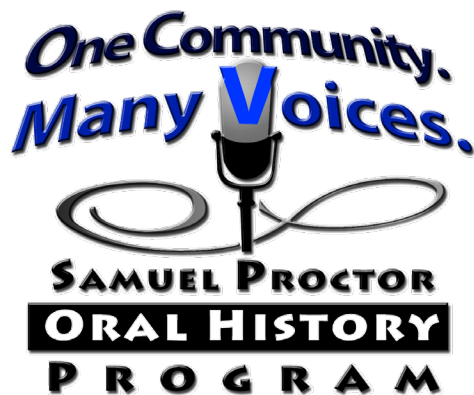


Chief Albert Sanders Sr.

Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-022

Interview by:

Leaborne Lee Whitesell
February 13, 1972



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CAT 022 Chief Albert Sanders Sr.
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1 hour, 11 minutes | 42 pages

Abstract: Albert Sanders Sr. recalls growing up on the Catawba reservation in South Carolina. He recounts the effects of the Spanish Influenza, the World Wars, and the Great Depression on his family and the Catawba. He describes several jobs he has had and his involvement in getting buses to take Catawba children to public schools. He was elected Chief in the past and shares his experiences handling several land disputes and visiting a conference attended by Tribes from around the country. He expresses his thoughts on issues he feels the Catawba should address such as housing.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; Chief Samuel Taylor Blue; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Oral biography; Land tenure]

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
PROGRAM
University of Florida

CAT 022

Interviewee: Chief Albert Sanders Sr.

Interviewer: Leaborne Lee Whitesell

Date of Interview: February 13, 1972

W: –Rock Hill, South Carolina. Leaborne Whitesell making the tape. All right, Albert Sanders Sr., I'd like for you to recollect for us a while, if you would, your life on the Catawba Indian Reservation. If you'd begin with your childhood.

S: Well, this is Albert Sanders, and I'd like to give some history on my lifetime. When I was a kid coming back when I used to hunt and run around and play and shoot rabbits and squirrels with a sling shot. Me and Douglas Harris and my friend. My mother died in 1918 and my father lived until he was sixty-two. He died in August 1962 **I believe**. Well, since that time I **often** remember back to my childhood. The first job I ever got was working in **Rock Hill, in the** industrial mill. And so, I got a job and worked there the most of my life—textile work. After I got old enough to leave home when my mother died, my father married again so I didn't stay there. After years, I say, well—after I got to be old enough to consider that I wanted to get married, me and Vera Blue, Chief Blue's daughter, got married in 1925, December 14. We raised eleven children, and I'm happy to say to today they're all living. [inaudible 02:19]

W: [inaudible 02:22]

S: And the school that I got was the fifth grade. I went on the old reservation down here. At that time, we didn't have the privilege of going out and going to school like you do today. In 1943, Mr. Jenkins, which was a man working with federal government, we went to York to see about getting them to go to school on the bus. And they said we couldn't do it. Well, at that time he said, "Well, would you say you're discriminating the Catawbas?" And they said, "No." So he said, "We'll

ride the bus then.” After so after that, we got to riding the bus and then going to schools—public schools—and it wasn’t anybody else there. And then they went to school on and up until the settlement come up. We wanted to own the 144,000 acres of land held by the state of South Carolina. They claimed it was leased for ninety-nine years—the Indians said—but I don’t know. But they said they bought it from the Catawba and then they prorated a small amount of money at that time way back when I went to school for the Catawba to go to school here at Catawba. The schoolteacher got paid out of that. They prorated 9,450 dollars, I believe. Once a year for—well, I don’t know how many years—for a few years. And every day there was a schoolteacher down there for the last—I don’t know. Well, he taught school down there and they went to school there, so we started these other public schools then after that. When I was going myself, I didn’t go nowhere. I had to get out and go and make my own self a living, because I didn’t have anything to go on. I had to cut cord wood for fifty cents a cord. Back in them days we walked two or three miles from the **nature** to get that. Well, two or three dollars a week went a long ways at that time and talking about the flood in 1916, I remember that. When the bridge was way over here at the **Barbara** shores, I was down on the road when I saw a house go down, bales of cotton, dogs sitting on top of the roof of the house and watched that. I think there was a couple of colored fellas that drowned down the road trying to pull out some cotton at that time—bales of cotton—and didn’t get back. So, I can look back and say the Catawbas are in better shape today than they were at that time. Even they got better chances, they go to school, they—

W: How many went to school when you were little? How many were going when you did?

S: Well, just a small amount. I don't remember, but not too many. I would say a couple dozen, maybe, at the time.

W: Do you remember your first teacher?

S: No, I forget them. I don't remember his name.

W: Do you remember any of your other teachers?

S: Well, **Elva Davis** taught down there and also—what's it called, Mr.—

W: **Hayes.**

S: Yeah, Hayes taught down there. And I don't know how many more but there's some teachers back at that time that I don't remember much about their names.

W: Where was the first school?

S: Down here on Catawba.

W: Is it located where the—

S: On the old reservation.

W: On the old reservation?

S: That's right.

W: And that school's no longer standing?

S: No longer standing.

W: Uh-huh.

S: That's right.

W: What did you and your little friends do all day when you were little boys?

S: Well, we got out from what I had to do. I done my time. Back in my day they said he always left home or **wherever** he went to work, and he said, "You know what you got to do **just**." That's all he would tell me, but I had that done when he got back. But I did go hunting and that's one thing he didn't like. He never was wanting me to use a gun was young as I was at that time. But I would work hard and do my turns around and when I get through, my mother was already passed away. I headed for the road where Douglas Harris lived, and me and him would go hunting. Well, he comes the **river** and finds me late that evening because he'd tell me not to go but I would. I wanted to hunt and I'd hunt. Now, he'd whoop me all the way back home but I reckon he's trying to show me something to do and so I still loved him for it.

W: [Laughter]

S: And so, he's gone. But I say the Catawbas today are not like they were when I was coming up. They got better privileges, better rights, and they're doing anything as any other citizen because I was on jury myself. And that's something that never did happen before, and I was on there, say, two or three years ago myself.

