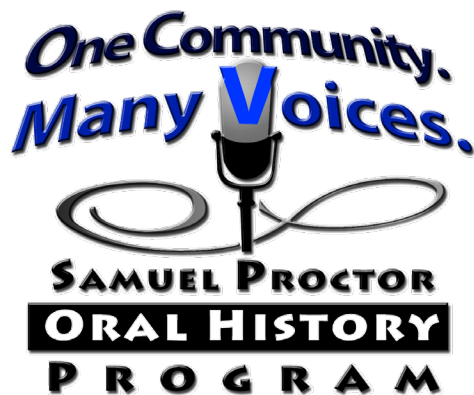


Eric Gerome Canty

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-074**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
August 1, 1973**



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CAT 074 Eric Gerome Canty
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
Interviewed by Emma Reid Echols on August 1, 1973
10 minutes | 9 pages

Abstract: Eric Gerome Canty talks about his educational experience over the course of his life, starting from school on the reservation to Lesslie to Castle Heights and finally to Rock Hill High. He then talks about the jobs he has held as a carpenter and as a bus driver for the school district, a position four of his close relatives held before him. Afterwards, he speaks about his church baseball team and how he feels about how Indians are treated today.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Education; Oral biography]

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
PROGRAM
University of Florida

CAT 074

Interviewee: Eric Gerome Canty

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: August 1, 1973

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Rock Hill, South Carolina, Route 6, Box 260. This is August 1, 1973. I am visiting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Canty and I am recording the oral history of the Catawba Indians. I am going to talk to their son who is a student at Rock Hill High School. Will you give me your full name?

C: Eric Gerome Canty.

E: Eric Gerome Canty. Where'd you get that name, Eric? You know how you happen to have it?

C: No, ma'am.

E: What about Gerome? How'd you get that name? I don't recognize it as being handed down through your family, I just wondered. That's a nice name. Now, were you born on the old reservation? Were your father and mother living on the old reservation when you were born?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: Now you're living on what we call the new reservation, or you're in the Springsteen Development, I suppose. Your father and mother own this six acres of land on which your home is situated and your garden. I notice you've been busy out in your garden helping prepare vegetables.

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: Now, tell me, when you were a little boy you went to school the first year on the old school on the reservation.

C: Yes, ma'am. I went to first grade.

E: Who was it teaching?

C: Miss Cornish and Miss Robinson.

E: Mrs. Cornish and Mrs. Robinson. After that you went to Lesslie. This was quite a change to go by bus to Lesslie. Had you ever ridden school buses before?

C: No, ma'am. The first time I rid in one was when I went to Lesslie.

E: Then a whole group of you went to Lesslie for the first time. What do you remember about how the other children treated you at Lesslie?

C: Well, they treated me all right. I got along with them all.

E: You got along with all of them.

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: When you played games at recess, did you Indian children play by yourselves and the White children by themselves?

C: No, ma'am. Whites and Indians played together.

E: That was good. Do you remember any special teachers at Lesslie?

C: Yes, ma'am, Miss Crawford. She was an English teacher.

E: I think she was a real friend to the Indians. She seemed to like you a whole lot, didn't she?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: You were there 'til you finished the seventh grade and then you went to junior high?

C: Yes, ma'am, I went to Castle Heights.

E: Castle Heights School. What do you remember about Castle Heights School?

C: When I started in there, I sort of didn't like it at first. The first year went by, the second year came and I started getting used to it then. My math teacher, he was

a colored man. He was good to me. He asked me about the Indians, too. There's this colored man came around, I guess he worked for a school district. He was talking to me, and he knew my father. Used to play with him down when he [inaudible 3:15] My father used to talk about him all the time.

E: You were sort of proud to be an Indian when people recognize this?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: Then from Castle Heights, where'd you go next?

C: Rock Hill High.

E: Rock Hill High. What teachers at Rock Hill High have been kind and helpful to you?

C: Miss Fields. Miss Fields told me about my grandmother, who used to come to Winthrop College and sell pottery up there. Says she bought some from her from the buggy. She says she still has pottery what she bought from her. And that's about all.

E: You'll have to go see Miss Fields sometime and buy that pottery back because I'd like for you to have some of your grandmother's pottery.

C: Miss Fields says she wouldn't sell that pottery to anybody.

E: She wouldn't! Not even to you?

C: No, ma'am.

E: Well, I know you'd love to have a piece of her pottery if you could have it. Did you do any reading or studying about the Indians when you were in school?

C: Yes, ma'am. When I went out here to Lesslie, I got a history book during first grade that had in it about Chief Blue and Nathan Blue.

