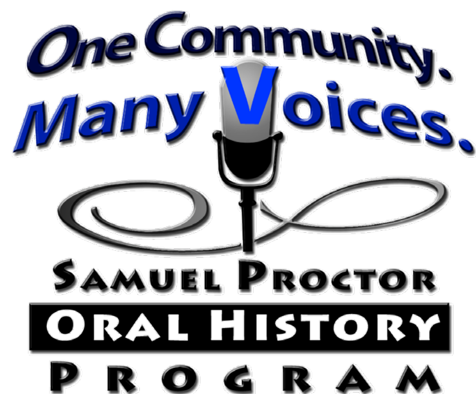
Landrum George

Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)

CAT-024

Interview by:

Leaborne Lee Whitesell
January 12, 1972



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CAT 024 Landrum George
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1 hour, 31 minutes | 44 pages

Abstract: Landrum George recalls early childhood memories, including a flood on the Catawba reservation. He talks about fishing in the Catawba River, his early school days, and baseball games at Catawba Junction. He remembers playing marbles and "Cowboy and Indians," and he talks about swimming across the river. He shares his knowledge about the division of Catawba land in the nineteenth century and how it relates to the modern settlement negotiations. He discusses his own military service and that of other Catawba. He recalls living through the Depression and his marriage to the Chief's daughter. He talks about the dynamic between government officials and the Catawba. Finally, he shares some of the natural remedies used by people on the Catawba reservation.

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

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CAT 024
Interviewee: Landrum George
Interviewer: Leaborne Lee Whitesell
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E: Landrum, I'd like for you to tell me about your days on the reservation—some of the things you did as a child and when you were young.

G: Well, I was born in Lancaster County, over near Van Wyck, which was a little town across the river from the Indian reservation. There was a ferry that they used to cross the river there, and we would come to church over—cross the ferry to come to church. Later on, we moved from over across the river back on the reservation, and that's when I started attending school. I was about eight years old, and that was the year that they had the big flood. You could see watermelons, cotton bales, and just about everything—couple houses—floating down the river. It seemed like about everybody on the reservation had gathered on this high **mold**, down near Aunt James's old house place there to look at the high water.

E: Do you remember any particular thing that happened to you during that time? Did you see the things coming down the river?

G: Yes, I saw these things, and every once in a while, you'd see a big tree or something—I guess it would hit the bottom of the river or the ground, and then it would shoot straight up and would protrude way out of the water.

E: Did you know why the water was high, why these things were floating down?

G: Well, it had rained quite a bit, and they didn't have control of the water like we do now. They didn't have the dams. The ones that farmed farmed around on the river there some, and they just took a chance, probably fifty-fifty. Some years they'd lose the crop from a lot of flooding, and some years they'd have good

crops. Land was real rich on the bottoms there, and it produced good. They would sometimes have to get in boats when the water would be up around the corner and pull it and haul it out in boats.

E: Do you remember how you felt about that, seeing the water so high and all these things coming down?

G: Well, I felt scared; it really scared me, you know, to be at that age and see all this. Some of 'em talking, say, "I see somebody dead floating down," which probably wasn't true, but something may look like somebody, you know.

E: Do you think the people on the reservation were kind of afraid, seeing all these things coming down?

G: Well, I think so, majority of 'em was. The men folks, later, they got jobs to go down and pull this cotton out of the places where it had drifted out and settled. They would get so much a bale; they'd pull it in where it could be hauled out again.

E: So, they actually made some money later from—?

G: They did. Seemed like people thought there'd be sickness because this water had come out so far and all this stuff settled.

E: Do you think there was, later, a lot of sickness?

G: Well, I don't think—not to no great extent. The water at that time was good fishing water there in the river. You could catch fish, and it was good to you. But now that this chemical and sewage and all that's going into the rivers, you can't eat the fish.

E: The river is now polluted? And this is the Catawba you're talking about, the Catawba River?

G: Yes.

E: You don't fish anymore now?

G: No, I haven't fished in years. I used to fish quite a bit.