W: You were called for jury duty?

S: Yes.

W: Where did you serve?

S: York.

W: In York. You remember the place you went into?

S: Yeah. Well, I was listening to several cases but there was a **judge** on several times. They'd always decide **to plead** guilty, so we didn't have to come up on it. But the last, I was knowing I wouldn't be on jury at that time—I'd be excused, I **felt**. But they happened to draw—I don't know how many different men and they excused them, but they hit my number again and when they did draw me, I was on that murder case which was trying a colored boy.

W: Did you feel it was a privilege to be on the jury? Were you glad to be called?

S: Actually, I felt I had the same **rights** as anybody else had and wanted to do just with my rights as anybody else would do. Until they proved to me the man was guilty—well, if he wasn't I'd have said no—they proved to me he was. Well, I tried to go along with the rest and that's what we did.

W: What kind of chores did you have to do as a little boy? What kind of work did you have to do while your daddy was gone?

S: Mostly I had to keep plenty firewood and get out in the snow up to my knees and carry it because I was a small kid. And we finally run out of all the wood that was on the old reservation up until we got 3,388 and five-tenths acres of land. The state bought, back in 1942 or [194]3, somewhere along that, that's when we got that. And then they was going to give that to the Catawba and build them homes and help them out and help them on the farms. Once **there was talk of a** hospital down here. So, that all died out because after that time—well, I was Chief at that time. I got to working with Mrs. **Hansfield** [inaudible 09:44] and so we decided to do away with this, the land that we had at that time, to do something.

W: Yes. I want to talk to you more about that when you were Chief. Going back again to when you were young and growing up, what kind of hunting did you do?

S: Well, mostly rabbit hunting, that's all. Squirrels or something like that. It wasn't anything else down there at that time. There wasn't no land. No woods. There was some outside but—we'd come up down there in the old reservation. I would say that's mostly where we did stay.

W: You ate the rabbits and squirrels?

S: Yeah.

W: Did you ever use the skins for anything?

S: No, we always just threw that away.

W: What did you hunt with?

S: Shotgun, slingshots we made. We would kill them with that. I've killed a many rabbit with a slingshot. And squirrels.

W: A slingshot? You had to be pretty fast.

S: Well, no. I usually would find them in the **bay** [inaudible 10:46]

W: What kind of sling—how did you make the slingshots?

S: Just like they do today. I guess there's some still made. You just cut me a prong out of old dogwood tree and put rubber on it and **it'll pop it**. We used rocks.

W: You'd use the dogwood tree?

S: Yeah.

W: What did you do for fun and recreation while you were growing up besides hunting?

- S: Well, we mostly just played together and went from one's house to another sometime and played around like that. That's about the biggest thing really.
- W: Did it take you all day to do your work? Did you have to milk a cow or anything like that?
- S: I never did milk none of them myself. I milked a few but we didn't have too many cows. Mostly back in them times, we didn't have what little you could get, and **got** by. That's the way it was at that time.
- W: There weren't many cows then on the reservation when you were growing up?
- S: Well, Chief **Blue** several of them and maybe some of the Harrises had a few cows at that time. Everybody didn't have it.
- W: What about pigs? Did you get any pigs up there very much?
- S: Yeah, we raised pigs back at that time.
- W: What about pottery?
- S: I never did have anything to do with that. My wife, **I know** didn't make none. I usually made the living what I could [inaudible 12:14]
- W: When you were growing up did your mother make pottery?
- S: No, she never did make any either.
- W: She didn't make pottery. What about the kind of food you ate? What did you eat in the **south**?
- S: Well, we just ate what we could get like anybody else. At that time there wasn't too much you could get unless you raised it. I'd raise a little bit to eat and what we could get was, I'd say peas, beans, taters, chicken, and like that.
- W: You raised a lot of chickens down here?

S: Well, some. They didn't raise too many. Some of them had.

W: Well, do you remember the era around World War I? Did any of the Catawba serve in World War I?

S: I can remember when some of them went. I was too young to go at that time. Richard Harris and Early Brown, I remember when they left one day. Early Brown, he done passed away but Richard's still living. And they had several of them to go. They said the Catawbas never did have their fight, but they've always had their **children** and when they come up there's been the war [inaudible 13:29] There's many of them this way. I recall several others, but I didn't go myself.

W: Did the flu that hit the United States in that period of time hit the Catawba too?

S: Yes. 1918 when it was so bad. That's when the flu started. In the end, I guess it was the Red Cross or somebody come down and help the Catawbas out. Chief Blue was one of the **great brothers** that went around among the sick and done all he could do. I know they called him from house to house to see about them at that time. And he had a brother—half-brother, John **Brant**. Well, he had two or three in one family that passed away in 1918, and also my mother died then.

W: Is that why she died? Did she have the flu?

S: Had that flu.

W: What did they use for medicine down here?

S: Well, we had a doctor down at Catawba Junction I believe called Dr. Hill and he practiced her at that time and done what he could. But that's about the biggest thing. They wasn't able to buy their own medicine and **much to eat**. That's the way it was.

W: Do you think you lost a lot of people?

S: Yeah, there were a good many of them.

W: Do you recall if it was older people or children?

S: Well, at that time they were young and old.

W: Did you use any remedies of your own? What kind of medicine would you use when you couldn't get the doctor?

S: Well, I don't know much about what they used themselves, but I guess they used the common old medicine that they could get just like anything else.

W: Does the Catawba make any medicines or **other** things like other Indian Tribes?

S: Some of the older ones did but I don't remember too much about that myself. Not in my time.

W: You don't remember **usually** [inaudible 15:34]

S: No, unh-uh.

W: Well, what about the Depression then? Things were bad during that time.

