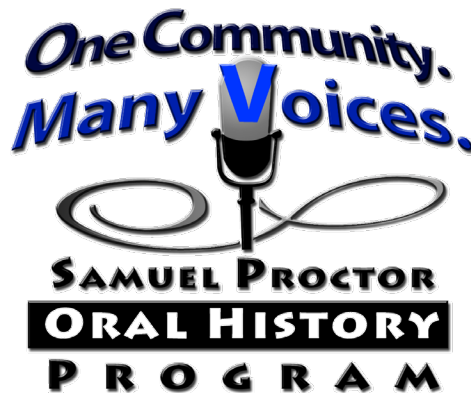


# Chief Albert Sanders Sr.

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)**  
**CAT-050**

**Interview by:**

**Emma Reid Echols**  
**August 15, 1972**



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](http://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 050 Chief Albert Sanders Sr.  
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project  
Interviewed by Emma Reid Echols on August 15, 1972  
58 minutes | 30 pages**

**Abstract:** Albert Sanders recalls his life and experiences as Chieftain on the Catawba reservation. He begins by talking about his decision to leave school and home on the old reservation to start working as a teenager in the textile plant. Then, he describes his fourteen years working at the bleachery before being fired without reason. He talks about how he had friends who worked there for a long time, but he had also seen others discriminated against in a similar manner as he was. Sanders then described his difficulty getting a job after being fired and the financial hardship he experienced. Then, he discusses his youth and how older people used to make a living when he was a kid. He describes his marriage and children as well as his friendship with his family's doctor. Sanders discusses the relationship to White people and why he was adamant about separating the reservation from the federal government. He then provides an in-depth explanation about the division of land when the Catawba Tribe severed ties with the federal government. He ends by discussing his pride in both his Catawba heritage and his South Carolina citizenship.

**Keywords:** [Catawba Nation; Dr. Edward Glenn Hill; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Oral biography; Land tenure]

SAMUEL PROCTOR  
ORAL HISTORY  
PROGRAM  
University of Florida

CAT 050

Interviewee: Chief Albert Sanders Sr.

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: August 15, 1972

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Route 6, Box 260, Rock Hill, South Carolina. August 15, 1972. I'm working on the oral history of the Catawba Indians and I'm visiting in the home of Mr. Albert Sanders. Mr. Sanders was a former Chieftain on two occasions and was especially involved in the transfer of land when the Indians came in possession of their own lands and their own money, so he will have many, many interesting things to tell us. Mr. Sanders, tell me, first of all, your full name, and your address.

S: I'm Albert Sanders and I live on Rock Hill, Route 3, Box 365.

E: Who were your father and your mother?

S: Well, my father was William Thomas Sanders and my mother was Nora **L. Ryner** Sanders.

E: Now have you always lived here with your parents on the reservation in this community?

S: Well, I lived with 'em when I were young—we'll say ten, twelve years old. Of course, I went to work in Rock Hill when I was thirteen for my own livin'. See, my mother passed away and I didn't stay at home after that.

E: Who did you live with after your mother died?

S: Well, I lived with some peoples, other ones. I lived with Early Brown a good while. He lived down there and run the ferry but after I got up around thirteen years old, I went to work at Rock Hill Textile Plant. Went and made a livin' for myself and I've been working ever since for myself trying to make a living. Raised a big family since that time.

- E: Now, what other children did your father and mother have besides you?
- S: Willie Sanders and Cleo Thomas—other words, I'm just giving you the names of what they were today when they passed away. Some are deceased, and some are not—and Ella **Candace**. She lives in Rock Hill. That's my sister. And there were six children but there were two of 'em that passed away a little while ago. Fred Sanders was one of 'em and Cecil Sanders.
- E: Now where did you get your education? You started work when you were so young.
- S: Well, I didn't get too much education. I worked here on the reservation. I mean I got mine here on the Indian reservation. That's when we were wards of the state of South Carolina. Didn't have the privilege to go to no other schools, which you probably already read in the paper that some of the rest of the Indians here have already put out. But what I got was down there on the old reservation.
- E: Now who were your teachers?
- S: Well, so far back, I don't hardly remember the names of 'em. Because it's been quite a while and I don't believe I'd be able to give them to you.
- E: I'm glad that your children got an education. Mrs. Cornish yesterday told me that the Indians were especially good in arithmetic. If they didn't do it on paper, they could figure things out in their head. Now, did you enjoy arithmetic?
- S: Well, what little I knowed 'bout arithmetic—I reckon I was good too, but I was always smarter in my head, I could figure it out that way. Just talking 'bout it, I could get it quick that way. Because I worked at the bleachery for fourteen years. Other words, I went up there—I don't remember what year it was—I left there in

about [19]55 or [19]56. And I was assistant foreman to Griff Duncan in the Sanforize department. I run it on the third shift twelve hours a night for eleven years and finally, I got run off from there—or rather, they fired me, and Griff Duncan was my foreman on the day shift. Well, he said “come outside.” In other words he called me up one evenin’ here at home about five o’clock. Said he wanted me to come to the bleachery. We had our little ups and downs as anybody else always had. And he brung my checks outside the bleachery. And I hadn’t been back in the bleachery since that time. He only had orders to pay me, he said. He didn’t say why or what. And I let it rock on like that and I lost my—well, I had a new automobile at that time, too, and I lost it. And finally, I went to work, picked up what little I could here and there to say four, five years. And Bowaters started down there and I went to work and done some carpenter work while they were building when they first come down here. And then after that they called me up to Goldtex, which was Mr. Goldberg was running it at the time. And I was Sanforize operator, and so they gave me a job. And that’s when I went to work again. And I’ve been off and on carpentering ever since that time. I never did go back to no textile work.

