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Transcript of Bernie's Final Tuna Run

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Title: Bernie's Final Tuna Run

Storyteller: William "Bill" Hook

Interviewer: Chris Forrer

Interview Date: July 22, 2011

Collection: *Launching through the Surf: The Dory Fleet of Pacific City*

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Transcribers: Andrea Snyder, Julian Adoff, Mary Beth Jones

WILLIAN HOOK: Uh, I'm William, but people call me Bill or Billy Hook. I'm Captain Hook. I believe it was in 1967 on a charter boat was my first trip out in a dory.

My stepfather Bernie¹. Really, really close with him, uh, in later years. When we were, young, we competed for mother. Teenage son and new husband. [Audible breath] Bernie became one of my very, very best friends, um, in his later life and, and uh—he was the epitome of tuna fishermen. That guy lived to fish tuna. He liked to fish anything. He'd, he'd fish crappie in Eastern Oregon, but he loved tuna. Anyway, Bernie, uh, had COPD [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease] and smoked Lucky Strikes his whole life, um. Hard guy, had been a boxer, completely undefeated in his career as a boxer. Um, shot pool for the house. He—he measured a man on how—how much work he could do in a day. And, um, anyway, he was a, he was an old tuna fisherman, and, and as he got COPD, and, and started to go downhill and was really gettin' bad, he made his funeral arrangements and he said, uh, you know, he told me that, and I said, "Well Bernie, do you like me to spread your ashes on the ocean?" And he said, "Yeah." And, uh, anyway, he passed away. His ashes were taken care of

and then they were turned over to me to put him on the ocean. My mom's around Haystack Rock, Bernie wanted to be on the tuna grounds. So, um, it took about two years to get a good day. To get out there far enough and, and we'd gone out and had been skunked and hadn't put any fish in the boat and I just didn't figure that was his day. And Bernie drank Oly Beer. And, in fact, the first time my mother went out on the ocean with him, his lunch was two Hershey bars and two cases of Oly Beer. And, finally we're out there, my cousin and I and my son-in-law, and we're fishing in the blue water when I think we had about six tuna on board and I'd—was carrying his ashes the whole time in the boat, along with two cans of Oly and I still smoke. Anyway, um, I said, "You know I think it's time to spread Bernie's ashes." And, and we went back, and if you guys have never been out there where the tuna are, the water is, azure blue. It's just incredible. It's not the green or gray water we get on the shore, and it's just beautiful. I went back to the prop wash of the boat, I poured his ashes in. I opened up a can of b—of Oly and I poured it on. And, then threw him a whole one in case he needed a second one. Threw him a couple of cigarettes, and, then moved back to the console and all three of us were getting like I am right now. Kinda down, thinking about the good times, and, about that time, the ashes kinda—the gray went out of the, the prop wash and it turned back to that blue, and—Pyoo! Pyoo! Pyoo! Three lines went lit up. And we all looked up and went, "Damn good joke, Bernie, thanks."

NOTES:

¹ Bernie Gilliland, also known as Hobo Bernie