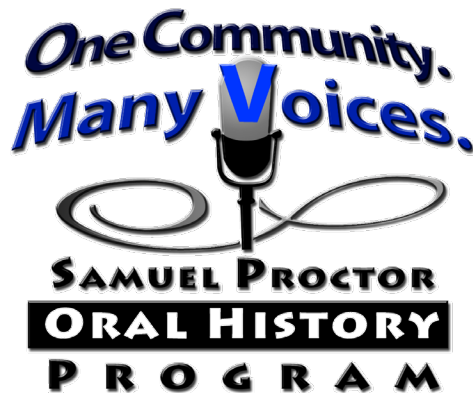


Evelyn McGhee George

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-129**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
September 2, 1976**



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6 minutes | 6 pages

Abstract: Evelyn George speaks about her childhood, attending school in Cotton Belt and York. She discusses her marriage to her husband, who is a Catawba. She shares that he was in the Navy at the time, and they got married while he was on leave. She recounts her work and training, as well as her husband's. She explains her interest in the Catawba people and how it developed as she raised her sons. She contemplates the loss of heritage as it relates to the reservation. She shares her religious affiliation and discusses her friends on the reservation.

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

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
PROGRAM
University of Florida

CAT 129

Interviewee: Evelyn McGhee George

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: September 2, 1976

E: —Rock Hill, South Carolina, Route 6, Box 260, September 2, 1976. I'm visiting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. George. I'm recording the oral history of the Catawba Indians. Mrs. George, would you give me your full name and address?

G: Evelyn McGhee George, 17 Georgia Avenue, York, South Carolina.

E: Now, this is a most interesting situation for me because you are so happily located here with your Indian friends, your Indian husband, and yet, you're a White girl. I want to know about your background. Where did you go to school, first of all?

G: I went to Filbert Grammar School in **Cotton Belt**, then I graduated from York High School in 1945, and I had met my husband in 1944. We got married on March 22, 1945, two months before I graduated, but I did graduate—first person to ever graduate from York High School that was married.

E: Oh, that's unusual. How did you happen to meet your husband?

G: Well, he worked on a farm that my daddy was an overseer. I had a cousin the same age I was. It all started off with him telling me things that Mac said and telling Mac things that I said that we didn't say 'til finally, he arranged a date for us, so that's the way we met. We'd go to the show, and that's about the only place to go back then.

E: You didn't have a car to go riding in, I suppose?

G: No, ma'am. The one time that he got the car, he went off with a bunch of boys instead of coming to see me. [Laughter]

E: Well, I **imagine** that's right. Did you ever do any cooking for him? Did you ever try to win the boy that way?

G: No, ma'am, 'cause he was too backward. He wouldn't eat if I'd cooked. He slipped in and caught me cooking a time or two, but he was too backward at that time. He did very little talking when there was anybody around.

E: Now, he was in the navy when you all were married. He came home on a forty-eight-hour leave, I believe, and you were married. Where were you married?

G: At the probate judge's house. Mildred Nunn married us, but I believe that was a seventy-two-hour pass instead of a forty-eight-hour pass.

E: Oh, yeah, that's nice to have a little bit longer time. Then he went back to the navy, and what did you do? Return to—?

G: I returned to school. He stayed for forty-eight hours, so anyway, it was just we got married one night at nine, and he left the next morning at seven, and I didn't see him for a year.

E: For a whole year. Then he came back, and you established your home here in York and raised your family. And of course, he did a number of work jobs. What did you do besides your home and your family?

G: I worked in a cotton mill for a long time. Then I went back to the College of Commerce and took an IBM course. Just as I finished it, we moved to Columbia for him to go to area trade school. They had settled up with the Indians in Rock Hill, and they could have land or money, and they could take a trade, so he decided to go to the area trade school in Columbia, so we moved there two

years. That's when I had used my IBM, and I went into the commercial banking in Columbia.

E: Now, what kind of trade did he learn?

G: Auto mechanics. They teased him, telling him he learned to work on them and came back and rode in them.

E: That's right, and so now, he's a patrolman in the police force of York.

G: He's a lieutenant on the police force.

E: How long has he been on the police force?

G: Going on thirteen years.

E: Now, what is your work—your work outside of your home?

G: I work at the Bank of York as a bookkeeper.

E: Oh, that's splendid. Do you do any special hobbies or anything else you're interested in?

G: Yes, ma'am. Flowers, especially African violets, and I do income tax during tax time.

E: Now, there's another very unusual thing; that is, you are a White girl, married to an Indian boy. You've got an Indian son over here that looks very much like your husband. And you're very much interested in all the Indian pottery and Indian history, and your scrapbook is filled with Indian things. Why did you become so interested in the Catawba Indians?

G: Well, I married one. [Laughter] You know, when you become married, you're supposed to be one. So, I just got interested in their backgrounds since both of my sons were interested. They studied it in school—and the pottery. I went with

them to get the clay. We started the scrapbook. I would like to say that there's ten years' difference in my two children, so I went through both of 'em in school, studying about the different Indians.

E: Have you ever tried making any pottery yourself?

G: No, ma'am.

E: You have visited down on the reservation a great number of times, haven't you?

G: Yes, ma'am. We even took our scout group down to watch 'em make pottery.

E: You have a number of friends down there, I'm sure.

G: Yes, ma'am.

E: I'm impressed that you seem to know all the family connections—who is kin to who in the Catawba family.

G: Well, I know 'em, but I get confused. Their line, you know, the way they crisscross, sometimes I get confused about it. But I've met quite a few of them.

E: Well, as you've seen the Catawbas over at Rock Hill and York and all around this area—are you proud of what the Catawba people are doing?

G: Yes, ma'am, very proud. The only thing that has bothered me somewhat is the fact that when they did away with the reservation, it took a lot of their heritage away from them—when they settled up with the federal—it seems that it took a lot of their heritage.

E: Did your husband get land or money?

G: Land.

E: And he sold that land?

G: Just recently. Because everybody had built on both sides of our land. They were White, there were no Indians on that part at all. We were the last—they were the last to sell theirs, I think, or just about the last ones along that vicinity.

E: Do you read books on the Catawba Indians, anything you can find, I'm sure?

G: Well, I've read some. In fact, I bought Ms. Brown's book, and I've enjoyed it.

E: Do you hear the older Indians sometimes tell old stories or old things that happened years, years ago?

G: Well, not too much. Mr. George tells some things. When we visited Uncle Sam Blue, back in his lifetime, and took our youngest—our oldest son, he used to talk to him and speak the Indian language to him. Now I just wish that I'd had a recorder to tape that.

E: I'm sure you would. You would go to church here in York, or did you go back to the Baptist?

G: I'm a Baptist. I go to Union Baptist Church in Filbert.

E: And do you sometimes go back to the reservation for services on the reservation?

G: No, ma'am. The only time I'm down there for services is a funeral. We don't get to visit as much as we did, but when there's a funeral, we always try and go back. We do visit friends, especially one of my favorite ones, Mrs. Arzada Sanders.

E: Arzada Sanders, well, she's—

G: Doris Blue has been real nice to us, too. Of course, all of 'em are nice, but I guess you have—

E: Special friends.

G: That's right.

E: How did you make friends with the Catawba Indians when you came in as a new person?

G: Well, I found that most of the time, I'd have to make the first move. I'm a big talker, and I don't mind introducing myself. I found that if—once I start talking and tell them who I am, that kind of breaks the ice, and it makes it easier for them to talk to you.

E: Then you could have many friends down there?

G: Yes, ma'am.

[End of interview]

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