E: But you worked long enough to get your social security, didn’t you?

S: Well, I’ve had it ever since it come out in 1936 and I worked forty-, fifty-something years on it. I know I’ve had it all the time, but I mean I worked. I’m sixty-right years old and if I see October 10, I’ll be sixty-eight. I was born 1904, October 10.

E: Now when you worked at the bleachery, you worked ten years and you got a special medal or award at that time, did you not?

S: Well, yes, I got a certificate for good conduct and also working, and I worked there one time my record was—I was working there twelve hours a night. And I think I lost **four hours out of seven mills** one time. I don't remember what part **towards the first of it somewhere though**. And so, when they let me go, they didn't tell me why. But I do say this: the bleachery, when I went up there and went to work—well, I worked there fourteen years. In the first three years they needed a assistant foreman to take over the job on the third shift, and they come and see me about it and I told them I didn't want it. I didn't think I'd be capable of running the job because I didn't have too good of an education. Well, I was told that I had enough education to run the job, which they knew I did. But I had the knowledge and the know-how to take care of the job and put out the work and the production and the work to have it right, you see.

E: Yes.

S: And because I helped several others in there out at their job and it wasn't no concern to me, but they only wanted me to give my discretion on it whether it was right or wrong. And I would tell them. Well, finally, it come up after fourteen years and that's when I got fired. They claimed I was too high-tempered or something at the time, but I thought the same thing about the man I was talking to. And, in a way, Mr. Swan, **I don't know if he had it done**, and another superintendent Mr. Durwood Costner he come in as a superintendent and so we had to go to school, you know, on the weekends. We had to go to school once a week. And I hadn't been up there in two or three weeks. Well, Mr. Swan told me, he said, "I noticed you hadn't been up to school in the last two, three weeks," and I said "No, I

hadn't," and I said, "I don't think I'll be up there next week either." I just told him like that. And he said, "Well I'll find out why you don't be up there." And so, I guess he did. That's the way I figured it out.

E: So, do you feel that any others were discriminated against in the same way that you were?

S: Well, I had a boy to go up there and work. Mr. Tylor hired him—Ronald Sanders. I don't know what. He'd went up there and they gave him a job and I said two times. He tried him up the first time and he didn't give him a chance. I say a week or so and they let him go. Well the foremen, I knew 'em all. Sometimes they keep 'em, sometime they wouldn't. Just like I did. Well, Mr. Jimmy Thorton was one time in there well he was a superintendent when I was in there and they had a fellow in there at that time. It was **Nub Rogers**. They called him Nub. Other words it's Nub Hedgeback I mean. I made a mistake on that. But he come to me one night and he said what you gonna do with that one-armed man, and I said "Well, they sent him up here to work, and for me to try him out." And if I'm getting anything to do with it—I was running the job at that time—I said, "If he suits me, I'll keep him, and if he don't, I'll let him go. It won't be you who had to let him go." And so today the man's still there. And I'm out. And that's been ever since I first went to work.

E: And when you left the bleachery, not out of your own volition, did you have trouble getting any other job? Because you were trained and everything.

S: Yes, I did. Because everywhere I put in applications, well there would be something come up. They didn't exactly tell me but it was plain enough to know

that there was somebody else involved and I always thought at that time it was the bleachery that give me that name. The reason they wouldn't hire me. But after so long, well, I lost about everything I had at that time. I had to sell a good bit of my land to live on. That's how I made it. If I hadn't had that, I'd had that land today. But there was some good—I ain't kicking the bleachery. There was good friends up there. I had good ones. Mr. Grier was a nice man. He's general manager at the plant. Well, anywhere he'd meet me after that he may not have knowed all the troubles, maybe he never was told. He's living today but I heard he's already retired now, I don't know. I worked under Mr. Jimmy Thorton. he's passed away I understood. And then there's others there. I had good friends all over the place. Thought a lot of 'em. I belonged to the union at the first, when I went in. And my understanding was that something would turn up and I couldn't go back to my job which I was running at the job. It would put me back. I was supposed to go back as a union man but I think that was the biggest thing I ever mention because when I mentioned it to the superintendent over there, that when we had our ups and downs over **I don't remember what** but I think that's the reason they fired me. Because I think I said, "Well if I'm not suiting you, you could put me back on the job because I belong to the union when I started," and I think that was a whole thing right then and now and that's when I got fired.

E: Well, I'm glad you had some years of good service there and you got some mighty good friends there yet. Now it's interesting to me that of your eleven children everyone is working now except one, I believe. Is that right?



