JACKIE WANNASSAY HILL, Cowlitz

TOM HILL

TOM HILL, Jr., Cowlitz

November 17, 1975

Kelso, Washington

This transcript is one of a series of interviews with American Indian people throughout much of the United States by S. I. Myers of the History Department of St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, St. Louis, Missouri, 63135.

The purpose of these interviews is to bring the Indian peoples' own comments to students in classrooms, and to foster greater understanding among the peoples of the United States by providing Indians the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions to a wider audience.

This transcript has been edited for clarity and ease of reading, but every effort has been made to preserve the original feeling. Conversations and opinions were encouraged on any subject of interest to interviewees; questions and responses do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the interviewer, the National Endowment for the Humanities, or St. Louis Community College.

This transcript series was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and by support from St. Louis Community College.

Copyright © S.I. Myers 1978
THE NEW YORK TIMES ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

LISTENING TO INDIANS

NO. 103

JACKIE WANNASSAY HILL, Cowlitz

TOM HILL

TOM HILL, Jr., Cowlitz

November 17, 1975

Kelso, Washington

Glen Rock, New Jersey

Microfilming Corporation of America

1978
Sam Myers:

Today I have an opportunity to talk to some people here in Kelso, Washington, who have some different, unusual information for us, and we'll begin with Mrs. Hill.

Jacqueline Wannassay Hill.

Mrs. Jacqueline Wannassay Hill.

SM: And that's the family name?

JH: The family name.

SM: You're a Lower Cowlitz?

JH: Lower Cowlitz, Tietnapum, canoe people.

SM: That means canoe people?

JH: Right, the Lower Cowlitz.

SM: The Cowlitz people were roughly at least divided into two parts?

JH: Lower and Upper Cowlitz, and we take in the Cascade people too, on the west side of the slopes.

SM: Before we go further, then, we'll also introduce Mr. Tom Hill and Mr. and Mrs. Hill's son, Tom, Jr.. Tom, are you teaching now?

THJ: No, last year.

SM: Down at the Pima Reservation?

THJ: Yes. St. John's Indian School.
SM: Could you explain the name Wannassay a little bit more, Jackie?

JH: It's a French and Indian combination is what it is, and that was my grandfather's name, and our family, as far back as we can trace, were all born on Squaw Island, which is no longer there.

SM: Squaw Island on the Cowlitz River?

JH: Um hm.

SM: How far up the Columbia River from the ocean are you, Mr. Hill?

TH: I'd say it's about 53 miles.

SM: And the Cowlitz River comes down from Mt. Rainier?

TH: It's a tributary. The Cowlitz River comes from Mt. Rainier, that is 13,000 and some odd feet high. That's where it starts from there, and it runs into the Columbia River.

SM: That's where we are here, right where it runs into the Columbia?

JH: Actually we're located right in between the Coweeman River and the Cowlitz River, which flow into the Columbia. The Coweeman River is on the other side of us here.

SM: The island you mentioned, what was the name of that?

JH: Squaw Island.

SM: Squaw Island is not there any more?

JH: No. The land is there, but a dike has covered up the slough that was there.
SM: Your family used to live on that island?

JH: The whole family lived on that island.

SM: And you lost it?

JH: Yeah.

SM: To the government?

JH: Not necessarily lost it, there's a suit still pending where the family is trying to gain it back.

SM: What's on the island now?

JH: The Hall of Justice has been erected on the island.

SM: If there is justice then you hope to win the suit?

JH: Right.

SM: Is the whole family involved in this?

JH: Yes. My Aunt Grace lives down in Gladstone, Oregon, and my cousins—well, let's see. Helen and Goldie are here in town right now. Goldie is visiting, I guess she went back. She works for the Quinault Tribe up at Taholah.

SM: Well then, the island. Is it attached to the shore now?

JH: Yes.

SM: So there's no longer a separated island?
JH: There's no longer a separated island, and I was the last person born on that island before the dike was put in.

SM: And the dike connects it with the shore now. Now it's got the Hall of Justice built on it. Is that for Kelso?

JH: That's for Cowlitz County. Kelso and Longview, all the courts will be held there, and there will be one main jail for everybody there.

SM: That's a nice comforting thought. (laughter)

JH: The whole top floor is jail.

SM: You have a lawsuit pending to reclaim the title to the land?

JH: We will. It's in the works.

SM: Do you have any idea when it will be heard now?

