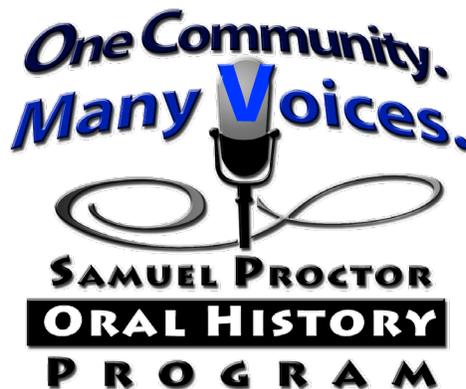


Lawrence Howard George

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-190**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
November 28, 1992**



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11 minutes | 8 pages

Abstract: In this interview, Emma Echols speaks with Lawrence Howard George at a Catawba festival, asking him about his parents, and his former job at the state highway department and how he lived in Ohio as a child. She then asks him about what he thinks about the upcoming settlement, along with how the reservation was when he was growing up, and how he spent his days outdoors rather than at school. After, he shows her a picture of his family when they lived in Ohio.

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

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
PROGRAM
University of Florida

CAT 190

Interviewee: Lawrence Howard George

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: November 28, 1992

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, 5150 Charlotte, North Carolina. I'm working on the oral history of the Catawba Indians with the University of Florida. And I'm working with Dr. Sam Proctor. Howard George is visiting me here now, at the great, big festival. George, tell me, you used to help run the ferry. Was that the Cureton's ferry?

G: Yes, ma'am.

E: Now give me your full name.

G: Lawrence Howard George. I was [inaudible 00:35] My granddaddy's daddy's daddy, there's five generations, I was the last generation to run it—is all handed down from generation to generation, and I was the last one to do it.

E: Now, your father was who?

G: Grandfather, and his father, and his father, and then his father.

E: Yes. Now, your own father was who?

G: Who my father was?

E: Yeah.

G: John Marvin George.

E: Yes. And your mother?

G: Evelyn B. Brown. She was a George, now. She's the one that—both of 'em, Catawba Indians.

E: And did your mother make pottery?

G: Still makes today.

E: Still makin' it today.

- G: Yes ma'am, still makes it.
- E: She was written up in the paper the other day, I saw.
- G: Yes ma'am, really.
- E: You're retired now.
- G: Yes ma'am, I retired from the State Highway Department, I worked for the Highway Department—
- E: Well now, years ago, in 1972 you went to Ohio I believe, visiting—making pottery up there and taking a group—
- G: Well, you see, back in 1934, [19]35, somewhere along there, we went to state of Ohio and made pottery for the federal—I mean for the government up there, the government. And the government people up there told us to come up there and we'd make pottery, 'cause you know, the Indians make pottery for 'em and they'd sell it! So, we went up there and stayed with 'em a while, and then when the daggum World War II broke out, we had to move from up there back down here in Rock Hill, and that was 1942. You know, back then I wasn't much—well, I was old enough to know right from wrong, but I mean [inaudible 2:20] So I said I'd go back, look the place up later, so I did! I went back in 1972! And I looked it up, and I took my daughter with me. I took her out of school with me, up there to meet [inaudible 2:33] this place and that's the cabin right there, I always lived, I used to live in when I was a kid.
- E: Yes.
- G: I lived in that cabin when I was a kid.
- E: And your daughter Rita now is living in Rock Hill and still making some pottery?

G: No ma'am, she don't make pottery. She works at a shrimp boat right down **Sherry Road.**

E: So, you're retired, what do you think—if the new settlement comes through, how will it help you?

G: Well, I'd like them to give me enough money, 'cause they owe me a septic tank and a well, and move my trailer from where I'm at down here, closer to my mother and father. That's what I want. That's my [inaudible 3:09]

E: And you'd like some health insurance, things of that kind?

G: Something like that.

E: Well, I'd like to see a clinic down here on the reservation.

G: I would too. Something a big deal.

E: You see a great many changes in these—don't you?

G: Yes, ma'am I have, really.

E: What do you remember especially about how it was years ago, down here on the reservation?

G: Well, back when I was a kid, coming up, I remember there when there used to be houses, 'cross the road there, used to be a old house and then right down the road there further, used to call it Harper Hill, that's what they used to call it, Harper Hill. There's the old man and was my uncle and my aunt stayed in here. And then, there wasn't no pavement, it was all dirt roads back then, that was back in the [19]30s. I remember this, like it was yesterday. Amazing thing.

E: Who was your teacher down on the reservation at that time?

G: I didn't go to school. I never did go to school. I was dumb, I didn't want to stay.

E: You liked the big outdoors, didn't you?

G: I loved to go outdoors, live on the riverbanks, fishing, and hunting, that was my biggest love and still is. I love to fish and hunt, like everybody else.

E: Well, I understand there's a great many animals, deer and so forth, back on the reservation now, is that right?