C: Well, that's right, that's what I was telling about the bleachery. And the last time they hired him up there they kept him up until two days of the time he would've been in the union if he'd wanted to belong to it, they let him go again. Well, I asked around for why they let him go, ain't no one was able to tell me. I asked Mr. Hill would he tell me and he said, "yeah I'll tell you" but I never was told. And I went up there several times to see. He was always out or gone, and whether he was in there or not I don't know. That's the word I got.

E: Mr. Sanders, let's go back in history. When you were a young boy and coming along, what did your mother and father tell you about the history of your people? Where you came from, or anything about the history of your people?

S: Well, my father and mother I reckon at the time when they were born it was like all the rest of the Indians. That's the Indian history. They didn't have too much education. And I think today where we come up from that time where we come since I've been born, I can remember when we were wards of the state of South Carolina. We only went to school down here on the ol' Indian reservation, which you call six hundred or some odd acres, thirty-two acres I believe down there now. Well, we couldn't vote, we couldn't go to school nowhere, as you already saw in the papers that a whole lot of these others—some of the rest of the Indians put in last week or so but they didn't mention why they ever got from where they were at that time and where they at today. I've always said I'm a man who wants to be independent. I worked for my living and I've tried to treat everybody right. And I've got a lot of good friends. A lot of White friends, a lot of colored friends. I think a lot of 'em. There are a lot of Indians that thinks a lot of

'em. Some say I'm not the Chief, some say I am today. I was the last Chief elected back when the settlement come up. Well, we had six hundred and thirty something one or two acres down at the ol' reservation and I was Chief at that time. Well, when this come up, I wanted to get out from under the government. Because we couldn't do it the way I wanted to do. In other words, I would have to get a permit to cut even a little bit of firewood to burn. And Mr. Fleming from Cherokee, North Carolina was the Indian agent down here and Mr. Lathan, his assistant. Well, they come down here once or twice a year to a meeting and I've always been told they said that the Indians got seven thousand dollars a year from that. Well, I wondered where it went, so when I checked up to find out, the Indians wasn't getting it. Mr. Fleming, Mr. Lathan's expense to Rock Hill to look after us. Beyond the reservation they gave us a permit to cut a little firewood or something. We couldn't do what we wanted to do. And that's the reason I got out from under them. Because they got the seven thousand dollars as their expense. And I was talking about Ronald there, well he's had a hard time trying to get a job. He'd go and go. He goes everyday trying to hunt for a job. They want to know if he went even to General Tire. They were going to hire him to Westinghouse. Well, it died out. I don't know what's wrong. Finally, they told him that something about the General Tire that he wouldn't be able to work on account of something wrong with him in his spine, I believe. He went into the Marines and stayed down there in the training 'til he got out of that, and they sent him back home. So, I don't know whether he got hurt there. He never was down. He ain't been down in the bed with it.

E: Well, I hope he'll get a job soon. Now, in the early days before the division of the land was made all of you lived on the ol' reservation. And did most of the Indians work any crops, or how did they make a living?

S: Well, in my opinion, when I was coming up there was a few people who made a living, say like the older ones, farmed very little. Never was no farmers. I said they might've worked a little bit of cotton. That's my wife's father, Chief Sam Blue, why he was the biggest farmer down there on the reservation, I said, the only man who ever farmed there. He raised cotton and corn. But the rest of 'em might've raised a little patch of corn here and there. But the rest of them get out like I did and cut cord wood for a living. I've cut cord wood myself for fifty cents a cord. I could cut two or three cords a day when I was young cutting it. Well, that's the way I started out. And sometimes I wonder how'd I ever keep bread and everything else after so many kids that there were born, but there always a way. There's eleven of 'em. Nine girls and two boys. Their birthdays on October 28. I married December 14, 1925. And the first boy was born—Albert Junior Sanders was born October 28, 1926. And the second boy was born 1946, October 28, which was twenty years apart on the same day.

E: Of all things.

S: And the girls all between there. And they're all living today.

E: Now you married young, your wife was about fifteen or sixteen I believe.

S: Well, she actually was sixteen at that time. Or a little better.

E: Do you remember Dr. Hill, the doctor who came—?

S: Yes, that's right. I've been possum hunting with him many a times. Carried a sack and climbed the trees at night. Me and him would go across the river and catch a bunch of possums. After we get 'em, we'd bring 'em back and turn 'em loose. And we run 'em all night long. I've done that with him many times. That was my doctor. He was a good man.

E: He was a good man. What did he look like and—

S: Well, he was a slim, tall man kinda. And when I was a young man, he was old to me at that time.

E: He was a brilliant doctor, wasn't he?

S: That's right. And he had a moustache, and he had a model T ford, and me and him I would go riding in that thing. He'd take his dogs and of course he'd drink a little sometimes I know, but I didn't. He'd take a shot or two every once and a while. But me and him—I've even been swimming with him down at the ol' ferry down there and, well, he didn't want me to go in, he always said. He'd jump in there and swim around, float about, and then he'd get out and say "Now, don't you boys try that just 'cause I've done it." Then he'd get out and go back. But he's come and waited on my wife with some of the older children. Back at that time, well, he didn't get very much money because the state was paying him three hundred, I believe it was, dollars a year to look after the Tribe and he'd come and wait on me and also the children were born, he'd wait on 'em. Well, I knew he'd come to my house, and if it wasn't time he'd sit there in the next seven or eight hours and stay there and drink coffee with me and we'd talk. I'd make ax handles or something or other, sit around there 'til the time come.