THJ: Well, I'm kinda speeding things up. Yeah, I'm tired of waiting, so I started writing letters to newspapers and to television studios....

SM: To get some publicity?

THJ: Yeah.

SM: Are they picking it up for you pretty well?

THJ: Well, I just sent the letters out Friday.

JH: He had an article in the Longview Daily News the other night about the island.

SM: Did you write the article yourself?
THJ: Yeah.

SM: You'll get publicity, but you have to be careful not to prejudice your case.

THJ: Well, see, all the evidence is where they can't find it. It's all in Washington State, and I'm working in Oregon State--try to backfire what they're doing. See, our aunt and our cousin, when they went to one of the Longview lawyers to file suit, he couldn't take it because he said he would be bought out by whoever doesn't want. . . see, the files on record that that property was ours are in the courthouse, the old courthouse in Kelso, and as soon as somebody started digging through, like our cousin and aunt, all of a sudden they weren't there.

JH: They were there up until 1944, because I worked in the assessor's office, and I typed them up every year, and then when they went up to look for them they were gone. The whole page was gone.

THJ: And so they had to go clear to Olympia, to the capitol, and couldn't find it there, and they went through the office of records and they finally found what they wanted there, and it states in the papers that the property was Indian property and it was tax free. What happened was that big business in Longview took over.

SM: Those pages in those books are all numbered, aren't they? Page # so and so, Book # so and so, and so you can tell when one is missing?

JH: When you can't find the property and it was listed in there for years when I worked in there. . . . I started working in the courthouse while I was still going to high school, and it was in there all during the early '40's, but then. . . . My family was a commercial fishing family. I started commercial fishing when I was five years old.

SM: You used to help the family?
JH: I helped my grandfather and my grandmother, and when I first started fishing we used a rowboat. We didn't have motor boats.

SM: A rowboat on the Cowlitz?

JH: No, on the Columbia. We have our family drift rights down there yet.

SM: What are those?

THJ: Have you ever heard of Judge George Boldt?

SM: No.

THJ: The Boldt Ruling? They have a big thing in the Northwest about the Indian fishing in the Columbia River. They've taken it to court and it's had pretty big publicity, I thought.

JH: Right.

THJ: National publicity.

JH: But in the Columbia River every commercial fisherman, be he white, Indian, or whatever, has a certain area that he fishes in. He has the rights to that particular strip. Those are drift rights. He gets to go fishing first, and anyone else that doesn't have a drift right there has to wait till he gets started down the drift, and then they can put in a floater behind him.

SM: On the same day?

JH: Oh yes. But they usually fish at night.

SM: And you started helping the family...?
JH: When I was five years old. I was a commercial fisherman until . . . well, even after I came back from the Navy I used to make all my clothes money by fishing.

SM: You were in the Navy during World War II?

JH: Right.

THJ: I was in the Navy last year.

SM: Just got out?

JH: He just got out. My oldest boy was in the Navy too.

SM: Your two men here, Tom and Tom, Jr., have they ever been involved in fishing like you were?

JH: Yes. He fished for me when I was expecting Junior down at Celilo Falls.

SM: Oh, you were working as a commercial fisherman that year?

TH: Oh yes. I'd like to explain somethin'. You take your fishin' rights and what she said, a floater, well, a diver. If you own the fishing rights you use a diver that's goin' under the water, you got enough lead line to hold it under water, see, you're gettin' bottom fish too. Now a floater, that's for silvers and a few fish that's swimmin' up, you got enough corks on that to hold that up, see, but it don't go from the bottom, and if you go on the river, you ask a guy, can you fish on his drift rights. Well, if he's a fishin' and you give him about ten minutes after he lays out, and he start rippin' down, then you could use a floater, but you cannot use a diver.
SM: So that you can only fish closer to the surface if you follow the person who has the drift rights.

TH: Right.

SM: Gets kind of complicated, doesn't it?

TH: And if you cork somebody, that's it.

SM: What is that?

TH: If you cork somebody. That's run your net into their net. Then you're out, 'cause they'd like to take a gun and shoot you.

SM: Now here you have pictures and you also have news items about fishing on the Columbia. "Historic Indian Fishing Place Will Be Flooded." That was at the Dalles. It is flooded out. There's a dam built there now, isn't there? So the Dalles you don't see any longer as they used to be?

JH: No, not like that. Those rocks are all covered.

