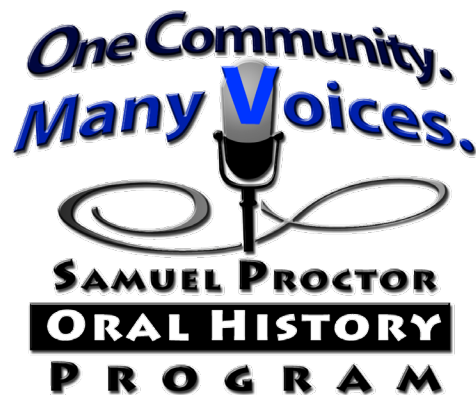


Steve Garland

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-012**

Interview by:

**Jerry Lee
January 1972**



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CAT 012 Steve Garland
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30 minutes | 18 pages

Abstract: This interview is with the eleven-and-a-half-year-old Steve Garland, who is in the fifth grade at York County Elementary School. Garland moved from Michigan to Rock Hill with his mother and sister a few years prior, following his parents' divorce. In Michigan, the children did not know his Catawba heritage, so he played with them, but in Rock Hill, the White children at school call him names. Garland talks about his interest in Catawba history and how he is proud to be part of the Catawba Nation. He recalls what he remembers of his grandfather, and what he knows of his mother's upbringing on the reservation.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Education; Discrimination]

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
PROGRAM
University of Florida

CAT 012

Interviewee: Steve Garland

Interviewer: Jerry Lee

Date of Interview: January 1972

L: You're Steve Garland. And we're sitting in Steve Garland's kitchen. Steve, what is your full name?

G: Steven Garland.

L: How old are you?

G: Eleven and a half.

L: Eleven and a half? How long have you lived here in Rock Hill?

G: Well, in Rock Hill, I don't know. I'd say about three years.

L: Do you go to school here?

G: Yes, sir.

L: Where'd you live before you came here?

G: We lived up in Michigan.

L: Who'd you live in Michigan with?

G: My mother and father and my sister.

L: Were you born in Rock Hill?

G: No, sir.

L: Are you a full Indian?

G: I'm not for sure. My mother tells me sometimes I am, and then other people tell me sometimes I'm not.

L: Not everybody knows. What did you do in Michigan?

G: [inaudible1:03] we played baseball and something like that. We played basketball. And we just played about one game because everybody else **was over.**

L: And they didn't think you was an Indian?

G: They didn't know for sure. I was as dark as I am now, but they didn't know for sure.

L: They just didn't notice, or they didn't mention?

G: They didn't notice, or I guess they didn't care.

L: What about when you moved to Rock Hill? Did you go to school here?

G: Yes.

L: What school did you go to?

G: York Road.

L: York Road Elementary School?

G: Yeah.

L: What grade are you in?

G: I'm in the fifth.

L: You make pretty good grades?

G: Yes, sir. Last term I did. I made all B's.

L: All B's?

G: Uh-huh.

L: That's good. Talk a little bit louder please.

G: **All right.**

L: Do the kids here know that you're an Indian?

G: Yeah. Yes, they do. [Laughter]

L: How do you know?

- G: Well in school I go around, and people say, “**watch him go and come there’s** that Indian boy.” Just about all of ‘em will call me that. Except for the teachers they won’t call me that, but all the boys and the girls come around and call me that.
- L: Do you like being called that?
- G: I don’t care.
- L: What do you think about them then?
- G: I think it’s nice that up down South Carolina there’re Indians, and some kind of Indian name all over. I can go see and—
- L: **It’s probably Indian.** Nice. Do you ever have any trouble at school? I mean, ever get into any fights or anything?
- G: Not that I know—I haven’t got in no fight yet.
- L: But they do worry you about calling you “Indian boy.”
- G: I **worry**, I think they’re trying to do something to try and get me to turn up—try somethin’. I don’t know.
- L: Do they ask you a lot of questions?
- G: Yeah.
- L: What are some of the questions they ask?
- G: They ask me if people still wear the kind of clothes they used to wear, you know, if they still live in teepees like they used to. And then they say “Do they feed you by buffalo meat and they live by that.” There’s no such push about [inaudible 3:46] Indian language, yes, if I’m a full-blooded Indian or not. Some of ‘em ask if there’s any [inaudible 4:02] **and I can’t know that for sure.**

L: Did you read the **old code** in the Catawba Indian School?

G: We used to use the Catawba—I'm about the only one who does it. We really have a thing on pilgrims and which things on Indians with 'em and we puttin' up a poster. Well, I'm really the only person who **puts** I'm a Catawba. When we had to draw pictures at school, most the kids draw pilgrims, I draw Indians. And then I be going to the library and get a book on 'em and read that. I read this one book and it was the one book that was all about it. And I done read it five times.

