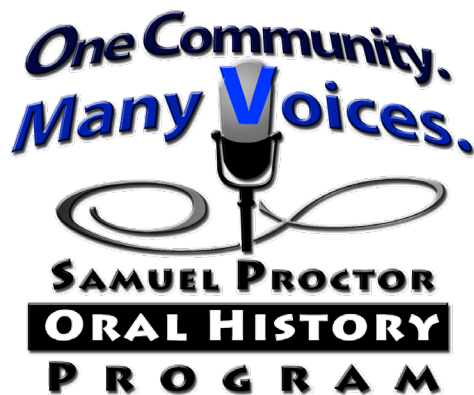


Lula Blue Beck

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-166**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
September 6, 1992**



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 166 Lula Blue Beck
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10 minutes | 9 pages

Abstract: At eight-seven years old, Lula Beck is one of the last living children of Chief Samuel Taylor Blue. Lula speaks about her family and remembers some of her teachers. She speaks about the community and shares some of her memories of her upbringing on a farm and of the death of Thomas Stevens. She discusses a recent fall she suffered that put her in a wheelchair and credits her overall good health to growing up on a farm. Beck ends the interview by describing how she stills gets to church after her fall and asking the interviewer to come back some time in the future.

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

SAMUEL PROCTOR
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CAT 166

Interviewee: Lula Blue Beck

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: September 6, 1992

E: Charlotte, North Carolina. I live at Sharon Towers, 5150 Sharon Road, and I'm visiting down on the Catawba Reservation a very, very special lady. On the wall of this clean little house is the picture of the Chieftain—the famous Chieftain, Sam Blue. He has his feather headdress on that he came back with from out West and he is smiling and looking out into the future. And with me here is his oldest daughter. She's now eighty-seven years old and in a wheelchair because she had a little fall. But she still has a twinkle in her eye and she still has lots of things to talk about. Lula, where were you born?

B: I was born here on the reservation.

E: On the reservation.

B: On May 3, 1905.

E: May 3, 1905. And your father was?

B: He was Chief Sam T. Blue.

E: And your mother was?

B: Lou Isaac Blue.

E: They're both gone?

B: Yes.

E: I remember your father especially. I remember he would come to the orthopedic school and do that famous Indian war dance. Then he set a wonderful example in the church here and out West, also. Though he didn't learn to read or write, he knew the Bible and he quoted long passages. When they had a funeral down here on the reservation, did he preside?

B: Yeah, and he preached a lot at the funerals mostly.

E: And he quoted the Scripture, didn't he?

B: Uh-huh.

E: You didn't have a bell. How did they call people to come when there was a death?

B: Well, you know, he had a big old automobile rim and he'd take his old sledgehammer and beat on that. And there was a bell in the old schoolhouse. He would go up there and ring it.

E: Then the people would know to come.

B: Yes, whenever they'd hear that sound, they'd know something had happened.

E: And the old well is right here in the front that you—the Tribe used to get water from.

B: Yeah, and I'm living in the old Chief's house—

U: Yeah, but—

E: And your father and mother lived in this house?

B: Mmhm, yeah. This was where we was all raised.

E: This is called "old house."

B: Mmhm.

E: How many children did your father have? Your brothers and sisters.

B: Well, Mama, you know, Mama birthed twenty-one kids and my daddy had three by his first wife. That'd be twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, that'd be twenty-four, wouldn't it?

E: Now, there are three of you left. Tell me the three.

B: There is Elsie, and Leroy, and myself, Lula.

E: And you're the oldest?

B: Yes, I'm the oldest, and Leroy is the next, and Elsie.

E: Now how many children do you have?

B: I had four.

E: You had what?

B: Four.

E: Four!

B: I had two boys and two girls.

E: They live close around here with you?

B: Well, Louise is dead now. She died—there was just seven months between her and her daddy's death. And Buddy lives up here next to Neely's store. He's got a house over there. And Lily she lives right up here in this little **house**. She's the baby one, Lily was. She lived on up there.

E: Well, you raised a fine family. Tell me about your school days. Who was your first teacher?

B: I believe Ben Harris was my first teacher. He was a Indian, you know. Yeah, I think he was my first teacher.

E: It was a tiny little school right down here.

B: Right up on this old road there, yeah.

U: Yeah.

B: Listen, sugar.

E: Yes.

B: But I believe it caught on fire and burned down, and Sammy Beck's got him a house built down there. He did have a trailer there but felt like building a house—

E: Were there just a few children at school when you started to learn to read?

B: I don't know how it was. I can't remember the way back—I guess I heard my daddy and ma tell me. Mr. Ben Harris, I don't know what kind of education he had, but—

E: But Ben Harris was your first teacher. They tell me he was a full-blooded Indian.

B: Yeah, I think he was.

E: He learned to read from a Miss Culp who lived up on top of the hill. I don't know who she was. He used to pick out letters out of a newspaper and learned to read.

B: I suspect you know a lot more than I do. [Laughter]

E: [Laughter] Well, that's what someone told me. I'm just the—

B: Have you talked with Roger Trimnal over here?

E: A little bit, yeah.

B: He knows a lot. He comes over here and asks me a lot. He brings pictures here that I don't know. He brought a picture here yesterday, it's two women. He said, "It look like they're sittin' there at the old well when we used to have the old [inaudible 4:35] It looked like they're sitting there." He said one of them said she was a Carlisle and the other one was a Gordon. I didn't know there was Gordons here.

