

John Early George

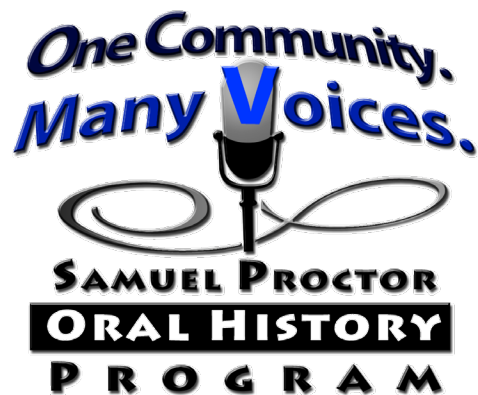
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)

CAT-101

Interview by:

Edith Frances Canty Wade

October 14, 1974



University of Florida • Samuel Proctor Oral History Program • Paul Ortiz, Director
P.O. Box 115215, 241 Pugh Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-5215
(352) 392-7168 www.clas.ufl.edu/history/oral

Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Program Director: Dr. Paul Ortiz

241 Pugh Hall
PO Box 115215
Gainesville, FL 32611
(352) 392-7168
<https://oral.history.ufl.edu>

CAT 101 John Early George
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
Interviewed by Edith Frances Canty Wade on October 14, 1974
14 minutes | 10 pages

Abstract: John Early George speaks about his family, and describes his childhood living on the new reservation. George speaks about his love for hunting and fishing and describes what doing these activities in the area is like. He recounts leaving high school in the ninth grade to join the navy and discusses his experiences traveling and working as a ship repairman. George speaks about his work at a box factory in Pineville, North Carolina, and comments on the differences in opportunity between his generation and his children's generation. He closes the interview by saying he is proud to be Catawba and describing his relationships with his White and Black coworkers and fellow community members.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Family histories; Military participation]

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
P R O G R A M
University of Florida

CAT 101

Interviewee: John Early George

Interviewer: Edith Frances Canty Wade

Date of Interview: October 14, 1974

W: I live on Route 3, Box 304, Rock Hill, South Carolina. Today is October 14, 1974.

I'm gathering oral history of the Catawba Indians for the University of Florida.

Today, I'm talking to John Early George. John, what is your address?

G: Route 3, Box 303A, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

W: I would like to describe John for you. I know him better as Tom, and if I make a mistake and call him that, well, it's still the same person. Tom is a typical Indian.

He's got coal black, curly hair. He's medium height, and he's dark skinned as the Indians usually are. Tom, who were your parents?

G: My father's name was John Marvin George and my mother's name was Evelyn George.

W: And who are your grandparents?

G: My mother's mother was Edith Brown and her daddy's name was Early Brown. My daddy's parents, I don't remember.

W: What brothers and sisters do you have?

G: Well, there was about nine of us. I got a brother named Howard, one named Charlie, one named Phillip, and one named Wayne. And I got three sisters. One of 'em name's Faye, one of 'em is Joanne, and one of 'em is Susan. I have a brother and sister that died when they were real young.

W: What kind of work does your father do, Tom?

G: Well, at present he's semi-retired, but he's a carpenter.

W: And does your mother work?

G: Yeah, she works for **Calthome** Fashions in Matthews, North Carolina, and she sews.

W: And what is she making?

G: She makes draperies.

W: Can you remember any old stories **or** celebrations that were held when you were young, Tom?

G: No. All I remember is they used to have square dances on Saturday nights, and that was about it.

W: When you were a child, did you have any duties to perform around the house?

G: Not really. Since there was so many of us and I was next to the youngest, all I had to do was study and get my homework done.

W: What was it like in your home when you were growing up?

G: Well, we weren't never really real close, except to our mother. But I guess everybody got along real good.

W: Did you live on the old reservation?

G: No, we lived on what was called the new reservation. I was born on the old reservation, but my father built a house out on what was the new reservation. We moved in it. It was a wood frame house with four rooms: the living room, and the kitchen, and two bedrooms.

W: And did you have running water?

G: No, there was no running water, no bathroom or nothing.

W: And you carried your water from—

G: Had to carry water from a spring.