L: About the Catawba Indians? Have you read a lot of books about the Catawba Indians?

G: Yes, sir. I read most Indian books and have all kinds of Indian books, but I mostly read Catawba books and look for that and read that.

L: Pretty good. Well, what do you think? Do you think that maybe people sometimes treat you bad because you're an Indian?

G: Some of 'em do. The ones about my age, some of 'em treat me bad just 'cause I'm an Indian.

L: Just because your skin's a little bit darker? What about your long hair? I noticed you've got shoulder-length hair.

G: Yeah, they come up to me and they called me all kinds of names for long hair. They said, "I can see why you're an Indian" he said. Some of the boys, but the girls didn't say it. He said, "Because you're an Indian because you have long hair." Is what they'd say.

L: Well, are you glad you're an Indian?

G: Yeah, I'm glad I'm an Indian, 'cause most people, they won't bully me almost, well they might call me "Indian boy", but I'm proud.

L: You're proud to be an Indian?

G: Yeah.

L: If you had the choice to be a little White boy or a little Indian boy, you'd rather be an Indian boy?

G: Yeah.

L: Grow up to be a big, strong brave.

G: Yeah. [Laughter]

L: Do you know most of the other Indians at Catawba?

G: Yeah, most of 'em. About how many I don't know. Because I go to see most of 'em. Most of 'em around here come and visit my grandma and come over here sometimes.

L: Do you have a lot of White friends?

G: Yeah, a lot of 'em. I have 'em around here mostly 'cause at school, well, I don't get to play with 'em much because we have to be doing our work. We don't see each other much except when we go out and play something like kickball or something like that. But my friends around here, they're all White people. None of 'ems Indians.

L: So, a lot of Indians come to visit y'all?

G: Yeah, a lot of 'em.

L: I noticed last night you had quite a crowd over here and they were all Indians I think, except one.

G: Which one was that?

L: One was Martin Samuel. Little guy.

G: Uh-huh.

L: I didn't know.

G: He's [inaudible 7:10] The rest of 'em are Indians.

L: How do the other young ones, older than you but like Martin and Philip and all those, how do they feel about the White people? Do you know?

G: I don't know how they go around 'em. They don't usually come over but some of 'em will come and tell them to come over here sometimes and then race 'em. I don't know how they do it for them other people. Guess I don't feel nothin' about 'em. I just don't have much to say about 'em except they're a little bit darker than the Indians, **that have** Indian blood in 'em.

L: Where do you go to church at?

G: When?

L: Where do you go to church?

G: I go to Church of Jesus Christ [inaudible 8:00]

L: Well, do they have White people there?

G: Yeah.

L: Mostly White people?

G: Uh-huh.

L: Well, do they accept you there?

G: Well, none of 'em knows, they don't say anything. They don't say it to me. I guess they do.

L: Do you have a lot of friends right around here?

G: Yeah, I have one boy up that street. He's a little bit taller than me. Well, he calls me a whole bunch of names just 'cause I'm an Indian. He doesn't like Indians. He be callin' me a whole bunch of names. A whole bunch of nasty names.

L: What kind of names?

G: Well [inaudible 8:47] he called me a paleface or somethin'.

L: He calls you some nasty names?

G: Yeah.

L: Do you ever do anything to him?

G: The most I tell him to be quiet and everybody on the bus don't like him. See, he cares about himself because nobody around here likes him because he does too many bad things. And I really go up to his father one time, I remember going up there twice and went up there and I told his father what he says. And he doesn't believe me.

L: His father doesn't believe you?

G: No.

L: Does his father like you?

G: I don't know really. Anyway, he used to. I remember he used to when I first came but whenever he starts calling me his names, I don't know if he likes me or not right now. Because he comes by, and he doesn't say nothing.

L: Did you ever live on the reservation at all? The Catawba reservation?

G: Well, I used to live with my grandfather.

L: What's his name?

G: Marvin George.

L: Is he an Indian? Full-blooded?

G: I don't know. I don't really know if anybody around here is full-blooded, but I know they're Indians. I know they're at least more than half. My grandpa is more than half.

L: When you lived with your grandfather, did he teach you anything about the Catawba Indians?

G: He told me stories about 'em.

L: What were some of the stories about them?

G: **There's the one about the Catawba that's tricky about the same thing.** It's about how they split up, four people, and how when they split up, they became three different Tribes. And they tell us about how Catawba and Cherokee used to have this thing, I don't know, where everybody across this river, well, they would just start a war. And then that was about two hundred years ago, but I don't remember. I don't think it was a long time ago when they broke that treaty when the Catawba went across the river. Cherokee didn't do nothing so now they're friends.

