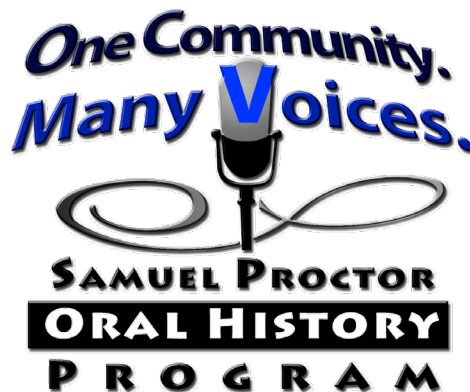


John Idle Sanders and Arzada Sanders

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-003**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
December 1971**



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

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

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

CAT 003 John Idle Sanders and Arzada Sanders
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
Interviewed by Emma Reid Echols in December 1971
29 minutes | 19 pages

Abstract: Arzada Sanders and John Idle Sanders are interviewed at their home in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Arzada Sanders describes going to school as a child and shares how she started making pottery. She describes how she makes and sells her pottery and what makes Catawba pottery unique. She shares some information about some pieces she has made and others that she has in her home. She describes her time working as a cook at a school on the old reservation during the Great Depression. She speaks about being a member of the Church of Latter-day Saints and they both briefly discuss the Catawba's interactions with government agents. They both share what some of their children do for work and where they live. They end the interview by sharing the story of the adoption of one of their grandchildren.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; Chief Samuel Taylor Blue; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Pottery; Family histories]

ORAL HISTORY

PROGRAM
University of Florida

CAT 003

Interviewee: John Idle Sanders and Arzada Sanders

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: December 1971

E: Box 260. I'm visiting the home of John Idle Sanders. I'm recording the oral history of the Catawba Indians. Mrs. Sanders, could you give me your full name and address?

AS: Arzada Sanders. Rock Hill, Route 3, Box 378, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

E: Have you always lived in the community?

AS: Well, I've always been born and raised on the Catawba Indian reservation, **you know**. My husband **and me** built a house up here. I believe it was 1965. I thought it was [19]65, something along there. **[19]55**. We built it here. Few weeks later, [inaudible 0:46]. Since high school.

JS: Now **we're in** the Friendship Community.

AS: Yeah [inaudible 0:51] Friendship Community.

E: And who were your parents?

AS: My parents were Mrs. **Wycie Rachel** Brown and John William Brown. Yeah.

E: Your parents are dead, but do you have any brothers and sisters living?

AS: I have **five** sisters, two brothers, Early Brown and George Brown.

E: What about your grandchildren?

AS: Well, I have quite a few grandchildren. I counted it up one time. I believe [inaudible 1:23] that's just what I do with it, so. **I knew, in fact**, that would come up.

E: Well, I know some of those. Now, do you remember anything about your early life as a little girl. What did you do as a little girl playing in **South Carolina**?

AS: We had a lot of those **fish** on [inaudible 1:40]. And then when **the girls** who went to school—we had a lot of children there—at lunchtime I played with them. The girls would get up the steps and go play house. Make a little Ferris wheel, a couch, little things like that. Then when time come for lunch—we'd have to hold for lunch. We always thought we liked school.

E: Do you remember the old man Thomas Stephen Harris?

AS: Yeah, I remember him.

E: And he used to go out down there and beat with a stick and sing for you. John, do you remember meeting him maybe a long time ago?

JS: [Singing in a different language 2:25]

E: Do you know what—did he ever tell you the meaning of those words?

AS: No, he never did tell us the meaning of the words. **He** was small and a real good actor. He probably was still stuck with that old Indian language, you know, some of them Indian songs. That's what he taught the Indians, songs.

E: I believe he looked like an Indian and didn't have no family. Who did he [inaudible 3:01] when he stayed in school?

AS: Well, he just about poked around most of the school, you know, but he [inaudible 3:06]

E: He **rented**, I believe, in North Carolina, did he not?

AS: No, it was the Cherokee. But they saw his people that he knew. You see, I didn't think he was in his [inaudible 3:20]

JS: He knew, he just liked to [inaudible 3:23]

E: He actually was deaf and I believe he died of [inaudible 3:28] in North Carolina. His body was brought back here for burial. Where was he buried here?