TH: We used to fish with a six-foot hoop net with a pole on it. We had a rock out there and we had a platform on it, and you'd just souse it down, you know, put it right down, and them fish try to go up and they can't make it, they come right back into the net, so you pull 'em up. Her and her uncle and myself, we stayed at Biggs Junction, and we used to fish night times. We used to make $1,500 apiece at night.

SM: A day?

TH: At night time.
JH: Each night.

SM: It was good fishing then.

TH: Good fishin', and then they turned right around and they really messed the Indians up. They paid 'em $3,750 apiece for the site, not their fishing rights, just the site, where they fished at, and then they turned around and they took $500.00 of that from each member for income tax, and Congress passed a law that there would be no income tax, so we're wonderin' where that $500.00 went to. At that time they was around 4,500 fishermen there.

JH: Yakima Indians.

TH: Yeah.

SM: Well, let's talk some more about this fishing thing. For example, how did you fish when you were a child?

JH: Set out nets, big nets for salmon. But at Celilo Falls it was always dip net, hoop net.

SM: In this part of the river you used the big nets, but up there more in the rapid part, that's where you used the dip nets?

JH: That's the way you catch smelt too, with the dip net.

TH: Well, you can gill net 'em on the river, smelt, but then you have to shake them nets out, and the most of the time you'll find that you tear 'em all to pieces, so that goes for cat food or dog food or anythin' like that, you know, or fertilize.

SM: Here's a picture of people standing on logs along the bank with those big dip nets.
JH: That's for smelt fishing there.

SM: What happened after you came in with a catch of fish back there in the old days. Did you clean them and market them?

JH: No. We'd sell them to the fish buyers.

SM: Just the way you caught them?

JH: Just the way we caught them.

SM: You didn't clean them, dry them or anything else?

JH: Oh yes, we used to dry fish, smoke fish. We don't dry fish here. Smoke them. In eastern Washington they dry them. They have a little bitty fire, where I use a bigger fire, but not so it'll blaze up, just smoke.

SM: You like smoked fish?

JH: Oh I love them.

SM: Is this the area where there was a recent decision on the Sound someplace?

THJ: Yeah, that's the Judge George Boldt Decision, the whole state of Washington.

SM: Is that the one you spoke of Tom? Where is that?

THJ: It takes place in the state of Washington and the state of Oregon and parts of Idaho on the Snake. It's a whole ruling on the Columbia River about the white fishermen getting in and beat up all the Indians...
and everything, and won't let them fish at night time while they're running, so the Indians don't get their . . . the decision of the Judge was that 50% of all the fish that commercial fishermen take in of the runs, not that the commercial fishermen take in, 50% is supposed to be saved for the Indians.

SM: So in other words they have a right to 50% of the catch?

THJ: Right. And they weren't getting this, and so, up in the Puget Sound, where right now the decision was made that no white fisherman can fish at all for the rest of the season.

SM: What part of the Sound? All of it?

THJ: The southern of the Puget Sound--I don't know how big the area was.

JH: And Lake Washington too at Seattle.

SM: So this Judge Boldt ruling was that the white fishermen couldn't fish at all until the Indians have their share?

THJ: Right.

SM: And the catch would have to be based on last year's catch, I suppose?

JH: No, they count your fish. They have fish counters all over the state, all your different hatcheries and different places, they can tell how many fish are in the lake and in the Sound.

SM: How in the world do they do that?

JH: Wherever they've got a dam or anything, they have a fish counter, and the fish go through there and they're counted. Electronically.
SM: Well, Judge Boldt's Decision, that's the way people refer to it?

JH: Right.

SM: That was a few months ago?

THJ: Well, it's still going on right now. The governor and the lieutenant governor are saying that they want it completely closed for ecology reasons.

SM: That would wipe out everybody, all the fishing?

THJ: Right. But then they took it back to the court and he decided the Indians were still to have their fishing rights.

SM: One article said that the white fishermen who have an investment, they claim, of $50,000 or so in their equipment, were collecting as little as $500.00 or $600.00 worth of fish in the whole season, which was wiping them out.

THJ: I don't think so. Probably about $500,000 or $600,000, because they get all the fish, and they were making all the money.

SM: That was the way it was?

THJ: Well, the reason that Judge Boldt decided that the Indians were to get fishing rights here--he was going to close the whole thing down to everybody--but then all the white fishermen up there, when they go out at night into the harbors, they would beat up the Indians and try to run them out, and this last time when the governor and the lieutenant governor tried to close the whole thing down in court, the Indians brought forth their lawyers and everything, had pictures and tape recordings of all the things that were happening. I don't remember how many cases they had of people that were shot, beat up,
thrown in jail, all the things happened to Indians, and one night they had a picture of some 500 boats in one little harbor that were all white people that were fishing on an Indian specified night.