E: Now you went possum hunting with your—were there any other animals that you hunted here on the reservation then?

S: Well, I can remember back when there were deer on the other side of the road and Dr. Bunder and Dr. Jim Nesbitt's place and they let us hunt on the other side. The river over there. And we'd catch catfish. There was good fish in the river when I was coming up at that time. We could sell 'em and pick up a little extra money during that time. But I never killed nothing like that. Mostly rabbits, squirrels, and things like that I reckon.

E: There were no bears here at that time?

S: I never saw any. Never have.

E: And what about birds. Were they—

S: Well, there were plenty birds. And I think there's plenty of them yet here around in different places. I have birds that come up into the yard here now, but I think that is because we've been shot at too much in different places.

E: Across the river, there used to be a lot of great big owls, and people would hear them—

S: Yeah, I've caught them in hollow trees. I climb a tree, maybe hunting a possum in the daylight and I've run up on an owl. I have caught 'em like that.

E: What are they? Are those the monkey-faced owls?

S: Yeah, they're the big ones. They're big hootin' owls.

E: Hootin' owls. And you hear them especially at night, wouldn't you?

S: Yes.

E: The Indians make so many of their pottery using the animals that you've got a lot of stories woven into your animals. You ever hear any of those stories of any of the animals that your parents told you when you were a little boy?

S: Well, my mother died when she was young. And I were young at that time. And I don't remember too much about her. They never told me too much. Actually, I spent most of my time getting firewood looking out for the winter.

E: That's right.

S: And I carried it on my back up to the house and piled it on the porch. But my daddy always told me when he left to go to work, he'd tell me one time **but he didn't tell me no other times either** and he'd say "boy," that's what he told me. I was the oldest. The only one he told at that time. He said, "You know what you've got to do," and said, "I want that done when I come back," and he'd go. Well, he'd have that done because I knew what to do. I had to do it if I stayed there. And I can remember when there were anybody come in on the reservation—off the reservation and wanted to live down on the ol' reservation. When I was a kid, like that picture I showed you, well, I knowed what to do and the rest of us did. We had an old fireplace where we burned wood if it was in the wintertime. Well, when I come in, and if anybody come in, well, I know what to do. Just walk over and sit down on either side of the fireplace with the children and wouldn't move and wouldn't ask nobody no questions because we were trained that way. Had to sit there and I knowed it. And didn't allow me to jump rope and run in and out while they was talking to somebody. That was the way I was trained.

E: And was the cooking done over that big open fireplace?

S: Well, we used wood stoves for the cooking, and used coal and pine wood.

E: You made a living with Early Brown for a while and that was when he was operating the ferry.

S: That's right.

E: Did you ever help him operate the ferry?

S: Yeah, I helped him many days down there. And sometimes he took me down there and kept me on account I wasn't working then for the time, wasn't married. And then after I went out on my own, when I was older and I thought I wanted to get married, that's when I got married.

E: Now all different kinds of people would cross that ferry and they would tip you and give you a little bit of money. What kind of money would they give you?

S: Well, back at that time I remember when Mr. Whatamona he used to run a garage in Rock Hill which is still down here on the back parking lot. He was from Lancaster. Well, anybody who would cross the ferry after certain times at night, after six or seven o'clock, I believe it was. If you made any money well that didn't go to the county, it went to the ones running the ferry, which was John Brown. Well, he'd give you some of it, or Early Brown, who took it last. He'd usually give us a little bit to help him out. And sometimes the ones who was going across in the ferry would give us a quarter or maybe fifteen cent tips.

E: Wouldn't make much at that rate. Now, Cureton's ferry was down below Early Brown's ferry, wasn't it?

S: Well, that's the one I'm speaking about now. That's where Early Brown was at the first time and the last time he come up to this ferry he was at **Brannelaxi**.

Well, I wasn't here then.

E: Now it was named Cureton's Ferry because the Curetons lived over in Lancaster—

S: That's right.

E: And had land over there. Is that right?

S: Well, Yorktown and Lancaster County still had each side.

E: And then they take some of their farm produce across on that ferry? If they were having it?

S: Well, mostly automobiles or whatever had to go across or whatever you were doing. It didn't matter. They'd put you over, but not so much farm equipment.

E: Now that Cureton's ferry is long gone, isn't it?

S: That's right.

E: And then of course I know the site of Early Brown's ferry is not far from Bowater today, is that right?

S: That's the last one they run. Mr. Ashe, a big guy out here, put one in.

E: That's called Ashe's ferry, is that right?

S: Yeah, that's right.

E: I remember crossing on that a number of times. And just across the river from Ashe's ferry on that hillside they tell me there are lots of arrowheads and other things over there on that hill that's plowed up.