S: Yeah, during the Depression they were bad but a lot of us didn't have any work. A lot of times we couldn't get work. And I've said today, some of them are well better off than they've ever been because they couldn't get out and get jobs. But we have got a few people down here on the reservation that can't get jobs today. [inaudible 16:04] You take me, I can say that I worked at the Rock Hill **penitentiary** myself. **For example**, as an operator and after that I made foreman up there after three years. And I stayed there fourteen years. Well, after all something come up and so, just like anyone else, I had words **with them** and they did too, and so I come home and they called me up. Come up to **the bridge**

one night and I was fired by my foreman. He said, in other words, that they were through with me and they didn't tell me why. But he met me outside and brung my **catch** outside. So, I had another, Randall, that worked there once or twice and I never did learn why they let Randall go.

W: Is that another one of your sons?

S: Yeah. But I've always thought after that it might have been something that they had against me. And I believe [inaudible 17:12] Everywhere he's been to hunt a job he put an application and nothing ever turned up. I'm gonna let you know about it, but he never hears about it. So, he hasn't got a job today.

W: Now, did you [inaudible 17:24] Were you a member of a union?

S: I was a member of the union at that time. And so, they asked me to take the job, **give** something and [inaudible 17:35] Well, they was over the [inaudible 17:40] and I told them at that time, I said, "No, I'm not the man for the job." And they finally talked me into taking the job and I told them I would try it out. [inaudible 17:54] problem I'd go back to the union if it wasn't satisfactory and they didn't keep that up. Other words, they fired me. I didn't get no jobs with the union down there [inaudible 18:07]

W: You were a foreman at the time?

S: I was a foreman when I got tossed.

W: So, you didn't really have the union to back you while you were a foreman?

S: No, but that's why I took the job, you see. If something had happened where I was supposed to go back on a job, give me a job then and they didn't do that.

W: So, they didn't keep their word to you that if it didn't work out as a foreman you could go somewhere—

S: Yeah. But I **run** the job [inaudible 18:32] Twelve hours a night, too. I think, after all, well, they didn't do me right.

W: No, that's **so wrong**. Do you think it might have had something to do with your connection as Chief? Were you Chief of the Tribe at that time?

S: No, nothing with that. Unh-uh.

W: Nothing on that.

S: Just something come up like anything else. Well, I think that—I had a son-in-law, **Owen Mackey**, was working in Fort Mill, that's the way it come up. In other words, I was working twelve hours a night and I was supposed to get an hour off for lunch every night. Well, they got on me about taking an hour off that night. I was due an hour or two each night. **I left** at twelve. Well, I could go out and get my stuff, which I did. So, I went and took him to Fort Mill and then I come back. The next night or two, something come up about going to school. And so, they said [inaudible 19:49]

W: You think maybe then that they were wanting their foreman to have more education than you had?

S: Well, at that time they probably didn't know how much education I had. I told them I didn't have enough to take the job, but I did run it and pleased them. So, there it **really is**. They thought I was smart enough to run the job and do what I done and the help I had were [inaudible 20:15] Treated them right and they treated me right. Anything I asked them to do they always done it and we got

along fine. But one night, one got on me after that about going to school. He was a night superintendent. He said, "I know that you hadn't been to school in the last week of school." And I said, "No and I probably won't be the next time." Well, he said, "I'll let you know something about that." And so, **I already** know how he let me know but after that I got fired so. Yeah, we never did straighten that part out.

W: Did you make **that profession** to go back to work in the main **plant**?

S: No. I worked at **Gold Tex** and went down there for a job. At that time, there was a fella there who run it, they called **Gold Tex**. So, I asked for a job, put an application, and they told me that they would hire me. They needed a **handpress operator**. After that I learned that they wouldn't hire me, so I didn't know what was wrong. But I couldn't get the job at that time so I went to **Bull Waters** and worked as a carpenter down there. And I worked there a while and finally after that, I got a job back up at **Gold Tex**. But they said that I was a little bit too independent and they had to let me go [inaudible 21:49] They didn't say the **bleacher** said that, but actually **Will** told me that regardless. That's the reason they didn't hire me but after all they did give me job and I worked there five years. Well, they shut down and the owner of that place I think he got sent to the **pen**, **Mr. Goldberg**, at the time. So, I never did do that I just worked after that for years [inaudible 22:16] 'til I partly retired.

W: Where do most of the Catawba work? Do they work in one main plant around here, do you think?

S: Well, no. They work here in Rock Hill or Charlotte. They work all around. They got jobs in different places and some of them got two to three jobs.

W: How about the World War II period? Did any of y'all serve because I know one you had—

S: Yeah, I have a young one. He went and **stayed** in service. So, I don't know, eleven, twelve, or thirteen years that he finally come out.

W: Did you have any others go into the service?

S: I had **Randall** to go and he went in the Marines back here. And they discharged him [inaudible 23:08] But I don't know what was wrong. They let him out and he never did **finish his term**.

W: Let's talk a little bit about the things that the Catawba as a people do best? What do you like best about being a Catawba?

S: Well, I'd have to say I reckon the things I like best about being a Catawba is because my mother and father were Catawba. They were Indians and I'm an Indian, so I'm proud to be an Indian. I guess that's one of the reasons I like being Catawba. But after [inaudible 23:55] Catawbas back here in the [inaudible 23:58] had a hard time. And today they're better off than they were at that time because actually they got better privileges than we had at that time. See, we were wards of the state of South Carolina one time. We couldn't vote. Couldn't go to public schools until this happened up in [19]43 when I was Chief at the time. And they said that the Catawbas couldn't even marry Whites. Actually, it was **illegal**, which **they did marry within the Catawbas marrying Whites before I was born**. At that time, I had that **too**. After, we had the same rights as anybody else had. And when they were settled up on the land question that come up before.

W: First, I'd like for you to tell me about the job of being Chief before we talk about the land. Would you tell me how you were chosen and who was chosen when you were and the **time**?

S: Well, when I was elected to Chief we were elected by vote by the Tribe.

W: Who could vote?

S: Anyone over twenty-one. Man or woman votes.

W: Now, was it who got the most votes? How did you determine who would be Chief?

S: They were elected by the one who got the most votes. That's the way that happened and I got the most votes, and I was elected.

W: How did they vote for you? Secret ballot or standing up and raising their hands?