E: About how long has it been polluted, to your knowledge—the Catawba?

G: My knowledge, I'd say it's been started over twenty years. And it started from across the river over in Sugar Creek, which comes from Charlotte, and some of the mills here, the dye and stuff would go into the river.

E: So, you haven't been able to fish for a good number of years now because of this pollution?

G: Well, we can fish above the dam here, which—the water's not as bad. Understand it's still polluted up there, but it don't have any effect on the fish.

E: Is there any other streams that you can fish in this area?

G: There's ponds that we have. We have a church pond down here. They have bass and grim.

E: Anybody that wants to can fish there?

G: Well, just the members.

E: Members of the church?

G: Members can fish there.

E: What else do you remember as a child? Now, going to school; where was the school located?

G: We had a little schoolhouse located about the middle, I'd say, of the reservation. At first it was a one-room building, a pretty large room. All the children went in this one room. They had different grades, and they'd go up to the front of the building there, to the teacher, and give their lesson on whatever assignment sheet their teacher would give 'em. I didn't go to school there long. I believe that I had four teachers during the time I went. I graduated when I was in the fifth grade. You didn't have to go to school. If you wanted to stay out of school, you could, and some of our boys and girls down there didn't go at all.

E: Do you remember what you studied in the first grade?

G: I don't remember the first-grade books, no; I don't remember what I did study in those books.

E: What about some of the later grades? Do you remember some of the books?

G: Well, we had arithmetic and spelling. And we'd have spelling contests, and we had arithmetic contests. I remember one particular contest we had where the teacher put up a quarter for the one that spelled the longest, and I won the quarter. But [inaudible 08:42] was in a higher grade than me, and it finally got down to two: me and another girl, who was Mary Brown. We spelled 'til I done got tired, and when she sat down, I spelled a few more words, and then I just missed a word because I done got tired. I probably could've went a little farther.

E: And did you win the quarter?

G: Yes ma'am, I won the quarter. I thought that was the biggest piece of money, 'cause a quarter at that time was—I'd say it would buy as much as a dollar or more now.

E: That was a big prize then, wasn't it?

G: It was.

E: Do you have any other recollections in your other grades, things that you did?

G: I remember our school closing. Every year when the school would close, they'd have what they'd call a school breaking, and they'd put programs on. At that time, there was more recitations that you would be given to cite. About all the children would do it, we'd say recitation. I remember one particular time that I had one to say, and I didn't want to say it, and I told my mother that I didn't have good enough clothes. So she went to town, and she got me a suit. I remember the little suit 'cause—big pants sets, you never see no long pants at that time, and that was the kind of clothes that we wore. And she told me and said, "Now, you can take your rathers; you can say it or take a whooping."

E: Did you say it?

G: I said it.

E: [Laughter] In your new clothes?

G: In my new clothes.

E: Any other things happen to you?

G: At one particular time there, I was going to Mrs. **Peable**, she was the teacher. Me and her son; her son was going, too. We got in a little fight there, and she whipped me. So, after she whipped me, I went home and told my mother.

E: What did you mother do?

G: Well, she come over, whipped the teacher. [Laughter] But she didn't. They, I think, had a few words, and that was about it.

E: Did the child get a spanking, too—the other one?

G: No, he didn't get one. He was a teacher's son.

E: And your mother knew that it wasn't fair for him to get by?

G: Yes.

E: Did you remember what you got into the argument over? Do you remember?

G: No, I don't. I don't remember what we did.

E: Was he an Indian child?

G: No, he was White. His mother was White.

E: Just a son, the teacher's school as well. And they allowed him to attend school, too?

G: She also had a girl in school.

E: Did you continue in school after that? You didn't let that stop you?

G: Oh, yeah, I went on after that. I may stay out a couple days, but that's about all.

E: Who were some of your other teachers?

G: Mrs. Debose was my first teacher. Rosie Wheelock was my second teacher. And Ben Harris, who was a Catawba. Rosie Wheelock was part-Catawba. And an elder which was a missionary, named [inaudible 13:07] he was my last teacher.