S: Well, I don't know 'cause I never went over there to **hunt none of 'em**. I remember when I was a kid I used to walk back up to Dr. **Bunder's** over here, straight across from where I am now, and find a few but that's been many years ago. I haven't even been over there lately. And I don't hunt none now. But you was speaking about how the Indians made a living when I was coming up. Well, my mother never did make pottery that I know of, but we had some of the older ones, like you say: Arzada Sanders, Rachel Brown, good many of the older ones and Aunt Martha Jane Harris. That's Georgia Harris's grandmother, I think. All of them made pottery during their time when I was a kid. But I never have. My wife don't make no pottery. I doubt if she could make any kind of a pot, but I've always managed to make a living somehow and so still makes it, but now I'm retired and I draw one hundred thirty-one dollars and ten cents a month. That's pretty hard to go, but still I'm able to make a living. I'm not hungry.

E: Then you can work outside?

S: But they don't allow me to make but sixteen hundred and eighty dollars a year. That's plus. If I make over that, they'll either cut my check or stop it 'til I pay what I made over that amount back.

E: Now that's hard like that.

S: I don't make much of social security on that basis on account. If you're old enough to retire and draw what you made, they're not giving you nothing. I'm just gonna be plain. They don't give it to you. Other words, you 've got to make it. And if you got it in there, you'll draw a certain amount. But see, it cuts the limits off of you when you go to make six hundred and eighty dollars, well, that's as far

as you go. If you make any more than that, you have to pay it back. Well, that's my money at the first start, the way I feel about it. I wouldn't be drawing it. After you get old enough to draw it you should—it doesn't make no difference how much you make if you're retired it oughtta be fixed that way. And I think the government oughtta to do something about it.

E: You're going to be glad to get a raise this October, aren't you?

S: Well, I haven't given it no thought. I hadn't gotten no ideas about it. I only heard it on the news and different other places. I'm go out to the place today and I kinda don't believe nothing 'til I see it.

E: Well, they told me it'll come with the October check, now, it is coming. Now one thing I'm interested in, you lived here so many years. And I picked up from lots of the Indians that certain White people were very good to them. Oh, the Griders and the Culps and some of the Neelys. and I'd be interested in hearing some of the old White people—

S: Well, I knew all of those. And they've all— **Mr. Rogada** lives over there now. His father lives right up here from me now. Well, he lives right over here. And as far as I know, they've been good men all their lives. I knowed them ever since they was born. And the Neelys are the same way. And Roy Neely, Edward Neely, and their daddy. Well, I knew all of them years ago.

E: What did these White people do to help you all?

S: You mean now?

E: No, years ago.

S: Well, only thing I knew at that time was they were kinda like anybody else. You had to work for what you got. And if you were able to give you a little bit of wood cutting, that's all I ever got. And I don't know about the rest of 'em.

E: Did any of the White people help you all in getting an education? A Ms. Dunlap, I believe, sent some of the Indian boys off to school.

S: Well, we had several Indians to go to Cherokee from down here and go to school, but that was just three or four, I'd say. And the rest of 'em, after 1943, see, we was wards of the state of South Carolina. Other words, the Indians couldn't marry among the Whites, there was a law against that, and that's when I got that changed when we got the settlement up here on the reservation. We had three thousand, three hundred and eighty-eight and five-tenths acre of land held in trust by the federal government which the state of South Carolina set aside for the Catawba Indians. They was gonna do wonders. They was gonna make us, build us good homes, even start us out to help us to farm. Build us homes. Some talk of a museum, some wants a hospital in here but the federal was to match that. And I wasn't the Chief a lot during them years when that was to come up. Which, I say the Indians could've got it if we had pushed hard enough but it was already started. But there was, they didn't care to stick their head out to help the Indians. The Indians always been like that. I'm saying that because I know. I'm Indian myself. Other words some of them were more or less, you might put it, they want something, but they don't want the other man to get it. That's the Catawba Indians I'm talking about. Because I even went to Atlanta—March, a year ago, and I met a bunch of people down there. Indian Tribes from different

other places. Pembroke. All of the other places down there. While I was down there, I met the HUD, housing places down there, I went down there and talked to them. They was gonna help us and talk to the governors. And they said they were gonna see if we could get some help. And I hadn't saw nothing since that time. I ain't even heard nothing about it. I did get a letter from Mr. **Jim Pope** in Rock Hill, stating that he was trying to something some of 'em. But he said some of the Indians had already objected that. And I knew that would come up because to some of the Indians, the want to stay how they is, but I don't. Other words, I'd like to have something if I could but I never have had. But I understand, you got to work for what you get. I do say the state of South Carolina, I don't know how, I read in the paper what they said that they bought the land. But to my understanding, ever since I was a kid, I been told, is that they leased the land for ninety-nine years. Which has been up for about one hundred and forty or forty-five years ago. Well, I do say today that South Carolina is the one that owes us, it wasn't the federal government. Because every Indian that's been old enough and well enough to go to fight, he's been in the war just like anybody else is. But he was a ward of the state of South Carolina. When I was coming up, I missed it sixteen days in World War I. Other words, I was sixteen days too young when the thing was over during that time. But after, that I joined up with the navy to go to the navy once. I was going to be sent when I was working at Carhartt Hill, that's the old Goldtex. And when I went to go, they told me they needed a few more and they wasn't going to send any along that day. I'd had to wait but the war had ceased then. That was back in the Second World