AS: On the old Catawba Indian graveyard [inaudible 3:38]

E: Is there markers on his grave then?

AS: Yes, ma'am.

E: Then I have to go to see it. What do you remember about your early days in school? Your first teachers and things you did in school?

AS: **Lewis Summers** was our first teacher. **Elder** Harris was our teacher and there was some Utah professors. He was our teacher. I don't know another teacher, I forget. **Elder Barris**, he was our teacher. He come from out west.

E: South Carolina, is that right?

AS: No.

JS: No, from Arizona.

AS: Arizona.

E: Arizona.

JS: Yeah, way in the west. Way on the other side of Salt Lake City. Five hundred miles.

E: Then you were married and you were kept busy after that—after your schooling—with a family and things in the home. Tell us when you began to make this first pottery?

AS: When I first went to make pottery—I saw my mother making pottery, so I went and asked her for a piece of clay and so she gave it to me. I just [inaudible 4:40] and went on my own and sat down and learnt to make pottery just like she did.

Then I had to go to school [inaudible 4:49]. And then I went and got her a little studio and when she'd be making pottery, I'd come **and I'd watch**. So, after I got married then I had family. I'd take care of **them** but I'd make pottery **before, after** I got married [inaudible 5:06] for a short time. Now after that—well, I played again for a while. Then the children all grew up and their children **didn't have chats with Clovis's** children. He'd take care of the little children and so I could make pottery. I'd sit down and made all day sometimes, what was wanted.

JS: Yeah. You sold pottery when you was at home.

AS: Yeah, I sold pottery—

JS: You didn't have **taxes**—

AS: I didn't take [inaudible 5:33] **which** one was it? [inaudible 5:36]

JS: The people come and get them.

AS: Yeah. [inaudible 5:36] some Cherokee would come down and [inaudible 5:43] pottery.

JS: All the way! Two hundred miles away from here.

E: Two hundred miles away. The Cherokee used to come and get some of the pottery?

AS: That's right.

JS: Yeah.

E: That is very interesting. Now tell me where you get your clay for the pottery.

AS: Well, I get clay west of **several bodies** down where Ray Catawba had that patch of land. And now he liked to get clay there some because the Catawba Indians used to make pottery. So, that's where we'd get our clay at. That's the potter's

clay. If we didn't have enough clay, we would use what you called the **painter's** clay. Where we'd have to get the pipe clean with it, stay 'til it gets dry, and then we put **the little curve**, put water on that, the **top**. And then we take the **painter's** clay, we sift through that, it looks kind of like a canoe. Then you work those two together.

E: You don't any measuring cups to measure?

AS: No, ma'am. Never had measuring cups.

E: You just do it by the feel and how much you think you need?

AS: That's right. **Depends** on how much you put in—you work in. [inaudible 6:43]

E: Then you take it and shape it?

AS: That's right.

E: Is there anything that shows you a shape to bring or you just do it the way you want to?

AS: Yes, ma'am, that's right. You use a little **painting bowl** and I get some old stones from the [inaudible 6:54] tell you that. I use those for 'em, I take my own [inaudible 7:00] You shape this part first, then you add the [inaudible 7:03] This part has to get hard. Not too hard, now. [Laughter] You'll grind that pretty **thin**. [inaudible 7:12] part of it.

E: And you're holding in your hand a beautiful little pitcher with a nice handle, a high part to it, and a little spout. You make the bowl—the bottom part of it first?

AS: That's right.

E: And shape the spout.

AS: That's right.

E: The last of all is the handle. Is that right?

AS: That's right.

E: Then let's see some of those pretty pieces you have in your lap. Tell me about the little basket down there?

AS: This is a little basket that we used to collect moon puffs when we was little so we—I thought about those days, oh, I guess it was in October, and I **took out** that little small basket there.

E: And there's just small ones and large ones—

AS: All kinds. Making small ones and large ones. That little cup it's what's called a loving cup. It's got two handles on each side of it. Over there is what you call a chicken comb pipe. This one here is a arrowhead pipe. And this is a little pair of frogs.

E: It take up the sides of the—

AS: It takes up all different sides, that's right. From east—

E: Now, that loving cup is one of the most interesting ones. I believe it's been handed down for many, many years in your family.

