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Poaching for Salmon on the Margaree Elwood Hart: You know, I never did much around the river. We were always carding wool or something. If I went to fish, it was get a fish quick and get home, for taxable purposes. There was no time for sport. I was never a guide--only probably once or twice I helped out the Ross Hotel for trout fishing. They'd be short, couldn't get a guide, and I'd go in, take them to the brooks, not the river. Show them where the pools were in the brooks: Tom Poor's hole and Solomon's Cellar and those places. They had very good pools in brooks those days, and* good brook trout. But if we went after a salmon, it was to get a salmon. We were organized those times. We had a net and we had a boat and spears. Use the net "to sweep the pools--a big long net went right across the river, and you drug it right down through the pool, catch your salmon. You'd wade to your neck if you had to. Net had floats on the top. Tie a chain on the bottom. Or with strings tie rocks on. Tie anything on. Pick up rocks a little longer one way. Put a loop over the rock and cinch it up. And once it'd touch the water, the string would soak up and it'd grip the rock. You'd never get it off till you'd loosen it. Put these every 3 feet apart all along the bottom of the net. That held her down. There'd be two men on each side of the river. If the water was heavy--walk along both sides of the river. You didn't use the boat with a net. You waded across--one or two--it all depended on the current. In those days you had cotton nets--they weren't like the nets you get today, nylon. They soaked more water and got heavier. So you'd have one man on each side of the river--or two men on each side--they'd hold the net and let it down easy. You could feel the salmon hitting the net. Some gilled. Some didn't. A great big salmon wouldn't gill and a small little salmon, he'd go through. You had a six-inch mesh. That took in about the 12-pound salmon. You were walking slow. Then when you got down to the lower end of the pool and the water got shallow, there were probably some salmon back down in front of your net that were too big to gill. So one man stopped still on one side and the other two men waded the rift around you, bowed your net and drug it ashore. They called that sweeping. You swept right in on the shore what wasn't gilled. (So, except for the very small ones, you'd get everything that was in a pool?) Providing. Providing. You know, salmon were pretty cute too. Burrow underneath. And they'd jump it. I've seen them popping right over a net just one after another. They'd come up and hit it. Go back about 6 or 8 feet and come and jump the net. They'd be glistening there in the moonlight. (Oh, you'd do this at night?) This isn't day stuff, you know. You wouldn't stand much of a chance in the day. (With the fish?) Well, that was against the law. It isn't like a man netting on the coast. That was the Indian law we were going by. Of course, our people that came here and granted first, the Crown was very generous. They gave the first Hart permission to take a salmon a week. Any way he could. Take a salmon a week. They didn't say fish it or what. They knew he was in a kind of tough spot. No land broke up or anything--they gave him a chance. That was part of his grant. They say it won't apply today, but if you had enough money to fight with a bank of lawyers.... (With the net, would you get big hauls?) There was abundance of salmon at one



time. The Indians named this river Salmon River, it was so abundant. This is the reason they made the summer trip to the Margaree. They had smoke houses along the river and campsites. (What would be a good sweep?) Well, you know, you'd hear all kinds of ru? mours from the old fellows. Some of them got as high as 20 salmon in a night. A crew. There'd be some carrying bark for the flambeau when they were spearing. The flambeau is the rod and the basket that holds the light. This was all made so that if the warden came along or the law came a- long, you could grab your flambeau right out of your boat. The stick went up about four feet. Then there was an iron like a piece of old wagon tire bolted on, and then there was an iron basket, they used to use an old potato basket, or you made your basket out of wire--that went on the end. Well, you chopped up your pine roots; it's nearly all pitch. And you put some birch bark in the bottom and pack all your pitch over it, light a match to the bot? tom- -and that will burn for probably an hour, two hours. That's your flambeau. If you heard someone, you just picked this out and ducked it in the water, put it out.