War. And they decided I had too many children, and that's when I was thinking about how I missed the sixteen days. Other words, I would anyways, but I volunteered. And I had volunteered, 'cause I had a son in there. And they were gonna send me. Well after that, war ceased down and they told me they wasn't gonna take anymore after that then, and so it wasn't long 'til it broke out again so they sent for me to come up and then I could go. And I said, "No, you didn't take me when I was supposed to go, wanted to go." And he turned me back and said I didn't have to go, and so now I decided that I don't have to go and they couldn't make me go on account of them sixteen days or something. So I didn't go. I never was in service myself, but I've had two in.

E: You had two boys in service?

S: That's right.

E: Well now, when they came out of service, did they have training that they had taken during service that helped them in getting jobs?

S: Well, Albert Junior was the oldest. He went to the navy, and he stayed in the navy. I think he spent twelve or fourteen years in the air force and the navy. I **know** but he finally got out because he decided he was gonna stay one time but he finally got out of it. He didn't stay. But I think when he got the training, we had this here training, you know, that the federal put out for some of them if they went to different places and different jobs. That's what most of 'em got.

E: Mr. Sanders, tell me now, when the lands were divided up, in South Carolina when you were left with just the six hundred and thirty-two acres here, on the old

reservation, everyone got either land or money according to the size of their family. Isn't that right?

- S: Well, at the time this land, see, I was Chief working with Robert W. Hatfield. Other words, he was a Congressman enforcing it at that time, **he was a judge at that time**. Any other time I guess he was a judge but what I mean is, at the time, that's what he **was living**. Well, he helped me, in other words, to get off of this, because I worked hard to get the Indians off of this because we weren't prospering then. And if they was going to hold me down just like I was when I was a ward of the state of South Carolina, well it wouldn't have mattered too much to me. And so, I got him to help me and we got that settlement otherwise started and that's when the federal government had that three thousand three hundred and eighty-eight and five-tenths acres of land I was telling you about awhile ago. Well, that was to be divided among the Indians. Land and money. Six hundred and twenty-five, I believe, got on the roll here. And land or money well that's all we got out of it. I knew that wasn't nothing when I took it, but the idea was that I was getting it on my own, not somebody else, see, and I wanted my rights. I worked hard to get it off.

- E: And how much land did you get for yourself?

- S: Well at that time it was appraised according to where you were getting this piece of land. Other words, it amounted to six hundred and one dollar per head when it was bigger in land and money and that's what they got out of it. Other words, the ones on the old reservation that's living there today got the same amount, stayed on the reservation, and wish they took the money. Others that got it on the

outside, on this other land and finally sold it all. I've sold a good bit of mine because I had to, I didn't have no job at the time. But it didn't amount to six hundred and one dollars per head on a dollar basis and that's what they got out of it. But now, the Indians—I seem to think that the ones on the reservation are only ones owns the old reservation today, but that's not true. It belongs to six hundred and twenty-five people. In other words, there's six or seven tenths of an acre, if it was divided up today that would be all they would have on the old reservation among them people.

E: But the old reservation means a boy or a family can always come back there?

S: That's right. But now we had a stopping and a starting place. In other words, in 1960, or when I was Chief at that time when it come up, we had to have a starting place and also a stopping place. Anybody who were on roll in 1943, which I got here today in this book. Final roll. Well, they had the rights to do that, to go back on the old reservation, live if they were able to build them a home that's the only way they get it because they still had some trust funds from the state of South Carolina. The state of South Carolina, they said here, I don't know if that be the truth because when they come up, that will own the final roll and everything. And I wouldn't sign for that. Otherwise, I said, "No, I'm gonna leave it how it is because I might be the first one that has to go back down there." But I would've settled for the three thousand three hundred and eighty-eight and five-tenths acres of land. That's what we got out of it. So, they took land. Some did. Some took the six hundred and one dollars per head, and they sold the balance

of it. That's where the money come in for the ones that take the money. One hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars of it.

E: Of the ones who took their land, have lots of them built their homes on that land and established themselves permanently? Or have they sold them to outsiders?

P: Well, it's been sold to outsiders mostly.

E: You're sorry to hear that, aren't you?

P: Well, I don't know. Other words, it might've been—just like everybody else, they had their rights. That's what I was working for. If they wanted to keep it, okay. If they didn't, I'm okay with that.

[Break in recording]

E: Mr. Sanders tell me some of the Indians who have used their land to build their homes and established themselves here?

P: Well, you take here where I'm living, this was a—been back, I believe, I moved up here in 1944—and old house. This was Mr. Ben Fields' old home. Well, I got this part when the settlement come up. I mean, actually when the state put that into the federal to hold in trust for the Catawba Indians. I got to come up here. It was small, practically a new house at the time, but it been worn out a lot since that time. I've remodeled it in and out and had to build new porches and over things, change it up, build a on a couple rooms for myself at that time. Well, you take several others they had down here. Chief Blue lived down there by that old house was still down there at that time, but he got Dr. Cato's place. And then the school I think the Mormon church built the church down here for the Indians. And



the schoolhouse was built off the land that the Indians had so the state run that school for a while, then finally took it out.