S: Well, there have been secret ballots at times. They were elected by secret ballots, and they counted them like that. But it didn't turn out to be so good that way until we changed it.

W: And how did you vote then?

S: By secret ballot. Yeah.

W: Do you have a council, a tribal council?

S: Well, I was elected Chief and—back in that time, Roy Brown, Assistant Chief, and Gladys Thomas was Secretary. Willie Sanders and Idle Sanders was two trustees.

W: And so, you were the council?

S: That's right.

W: You ran the business of the Tribe. Just what kind of business were you supposed to take care of? I mean, what did you—

S: We were supposed to look after what was going to be done for the Catawbas at that time. We had a lot of [inaudible 26:39] That was going to be done. And you had to have a government body of people to look after something or you couldn't do nothing. I heard them say—several of them today—that that was done away with when we done away with the government. That's not true. Because I was elected Chief at that time and there's been nobody elected since that time. And I feel that the ones were elected are still there, at this time.

W: [inaudible 27:12]

S: Yeah.

W: Under your constitution, the law of 1944 was approved June 30, 1944, by the Tribe in order to have a change you have to have an amendment. To your knowledge, you've never amended the Constitution to do away with [inaudible 27:40]—

S: That's right. We still have the old reservation left.

W: So, you still meet?

S: You mean the Tribe council meeting now?

W: For any **problems** that might come up.

S: No, we hadn't had any. So, we don't have no meetings at that time. Some say that it was all done away with at that time and there wasn't no purpose in having it. But I say we still own the 652 acres of land on the old reservation, and it belongs to the Tribe yet. It wasn't busted up and so I say, well, somebody's got to

look after that. Which a lot of them think today we don't have any Chiefs, we don't have no tribal councils. But we do until something changes we got. I've left the old reservation because I figured I didn't know when I might have to go back down there myself to live. And there's some down there—ten or twelve families that live down there. But they don't own that by themselves.

W: Oh, okay. Now, going back to this business about the old reservation, did you start at the beginning of this land being provided? And tell us the story of why the Catawbas wanted to be independent from the state and what y'all went through and how you handled that.

S: Well, back at that time, there were a lot of Indians that wanted to stay at they work and didn't even come to the meetings, didn't take no part in it. But actually back—if you had as many as thirty-five votes, you could be elected. Well, at that time you could hold your council meetings, see, with thirty-five members over twenty-one and would vote [inaudible 29:33]. And so, I was elected Chief at that time and rather than have somebody looking after me from my land **or me** in Cherokee—which I remember Mr. **Clemmons** was the superintendent in Cherokee, South Carolina. Him and Mr. **Layson** come down here and looked after from [19]43 up until we had the **post**. Well, either one decided to get it and I got it passed too.

W: Just what was it **producing** before you guys passed and then how it's been **producing** since you guys passed?

S: Well, before—

W: What were some of the things that were happening that you wanted to change?

S: I wanted to change it because I wanted to be independent like anybody else and at that time, well, I couldn't get out here and cut a stick of wood without getting a permission from the superintendent at Cherokee, **North** Carolina. Before I couldn't even cut firewood and I didn't like that. And I told them I was going to try to do away with all of that, so we finally brought it up to a vote and got this thing passed. I worked with Mrs. **Hansfield** which was **the judge**.

W: Did Indian Nations come down and listen to this and help you make the agreement?

S: Yeah. We had an Indian agent named Mr. **Clemmons**, I believe, from Cherokee, North Carolina.

W: And how did you change the situation? What did you do to change the way the Tribe was so that they could own the land?

S: Well, we brung that up with the Tribe, I did. And we put it to a vote to see how many people were willing to give out and own their land or their own homes and try to improve themselves. Which a lot of them did but a lot them don't **like it** until today. But they the ones that got the most out of it now. And that's the way it was. I said at that time if I couldn't do with my own land that was Catawba Indian land without someone else looking after me or telling me, **everyone** [inaudible 31:50] I **didn't know**. And [inaudible 31:53] that's the reason I wanted out of it.

W: How long did it take you to get the Catawbias to agree to this?

S: We didn't have two, three meetings on it and I talked to several of them and they told me to bring it up and put it to a vote. [inaudible 32:12] a Cherokee [inaudible 32:14] and they come down. He said I know where to get [inaudible 32:18] **but I**

didn't. And actually, see, the government helped with the land and **stuff**, it's **federal** and [inaudible 32:27] we supposed to get something out of it and I didn't get nothing, so that's what we **got now**.

W: Well, while the land was held by the government, they had certain obligations to you that they didn't keep?

S: That's right. Yes.

W: What kind of things were they going to do while they had the land?

S: Well, I'm going to tell you just like when it first come up. The state of South Carolina bought that land I was telling you, 3,388 and five-tenths acres of land, for the Catawba. They didn't hand it to the Catawba. What then the Catawba Indians owned 144,000 acres of land. Fifteen square miles, which the state of South Carolina got that. They **re-leased** that for the ninety-nine years, I understood. I **wouldn't in no way** approve.

W: The state has never proven to you satisfactorily they bought that land?

S: That's right.

W: They never shown the Catawbas the bill of sale?

S: No, they haven't.

W: Have they ever shown you a copy of the lease?

S: No, and I never saw one.

W: You've never seen a signature of the Chief that carried out that business?

S: I haven't myself, no.

W: This seems to be a problem with the Catawbas. They have not been able to satisfactorily show that this land was sold to the state of South Carolina.

S: I don't know what it was sold or leased. But even at that, I say the Catawba still deserve the right for the state of South Carolina to do something for them or either pay them some taxes if they **are** taxed. I pay my taxes. And so, I think that they owes us even [inaudible 34:12] tax on that land so we're able to get something out of it.

W: When the Catawba started asking South Carolina for their land, then what happened? What did the state do? They bought land and let you use it?