L: They can cross over the boundary now.

G: Huh?

L: They can cross over now.

G: Yeah.

L: Have you ever been up in Cherokee where the Cherokee Indians are?

G: Yeah, I've been in Catawba, Cherokee.

L: Did your grandfather ever make pottery or make any Indian pottery?

G: Yeah.

L: Do you know how he made his pottery?

G: Yeah. He would take this thing and take mud and mix it up real and then he'd make a shape or something and then when he was through, he'd take out his knife and he'd cut around it to make it thinner and he'd make bowls and little totem poles.

L: And what would he do with 'em?

G: He'd sell 'em up.

L: He'd sell 'em?

G: I think he did.

L: Did he ever make you any Indian toys?

G: Not that I know of.

L: Did you ever have any Indian toys?

G: Well, I had—

L: Like a tomahawk or a bow and arrow.

G: Yeah, I had a tomahawk that was stone, and I had a bow and arrow once when I was little. I don't know what happened to it.

L: Did he ever try to teach you the language or anything?

G: No. I don't even know if he knows it or not. I don't know if nobody knows it.

L: Would you like to learn the Catawba language?

G: Yeah.

L: If it was available, you would try learning?

G: Yeah.

L: Would you try teaching your children along?

G: I would teach 'em. The reason, people in school ask me if I know and I tell 'em no and they keep asking me. I'd sure like to learn.

L: And you'd tell 'em.

G: Yeah. They want to see an Indian word so I would get this paper and I'd show it to 'em.

L: That would be good.

G: Uh-huh.

L: You're eleven now right?

G: Eleven and a half.

L: Have any of your sisters and brother ever had any trouble with White people?

G: I don't know. I really don't know because the school, they don't come around. They just tell us what they know, and **they keep it at** that. And my sister, she ain't very dark. She sure ain't White but she ain't as dark as me.

L: So, they don't give her a hard time.

G: No, I guess they don't think it, but she says that nobody says nothing to her, but they say something to me.

L: Does it make her mad when they say something to you?

G: No, **this I know that they just** sit in here talking. But she knows. When she hears what Douglas, the boy up the road, when she hears what he says, what he says or wrote, she'll get mad.

L: So, that's the only one who really gives you a hard time?

G: Yeah.

L: How about the teachers at school? Do they realize you're an Indian?

G: I guess they do but they haven't said it. [inaudible 14:36] They say that's an Indian boy back there and the teachers know they say that all over. I bet all the teachers know all over school knows that they're saying it to me.

L: So, whenever a teacher comes up to call you, they always say "the Indian boy" rather than say "Steve."

G: Yeah.

L: Do you like that?

G: Well, I don't care. I really don't hear 'em but sometimes I do. It don't bother me.

L: You'd rather be called Steven?

G: Yeah.

L: You said that you were born in Michigan, right?

G: Right.

L: Well, your father's White?

G: Uh-huh.

L: And your mother was half a Native **born**?

G: **That's because** she's so dark.

L: Dark as you.

G: Uh-huh.

L: Well, in your home, who disciplined you? I mean like who spanked you or who fussed at you? Was it more your father or more your mother?

G: Mostly my mother because my father, well I can't remember him givin' a whooping when I was a little boy, but I remember he give me some whoopings.

L: Did he ever tell you anything you could do or couldn't do?

G: Well, sometimes they tell me not to cross the road alone. Never do that. Tell me never to do bad things or say bad words. And say always play right and when you cross the road, before you goin', to look both ways to make sure there's nothin' comin'.

L: Your mother usually spansks you if you did something wrong?

G: Yeah.

L: She did most of the discipline.

G: Uh-huh.

L: Anything else you like to tell?

G: Well, when I was little, I remember when I was younger and I'll never forget this, when I was little, I had this guitar that was real large, about as large as you can get. Stood about this high. And I'd get it and play it and I'd play it every day, and I drug it to the river with me and everybody come around and say, "play something" and I [inaudible 17:06] learn to play something little by little. Well, my dad went and sold it and then I guess he went, and he made cars, trucks, cars and trucks, stuff like that. And when my daddy was buying a truck he made, he drove here, and he was driving off the rez and I guess he hit a wreck and he had to stay in [inaudible 17:43] for a couple of weeks. [inaudible 17:50] And we still have it, unlike the rest of 'em. [inaudible 17:52]

L: Does your father still live with your mother now?

G: No.

L: Are they divorced?

G: Yes.

L: Did you know anything about when your mother was a little girl? How she lived and all?

G: Yes. Yeah.

L: Tell us about that.

G: Well, I knew that she used to live in log houses made of trees, what are those?

L: Log cabins?