SM: Were they able to use these pictures and tapes in court then?

THJ: Oh yeah, they used everything. . . .

SM: And then the judge handed down his decision which said the Indians get 50% of the catch?

THJ: No, they got all of it. 100%.

SM: Do you know the area? It isn't the whole Sound, is it?

THJ: No. Well, if you go up there you go to the Muckleshoot Reservation. They're the ones that are getting hit the hardest.

SM: And they are on the Sound?

THJ: Right.

SM: On which side?

JH: They're near Tacoma and Puyallup.

THJ: There's a town called Enumclaw. That's 16 miles east of Tacoma, you can see signs that say Enumclaw, and you go out there and that's the reservation. I know a whole bunch of people live out there, and they're the ones that are getting hit the hardest.

SM: But they're the ones also now that are being affected by this decision?

THJ: Right.
SM: Well, then, that was quite a jolt to a lot of people, I guess?

JH: Yeah. See, as Cowlitz I have no fishing rights, but as Yakima I have my fishing rights.

SM: Would you explain that for us?

JH: Because I'm registered on the Yakima Reservation as well as Cowlitz.

SM: Why would you be registered on Yakima?

JH: Well, years ago they massacred all the Indians around Battleground, and put the women and children over on the reservation.

SM: In other words the Cowlitz never had a reservation, that's why you were with the Yakima?

JH: We never signed a peace treaty with the government.

SM: The Cowlitz people lived in this whole area then from approximately here where the Cowlitz River runs into the Columbia, on up to Mt. Rainier.

THJ: Here's the story.

SM: Oh yes, here's the paper with the states averting the Bold Decision. May I read that, Tom?

THJ: Sure. That has the names of everybody up there. This has a list of cases that I was talking about. Different things that happened to the different people. That's how much fish that was caught, and these are all. . . .

SM: Well, that's a much more thorough description than appeared in the
national press.

THJ: Yeah, see what happened? The numbers of the boats, the people that were in there, the owners of the boats, exactly where it was at what time, what day, how many days it was there.

SM: This is in The Indian Voice, the newspaper of the small tribes organization of western Washington, right?

THJ: Right.

SM: And then Tom, Sr., just found me a map here showing the area that the Cowlitz people inhabited.

TH: And Governor Stevens, when he offered the chief of the Cowlitz Tribe, he offered him . . . was it seven acres?

JH: Seven acres, one cow, one horse, and $7.00 for each family, and he said, "No." That's why our chief wouldn't . . .

SM: The Cowlitz people refused and . . .

JH: Have never signed a treaty.

THJ: That's what this story is about--"STOWW Files Recognition Papers."

SM: Yes. I'm getting some good information here. And this map shows the area from along Vancouver, Washington, north to Castle Rock and . . . how far north does it go? As far as Chehalis?

JH: Centralia-Chehalis and Bear Mountain to the west.

SM: And how far east?
JH: Over to the Yakima Reservation.

SM: Big area, isn't it?

TH: A heck of a big area.

JH: And this is a map that's put out by the mining engineers, shows a gold mine that my grandfather and his brother used to mine gold out of. And my grandfather and his brother would go every year and get enough gold to last all the families that lived here at Cowlitz County to buy food for the year.

SM: That was up near Mt. St. Helens?

JH: Yes.

SM: Is there still any gold mining up in that area?

THJ: Everytime somebody goes to a bookstore and finds that book.

JH: Everybody's lookin' for it. My grandfather told me when I was about eight years old where to find it, before he died. He died when I was ten, and my husband and I have tried to find it and we can't find it. Everything has changed over the years.

SM: There haven't been any earthquakes since then, have there?

TH: Oh yes. We had one heck of an earthquake here in '49, was it?

JH: Let's see. Jack was just a baby, he was born in '46. We had one in '46 when he was born, 'cause he was only a few days old when I was in the hospital, and the hospital started shakin'.

SM: So you remember that?
JH: I remember that one.

SM: So that could have stirred up the terrain up there and masked over the whole thing.

JH: See, I was born and raised on a floathouse.

SM: On the river?

JH: Um hm. My first toy was a boat.

SM: That you'd float in the yard, huh?

JH: Yeah. I had a canoe up until just a few years ago. One of my cousins borrowed it and we never got it back.

