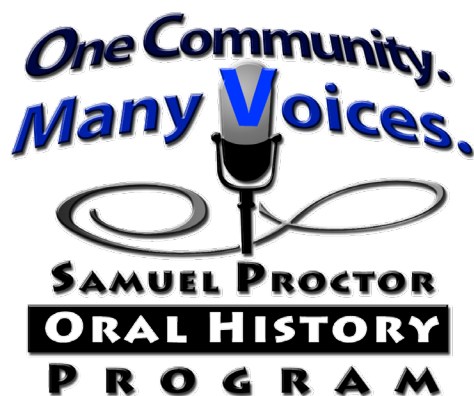


Gloria June Trimnal Bells

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-035**

**Monologue by:
Gloria June Trimnal Bells
June 10, 1972**



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CAT 035 Gloria June Trimnal Bells
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
Recorded on June 10, 1972
23 minutes | 8 pages

Abstract: Gloria Bells, great-granddaughter of Chief Samuel Taylor Blue, speaks about her experiences as an Indian throughout her life. She discusses the importance of her Indian blood in her place in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and discusses the lack of medical care available to her growing up on a reservation. She discusses her opinions on the importance of education today. She also talks about her opinions on the opportunities afforded to Indians today, and the relationship of White people to the Catawba over time.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; Chief Samuel Taylor Blue; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Mormon Church; Education]

SAMUEL PROCTOR
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University of Florida

CAT 035

Speaker: Gloria June Trimnal Bells

Date of Interview: June 10, 1972

U1: I'm gonna count again.

B: This is June 10, 1972. I'm at the home of my mother, Mrs. Virginia Blue Trimnal, Route 3, Rock Hill, South Carolina. My name is Gloria June Trimnal Bells, age thirty-four. My mother is part Indian, my father is White. I have two children who are not Indian at all. They are adopted. I live in California, near Los Angeles. I'm about one-sixteenth Indian, on my mother's side of the family. My complexion is fair, my hair is dark and so are my eyes. I do not resemble the Indians.

[Break in recording]

U1: [inaudible 1:44] now it's recording.

[Break in recording]

B: For it by the government. During my young childhood, I don't remember playing any real Indian games. The only real thing I can recall is being around my great-grandfather, Samuel Taylor Blue. Many times he would show us how to dance around the fire and put on his feathers and his beads and sometimes tell us a few Indian words, which I don't remember. I never attended any classes pertaining to the Indians. I never attended the government school that was provided for the Indians. I always attended public schools. I was never discriminated against. When we lived in town, we walked to school. When we moved to the new reservation after our home was built, we rode the bus or either drove the car to school. Didn't have buses at that time. I graduated from high school in Rock Hill and went on to graduate from college at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. I never attended any of the schools that were provided for by the government. After graduating from college, I went on a mission for the

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. An eighteen-months, in what is called a Central States Mission, spending part of my time in Nebraska, in Kansas, and also Missouri. After completing there, then I returned to Brigham Young University for post-graduate work, whereupon I met my husband and was married, and we later went to California to live. My husband is Floyd Wayne Bells. He's from Danville, Illinois. We have two children that are both adopted, therefore they have no Indian blood in them. I've never had any problem with prejudice against my family or—I was never really taught to even marry an Indian. If I had married one, I'm sure it would have been fine with my family, but it never really mattered to me. I never really thought about it even being important, whether I married an Indian or not. My father is White, my grandmother is White, and therefore I guess that's the reason why. My husband and I have a good marriage. He's proud of the fact that I am part Indian, mainly because we share the same religion. And to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it's a great honor and a privilege to have Indian blood. We call it Lamanite blood, because of the history of the Book of Mormon, which tells of a people who came to this country. They left Jerusalem six hundred years before the birth of Christ and traveled across the water and came up through South and Central America. One of these—this man who led these people had a son named Laman who was not a good son, and they rebelled and spread off and became a warlike people with darkened skin and they were known as Lamanites, which is the same as Indians. And they were a very special people to God, and therefore this is why my husband is very proud that I am a descendent of these people. I think

education is terribly important. One can't make a decent living without it. One can't be a good citizen without education and knowing what's going on in the world. You can't be a good mother without being educated and knowing the proper and the best ways of raising your children and managing your home and the finances in which you're given to manage. The Indians, I feel, now can get a good education. I can remember the stories that my mother has told me that when she was a child, they were discriminated against, and I don't feel that they had the chance that they should have had at that time. But today I feel there's no excuse for them not to have a good education. If they are hardworking and have determination and faith in themselves and are willing to work hard, anybody can have a good education, I don't feel who they are. Having been away from the reservation for so many years, I'm not really familiar with who makes pottery anymore, or even who has the articles to sell. The only person I could really think of is Mrs. Arzada Sanders. For years, she has made Indian pottery and sold it. I can remember once, as a child, visiting down the road at the home of Ephraim George and learning how to make Indian pottery, which by the way has become a lost art, because there's not many who know how to do it anymore. But it's something that I wish that I had pursued and retained in my life. You ask why the Catawbas are not like Cherokees. I can't really answer this question authoritatively. I have been to Cherokee. I have known some of the people from Cherokee, especially at BYU. My impression of the differences, the fact that I would say they're more clannish than we have been. It seems that most of them has stayed together there in the one area, whereas the Catawba Indians have