E: Do you recall any particular experiences under Mrs. Wheelock?

G: At one time when we had moved to Rock Hill, I moved, I went to the Wheelock's to stay to go to school 'cause we couldn't go to public schools, and that was the only school that we were privileged to go to.

E: You mean while you lived in Rock Hill, you had to come back on the reservation from Rock Hill to go to school?

G: That’s right.

E: They wouldn’t allow you to go to school.

G: No.

E: And you lived with the Wheelock’s?

G: I lived with the teacher, Mrs. Wheelock.

E: And she lived on the reservation at that time?

G: She lived on it, yes.

E: So, you could attend school.

G: Yes.

E: If children moved off the reservation, then, they had to come back?

G: If they went to school.

E: To go to school.

G: That’s right.

E: Do you recall when that stopped?

G: I don’t remember. I believe Robert Blue, Herbert Blue’s children, was about the first that went in Rock Hill. Later on, I believe Hayward Canty—he told me he was one of the first ones that rode the bus out of Catawba there to come to Rock Hill to school.

E: Would you think that many children didn’t get an education because they were too far from the school?

G: I think it was a handicap, too, in some ways. Some of ‘em, they just didn’t want to go.

E: Do you think that Indian parents pushed their children to go to school?

G: Well, some did, and some didn't.

E: What else happened to you in the schools? Anything that you might remember now? Any other experience you might like to think about? What were some of the games, for example, that you played?

G: Yes, we played ball there on the school ground. We usually had to make up balls though. It'd be a yarn ball. We'd get yarn and make us a ball. We'd put a little rubber ball in the center of it, which would make it—when you hit it, it wouldn't go far.

E: You actually took your own yarn and made the ball?

G: We made the ball, yeah.

E: What did you do to finish it?

G: Well, we would sew it. We'd take a needle and thread and sew it to keep from it unraveling.

E: Sew it to a cover?

G: No, no cover. You just sewed the yarn together. You'd roll it hard, and then you'd sew it, keep from letting it ramble; the thread would hold the yarn together. But after you beat it a few times, it would get **frazzled**.

E: Come undone, you'd have to make another?

G: Well, mostly everybody would have his ball. The boys would play at home some, too.

E: Was it common, then, for the boys to make their own balls so that all have one?

G: Sometimes we might appoint one to make a ball, you know.

E: Was baseball popular?

G: Yes. Now later on, after we got to playing baseball, we'd buy baseballs and play. We had some good teams there. I remember we had one diamond down on the river bottom. The upper land was so rocky that the rocks would cut the balls. We'd buy a new ball, and it wouldn't last very long. But after we got down in the bottoms where there wasn't no rock, our balls would last longer. We'd even walk to Catawba and play down in Catawba Junction. We had a team down there, and the Catawba Indians would go to Catawba Junction to play down there, and we'd walk, which was about four or five miles, and we didn't think anything about it. Everybody in the reservation just about it, had a wagon and a way to go, they would go to the ball game 'cause that was about the only recreation that they had for their adults, you know. They had some dances later.

E: You mean the adults and children, just everybody would turn out to watch the ball game?

G: Everybody.

E: Did you start in the mornings and just make it an all-day thing?

G: No, we'd usually play about two o'clock. Get through a game and have time to get home before dark.

E: How did you fare? Did you play in these ball games?

G: Well, I played, and I played very well. After I moved to Rock Hill, I played on some teams over here. I played with the Catawba Indians, and I played with the Catawba Junction team, and I played with the Van Wyck team, which played in the county league. All of it in one week. I'd play different days, and I played with at least three teams. Brother Douglas Harris, he was one of the Catawba

pitchers. When we played over at Van Wyck in the county league there, the Lancaster County league, we played twenty-six games and won twenty-four out of the twenty-six.

E: That's a good record.

G: And the two games that we lost was the two games that I didn't catch.