SM: Now did you say that your grandfather used to get gold up there in the hills?

JH: Yes, my grandfather and his brother.

SM: And since then nobody has ever found it?

JH: No. We've searched. Everybody has searched. There's an issue comes out ever so often on that, every state, of all the gold mines. silver mines. and what have you. It's a regular volume that's put out, and this was in there.

TH: They buy that book and then they go check, and they haven't found it yet.

SM: It sounds like the Lost Dutchman's mine down in the Superstitions, doesn't it?
SM: You're familiar with that, aren't you, Tom, because you worked down there in that neighborhood?

THJ: Right.

SM: Well, like somebody said, it would be kind of a tragedy if anyone ever found that Lost Dutchman's Mine because then all the interest would be dissipated.

THJ: Everybody down there talks about it too.

SM: Yes, and the Don's Club takes excursions out there, and so on. Individuals largely are the ones who go up here and have tried to find this gold deposit near Mt. St. Helens?

TH: Yep, it's every year, and they haven't found it yet.

SM: Mt. St. Helens is a cinder cone, isn't it? An old volcano?

JH: Yes.

SM: And that erupted here about 125, 130 years ago? 1830 or '40, something like that?

TH: Around there it erupted. Mt. Baker is steamin' up, but Mt. Rainier on the east side is steamin' up.

SM: They are now?

JH: Mt. St. Helens has had . . . off and on it's steamed up on the other side.
SM: I'd hate to be there when it happens, wouldn't you?

TH: That wouldn't bother you a bit.

SM: Wouldn't it?

TH: No.

SM: You mean it doesn't spout and pour out molten lava?

TH: If it did it doesn't make any difference. There's enough valleys that it would go down. You could get up on a hill, you'd be safe.

SM: Oh, you could scramble up the nearest hill and get out of the way?

TH: Oh yeah, yeah. See, it would come down the Coweeman River, no, the Kalama River, and it would come down the Cowlitz River, part of the Cowlitz, and the Toutle River. See you go up the Toutle, and you go up to Mt. St. Helens. Now that you got Spirit Lake up there. Some places up there in that Spirit Lake they haven't never found bottom yet.

SM: It's a beautiful place, that lake. Those trees, huge pines standing.

TH: Well, fir. They're fir, hemlock, spruce, and oh, once in a while you'll run into a big alder.

SM: Those are Douglas Fir?

TH: Right. Well, it was in the paper here the other day Oregon did have the biggest tree in the Northwest, but they had a storm in southern Oregon and it brought that tree down, so now Washington, it's up at Queets. That's up here on the reservation, the Queets Indians, they have got the biggest tree now, the biggest fir tree.
SM: The biggest tree in the Northwest now?

THJ: No, in the United States.

TH: Yeah, it's the biggest one.

SM: Oh you mean these are bigger than the redwoods too?

THJ: The one down in Oregon was the biggest one in the United States, and then the one up there's biggest now.

TH: Friday's paper, I'll show you that. It's right in there. They published it right in the Daily News.

SM: Well, there's a picture of one of the mountains right there. Which one is that?

JH: That's Mt. St. Helens, isn't it?

SM: Mt. St. Helens, all covered with snow. I've only seen it in summer when it's all rocks.

TH: Well, you see it's been snowin'. You can see it in the foothills below there, see? Well, their hunting season started in October for deer, and November why it's elk season, you go camp out then, and lot of them they got snowed in, so they had to wait. We did have some rain and it warmed up so they finally did get out.

SM: Now today it's supposed to be quite a warm day here in Kelso?

TH: Well, it'll be a little cool accordin' to the weather man.

JH: Last night it was snowing in Gresham.
TH: It rained the whole night.

JH: There it is!

SM: Oh yes. Jackie found the article, "Wind Topples Largest U.S. Douglas Fir" at Coos Bay, Oregon, on the coast over there. At least that's where the paper, the article comes from. The tree was named for Lance Finnigan, the Bureau of Land Management, an employee who discovered it. It stood 302 feet high, was 41 feet in circumference, and more than 800 years old. Now that's gone and so the nation's next largest tree now is the Queets Fir in Washington's Olympic National Park. I always thought the redwoods were the biggest, but some of these are bigger?

TH: Well, if you go up the Quinault you'll see how big they are because if you go up to Queets you have to drive down this one road, it's the only road that goes to Queets, and all you see is these great big, gigantic trees, they're even taller than the redwoods.