S: Well, Chief Blue worked on the land situation for years and tried to get something done for the Catawba Indians. Always got big promises but never got nothing done. Finally, we got that land—the three-thousand acres of land that I was telling you about. And they turned it to the federal government to hold and **such** for the Catawba Indians, which didn't give me no further rights to do what I wanted to do at the time. And so, I was elected here in 1960 or somewhere along that and I've been Chief off and on ever since [19]43 up 'til then. I'll always try to get out and I did finally get it worked out with [inaudible 35:15]

W: Now, tell us about that land settlement. What was the agreement? What happened? How did you decide who was going to get what land and in about [inaudible 35:24]

S: Well, that was decided among the federal men that was sent down here with me to work that and we tried to work it out the best we knows how. They settled on the basis that we would either take land or money and some of them still live on the old reservation. And they think they own the old reservation **alone, I'd say. That's to them.** But only 632 people that were on the roll at that time, well, we

divided to take them the money, which some did and some didn't. It was kind of valued on the dollar basis. That's they put it out on each of **the basis**.

W: And everything was divided up but that 640 acres?

S: The old reservation wasn't divided. Well, as I remember, 662 is what they always said. I don't know that.

W: And so, this is the land that you are interested in now?

S: Yeah, the old reservation.

W: What's gonna happen to that land?

S: Well, according to the bylaws they made up there on this when it was settled, the ones on the **roll since** 1943—the Catawba Indians—up until 1962, I believe, they're the ones on roll. Only one that's got a claim to the **Indian** reservation. But now anyone born after that date or deceased during that time was not on that **thing**.

W: Now, any Indian born after July 2, 1960, will not be entitled to live on that land?

S: Well, I don't think that the state would have anything to say about that now because they'd be glad for me to stay quiet. But now some of the Indians feel that way probably and they deny it. I know I got grandkids and the rest of them had that's been born since then, but I don't think nobody would object to some of them going down there if they were living that long if it wasn't tucked away by that time.

W: Do you think the state would allow them to live on it?

S: I would think after the last one was on roll, if he was about to pass away and that was the last one, well, the state of South Carolina would take the land back
[inaudible 38:00]

W: And what would you like to be done with the land?

S: I'd like to see it be kept, if it is, for the Tribe. A lot of **them** wants to be that way but I don't like the way things go. Other words, some of them say, "Well, now, we down here and the rest of you don't have anything to say about that. So, you **can** go down there and clean your place off and build your house if you're able to build." But if you got a piece of land and clean it off after all this **stuff** because you not got the money to build a house, you're not going to get it. You got no deed for it. And it's held in trust by the state of South Carolina.

W: And that land is going to go back to the state of South Carolina when the Indians who were born before 1960 die?

S: Yes, that's right.

W: Would you like to get it changed so that that land would always be for the descendants of the Catawba?

S: Well, all the old Indians that been living for years ago, they've always said as long as there was one Catawba Indian living that there always be a reservation down there. They couldn't do away with the old reservation. But if I said today when the last Indian dies that's on roll, there won't be no more Indians according to that amendment and they can do whatever they want to do then. If you got the **deed** to keep it, how you going keep it?

W: Would you like to see this changed some way **or curbed**?

S: I'd like to say it'll never be tucked away but leave it as a reservation for the Catawbias because it is Catawbias here yet that's got a hand in it. Even the ones that's at that settlement outside has just as much right down there as anybody down there. They don't no two or three own it, it's 630 some odd people on roll at that time—still on roll at the reservation. They gotta share that. And another thing I don't like is the two or three say well it was handed down from father to mother to son and daughter or something, they think they own it. Well, they didn't own it no more than I own it. They didn't have any deed in it. But they do get out and rent it out to some outsiders now and not many Indians. Never for them, never will, I reckon. Never did for them. But I say let it stay down there because it's not right that two or three get the rent and the rest of them get nothing out of it.

W: Have you thought about taking some kinda action? Is this what you're thinking about?

S: Well—

W: To make the people know the situation.

S: Yes, that's what I'm after. We want them to know where the Indians stand themselves. And then I think the Indians ought to be just as smart as anybody else these days because if we want to own that much land—even more than the 144,000 acres I told you about a while ago, more land than that that's got away years ago back in, say, the 1600s, 1700s, along that, was done away with. And I don't know much about but now I say if the Indians had all that land, they deserve the right to have some of it today. There ought to be some way that the state of South Carolina, if they got that, for us to get something out of it today.

They hadn't never gotten nothing. They got promises. And when they turned the land that they bought over to the federal government to hold **and such**, well, the federal was going to **match** theirs according to my understanding. The bylaws that I got there, and I got some of them here. And if they was to do something with the Catawbas and help them improve and start them out so they could be on their own. They have put them on their own, but they didn't have anything.

W: They didn't give them anything to go with them?

S: That's right.

W: Do you intend to petition the state of South Carolina to leave that 640 or—

S: Yeah, that's what I'm figuring on doing now to **leave it on**. I'm going to be elected again as Chief if they say I ain't got one by some, or either somebody else can take it over. But I intend to do something about it.

W: Now, tell me about being Chief. What about this meeting you attended recently in Atlanta? What was that for? Who was there?

S: Well, I had the invitation to come down there by **Mr. Young** [inaudible 42:40] Other words I didn't have a telephone and a couple of the county officers come down here several times and ask me about getting in contact with him. So, he wanted me to go to Atlanta and have these meetings. I went down there and spent a couple days and nights. Of course, I enjoyed that, but the main thing was to listen to the other Indians who were getting help and who wasn't. I didn't have much to say down there. But I did get to speak to some of them and they had some promises made and I hadn't heard nothing yet. But now **Mr. Colby** in Rock Hill [inaudible 43:22] I believe, he's over this housing stuff and I met him several

weeks and he said he's still working on some of this stuff. They's gonna maybe do something for the Catawbas, but he didn't know just when.

W: What was the purpose of the meeting that you had in Atlanta? Why were the Indians meeting?

S: Well, mostly I could say a lot of them was getting on the low-income houses that they're building for a lot of people and some of them got [inaudible 43:56] I believe. Some of them got them over there, some other Indians. So, they're doing a little something for some of the Indians and some they're not. Some Indians, I understand, is not doing as well as maybe the Catawbas are even today because they don't have the privileges and rights that we got.