G: Yeah. And a whole bunch of houses so close together and I have a picture of my mother.

L: What was she wearing? Do you remember what she was wearing?

G: I think she was wearing a dress.

L: An Indian type dress?

G: Yes. And they had these wells that were made out of brick, and they had brick around it and this talc powder to keep it cold. It slides down like it was slick and just a little orange to get it tough. [inaudible 19:14] to keep the water cold.

L: Did they have running water in the house when she was little?

G: No, they had to go out and get the water from the well.

L: Do most of the Indian houses now have water in 'em?

G: Not all of 'em.

L: Where do they get their water?

G: From a little stream [inaudible 19:32] back of the reservation. Good water, it's clear, it's not germy and bad.

L: Do they have outdoor toilets?

G: Yeah.

L: Most of 'em?

G: Yeah.

L: Did your mother, when she was a little girl, where'd she go to school at? Did she go to school?

G: She went to school, well, they used to not let the Indians go to school with the White people and then she went to school by the reservation church.

L: There was an Indian school there.

G: Yeah, and then she went to Ebenezer School.

L: And that's a public school in Rock Hill?

G: Uh-huh.

L: And did she go to high school?

G: Yeah, she went to Rock Hill High but it's now called Sullivan.

L: Did she graduate?

G: I don't know. I think she quit in tenth grade.

L: Does she ever tell you much about her childhood?

G: Yeah, she don't tell. Mostly I go around, and they'll be talking at my grandmother's, and I hear them.

L: Do you think education is important?

- G: Yeah, it's important for a person to get an education and get a job or something so when he gets bigger, he can live good and be able to live on food.
- L: Do most of the Indians live good?
- G: Yeah, all of them live good lives that I know of. They live in houses, they have enough food, enough money to buy food and have food and feed 'em.
- L: Do you think they could be better off if they went to school?
- G: If they went to school?
- L: Yeah, do you think it would be important for other young Indians to go to school?
- G: Yeah. Probably.
- L: Do you have any idea what you're gonna do when you grow up?
- G: I have an idea. I want to be a car builder. Some things I said I was gonna be was I was gonna be a car builder or be a transmission worker and work on cars. And sometimes I think I want to be an astronaut and do all sorts of things. I sorta change my mind and I feel like I want to be a football player mostly. That's the most thing I like the best. I want to be a football player.
- L: Did any of the Catawba Indians ever make good football players?
- G: Yeah, most of 'em.
- L: Do you know their names?
- G: Well, my big brother, he was a football player.
- L: Where did he play at?
- G: I don't know where he played at, but he was a football player and he even told us. And then there was a couple people at the school I used to go for Indians. They play that.

L: Did your big brother go to college?

G: I think he quit school just like my mother. Quit in the ninth or tenth grade.

L: How many of the Catawba Indians? Did most of 'em finish high school?

G: I think most of 'em quit.

L: Most of the older Indians, how far did they get in school?

G: I don't know. I think they get less of an education than we have [inaudible 23:08]

L: Do you think you have the chance now to get all the education you want?

G: Yeah.

L: It's just a matter of getting it now.

G: Yeah, I think I've got a chance to get into college and get me an education.

L: When you get bigger, do you want to live better than you are now? Or do you think you live pretty comfortably? Do you always have enough to eat and everything?

G: Well, I'm not sure. It don't matter really. It's almost like we gettin' what we can eat and always have enough food to feed myself, and if I had any kids I would feed them. I don't care if it's life like this or if it's a little bit rougher.

L: You don't necessarily want a whole lot of money?

G: No.

L: **Just so** you have a good life.

G: Yeah.

L: Would you marry a White woman or an Indian girl?

G: Well, I think people are a little bit darker because White people are a little bit too white.

- L: You prefer one with a good tan or maybe Indian.
- G: I actually prefer dark. Not real, real dark but still dark. Nothing real light.
- L: What about the colored people?
- G: Well, some of 'em I think are too mean and something like that but some of 'em are real nice. And they'll just be nice to you.
- L: And do you have a lot of colored friends?
- G: Not really, just because they aren't around me. I used to have one boy and he started coming up and he started around.
- L: So, you've never had any trouble with colored people?
- G: No, not any trouble. There are some at school but there weren't none hardly. They'd be some but they wouldn't come around you, wouldn't even bother you. [inaudible 25:16] jump on people and throw 'em in a whole bunch but everybody said they won't do it.
- L: Well Steve, I reckon that concludes it. I appreciate your time and all the questions, and I hope I hadn't inconvenienced you. I'd like to wish you a happy new year, you know today is the first day of 1972. And I appreciate you very much. Thank you, a lot.

[Break in recording]

U: [Inaudible 25:40]

[End of interview]

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