W: When you were small, I know that you did go to church. Tom, what church did you go to?

G: I went to the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints on the reservation.

W: Let's talk about your schooling now. Did you ever go to school down here on the old reservation?

G: No, I never did. I went to a public school in Rock Hill.

W: What was the name of that school?

G: First school I went to was Richmond Drive Elementary School. I went from the first to the sixth grade. Then I went to Ebenezer Elementary School from the sixth to the seventh grade. And then we moved into town, and I went to Northside from the seventh to the eighth—no, from sixth to the eighth. Then I went to Rock Hill High School for six months. And then I quit.

W: Why did you quit?

G: I went in service.

W: Oh, you went in service. Well, I want to talk to you about your military service in just a minute, but I want to talk with you right now about something that I think you really like and that's sports. Let's start off and talk about hunting first. Do you like to hunt?

G: Yeah, I think I'd rather hunt than work. [Laughter]

W: All right, go ahead and just tell us, Tom, some of the things that you hunt with and the kind of animals you hunt for.

G: Well, I like to hunt for anything, but in the last two years I've become interested in bow hunting and I deer-hunt with a bow. I haven't been too lucky with it. Like I

said, I just started, and it takes a while to get good with it. But I can hit what I shoot at.

W: Well, I can vouch for that. Tom has a big deer head over his couch in his home, and I know that he's real good with the bow and arrow. I would like for him to just describe his bow. I can't even begin to describe the bow that he has.

G: Well, the bow I own now is the new bow they come out with within the last three or four years. It's a wing compound. It's got pulleys and cables on it. It makes it easier for the archer to hold it at a full draw because the way the pulleys and cables are set up on it.

W: You say you like to hunt deer. Where do you go hunting for deer?

G: Below Chester, South Carolina, about thirteen miles. It's around the Sumter National Forest.

W: Do you have to pay any fee for going?

G: Yes, I have to do just like everyone else. The hunting license for this area is \$6.25. And you have to have a game permit, which is a permit to hunt on government land, and it's \$4.25.

W: Well, I'm real anxious for Tom to go back and kill a deer because he's already asked me to make space in my deep freeze, so I'm looking forward to it. And now let's talk about fishing. Do you like to fish?

G: Yes, I love to fish. I hunt all winter and fish all summer.

W: And where do you fish?

G: I fish in the Catawba River.

W: Are the fish good to eat?

G: Well, I've heard they're not, but I'm still alive, so they must be.

W: [Laughter] What kind of fish do you catch most?

G: Well, the most I catch is catfish and bream.

W: And do you fish with a fishing pole, or do you fish with the rod and reel?

G: Oh, I use a rod and reel, a fishing pole, and sometimes I even use my bow.

W: Oh, you mean you kill fish with your bow and arrow?

G: I sure can.

W: Well, that just goes to prove that Tom is real good with the bow. He's just modest about the fact. Now, let's talk about ball games. Do you like any kind of ball?

G: Well, when I was in school, I played football, but that's about as far as it went. I never did care anything about setting down and watching football or baseball on television, because I could always be out in the woods doing what I wanted to do.

W: Well, that's real good. I'm sorta like you. I like the outdoors too. Tom, now, I know you were in service. What branch of service were you in?

G: I was in the navy.

W: Where were you stationed?

G: I was stationed on the west coast. My first year, I was in San Diego. Then I went to Midway Island for my second duty station. I left Midway Island and came to Long Beach, California, and that's where I spent the rest of my time. That was the home port but I was on the ship, and it traveled throughout the Far East, the Orient—whatever you want to call it. We went to Japan, Hong Kong. Went to China, Formosa, and the Philippines, and Hawaii.

W: Were you ever in any battles? Was war going on when you were in service?

G: The Vietnam War had just started. It was [19]63. I was in it from [19]63 to [19]67, but I never went into any of the battle zones, which I'm thankful for.

W: I guess so. What kind of boat were you on?

G: I was on an AR, which is a repair ship for the service. All these other ships that go into these wars get all shot up, and these repair ships they can—it's just like a floating dry dock. They'd just pull alongside of these other ships and repair 'em while they're setting in the water, and we leave.