W: Were there Indians there from all over the country?

S: All around. Everywhere. I don't know just where from. I had a list of them, but I don't remember.

W: And you think then the Catawbas might get some low-income housing here?

S: Well, if it's left up to some of the Catawbas down here—there's **just some** who kinda got their own homes today—they wouldn't like to see it because they rather not have it on the old reservation if they could keep it. But I'd say, the old reservation belongs to them and belongs to the whole 630 people on roll at that time what hadn't deceased. Well, if they want it down there, they got a right to have it down there and it ought to be down there than sitting in some other place. They asked me If there were any homes built for the Catawba would they be willing to be in houses like they build today, in these apartment homes. And I said no because the Catawbas couldn't get along under **stairs** a mile or two apart.

Well, they couldn't live together and get along. So, I don't think that would be good.

W: You think they want their own separate house?

S: Their own separate little houses or whatever it would be.

W: Several **streets** apart.

S: That's right.

W: Do you want to **stop**?

[Break in recording]

S: Well, what I'd like to say on this land down in the old reservation would be that just keep it as a tribal land for the Catawba Indians. But now that's for the Catawba Indians themselves to understand that it don't belong no one individuals. It belongs to the Catawba Indians. 632 persons were on roll, 1943. And they don't have any more rights than none of the rest of them. Anybody that lives down there should have the rights, the privileges saying where they would like their homes. But now, going out and renting the land out to outsiders, I don't think that's right because they get twelve or fifteen dollars a year on that four or five acres of land. I'd rather see it just lay out. Some of them think that you can't go down there and get the wood or do something. Which they do. A lot of them just go down there and take it. They got the right to go down and get it and **bring it where** they want to **and everything**.

W: You mean that you think certain Indians don't understand that the [19]62 settlement left that land for all of you and they're still claiming it as their heritage?

S: Well, I think that's what they're say. Some of them feel that way about it whether they know or not, I don't know that. But now that's the way it's left. Actually, to the state of South Carolina, I think, some of them admitted it. I believe once they put a trailer down on the reservation and so they didn't have to pay any taxes long as it's on the old reservation. Well, your home you don't pay any taxes but if you live on another outland like you got, you pay your taxes. You got to keep it up yourself like anybody else. Now, they claim that they went down there and was going to make them pay for taxes for the trailer down there and I understood that some of them went to [inaudible 47:36] to find out about it and they claimed they didn't know anything about the old reservation was even **left** like that. Well, somebody knows. If they don't know we going to find out one of these days. If I have to get outside somewhere to find it, I'm going find it.

W: There's a lot of controversy then over the old reservation.

S: That's right. A lot of them don't understand the way it was left or something.

W: Do you think that the land is gonna be stripped of trees? Are they cutting down too much?

S: No, they can't take it out and sell it which some of them started that, wanted to do a little something like that. I think it's just [inaudible 48:18] and I **get on** some of them about it. Well, that quieted down but now **Floyd's** burning the wood. I don't see nothing wrong with that. They can down to keep wood burning **to heat**.

W: What would you like to happen to that land?

S: You mean the old reservation?

W: Uh-huh.

S: Well—

W: If you had your way, what would you do with it?

S: If I had my way about the old reservation?

W: Mmhm.

S: There wouldn't be much **there, is all**. I don't have any money to do anything with it. But if I could see it like I'd like to see it, I'd like to see eventually a lot of Catawba Indians have good homes right down there and live as other people live. But I'd like to see it on the old reservation, not somewhere else. The way I see things now some of them are not able to keep themselves up like I am. See I'm **done now** retired and I don't work no more. Now, I haven't worked none in the last eight years. But I've usually worked. I worked hard all my life because I had a big family and so it took what little I **do** to keep them going. I couldn't **do it** no more.

W: If you could talk with the Chiefs of **America** that were at the meeting of Indian Tribes in Atlanta this past year, do you plan to try to convince them to put low-cost housing on the old reservation?

S: Well, that's my understanding. I want to do whatever comes up—what they should get low-income housing. I wanted put it in the old reservation. I'd like to see it down there because there is there is some good places, good home sites and good hills and **hollows** is about all there is. They wouldn't have any trouble about putting things up there.

W: You think the people don't need a place to farm or cut wood down, they need a place to live?

S: That's right. I think the farming is one of the things that's **bad**. I don't know if any of them farming now but never did farm much. There's just been one or two farms **there**. The Catawbas never did farm much.

W: Do you have any **Indians** that do not want to leave the reservation?

S: Yeah, we got [inaudible 50:47] wouldn't leave. They wouldn't go nowhere else if they had the chance and then we got some probably would.

W: And those who don't want to leave are the ones that need the homes?

S: Well, we got them in Rock Hill. We got other places and we got them living all around. We got Indians living in Charlotte. We got them all around. Most of them are right around here, I'd say, in Rock Hill. **Down in** Catawba. **Goes in** that way [inaudible 51:18]

W: What do you think is going to happen to the Catawbas as a Tribe? Are you going to continue to worry about them and the Tribe and work with them? Especially with the land down there. Do you **think** a getting together of the Tribe, that would be **smart**?

S: Well, I hadn't talked to the **Tribe** of the Catawba as much **myself** because a lot of them don't like to see people [inaudible 51:56] and there's some would like to get out. And now I'd like to see the whole reservation left down there. That's one reason I left it one extra time. I could've done away with it when they done away with the other. But if I had then it'd been gone like a lot of the other land. So, now most of us have sold the land because they who didn't have anything. And some wasn't able to build because they wasn't in no better shape than what they were when they were on the old reservation.

W: So, you wouldn't let them divide all the land. You're the one that insisted that they hold that six hundred acres.

S: That's right **because** I was the one that left that down there at that time.

W: Did you have to accept that part about the 1960 **roll** so to **form** at that time or could you—how did that come about?

S: Well, when that come up that was brung up and so at that time nobody hadn't told me how they were bringing that up. But until that time. So, when it come up, well, we accepted to it and went ahead with **it**.