AS: **That's true.** Some of the oldest people way back. My grandmother's not around.

E: Then you also have one over there looks like a jug with two spouts to it.

AS: That's a waiting vase.

E: A waiting vase?

AS: Mhm.

E: Now, where'd you get the name of that?

AS: Well, from my mother and grandmother and all of 'em. [Laughter] Because they said that one time they went to a **Cherokee event** where they [inaudible 8:43] So, they was showing the people, some of people of the Cherokee, the **tribal fruit**. They had to both **spit**, one over there, one over here. And they had that **rope** in their hair.

E: Peace pot?

JS: Waiting vase.

AS: No, a waiting vase, something like that. They tell these couples marrying they have to do a **fruit**. That was way back a long time ago. There's a ceremony to it.

JS: [inaudible 9:16] story.

AS: They said that the couple was going to get married, they'd have to **get** that **early**. They needed it to get married so quickly. And that's what they call the waiting vase.

E: That is very interesting. An interesting story about that **spittoon**. Now, after you've mixed your clay.

JS: **That's** what **that is**.

AS: [Laughter]

E: [Laughter] You've mixed your clay and you shaped the pottery, then you got to **tie** them up to the **old weight frame**, build a fire, and style it. Will you tell us how you do that?

AS: Well, we get our **pipes** at [inaudible 09:52] after we come back, get something or other [inaudible 09:57] Well, we made it for a long time. And I would [inaudible 10:05] so then they were at my son's. He used to do it for me at 65th Street and

22nd. There was a fireplace out near [inaudible 10:15] always used up coal, you know. And then I took the pottery all the way there to the fireplace. Brought it back inside. We would build just a little fire—just a little one—so it don't touch anything in there and you'd have to keep that there for a long time. Turn it for three hours while the pottery is heating there. It's gonna be hardest to burn when the three hours are up. Then, you take out the coal and lay the pottery on top of the fire coals. Then you take the wood and cook it three times again. You **burn** one **fire coal**, set the wood down, and you put another **fire coal** down until it gets **tough**. Then once you get that burnt down there you put your chips on that [inaudible 11:02]

E: What kind of chips do you use?

AS: We use the—well, we used to have to get the chips wherever you could find because the people don't cut the wood chips hardly now like they used to. They used to get the pine bark. It's kinda hard to find like that. [inaudible 11:23]

E: About how long does it take you to fire one batch of pots?

AS: Won't take three hours. About six hours altogether because I keep the **wood** burning [inaudible 11:33]

E: And you have to let that **entire** cool before you pull the **reversal** down?

AS: Last time the clay [inaudible 11:42] too hot, too cool—

E: Have you ever had any of them broken?

AS: Sometimes. This one happened before because it **wasn't** hot enough, it **didn't** break.

E: Have you Indians ever put any glaze on your pottery?

AS: No, ma'am. Never have.

E: Maybe someday you'll get by doing that. I don't know. Were there any other Indians who were making pottery?

AS: Well, Doris Blue. Doris was making—unfortunately she isn't making any now. **Olivia Brown**, she did make pottery too, but she said seemed like she couldn't [inaudible 12:12] We actually have some of hers. And Nola, now, she used to make [inaudible 12:17] several times.

E: Do you have any difficulty in selling your pottery at all?

AS: No, ma'am. I don't have any trouble selling my pottery. [inaudible 12:25] pottery.

E: They come—you have a sign there right on the highway?

AS: Yes, ma'am.

E: They know right where to come.

AS: That's right.

E: I believe they'll be buying a lot of this pottery around Christmastime, won't they?

AS: Yes, ma'am. It seems like they done come all over the street like they never had pottery then. I don't haggle them, but they come. [Laughter] I believe [inaudible 12:49] somebody. My husband, he could've [inaudible 12:56] given 'em a price.

JS: I gave them a price for it.

AS: You didn't know what the price value was and I had to pack it up.

E: You'd have to know the prices because you were the one that worked with him.

JS: [inaudible 13:08]

E: Tell me about this rubbing stones that you have?

AS: I have my grandmother's rubbing rock. I got two of those. I don't know how old that is there. About two hundred years old. I made [inaudible 13:19] quite a while and I know she had it a long time. And then I kept the one up top there when I was about ten years old. So, I had to **check out** the river and I rowed it back, I **picked** [inaudible 13:33] and I still have it.