spread out more and are almost becoming extinct, because they're not being together anymore the way the Cherokees seem to have always been. You ask, "Did Indians have good medical and dentist facilities?" I would have to say no, absolutely not. I myself had a serious health problem as a very young child, and the doctor that attended me was provided by the government. And I can remember when sugar pills were given for illness rather than good medicine. I myself was treated for problems other than the one that was present and came within a month of losing my life because of the negligence and inefficiency of the doctor that I had. And as far as dentist facilities, I can't recall there every having been any dental facilities for us. As I grew older, in my late teens, the government began to provide opportunities for vocational training, which some took advantage of but I can't really say—see where it was any great help to anyone, they probably didn't use it properly. As far as moneys to help families, I don't know about any money that was every given to any of them to help them. I was twenty-one myself at the time that the land was divided up, and I did get land. I chose the land rather than the money, because I felt that the land would eventually be of more value than the money. Because, as everyone knows, land improves in value with time, and this has certainly been the case. I have about two and a half acres of land near my mother now, which is directly behind the vocational school on Bypass 21 and has certainly risen in value from two or three hundred dollars an acre to probably two thousand dollars an acre, now. You ask also, "How could the government have helped Indians to be better educated and ready for jobs?" I think this works two ways. The government could have

provided better schools, perhaps they could have even erected one closer, because the Indians of course didn't wanna leave home to go away to school. They could have provided many good programs, but the point is the programs are no good unless the people want to take advantage of them and have enough ambition to be better educated and ready for jobs. So, I really don't know if it would have mattered, because later when the opportunity did come to get better educated and ready for jobs, hardly any took advantage of it. I don't think we can really blame the government for the lack of education and better jobs. The Whites have always treated me fairly. I only remember once in my life ever being mistreated because I was Indian, and it was a very ignorant child who did this to me. I was in the seventh grade, and we were studying the history of South Carolina. Therefore, my teacher had made it very plain to my class that I was found out as part Indian. However, I didn't look Indian, but they knew it because she had told them. And I remember one boy getting angry with me one day and calling me a dirty old Indian. But that's the only time in my life that I was ever mistreated because of my Indian blood. I think the Whites are prejudiced towards the Indians for two main things. First of all, I think that there had been times, and presently there are times, in movies where Indians are misrepresented. Another thing is they never seem to see the good side of the Indians, it's always generally the bad side. And in our case, in our Tribe, there have been very few that have been hardworking and ambitious enough to make something out of their lives. I can think of Black people like George Washington Carver, that people really admire and respect because of the hard work and the great contribution he made

to society. And I think of Indians like Jim Thorpe who was all-American and people admire and respect him for what he did and what he was. We even had a local person who was a great football player, Buck George, and people really looked up to him. They admired and respected him. So, when people are prejudiced against Indians, I think it's mostly their own fault. Except for this thing about their image being misrepresented as it is in movies very often. And I believe that this prejudice can be rectified if the Indians would take their place in society being fine upstanding citizens, taking care of their homes, having a good appearance and taking pride in their own appearance, taking advantages of opportunities to read and learn and to be good upstanding citizens, to pay their debts and not being forever hounded by creditors. This is another great problem that our people face, too many of them are not honest about the debts that they must pay. You ask, "Does protest help?" I would assume from this question that you are talking of the kind of protest that we are accustomed to in our day and time, and I am not in favor of violent protest. I am in favor of legal protest. If we want laws changed, then we should get petitions and have people sign them, write editorials in the papers, and this kind of protest. I don't believe in violence or sit-downs and demonstrations. We don't gain friends this way and we don't gain respect of others this way. Violence has never been the answer to any question. Voting does help, but we also have to take the responsibility of supporting the right people to vote upon. People mustn't take the attitude that it's no need to register and be qualified to vote because what's the use. It's all those people who don't vote that cause the bad guys to get in. I'm very much involved in church. It's

always been the hub of my life, and I remember my great-grandfather Chief Taylor Blue. The White people never took any interest in the Indians. They never did anything to help them. For years and years, they were looked down upon, ignored, almost cast out there on the reservation and treated badly by the White people. And then one day two young woman missionaries were chased by a mob crowd out of Rock Hill and onto the reservation, and they knocked on my great-grandfather's door. And when they taught him and his people the gospel, their lives began to change, they began to have more pride in who they were and what they were because they had heard the story of the Book of Mormon and how much the Lord loved his Indian children. And it was then that the White people began to notice the Indians. I feel from all that I have heard and have been told that they were jealous of what the Mormons had done for this people, therefore they were willing to move in and do their part and try to take over and it's been that way. I recall in my childhood how they used to send their missionaries trying to uproot the teachings of the Mormons and trying to convert them to their ways. They didn't try to do anything to help them until the Mormons came along. I'm very proud of being an Indian, as I have explained before, because I know why I am and who my people really are, and the favor that I have on the side of the Lord because of the blood that's in my veins. I have never been ashamed. I have been ashamed of the way that my people have behaved, but not ashamed of my heritage. Whenever they get drunk and are thrown in jail, or they don't pay their debts and they break the law, that's when I am ashamed. I think it's a silly question to ask whether I pull for Indians in movies. If he's a good guy, I'm for

him. If he's a bad guy, I'm not for him. And it doesn't matter whether he's an Indian or White or a Black, it all depends upon the circumstances. You ask, "Who was the greatest Indian?" I've no authority on that. Because I haven't known very many Indians. But I think my great-grandfather was a great man. Knowing that he had no education, and yet he was never afraid to fight for his people, whether it was to get them out of jail or to go to the state capital to 'em to speak to their rights. And the greatest White? I've done a great deal of reading about George Washington, and I feel that he is the greatest White man that's ever lived. He was a God-fearing man. He was a generous man who had a great deal and shared what he had. This is the end of my dialogue, and the conclusion of my feelings concerning the questions that have been asked of me.

[End of interview]

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