hiding in the bush. Each man come off the ship brought a sack of flour on deck. He opened it and dumped it in the beach. They didn't know what the flour was for. Nobody knew it. And the ship was real high, listing over, yet that flour was just sticking to the deck to the beach. That's how much, what they were doing, the Indians, some of them do it right there. Cut the corners off the flour and put his arms through it, he got a shirt.
Don: They weren't interested in the flour?

Gillette: (laughs) Never mind the flour, they had a shirt anyway. (laughs) Oh, I guess that much we didn't understand at all long ago.

Don: So that ship was just after Captain Cook had left the first time?

Gillette: Yeah. And some Spanish schooner came ashore with that flour. Different ship altogether. I think it thought that we cannot carry through, seems like we forgotten a lot of things what we were told. In the olden days how we lived was, I guess it was very poor. Nobody knew it. The crabs was food. So the fellow find out the crabs was real good next door and the people outside tried to listen what that cracking sound was for. And some people looks through the knothole and they said, "He's eating that funny looking animal."

Don: Who was saying that?

Gillette: People looked through the knot.

Don: The Indians from...?

Gillette: The Indians, yeah.

Don: Looking through the knothole.

Gillette: Yeah, at Nitinat, yeah.

Don: Looking out to Captain Cook's...?

Gillette: Looking at the people eating the crabs.

Don: Who were the people eating the crabs?

Gillette: Were Nitinats.

Don: Nitinats, a different group of Indians.

Gillette: Different group altogether. And what they used to do, these people find the crabs as food. Used to wrap around a little bandage on it and bite it so it don't crack sound. Keep the cracking sound out. More meat, get the whole arms off that. Don't want anybody else to find out it's food. That was the case they doing. They were hiding it because all kinds of crabs on the rocks under the water. Don't need no spear, all you got to do is pick them with the paddle. Of course, the crabs grab it when it moves by something else. They want to find out too, what they moved them. That's how they find out the crabs are food. Although it's in a story about the crabs. It's... the crabs supposed to be youngster deer, youngster. The older brother, it's our deer.

Don: Oh, I see. So the crab is related to the deer?
Gillette: A youngster deer, that's why you see the crabs got that (Indian) fur on the chest.

Don:  Oh, I see.

Gillette: You see a deer picture, if you look at the backs, if you look at them cross-eyed, you look at them, you'll see a deer laying down like that. Whole body, whole picture of a deer, don't imagine things. The eyes, a little bump, nose, horn, it's there on the crabs. Just telling you the story. (laughs) You try it and see it. If you don't make it out, well, rub the top back a little more clean and then you'll see the eyes, you'll see the nose, you'll see the legs, everything is there.

Don:  How did the deer become the crab?

Gillette: Oh, when this world...