- E: Do you find there's not very much written about the Indians?
- C: No, ma'am.
- E: Was there ever any unit, any regular course of study that the teachers taught about the Indians?
- C: About the Catawba Indians?
- E: About the Catawba Indians.
- C: No.
- E: What courses are you planning to take at high school now this coming year?
- C: Junior ROTC, and I'm taking math, English, and world history.
- E: What kind of work are you hoping to do when you get out of high school?
- C: I hope to be a carpenter. That's what I do now, and during the summers.
- E: Who are you working for this summer?
- C: Well, I was working for Mr. Lewis, now I'm working for Winn-Dixie.
- E: Winn-Dixie. **For when?**
- C: Part-time.
- E: Part-time at Winn-Dixie. You're glad to have a part-time job because you need clothes and things for school, don't you?
- C: Yes, ma'am.
- E: Do you drive a school bus during the winter?
- C: Yes, ma'am.
- E: That helps your education, too. How much do they pay you to drive a school bus?
- C: They pay me around 140 dollars every twenty days.

- E: 140 dollars every twenty days. That's good. That helps you, doesn't it?
- C: Yes, ma'am.
- E: Then, next June when you get your diploma, what are you going to do then?
- C: I haven't ever thought of it. I guess I'll go to work.
- E: Are you interested in mechanical work of any kind? Electrical or mechanical work of any kind. Several of your cousins are working for electrical companies and tire companies and things of that kind. I wondered where you'd find a job.
- C: Where I'd find a job at?
- E: Yes.
- C: I'd just do carpentry work. I just like it.
- E: You like that. You get in with a good company that'd be a good future for you. Have you ever had any difficulty with your schoolwork, any courses unusually hard for you?
- C: Yes, ma'am. Math, sometimes it seems like I can't do it, but I just study real hard and I usually pass.
- E: You're proud to be an Indian. What do you think about the future of all the Indian boys, you see lots of them here. What do you think about the future? Have you got a chance for the future?
- C: Yes, ma' am.
- E: You think most of you can get a job if you try hard enough?
- C: Yes, ma'am. My other brothers when they finished school went to work for the school district. I guess I'll get a job up there working, too, when I finish. All my

brothers drove a bus. This bus what we drive now has been in the family for about ten years.

E: Is that right?

C: Handed down from brother to brother.

E: Is that right? Now the Rock Hill School District really knows this Canty family then?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: Who were the brothers that drove the buses? Edward, the first one?

C: Yes, ma'am, Ed Canty. Well, my cousin Kurt Canty drove it first, then my brother Junior Canty, then Ed Canty, then Wallace Canty, and now I'm driving.

E: Five Canty boys have driven the bus! No wonder they like this Canty family in the Rock Hill School District! I knew that your oldest brother had a job in the school district, but I didn't realize you were headed in the same direction. Who do you know down in the school district that has helped you?

C: Mr. Hanford, he drove the buses, and Mr. Nightner—he's a colored man—he drove the buses. Those are the two finest men I ever knowed. They helped me out and I just like them.

E: That's wonderful.

C: And then there's Mr. Buddin, he was the principal down at Castle Heights. He's a fine man, too. I liked him. You can't find no better men than them.

E: Do you have any trouble with the discipline on the buses? The children misbehaving all the time?

C: No, ma'am.

E: That's wonderful that you're able to maintain your discipline too. What time do you get home with your bus in the afternoon?

C: I get home about fifteen after five.

E: Then you have to leave in the morning, what time?

C: Seven o'clock.

E: Seven o'clock. What do you do for vacation? Do you go to Cherokee, do you go to the mountains, or what do you do for vacation?

C: We go to Cherokee, North Carolina, for vacation. This summer we'll be going to Raleigh, North Carolina. We're having a softball tournament up there.

E: When you say, "we," you mean you have a team?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: An Indian team or what team?

C: All the Indian boys has a team down there, a church team, to play softball. We have to go to Raleigh this Saturday coming.

E: I didn't realize you had a softball team down there.

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: You play every week, then.

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: Who directs your team? Who's in charge of the group?

C: Right now, Mike Wheelock is in charge. He's the captain of the team, tells you what to do and all [inaudible 9:47]

[Break in recording]

E: Eric, how do you feel about how the Indians were treated years ago and how the Indians are treated today?

C: I thought the Indians way long ago was treated pretty bad, but it seems today they're treated all right. White people likes 'em more now. Seems like there's not going to be too many Indians left, they're mixing up with White now.

E: No any full-blooded ones left that you know of?

C: No, ma'am.

E: You're proud of your past, I believe, aren't you?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: You're proud to be an Indian.

C: Yes, ma'am.

[End of interview]

Transcribed by: Rayyan Merchant, September 19, 2021

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