E: [inaudible 13:34] that's the shape you use in the shaping of your pottery.

AS: That's what we rub our pottery with.

E: Now, besides raising a family and besides making your pottery, you also worked in the school for a number of years. I believe you were the cook at the old Indian reservation school. Can you tell us about that more?

AS: Yes, ma'am. When I first started work down there, they didn't have the school a lunchroom that's finished up, so I had to [inaudible 14:05] and stay for about a week or two. Then they said they'd get [inaudible 14:09] **a week later**. I need some help with this one. This one lady from the Catawba, she come up and worked **there** a while. We worked [inaudible 14:23] there. Just [inaudible 14:25] what was it called?

JS: [Inaudible 14:28]

AS: He come up helped me a while, but he didn't work there. I had help, and then after they closed the school down in the **building** they used to [inaudible 14:39] I worked down there and then went back to work there and we worked a long time. I worked 'til they closed the school.

E: Now, how many years did you work then?

AS: Oh, I think it was about at least twenty-five years.

E: [inaudible 14:57]

JS: According to the wardens in the Indian school, you were there twenty-one years.

AS: I worked down at the old reservation school. I worked **as a cook**.

E: Mrs. Robinson, I believe, was a teacher at that time. She did most of the buying of the groceries and dinners.

AS: Yes, ma'am, she was there. She was getting dispensations there and then she bought the firewood, corn, and stuff like that. She even had peaches and all kinds of fruit. The things came in these big cans coming in.

E: Do you remember some of the special things you cooked for them?

AS: Well, I cooked biscuits for them. They loved my biscuits and I cooked cornbread. They loved the cornbread. Baked, mashed potatoes for them with fried chicken. Sometimes we'd have hamburgers and sometimes we'd have potato salad and sometimes we'd have banana pudding and we'd have all kinds of slaws.

E: You worked during those hard Depression years. Did you feel that sometimes this good meal that you prepared for them would be the one good meal they'd have for the day?

AS: Yes, ma'am. They enjoyed that food I cooked. Actually, I laugh because there was a lot of times I cooked them things and they'd go home and tell their parents they wanted the cooking like I cooked and they said, well, they didn't know how I cooked it. **When they** asked me how I cooked cornbread I said, "Well, you just have to make cornbread." [Laughter] And they said, well, my cornbread tastes different from what they ate at home.

E: Did the children often ask for second helpings of your food?

AS: Oh, yes. [Inaudible 16:38] second helpings [inaudible 16:40]

E: How well behaved were the children? Did the teachers have any trouble **as well**?

AS: **You know**, sometimes. I don't know too much about the [inaudible 16:52] sometimes when I'd have, but I never had too much trouble with them. Now, over there by that—they said, "Can I **come in**, young lady?" I said, "If you want to." They'd run a rag [inaudible 17:02] So, that's all I [inaudible 17:05] They helped me wash the dishes and my cousin helped me most times wash the dishes. We were there until six, for a long time. [inaudible 17:16]

E: Now, you have a lot of friends down here on the reservation. Tell me what Mrs. Lawrence used to do for you or with you?

AS: Well, Lawrence used to come to visit quite a bit. She bought some of my pottery from me. And then one time she went with me to the Winthrop College there for something—something that came up there at the college. I'm gonna say we spent about a day up there **at state**. [Inaudible 17:43]

JS: [inaudible 17:46] her grandchildren was.

AS: And she took the littlest granddaughter along with her.

JS: Two of 'em.

AS: No, she didn't take the other one. The other one came [inaudible 17:54]

E: Mrs. Lawrence used to visit the school and bring fruits and candy to the children at school. Do you remember that?

AS: Yes, ma'am. She used to bring fruits and things to the children at school.

E: And I think she used to take pictures at the school. Do you remember any of the pictures she took?

AS: I don't know.

JS: No.

AS: I don't remember.

JS: I guess she did, now. I don't know.

E: Then do you remember—the Winthrop girls and the Winthrop professors—Dr. Sadie Goggins and Dr. **Lochhead** that used to come here?