E: The Gordan was a—

U: **Mawmaw, mawmaw.**

B: What?

U: The stove's hot.

B: Oh, okay. No, I'll be with you in a minute, in a minute.

E: Your mother made pottery. Did you make pottery, too?

B: I've tried, but I can't make—I haven't made any since I got crippled but I have some, a bit. Well, I'm sure—whenever they're going to have this here thing up here.

E: Well, your husband was Major Beck.

B: Mmhm, Major Beck.

E: He was a fine-looking person and he joined the church recently, didn't he, before his death?

B: And he was a carpenter, you know, mostly. Well, he farmed. He joined church when he was eighty-one, I think.

E: After you had that first teacher, who was your next teacher at school?

B: I don't know how many years he taught but I think there was a man from Lesslie taught us. His name was **Sip** Lesslie, I think. I don't know and then there was another woman, her name was—she was a white woman too, but I can't think of her name. After them, Rosie Wheelock, Doris's and Mildred's momma, you know?

E: Yeah.

B: She taught school a long time. But I don't remember.

E: I miss Doris Blue and some of those ones that have gone on.

B: We all do.

E: And in the government building, Frances Wade is still in charge of it?

B: Oh, and it looks good up there and they're still going to build more up there. It looks real good.

E: They're doing a good job on it.

B: Yeah, they have. Mildred's working up there—buddy, you goin' fall—Mildred's working over there too and they're doing real god.

E: Well, it's beautiful down there. The new treaty with the land settlement, it won't affect you or will it?

B: I don't know a thing about it. That's one thing, I never did go to those meetings and thing. I don't like to be like that, I said there.

E: Well, you just want to be medically and physically taken care of and that's it.

B: Yeah, that's all I look for now.

E: And you got some wonderful memories of the past?

B: I hope I have some. [Laughter]

E: What do you remember most about the past, the good days?

B: Well, I guess some of 'em was good days and bad. The more good old days when I used to farm. I was raised on a farm and I said I reckon that's one of the reasons I'm so tough.

E: Yeah.

B: When I went to the doctor, he's talking to me and he says, "I don't know how you was raised, but you've really got a strong body." And I said, "I'm a old Indian, anyway." And he laughed, and he said, "Yeah, I know." But our church teaches us not to drink coffee and tea and tobacco and stuff. And they gave me a

physical examination and everything, the x-rays, and he said I had a clean, pure body. I think that's what's keeping me a-going, you know.

E: Well, you still got that wonderful spirit.

B: Yeah.

E: Do you remember the old Indian Thomas Stevens?

B: I remember 'em talking about him. They said he was either born in 1905 or died in 1905. He's—

E: He's buried on top of the hill.

B: Yeah. And on his tombstone, it's got his age on there. But I've heard 'em—

E: They said he froze to death.

B: That's what they said, that he froze to death.

E: Well, your father—so the story goes—when the message came of Thomas Stevens's death, he got a wagon and they went down and picked up the body and brought it back.

B: Mhm. And they said Sally Beck and my sister Lily went along and sung songs when they was comin' back, but I don't know. I've just heard what they told me.

E: Is Lily Beck living?

B: No, that was my sister, you know. She died. I believe she died before I ever got married.

E: Do you remember any of the songs you used to sing in church?

B: Well, we all got the same old songs.

E: Same thing we always sing.

B: Yes.

E: Do you get to go to church now? You have to go in your wheelchair?

B: Yeah, I go, and I hate to do that because they have to roll. But my son-in-law, he's just as good to me as he can be—well, all my children are. They roll me in there and get me a place to sit down. I haven't been but twice since I got my leg hurt. But last night, I get nauseated be here all by myself. I get to **thinking** about what I could do, what I used to do, and it just bothers me, gets me aggravated. But Sunday morning, I got up kind of late and they had church at 9:00 and, well, they had to get me ready by that time. And I went to church, and I was feeling pretty good up in there. But sometimes, my leg gets to hurting me and I get the fidgets, you know. Donna looked and said she could tell I wasn't resting good, so she brought me home. And I've just been to church but I'm goin' go Sunday. There's one elder—he's going home in about two weeks—he's been here two years and a half. And he always comes here to see me and he'd watch me come here and talk. I think it's Sunday, and I'm going to try to **roast** him—

E: Lula, I'm proud to have known you and your family. I know so many of 'em. And I remember your father—I didn't remember your mother, but I remembered your father, so many good things about him. Then, you know, it's amazing and wonderful to me that we White people have friends. You're my friend and we know that.

B: See, because we've always been together.

E: And there are lots of friends around here that's the same way. Well, I will be thinking about you and God bless you.

B: And to tell you the truth, I've thought about you a lot, too. And as I saw you that day, I told Donna, "I believe that was her," and Donna said, "I think it was her, too," but I said, "She didn't see us." I said, "You'd have come to speak to her."

E: I didn't see you. I'd run to speak to you.

B: Yeah. Well, I'm sure glad. Come back again. Are you doing anything, or are you just home now?

E: I'll come back again to see you.

B: I mean, you stay in town now?

E: I'm in Charlotte in a retirement home.

B: Oh, are you?

E: But I'm goin' come back down to see you real soon again.

B: Well, you do. You come back and see all of us. I know that I would be glad to see you.

E: You'll always be here.

B: Yeah.

E: And I want to bring you the picture that I have of your father. I couldn't find it last night, but I'll find it and I'll bring it back to you.

[End of interview]

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