W: Do you mean that in order to divide the rest of the land you had to accept the way they drew it up?

S: Well, yes that's the way it come up and they wanted me to throw the old reservation in with that. Just go ahead and divide the whole thing. And so, I wouldn't accept that. I said no we won't accept the other if I don't keep the old reservation. We kept that and accepted the rest of it. That's what I say we still is a Tribe. Some that's not but they're living on the old reservation which is tribal land. It's not no individuals because they do not pay taxes on it.

W: Are you **treated** as a Chief by other [inaudible 54:06] Indians? Are you still called on or talked to about it?

S: Mostly outsiders down on the reservation but we don't have no council meetings. They hadn't had any. We don't have much to tend to and they never do mention that. Some say they don't have a Chief. Others say that you're still the Chief 'til they do something about it. And so, I think in a way we were the last ones elected. [inaudible 54:36] until something happens and if they want new ones,

well, they can elect them. If they want me, I'm going to try to do something. If I have to get elected again, I believe I can do that because I'll have enough to **elect** that want me to do something about it. One of these days I'm going try to do **as us** somebody else does. I'm going see if I can't get something **from them** because—

W: When the others on the reservation or off it—other Catawbas—have problems with outsiders about things that pertain to the reservation, do they still contact you or who do they see about these matters?

S: No. Actually, you mean, just like anything comes up among the individuals?

W: Mhm.

S: No. It used to be if we had a little trouble down here on the reservation the Chief usually handled that. Because they once didn't vote, they didn't pay tax, and they didn't have the privileges or rights that outsiders had. And the Chief looked at it, **I'd say**, for some of them once went to Rock Hill, got in a little trouble down there. Wasn't just minor things. Well, they usually settle it **with** their Chief. They didn't have to **go nowhere**. Even they didn't have to do like they do now. But now something comes up, well, they're just like anybody else and they get the county or whoever that come in and do that.

W: How did they know to contact you about this meeting in Atlanta of all these Indians? Were they—

S: Well, I've always got letters from all over the United States where there Indians and I still get them. And they wonder why the Indians never get **nowhere**. They think sometimes that the Indians don't get what they oughta have. They got land

but they don't get things done that other people have. And so, this was brought up by me a lot of times and—so it's the Catawbas now [inaudible 56:53] other Indians because there are other Indians that don't have the privilege that we have. They don't go out, they don't vote, they don't do nothing. They're just on a big reservation.

W: And is there a national Indian organization now?

S: I don't know too much about it, but I hear from a lot of Indians that they want to try to do a—Indians have been **sitting** still too long, **okay**, and they want something done like everybody else, so one of these days they're going to have to have something done.

W: You think they're getting together now and organizing?

S: Well, I think so.

W: At this meeting did they mention anything about voting or national elections or things like this? Voting in general?

S: Well, I think other Indians want—I told them and explained how the Catawbas were when I was in Atlanta. They seem to think that we're a little **distant** to other Indians, which I guess a lot of it's because the Catawba Indians are over half White. And some three-quarter White, I'd say, **something there**. Right now, that's the [inaudible 58:00] one of these days and I think the Catawbas ought to be **taught** to starting to look **to themselves other ways**.

W: Well, have you got anything else you might like to tell us that we've overlooked about the Catawba Indians? Something that you think other people might like to

know or that your own grandchildren might like to hear about a few years from now.

S: I'd like to know something more about the Catawba myself but what little I've learned, I had to pick it up the hard way. And so, I have had some **history** on the Indians and still got some and one of these days I think I'm going do what [inaudible 58:43]

W: What about this little museum they tried to get built?

S: Well, that come up one time. **Couple folks** wanted the Catawba Indians—he talked to me several times and we went—and I think they had a meeting with the [inaudible 59:02] And they gonna do something, build a museum for the Catawba Indians down here in the state and this and that. I don't know what happened to it. **Finally**, I know it didn't come up. But I disagreed with giving the land and putting it on there myself, I know.

W: How much land did they want for the museum?

S: I believe they said fifteen, twenty-five acres. Something like that.

W: And you didn't want to give them that much land?

S: Well, they wanted the deed to be held by the state of South Carolina **instead of** the Catawbas, and so that's where I disagreed. If you're going to do something for the Catawbas, I think the Catawbas ought to have been the ones that held the deed.

W: You're not too trusting of the state at this point. Were you thinking that you might lose the land completely if you trusted **South Carolina**?

S: This land was given to them on this other land that they had already bought by themselves in trust by the federal **associate**. It had **to be** worked out. And they wanted to put it on the old reservation though a lot of them didn't want it and some seemed to want it, but we didn't want to agree to that.

W: And so, you didn't agree to that. Didn't a Mrs. Lawrence donate some land for the museum?

S: She offered eight acres and there's where I'm living now, down the road here. But at first, for the Catawba Indians, but the state never would do anything about it. She wanted some help; she couldn't get it figured out.

W: The state didn't support her enough.

S: That's right.

W: How did she get land on the Indian reservation?

S: Well, that land, some of them was sold what they had there **seriously**. What they took in money, six hundred dollars. So much in land is valued to that. Well, I think the way she come in on that she bought that place with the purpose of getting that done for the Catawba Indians and didn't get it done.

W: She bought the land?

S: Yeah.

W: If you decided to put a museum there and if the state would help her, **you think** the land would still be there for you?

S: Well, I don't know. Mrs. Lawrence has already passed away now and so I don't know what—

W: You don't know what her estate would do? If they would allow that land to go?

S: That's right.

W: If the Catawbas did agree to a museum, and if the state agreed to help, would you have things to put in there?

S: You mean on the old reservation?

W: Yeah, or here. If you decided to build a museum. Say about the size of this room or maybe a little larger. Would you have things to go in there to fill it up?

S: No.

W: What kind of things would you put in there?

S: We wouldn't have anything.

W: You don't think so?

S: We wouldn't have anything to put in. **Not the** Catawbas, unless things were provided for that thing.