AS: They used to come. There's a lot of them used to **teach** at the school down there. And, you know, there was teaching hours then, so probably I'd be working [inaudible 18:38] the time I worked.

E: A couple years ago at Winthrop College there was a table out in the front campus with your Catawba Indian pottery there for sale during the summer. Did you have pottery on the stand—

AS: Well, we always went to the **gate** the first **week** there and everything, so there was all this pottery there and it got sold [inaudible 19:03] **mother** inside. And right inside the gym we sold right there. We had two pottery stands. It was pretty nice there. [Inaudible 19:13]

E: How old was your mother when she died?

AS: I believe she was—I don't know, I'd have to get the papers [inaudible 19:22]—

E: But you learned your pottery making mostly from your mother then?

AS: That's right. I learned pottery making from—well, I saw [inaudible 19:30] make pitchers. My **Uncle June** made those. My mother didn't know a thing about it then. I made it then after that. She learnt to make it too. [Inaudible 19:41] my **Uncle June** was—

JS: Just you made that pottery.

AS: Yeah, my mother did.

JS: And then [inaudible 19:47]

AS: No, I made the pottery for mother that she couldn't make.

JS: Oh.

AS: She used to do what I couldn't make because she—I was at least practicing. I didn't make **pipes** 'til just about three years before she died because she made all my **pipes** for me. Now, she thought I was just too scared to try but I just wasn't able to make peace pipes and things [inaudible 20:09]

E: I think you sold a great many Catawbas here the last time. And I think you'll sell more between now and Christmas.

AS: Yeah, there's orders for people now in late December **down here** in Rock Hill.

E: Now, when the cold wintertime comes you won't be able to go up there and fire them and prepare your pottery with.

AS: No, I won't. I've seen just what I'm going to do just before Christmas. [inaudible 20:36] some today. I'm gonna have him go to town [inaudible 20:40]

E: What do you remember about your early life in the church? Do you always remember the Mormon Church, or do you remember any of the other missionaries who were here doing mission work for other churches?

AS: Well, I didn't—there was one church [inaudible 20:56] because they couldn't build a church, but they didn't keep it there too long. All **rising over** was the Latter-day Saints.

JS: Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints.

AS: Church of the Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints.

E: Now, who were some of the workers that you remember in that church?

AS: Chief Blue was the president for a long time. He stayed there for years in a [inaudible 21:24] I believe [inaudible 21:32] was the one that took over [inaudible 21:34] took sick. And then [inaudible 21:36]

JS: **They** turned around and did some work.

AS: **Did some work** on the Catawba reservation.

E: And what about the Indian agents. Who do you remember as the Indian agents here? Who handled Indian affairs and that kind of—

AS: I don't know much about the Indian agents because the Indian agents in the [19]60s was the **Whites**. [inaudible 22:00]

E: Do you remember Mr. **Greer Lesslie**?

AS: **Mr. Greer Lesslie** used to be when I first started and that's where I—

E: And Mr. **Dixon Lesslie**?

AS: [inaudible 22:10] was over at the reservation that time. Who was he, was he one of the chiefs?

JS: Himself?

AS: **Greer Leslie. That's so unfortunate.** [inaudible 22:23] I would assume.

JS: What are you talking about? **Lesslie Greer**? [inaudible 22:31]

E: Mr. **Dixon Lesslie** was one and **Mr. Greer Lesslie** was one of the agents at **the time**.

AS: I remember one of the **Lesslies**, I never talked. He was the one that helped with the **daily lamb** and—

JS: [inaudible 22:42]

AS: And they bought the school.

JS: But he wasn't working at it. Wait a minute, Mr. Greer and the Catawba and **Dixon** Lesslie was all [inaudible 22:53] He wasn't—

AS: But one of the Lesslies come down there.

JS: I know, but he wasn't the one.

E: Were those agents good in helping you and looking after the medical bills of the Indians? That's the whole thing, I believe. And one of the big things that happened was when these roads was built down through here. I know you remember when they paved roads through there.

AS: Yeah, way back.

E: Now, how many people do you think are living in this Indian land? How many are on the reservation?

AS: [inaudible 23:25] one time but I forget how **long** it was.

JS: That's the old reservation.

AS: The old reservation, **uh-huh**.