JH: In the United States they have the rain forest up there. It rains more there than any place else in the U.S.

SM: That's on the Olympic Peninsula up there, isn't it?

TH: And they's also, in the Olympia National Park there, they got three big cedar trees there, and the biggest one is 22 foot in diameter at the butt.

SM: That's a cedar now.

TH: Yeah. And it's hollow down below, so lots of times lots of bears go in there and hibernate.

SM: Like a cave. Some of the redwoods are like that.
TH: So when you get 10 to 15 to 20 foot of snow, they go in those places like that, they just hibernate.

SM: A nice cozy spot.

JH: We were up there huntin' and I was following a cougar and her cubs, and it started snowin' on us and my husband said, "Where you at?" I said, "I'm goin' after this cougar," because at that time there was a $65.00 bounty on 'em. And I couldn't catch up with her, it started snowin' too much.

SM: It slows you down. But when the snow is falling there isn't very good tracking.

TH: You can't see your hand in front of your face, it was snowin' so hard.

SM: Jackie, do the Cowlitz people make baskets any more?

JH: Oh, not very many make baskets. The ones that live over on the reservation do. They still make them.

SM: Do you mean over on the Yakima Reservation?

JH: Right.

SM: Now there are still Cowlitz people living over there?

JH: Yes. A good number of your Yakima Indians are Cowlitz.

SM: Do the people separate themselves into Yakimas and Cowlitz on that reservation?

JH: They're all Yakimas. There's 12 different tribes over there.
SM: Though they're all called Yakimas, some of them are actually Cowlitz people.

JH: Right.

SM: Any of your relatives over there?

JH: Out of 4,554, 4,000 of them are my cousins.

SM: That's a good answer. Four thousand cousins over there.

JH: Yeah. Every time when I go to town I meet somebody at the agency, my husband says, "Who was that?" I say, "That's my cousin."

SM: Are they literally cousins or special friends?

JH: No, we're all related.

SM: Blood relations?

JH: Right.

SM: Do you remember them all?

JH: Eagle, Selatzie, Robert Jim, Roger Jim, the James boys . . .

SM: Not from Missouri, the James boys?

JH: No. Ileys, Skhans, Olneys, Rabbitowls, Lewis, John, well, there's two or three different Lewis families over there.

SM: Yakima Reservation is over there near the town of Yakima, Washington?

JH: Yes.
THJ: That's supposedly the richest tribe in the United States, richer than the Oklahoma Indians.

SM: The Navajos are sometimes claimed to be, and other people claim the Osage are the richest.

THJ: Well, I don't think any other tribe owns airports and . . . .

SM: But the Yakima people own all these things that they've developed?

JH: Oh yes. We have a furniture factory, glove factory, cannery.

SM: Do they own these themselves?

JH: The tribe as a whole owns it.

SM: And I suppose some people who aren't Yakimas even work there.

THJ: Flight school.

JH: Yes, we own a flight school, the airport there in Yakima.

SM: You just said "we" there. Do you think of yourself as a Yakima as well as a Cowlitz?

JH: Right. I can't help it, this is what my grandparents did, or great grandparents. (laughter)

SM: You can't change it either, can you?

JH: No. It's just like a white man has a German mother or a French father or something. Well, he can't help it.

SM: Well, that's interesting, you see, because you can think of yourself
as a member of both tribes. Now Tom, Jr., here.

THJ: I get stuck in one.

JH: He gets stuck in the Cowlitz.

SM: You can't claim the Yakima?

THJ: Oh, I don't know. If I took it to court I probably could.

SM: Are you on a tribal roll then, Tom?

THJ: I'm on the Cowlitz tribal roll. Which doesn't really mean anything.

SM: Well, it can sometime, like in this Alaskan settlement. You had to be on the tribal roll in order to participate in the awards.

THJ: Oh well, it doesn't run that way here. We got an award in 1972 that hasn't been paid yet.

SM: That's three years ago.

THJ: Yeah, it was $1,550,000 put in the bank and nobody's heard anything yet with it. They turned it over to the government, the tribe; now we have two tribes of Cowlitz instead of one, since the people, they split into . . . now they have the Cowlitz Tribe of Indians and they also have the Sovereign Cowlitz Tribe of Indians.

JH: That's a young, radical group.

THJ: Ya a a y.

SM: They call themselves the Sovereign Tribe of Cowlitz?
THJ: And see, everybody will be included in the payment, including my mom will be included in the payment.