W: How did you get along with the Whites and Blacks in service?

G: As long as they left me, I left them alone.

W: [Laughter]

G: That's the way I get along with 'em right now. As long as they don't bother me, I don't bother them.

W: All right. Where were you discharged, Tom?

G: Well, I got my discharge papers in San Francisco.

W: In what year?

G: 1966.

W: You just finished telling about the kind of work you did while you were in the service. Did it help prepare you for a job on the outside?

G: Not really. 'Cause when I got out of service—well, I was a seaman in service, and when I got out, I went to work for Douglas-McDonald Aircraft in Long Beach, California as an assembler.

W: What kind of work do you do now?

G: I work in a box factory. I make corrugated containers.

W: And where do you work?

G: I work in Pineville, North Carolina.

W: Do you think that you make a good salary?

G: Yes, I do. This is the best that I've ever done. I make over four dollars an hour. I work forty to fifty hours a week. I'm never under forty hours. All the rest of the plants around are starting to run short hours and we's fixing to start up a third shift.

W: Well, that's real good. Do you own your home, Tom?

G: I'm in the process of buying a mobile home.

W: I know that you really have a nice mobile home. I know that you're married, and I know that you have a family. Where were you married?

G: In York, South Carolina.

W: To whom did you marry?

G: Linda Elaine Hanson.

W: And how many children do you have?

G: I have two boys. One of them is a year old, and the other one's two years old.

W: And I'll have to insert something right here, that his oldest son is a little curly top and he's just as outdoors as his father is. He goes to the river with his dad. I think he's ready to do everything his daddy is doing. Tom, do you think that your children will have better opportunities today than you had?

G: Yes, I do.

W: How do you think their opportunities will differ from the ones you had?

G: Well, as long as I got anything to do with it, they're going to stay in school until they finish. That'll give 'em a bigger opportunity than I got, because I only went to the ninth grade. I didn't even finish it. And the laws that they have now, they can't be discriminated against. And their jobs, they can't be discriminated against in their jobs. They can get any job as long as they're capable of doing it.

W: That's real good. I know that you're a citizen of our community and I know that there is a possibility that you might be helping a lot of our young Indian boys to learn to shoot the bow and arrow. I've heard several people talk about they would like to have you teach them. I know that you're a real good citizen of our community. Do you attend church now, Tom?

G: No, I don't.

W: You're a member of a church, though, aren't you?

G: I'm a member of the Mormon Church, which is a Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints.

W: Now, I know that you like to take part in a lot of things, and you're real active, but in things that you like to do. Have you ever registered to vote?

G: No, I never have.

W: Why haven't you? Do you have any reason?

G: No, I just never have. [Laughter]

W: Do you not think it's important to vote?

G: Yeah, I would think it is, but I just never have took the time to do it.

W: All right. Do you have friends among the White people?

G: Yes.

W: In fact, your wife is not an Indian, is she? [Laughter]

G: Right, so I have to. [Laughter]

W: And do you have friends among the Blacks?

G: Yes, the ones at work. The Black people at work, I get along with fairly well.

W: And now let's get back to you. Do you think that you have accomplished very much?

G: In what way?

W: Well, in any way. As far as being an Indian, do you think that you have made a contribution?

G: Yes, I really do, because somebody walk up to me and ask me if I'm Puerto Rican, or if I'm a Mexican, or what, and I'll tell them, "No, I'm an Indian, and I'm proud of it." And all the people at work, they don't—well, I'll give you an example of it. The people at work, they don't even know my name, except the people in the office. The workers don't know my name. The foremans don't even know my name, half of 'em. I got a phone call Friday; they didn't even know who I was when they asked for John George. All they know me by is Geronimo, the Indian.

W: Oh my. Well, you're sort of like my husband. I think most people call him Big Chief.

G: Yeah.

W: And I'm sure that a lot of people don't know his name either. But they know you from the accomplishments that you have been able to give to the people you work for and the community you live in.

[End of interview]

Transcribed by: Anthony Delgado, October 25, 2021

Audit-edited by: Rayyan Merchant, March 12, 2022

Final edited by: Evangeline Giaconia, July 26, 2022