JS: We didn't count any of them up here.

E: Now, a number of them have moved to—where? To Charlotte and Fort Mill?

AS: Well, there's a couple families moved to Charlotte, I knew them. The Indians are quite few over in Rock Hill and they both [inaudible 23:45] and everything because they had [inaudible 23:48] on the reservation but still they started building camps, some of them.

E: I know you're proud of your children and what they're doing. Tell us the names of your children and where each one of them are living and working?

AS: Fred he works over here at **the car mechanic** place. He's a machine shop man.

E: He's in Charlotte?

AS: Yes, ma'am. Over in Charlotte.

JS: [inaudible 24:13] machine shop [inaudible 24:15]

AS: And then Roberta, she works at—

JS: [inaudible 24:20]

AS: [inaudible 24:21] She's been in there for a while. She used to work in Charlotte but it's so far to drive back and forth. She worked at [inaudible 24:32] she had been working there quite a long time. And then she worked at **the register** and [inaudible 24:39] And William, he's a carpenter and [inaudible 24:50]

E: All of your them have good jobs and I know you're proud of them. Did any of them **but one daughter** finish high school in Rock Hill?

AS: Vivian, she just did a little bit. She did just about seven or eight weeks maybe, but her father took sick and she had to stay home to help me take care of him. They waited so long for the Tribe to give any help to go back and she cried. She said she'd like to go back because she loved that school, but she said she waited so long she'd never get [inaudible 25:24] What she could be [inaudible 25:28]

JS: [inaudible 25:35] okay.

AS: Yeah, [inaudible 25:37]

JS: [inaudible 25:39]

AS: But her **friend** finished high school. [inaudible 25:42]

JS: What's his name? That preacher man. Wasn't his name [inaudible 25:47]

AS: Yes.

JS: [inaudible 25:50] high school.

AS: And he's got a good job.

E: Well, I'm glad he's got a good job. Now, Fred left and lived in Utah for a while.

AS: Fred lived out there for about—

JS: Nine years.

AS: Nine years, I believe, [inaudible 26:05]

E: And that's when he adopted the little girl?

AS: That's when he adopted the little girl. He adopted—well, his wife and children all wanted a [inaudible 26:12] She didn't have any other children. She wanted to adopt a little girl, so he went ahead and adopted the little girl.

E: And then he brought back the little girl here? What was her name?

AS: Stephanie.

E: Stephanie. And were you surprised and delighted to see another grandchild?

AS: Yeah, I'm very proud of her because she's a sweet little girl. [Laughter] She was here this morning [inaudible 26:42]

E: She spends most of her time in North Carolina?

AS: Mhm.

E: Does she like to visit down here more than—

AS: Yeah, she likes to visit her father and she likes to come here, so.

[Break in recording]

E: **Ms.** Sanders, I believe you have a granddaughter who came from out west. Your son Fred went to live in Utah. Tell us about the Ute grandbaby he brought home with him.

JS: Well, he adopted this poor girl.

AS: He adopted the little girl after another Indian girl from out west and he—

JS: He left.

AS: And she was eleven months old, I believe, when he adopted her.

E: Eleven days old?

AS: Eleven days old and so he kept her and took her home. [inaudible 27:29] rest of them. She takes a lot of **credit**.

E: Now, how old was she when he brought her here for you to see?

AS: I don't know about how old she was when she first came in here, but—

JS: Two weeks old.

AS: Two weeks old? I think she was two something—

E: But she must've been a beautiful little baby.

AS: Yes, she was a right nice little baby.

JS: Now she's eleven years old.

AS: Yes. She shared [inaudible 27:55]

E: Is that unusual for Catawba Indians to adopt the children from another Tribe?

JS: Kinda, yeah.

AS: Kinda, I think.

E: Do you know of any other adopted children down here?

JS: No way.

AS: No, ma'am. I don't know of any other [inaudible 28:10]

E: Now, Stephanie is a full-blooded Ute Indian.

AS: That's right.

E: Do you know of any full-blooded Catawba Indians on the reservation now?

JS: Yeah, you're looking at one. [Laughter]

E: Your husband is a full-blooded Indian?

AS: Mhm.

E: And what about yourself?

AS: Well, I believe—

[Break in recording]

[End of interview]

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