W: Well, **I think** pottery and some things?

S: Well, you might have that. A lot of people think today—I've been asked the same question. I say, well, I'm retired. I got \$131 a month for my family to live on now. When I'm able to work a little, I'm liable to make \$1,680 a year, I believe, besides the **taxes**. Well, some years I work and some years I don't, and don't get anything. But now you say to a **state** like that, \$631 a month, that's all I get **anymore**. And you couldn't be on [inaudible 1:02:46] or work on something like that.

W: No, I was thinking about the things in the homes of the Indians. Do you think they'd have any pottery to show how it was made put in the museum or maybe some old pictures?

S: We don't have but a few old women that make it. I've had uncles—Idle Sanders, his wife has made pottery all her life. But she's old. I guess she still makes [inaudible 1:03:11] it. Ain't nobody making pottery on the reservation.

W: Do the Indians keep—well, as far as that I see you have some very old pictures in uniforms here on the wall. Would you leave those to the museum if they **wanted them.**

S: Well, that's my wife's grandmother over there. She's Blue's mother and I don't know if she'd do away with that. Over there is my mother. That's the only one I've had and that sure is back in the hard times when I was coming up [inaudible 1:03:46]

W: I was just wondering if there were things like that that some Indians would donate to the museum if they had it [inaudible 1:03:54]

S: Some of us have. Yeah, we would do that.

W: Are you interested in [inaudible 1:04:02]

S: I'd like to see a museum that would help some I reckon. But actually, I think the Catawbas need more or less a place to live and things like that. **Something like** other people live. That's what I'd like to see. I'd like to see the Indians have a home of their own. Maybe **places** where they can take **work** even if there's **low** rent. They wouldn't want to rent because they like to have their own homes, to buy them if they can afford paying for them. That's what I'd like to see.

W: You think then they need a home and the basic things of life. A little bit more [inaudible 1:04:46]

S: That's right. That's what I'd like to see.

W: [inaudible 1:04:51] What do you remember about the language? Do you know any of the words in the language or you—?

S: Well, I never learned much about that when I was coming up, no. We never did try to learn any language and I think that's one thing the Catawba should have learned because there's not many—that's a **pastime**. We don't know **anymore**.

W: There's no way then that you can hand it down. What about songs? Do you remember any songs that the Catawbans used to sing?

S: No more than church songs at that time. I don't know them too well myself so none of those songs.

W: Is there anything else that you might like to mention about the Catawbans?

S: Well, I don't know if there's anything else at this time.

W: What about the things that they could do the best? Looking back from your childhood right on up to now, what are some things about the Catawba, the people, that they do best?

S: I think back when I was coming up they were more friendly or together, that is the Catawba Indians at that time. And if anything come up that somebody needed or some of the older ones had to have help to get wood or different things like that, well, they would jump in and do that. But today we don't have time for [inaudible 1:06:32] Things has changed so much. And so, I think more or less each one is **themselves** and nobody else is like everybody else.

W: You think they sorta gotten caught up in the ways of the world and the way things are moving?

S: I think so. That's right.

W: What do you see in the future for the Catawba Indians?

S: Well, if I see anything better in the future than it's been in the past—I've had so many promises and things they going to do for the Catawba Indians and, say, like when I went down to Atlanta. "We'll let you know something in three months" and it's been a year—a year ago this March. "We're going let you know. We're going to do everything in our power to help." And I haven't heard anything from nobody. And so, that's the reason I think that if the Indians get anything they're going to have to **step into** higher power to get it than what they've always done. The Catawbas alone can't do it. The way that I think that if something can done then somebody is going to have to try to do something some of these days. If I live long enough, I'm going to be one that's going **try**.

W: Did they call another meeting?

S: The Catawbas haven't, no.

W: But I mean the one you attended among all the Indian Tribes—

S: Well, they have them all around. They're usually in, you know, different places and if you haven't got the money to go—I've been invited to come back to several meetings, but I don't have the means to go to them. And so, that's **usually** how they go.

W: Do you think the Tribe would support you in this if they knew about it, **our** meeting?

S: No, I don't think the Tribe **approves**.

W: [inaudible 1:08:19] Indian affairs?

S: The Tribe wouldn't, no.

W: You don't think that'd interest—

S: I don't think there'd be that interest in any part of it and the ones that would be probably wouldn't have **it too**.

W: Is there anything else you can think of that you might like to **talk**?

S: I don't know if there's anything else I'd like to say today. I'd like to say, well, the old Indians, there's a good many of them—I'm getting pretty old myself but there's a lot of them **over my age**—and they going to pass away one of these days and I'd like to see something done. If they don't in my lifetime get it done, I'd like where something could be done for the younger generation that's coming up. I want them to understand a little more about the Catawba Indians than they have been because they already don't know where they at right now, some of them.

W: You'd like them to know more about what happened in the past.

S: That's right.

W: Something about their history.

S: I think that they ought to be a little more interested in the Catawba Indians too.

W: Is there anything else you might like?

S: Well, **I'd like to** say—we was talking **how I was** getting married in December 14, 1925. Well, there was Albert Jr., the oldest boy, he was born in 1926, October 28. And eleven children in our family and all living today. It's nine girls and two boys. Well, twenty years from the time Albert Jr. was born—October twenty-eighth—Lionel Sanders was born October twenty-eighth. Which was twenty

years apart. They got the same birthday. And I just thought I'd mention that.

[inaudible 1:10:24]

W: Well, talking about all those girls and those two boys, how many grandchildren you have?

S: My wife usually tells me when I ask her. I think thirty-three or four.

W: Thirty-three.

S: Grandchildren, five or six great-grandchildren.

W: Great-grandchildren. That's quite a family. That's a lot of Catawbas.

S: A lot of people that I go through today are asking about different things. A job or maybe something else, but they all want to know why **it is** that I still into my fifties and I say, "No, I wish I was." Because I'm **sixty-three** years old, **October 10**.

W: You don't look that old. You still got some black hair.

S: Well, it's getting gray a little.

W: [Laughter]

[End of interview]

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