E: So, you have around twenty-three acres belonging to the church and the school. That would be for your recreation and for your worship and so forth.

S: Well, we have twenty-five acres down there around the church and school. That's what we've got set aside down there. The church of Jesus Christ and the Latter-day Saints got the deed for there out west. Other words, they brung that up in a meeting down there. In a council meeting when I was Chief. When we were out and we put it to vote and they also voted a hundred acres over here at Springsteen farm where they had cattle over there at that time. Well, they got that and they still do got it themselves. And my understanding was that it was supposed to be for the Catawba Indians, but I don't know about that. I think it's for the whole church now.

[Break in recording]

E: You know what, I turned the little thing off. That's better. Mr. Albert you were telling me that around fifteen families live down at the old reservation, but this is supposed to be for all the Indians, is that right?

S: The final roll shows that when they got settled on the dollar basis that were left was on that roll at that time. And so, it belongs to anyone who was living out there on the ol' reservation. He can go back down there. If he has means to build, he can build, and if he don't, well you can't move him. Other words, it's tax-free.

E: And you told me a couple of the families who have come back recently to the old reservation. One from Columbia.

S: Well one come from Columbia, that's David Harris. He stopped up here and he's also moved back down there yesterday evening late.

E: Now where will he live down there?

S: Well, he's on the old reservation.

E: In a trailer or a house?

S: Trailer.

E: Now you are—there's been no elected Chieftain since the lands were settled, so you're still the active Chief, are you not?

S: Well, we don't have our meetings. We don't call any, other words, we hadn't had no meeting since we split up **so called** at that time. But I spent ten years, but they never did elect another Chief. So according to the paper over there that the ones who still in at that time are still there today until they do something about it. And we were planning on—I am and several others whose been after me—to call a meeting to get some reelected. Actually, someone wants me to run again so that depends on what the Indians want. But I think the Indians are better off today than they ever was in history, because they do have their rights, privileges. If it wasn't for that they wouldn't have any jobs they getting today. They're smart enough to run 'em, but if you're gonna stay wards of the state of South Carolina or any other state, you don't have much rights. And I was called on a jury three, four years ago, and I understood some of them to say, well I only went to grammar school down here on the old reservation. And I heard several of them

say that if you only had a fifth-grade education, you were excused from being on the jury so you had to get up and tell them **for the jury**. And when I told him and he asked me how old I was and I told him and I believe I was sixty-four or five at that time and so I told him and told him my age and he asked me about where I worked and how long I had worked in my lifetime and I told him fifty, fifty-five years. And he said anybody who worked fifty, fifty-five years had more than a fifth-grade education if he didn't get it in school. I agreed with him. Actually, I figured, I don't know how other people figure, but I have to give myself credit for being pretty smart at that, I know. And he didn't excuse me from being on the jury and I was called up about later that week four or five times and never did get excused that first day when they got the jury on and from then on some time or another they drove me enough to get me there. Sometimes, on the last day they had to draw fifteen or sixteen times and I already had eleven and they excused them people 'til they finally got to my name in the last go, I thought I was gonna get to come home on Friday early. Well, they hit mine and then I had to be on jury for the rest of the day.

E: So, you're proud that you were a citizen of South Carolina?

S: That's right. I had the right to join just as anyone else was doing and that's what I've always wanted. To be a full man and I'm willing to work for what I get, and I've always worked for what I got, and I've got a lot of good friends in South Carolina and anywhere else I go. And I've been in good health, able to work through last year. This year, I finally got—I was helping Sanford Bryson over here on the pulpwood truck back in February and I haven't worked none this year.

E: Now, to sum it all up, do you think the Indians today are in far better shape than they were years ago?

S: Yes, I'd say they are, because you got the—other words, years ago, they didn't have no way of going out and getting no jobs and they had to take whatever they get. Some of them made pottery. Some of the women made pottery for the Indians, for their husbands. I know that to be a fact. That's what a lot of them made it and a lot of 'em didn't but some of them after that, coming up in my lifetime, they all usually got out and work for themselves.

E: And the industry plants all around.

S: All around.

E: They don't especially like the cotton mills though, do they?

S: Well, I worked at the cotton mills a good bit myself and it's pretty dusty if you want to work in the carding room. I don't know much about the pulp room. But that's after I worked in there a good while. I was lucky enough to get a job at the bleachery like I was telling you back then. And so, I'd rather work at something like that if I was gonna work. I'm still able to work today if I had the job. But my age, they don't hire you no more.

E: And with more education—

S: I can get cotton work or something like that. But that's all. But there's a lot of 'em with a high school education today on that account that wouldn't have had it if we hadn't got what we got today.

E: And they can ride the buses. They can go to school. Technical training in Rock Hill is open to them. South Carolina Technical School. Some of 'em are goin' to

Clemson. Some of 'em are goin' to Winthrop. Some of 'em are goin' to nursing school. And some of them have gotten training while they were in the service, haven't they?