G: Yes, ma'am, there's plenty of 'em down here, they're plentiful. We have a lot of 'em down here, yeah. But they're gonna, just like they say—I say outside I ain't say nothing about people like them, **I don't like to talk about people.** I mean I love anybody, I mean all kinds of colors, creeds, I ain't no racist person, I'll love anybody. But some people, they don't know how—like I said, in 1962, I went to York, South Carolina, up there, there's a county building, up there, and I asked this lady up there, and I said up where could I talk to somebody about getting a haircut, this was when I was working in the state highway department. And she told me, she said, "Yeah, I'll be glad to tell you!" So, she tell me where to go, I walked down this barber shop, walked in there and there's this man and he's sittin' there, you know, wasn't nobody in there but him and another guy, two barbers, and I walk in there and I said, "I'd like to get a haircut, **if I do what'll it cost me by chance.**" He looked at me, he said, "Sir, if I cut your hair, I'd have to cut all them other guys that come." And he cursed me, said, you know, bad words. I said, "What you mean?" He said, "I don't cut nigger's hair." I said, "Well, thank you," just like that, and I started out the door, I turned around and something **stopped me.** I turned around I told him, I said, "I'm a full-blooded Indian." That's what they told me. Haven't gone in there since 1931, I said that's

what they tell me, I was a full-blooded Indian. So, I thanked him, I appreciate what you told me. I said, "Now one of these old days, you come to me for help and I ain't gone show up." Six months ago, he come to me and ask me to forgive 'em, what—he told me he had done retired from his job, wanted me to forgive him, I said—well, I mean I what I was saying was I'm hard to forgive [inaudible 6:07]—

E: You went to the adult education school, didn't you?

G: Yes, ma'am.

E: That was a wonderful experience for you, wasn't it?

G: Yes, it was, it really was. I learned how to read and write. That was my biggest difficulty—

E: And how old were you when you did that?

G: Three years ago. 1990. Just three years ago, when I done this, learn how to read and write. Back before then, I didn't even know my name. You could write my name on a piece of paper I'd see, then they gonna say, "That's your name right there, Mr. George," and I'd say, "no."

E: You all did it with a fingerprinting, now [inaudible 6:39]

G: All my name was daggum two X's, and then two dashes upon that. My name. I signed a many check that way. My checks, what I used to get from the state highway department, that's the way I signed my name, two X's, then two dashes upon it, that was my name. I couldn't count, I couldn't count money yet today. I can count some but not all that good, but I can read some, but not like I want to. But again, I'd love to, you know, find out—this lady here, she stayed with me a

day ago, she told me she'd learn me how to read, write better, she's an Indian herself, she's from down in **a little** part of the state, and uh, excuse me ... We talked about different things, this thing and that—that's me right there, that's me and my mother, and my brother, that's me in Ohio right there.

E: And your mother was?

G: Evelyn B. George. And the little boy she's sitting on her lap is Charles George. And that one is me, Howard George. That's me, I remember that thing as good as—I can remember when everything was made, that was made in 1935. I remember when the day—see, back then when they was in Ohio, people would come all over the United States there to see us make their pottery and stuff, and then one day, I told my sister, I said, “You gon' make a dollar?” She said, “What you mean ‘make a dollar?’” I said, “I asked you how to make a dollar.” She said, “What we gon' do?” I said, “Well—” Wasn't nobody but my sister and my brother. All [inaudible 8:27] here today. And this—what you want to call this thing here. Anyhow, we went up there and got this old tin can, **looked like somebody opened** peaches out of a big pork can, and I turned the daggum thing bottom-side up. Got me two little sticks, and I started beating on the daggum thing. It sounded like “dum, dum,” just like making music. My brother, my sister, they're out there jumping like clowns, I say clowns, and people started getting around us and taking money—ladies, men, children, taking money out of their pockets, throwing it over there to us, we was getting dollars, quarters, nickels, and dimes. Then, the man on the state park, he broke it up, he said he couldn't go for that, **said they was** taking advantage of his work, and so he stopped us. He wouldn't

allow us to do it no more. And we just—them daggum people beggin' us to get out there and dance for 'em—show us they could dance. Just like they doin' today. I mean, I love to dance like it, but I feel like I'm a—I don't know—I just say, you know, get out and make a fool outta myself like a lotta these people. Honestly, these people are making a fool of theirself, that's the way I feel.

[Laughter]

E: What other children do you have besides Rita?

G: I got seven children and twenty-four grandchildren. And Rita's the third one from the baby. My son, he walkin' around here somewhere, he works for the rescue squad in Rock Hill. My baby boy do. He work for the rescue squad. Like I say, I was about the ferry business. I mean, I wanna dig this up myself, I wanna find somebody to walk with me down there, and I wanna find out who operated that ferry. And how I'd begin to start, you know, who would build it, how to begin to start, you know, operating, something like that. Because I know I ain't got long to be here, now I know I ain't gon' be long, I'm sixty-one years old, will be sixty-two in September, but I mean, I'd just love to find out a lot of things about it, and know all I can about it. I can't read or write, I'd like to take someone with me who can do, you know, work for me.

E: But you can read and write now, and we're proud you went to—

G: Well, I can read and write some, but not like you can, I wish I really could.

E: And you're proud to be a Catawba Indian?

G: Yes ma'am, every bit of it, every nine yards. The whole nine yards.

E: [Laughter]

[End of interview]

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