SM: Would you too, because you're on the roll? You wouldn't though, Tom?

TH: Oh no, no, no.

THJ: Well, see, she's not even on the rolls there, but she will, because the government took it over. The Bureau of Indian Affairs right now is investigating it, getting all the proper people that are supposed to be there. See, in the Cowlitz Tribe of Indians, it isn't all Cowlitz Indians that are there, that are running it, and see, other people broke in. They come down from Canada, and now the French people that come down from Canada and got into the tribe by inter-marriage.

JH: And most of them are as white as my little granddaughter there.

THJ: She's a Cowlitz Indian. Can you believe it?

SM: With the blond hair? Well, sure, it can happen all right. A little girl in Santa Fe was not blond, she was red headed with blue eyes and freckles, and she was Cherokee.

TH: I'm a little bit of Cherokee. I'm not a lot, I don't have nothin', you know what I mean.

SM: Not on any roll?

TH: No, no.

JH: Did you ever know that the Cherokees originated in Carolina and Tennessee?

SM: Yes.
JH: They were put on a death march to Oklahoma.

SM: Yes, and some of them are still back there.

THJ: We might get put on a death march to Portland, Oregon.

TH: My great grandmother was full-blooded Cherokee.

SM: Did she live back in the Carolinas or in Oklahoma?

TH: She lived in Tennessee. And they slipped out of it when they was makin' them march here to Oklahoma.

SM: Yes, some of them didn't come.

TH: What I would like to've seen when they did put the Cherokees there . . . the white man stepped in and he bought most, you know, 'cause they struck oil in Oklahoma. The Indians were very rich, and then the white man come in and he robbed 'em and he stole everything off of 'em, and that shouldn't have been.

SM: Some of the Osages were able to keep it, but not very many.

TH: That's right.

SM: And some of them got very wealthy, but, you know, a small part of the total.

TH: If they had the Bureau of Indian Affairs as good as they got now, I don't think that woulda happened back there. And a tribe woulda gotten together, your councilmen, and formed it like the Yakimas got it, see, they're tryin' to be independent, and they do, which they're doin' it. But President Eisenhower, back when he was President, he
wanted to terminate the Indians, and he wanted to terminate every one of 'em. Well, the Yakimas they fought against that.

SM: Were they terminated?

TH: No, no. But the Klamath Indians, Klamath Falls, Oregon, in the southern part of Oregon, they terminated them.

JH: That's what you get for bein' Indian.

TH: Yeah, it was. Now see, what they shoulda done, they paid 'em, I think it's around $72,000 some of 'em got. Well, you know, the biggest problem of the Indian right today is alcohol. And, 'course, they got all this money, and they get drunk, and they just blow it away. Now half of 'em, right now, is on welfare, 'cause they blew all their money away. They shoulda had an agent that woulda seen that they was incompetent, and took that money and put it in the bank for 'em, and doled 'em out enough to live on each month. They woulda been a lot better off than what they are today.

SM: Do you agree with that, Jackie?

JH: (laughter)

THJ: No.

SM: You know, a lot of people would argue about this that government shouldn't be in it at all.

TH: Well, they coulda had any state agent or anything, you know, to do that.

JH: See, on the Yakima Tribe, they have a certain amount of members over there that are incompetent. They know that they will go out and blow
their money. They don't get as much.

SM: Of course, nobody likes to be called incompetent.

JH: No, but they have put them on a certain allowance. If they sold anything.

SM: Now here's a coin. This is a gold metal that Tom, Jr., just gave me. The Sovereign Nation of the Yakima.

JH: Yeah, I got that from the tribe. No, the tribe had them minted themselves.

SM: It's a beautiful coin. It's worth quite a bit, isn't it?

JH: I imagine. I never did find out what's.

SM: It is gold, isn't it?

JH: Yes. Bronze.

SM: It looks like gold the way it's polished.

TH: Every member. They give every member of the Yakima Tribe.

THJ: Well, around this area this is what a lot of the Indians have, Pendleton blankets.

SM: Oh, Pendleton blankets from Pendleton, Oregon?

JH: Right.

SM: Do the Cowlitz people weave?

JH: No.
SM: They wove baskets, but not. . . .

THJ: They always went to Pendleton for their blankets.

SM: After Pendleton got started, because Pendleton is a comparatively new development, compared with the Cowlitz people. It's a beautiful blanket. They have a store here, or is it a factory?

JH: In Pendleton, Oregon.