S: That's right, yes.

E: Well, it looks like, to me, like y'all are on the up and up. I hope you are.

S: Well, I think that's true, but I think in a way now all these houses 'round here, and you've got houses down here, been on the reservation, are actually not the Indians' houses today. 'Cause that's Whites that've come in here and bought places and still live on it. Well, you've got some pretty good houses in here. You've got some Indians who've married outside. White. Well, some few of them got a house on the newer part of the land but not the old reservation because they know that when they put it down there, well that would be the last—they couldn't sell it. Because it's on that land that's held in trust by the state.

E: One thing that hurts you right now is that they're building that new highway right through the new reservation, is that right?

S: Well, we usually don't own that now, where it's running through. Maybe one or two of us had a little land on it—

E: Was it Gladys Thomas and her—

S: Yeah, but they sold that out.

E: —are being hurt by it. And Moroni George.

S: Yes, Moroni George. He's still back over there. I understand he done sold his place.

E: I understand he's moving to York. Now, a number of Indians have moved away from that highway because they think it's going to hurt their property in value.

S: Well, I say they got rid of it to move. I don't know why. Even at the highway, some of them sold **per head long before that**. There's not too much of the new land that's left with the Indians now.

E: Mr. Sanders, would you say that—what do you think of your past? Are you proud of your heritage as an Indian? Do you think your people are proud?

S: Well, I am. I can tell you that. The rest of them should be. I never knowed nobody to say that they wasn't proud of it. Other words, if you're an Indian you're gonna die an Indian. In other words, regardless what you say or want to accomplish, I'm still glad I'm an Indian and I think a lot of Indians and all the other Indians, but it has been sometimes—

[Break in recording]

E: This is Emma Reid Echols and I'm visiting in the home of Mr. Albert Sanders. Mr. Sanders just finished a conversation with me about the Indian affairs. He lives in a nice, white-painted home. Six rooms set back from the paved road with a garden at the rear of his home. This is one of the better homes on the Indian territory. To finish up this interview, I want to clear a few of the facts. And I'm quoting from Mrs. Brown's book, *The Catawba Indians*. On page 351 she says, "Albert H. Sanders became Chief in 1959 and served wisely and discretely during a time when the Tribe was ferment over whether to dispose of its land. Chief Albert Sanders served from 1958 to 1962 and there hasn't been a Chief to serve since that time." A quote from her book on 361: "On March 28, 1959, in the white

clapboard schoolhouse on the old reservation, a general Tribal council meeting was held. By a group of forty to seventeen, the Catawbas authorized Congressman Hatfield to introduce a bill to sever all Tribal relationships with the federal government, including provisions to permit ownership of the land and a division of same and other Indian assets. This council meeting may have been the most significant in the long history of the Catawba people. The law Congressman Hatfield introduced, Public Law 86322073 Statute 593, passed the House of Representatives August 21, 1959; the Senate on September 9, 1959; and was signed into law by the president on September 21, 1959. One provision of the law was that the Tribal roll, compiled in 1943, be brought up to date. This new roll was open for registration in late 1959 and closed on February 25, 1961. The final **list** number: 691 Indians, 226 of whom were adults. Also, members of the Tribe were able to designate portions of their land for church, school, or cemetery purposes, with the remainder to be disposed of according to their individual wishes. Under this provision, 100 acres, more or less, designated and set aside for Tribal community purposes were then converted by title to the Secretary of the Interior to approve trustees of the Tribe. President Herbert Blue of the Catawba branch to the Church of Christ Latter-Day Saints was made supervisor. After all the Tribal assets had been appraised, the figure amounted to \$187,774. Each Indian was given the privilege of selecting a tract of land for himself, not to exceed in value his pro-rated share, or if he were to decide, he would receive money instead. The majority wanted land. The first choice went to those whose homes were located on the reservation. 345 were given titles to real

estate amounting to 1955 acres and 286 elected to receive cash in lieu of land or \$296 each. When the last roll of the Catawba Tribe was compiled, some of the names appearing on the document has been familiar ones throughout Catawba history: Beck, Blue, Brown, Harris, Canty, George, Sanders. A very prominent one was that of Hester Louisa Blue, widow of the Chieftain Samuel Taylor Blue, who had already passed to the **HUM Ari**. Chief Blue had been stricken with cancer in the midst of their struggle for what he considered was best for his people, dying April 18, 1959, just as a glimmer of light came. He was succeeded by Albert H. Sanders, a 57-year-old textile worker, the father of eleven children, who had married Vera L Blue, youngest daughter of Chief Blue. Sanders was the last of the ancient line of Chieftains. Although his reign was brief, Chief Sanders continued the efforts to liberate the Catawbas, asserting his position firmly when the chance came for termination of the Tribe from the federal government. I quote, "A lot of other Tribes are glad to be under the federal government on reservations. Speaking for myself, I am glad to get out. Now the Indians will have to make it like any other citizen." Unquote.

[End of interview]

Transcribed by: Easton Brundage, September 4, 2021

Audit-edited by: Sofia Echeverry, April 29, 2022

Final edited by: Evangeline Giaconia, July 12, 2022