SM: In Pendleton, Oregon, over there by the Umatilla Reservation, but they also have one in Portland?

JH: Portland, right.

TH: They got a store yet?

JH: No, they got a factory. They got a factory down there.

THJ: Down on the Pima Reservation all the Indians down there have bought these Pendleton blankets, and now they're learning how to weave them. They're taking the patterns from them, but they have to change the pattern or they get in trouble.

SM: Where are they doing this, Tom?

THJ: Down on the Pima Reservation, Arizona.

SM: Yes, because they weave like the Navajos.

THJ: Yeah, this is what they make down there. The kids in the school make these moccasins.
SM: Where is this now? At the Pima Reservation too?

THJ: Yeah. They made those for me.

SM: It says "Taos" in here.

JH: And on the back of that divan you're sittin' on is a deer hide.

SM: This one here?

JH: Yeah, a deer hide. I use it for a throw.

SM: It's a nice one. Soft. Did you ever tan one yourself?

JH: No.

SM: It's kind of hard, isn't it?

TH: A lot of work there.

JH: Yeah, you have to salt it down, and then work all the hair out of it after so long a time.

SM: There are so many things that we've got going at once, it's all interesting. Can I ask you any more about the baskets? How long ago was it the people were making baskets?

JH: Well, up until my mother passed away in '50's, she made them all the time.

SM: You made this small one here when you were a child?

JH: Yes. My grandmother was 112 when she died in '48, and my great aunt,
Mary Kiona, was 127. She was my great aunt. She rode a horse until she was 101 or 105, I forget which.

SM: You've got some good ancestors back of you there, Tom, if you can keep up with them.

THJ: Yeah, I could.

SM: Mrs. Irwin was telling about a collection of Cowlitz baskets up in the museum at Seattle.

THJ: Oh, that's probably by the Indian Medical Center.

SM: They used to use them for different purposes, even cooking sometimes, didn't they?

JH: Right.

SM: With hot stones, like that one there. It was waterproof, wasn't it?

JH: No, this is a berry basket. See the berry stains in there?

SM: But it's woven so tightly, wouldn't it be waterproof?

JH: It was at one time.

TH: It's pretty old now. You can tell where it's busted out, there you know. Where you'd have a string you'd tie it round you here and you'd just go and pick them huckleberries, just throw them right in, you see.

SM: It's amazing how tightly they can be woven, isn't it? It must have taken a lot of strength in the fingers.
TH: When they'd make them they'd want it to last. They'll last. I don't know how old that is.

JH: I don't know what happened to my other one, but I've got a smaller one.

SM: Was that made for you when you were born?

JH: Right. When there's a new baby born they always give the baskets and beadwork and stuff. Now you see those beaded bags up there on the right side, the one of Mt. St. Helens?

SM: Were they given to somebody like that?

JH: Yes. They were given to my grandmother, that top one. Turn it over and show him how old that bag is—older than I am—that's the kind of material they had in those days.

SM: That was cloth, and the other side is all beaded, isn't it? That was your grandmother's?

JH: Yes. And the one in the middle up on top is corn huskin' yarn.

SM: But it's very firm and strong, isn't it?

JH: Yes.

SM: The beadwork now. Have the Cowlitz people always been known for doing beadwork?

JH: Oh yes.

SM: What did they use to make things like this before beads became available?
JH: Shells.

SM: Sea shells and the shells from the river? And these are bone pieces in this necklace?

THJ: These are bone sticks that are supposed to save your life. They say how many you get is how old you are. This is what I'm working on now.

SM: It's a shirt, is it?

THJ: Jacket.

SM: A jacket with an Indian head on the back and a headdress, Plains Indian headdress, isn't it? Did the Cowlitz people wear headdresses like that too?

TH: I doubt it.

JH: The Cowlitz Indians wore baskets for hats.

SM: Oh, those cone shaped, because of the rain, and because it was a comparatively mild climate they didn't need anything warmer.

JH: No.

SM: Well, we've touched on so many things here, I've got to run down a half dozen different leads now. The fishing business up there. I'm not going out searching for gold though.

TH: You'll never live to find it, I'll tell you that. I give it up a long time ago. They's been some pretty good guys that knows what they're lookin' for too, tried to find it. They've been to college and everythin' else, and they haven't found it.
SM: Well, it's getting on to noon, and I just want to tell you I thank you very much for your time. I wish we had time to explore all these different avenues.

TH: You're very welcome.