E: So actually, you played twenty-four games, and your team won twenty-four. Now this is on a county level; I mean, was this more than a few kids? This was pretty big—

G: Oh, we had eight teams. Eight teams in the county that played in this league.

E: What position did Douglas Harris play?

G: He was a pitcher.

E: And you did the catching?

G: I was the catcher.

E: Just how good were you?

G: Well, I never thought I was as good as people thought I was. There was some scouts, which was Gatlin's—they were the Washington Senators, who had a team over in Charlotte known as the Charlotte Hornets. They'd come down, and he did and looked over the players, you know, and I was invited to go up and try out the last twenty games of the season with the Charlotte Hornets. Then if I made the grade, I would then sign with maybe some lower team or maybe with them. But I got married, and I hurt my arm. I was tagging a fella coming home, and I was looking for him to slide. Instead of him sliding, he just kept running, and I stuck my arm between his legs, and it knocked a ligament in my arm

somewhere, and I couldn’t throw as good as I did before. So, I wouldn’t go, ‘cause I didn’t think I would’ve made it.

E: So, you never really know for sure whether you would’ve made it or not, but your arm did bother you some.

G: It did, and it still bother me. I mean, a certain way that I move it, yeah.

E: What about Douglas Harris, the pitcher?

G: Well, Douglas, he was a good pitcher. I don’t know how many teams he did play with. I know one time, a manager from Pageland, South Carolina, which is in the **Sandhill League**, with me and Douglas to go over to Marsh Hill, North Carolina. They was playing a double-header on the Fourth of July. We went over and played in the morning, then we played in the afternoon. They had a big picnic at noontime. And we got paid for it. I mean, we made a little money later on. It didn’t make me a whole lot of money, but we get paid so much for each game we played when we was playing with different teams.

E: So, you actually were able to play baseball for money?

G: Yes.

E: How about Douglas Harris? Did he ever get any offers, too, like you?

G: I don’t think that he ever did get any offer to go further up. Course, he had offers of jobs to go to different places to play and work.

E: While we’re on the subject of baseball, didn’t Douglas Harris have some boys who were good, too, in baseball?

G: Yes. He had two boys, Floyd and Dewey. Floyd was a pitcher. He pitched 'til he hurt his arm. He was a pretty good pitcher at one time, but he hurt his arm and

had to quit. And his young boy, Dewey, he was a good ball player. He went somewhere for a period of time with a big-league team; I mean, you know, one of their farm teams. He tried out, he stayed quite a while, and I think probably got homesick more than anything else, and he come back. And then later on, he got to play a little softball, and he was good on it. I think his present job up in Ohio was given to him just because of his ball playing.

E: Looking back for a minute about baseball: Are Indians good ball players?

G: Well, it seems to be a majority of 'em is good players. Seemed to me that they moved faster—they can run faster than the average ball player. I don't know why; maybe it's because they hunted, I guess, could be.

E: Do you think they like sports?

G: Oh, yes. Whenever we'd have a game, everybody in the reservation would be there.

E: Do you think they liked baseball because they were fast and were good at it?

G: No, I don't think it was that. I think it was more of the sport, of the game.

E: They would probably play then, even if they hadn't of been as good.

G: That's right.

E: How about some other games when you were young?

G: Well, we played about the usual games that other children played around. We'd play hide-and-seek. We played a little basketball when we were in school but not like it is now, you know; mostly we played outdoors, and we didn't have to follow the rules too close.

E: You mentioned something to me about a pot game—a game you played using Catawba pottery.

G: The teacher, at the closing of school time, right when school closed, she had took one of them pottery and tied it up to the limb of a tree on a string and put two or three apples in it. Then she would blindfold someone and turn him around and around and give him a stick and tell him to hit the pot. And if he hit the pot, he would get what he knocked out. At one particular time there, they blindfolded Albert Sanders, and **Ron Decaddy**, he come running up there and hollering at Albert, saying, “Here it is! Hit it right here!” And Albert holed off and hit Ron beside the head instead of the pot.

E: He was following the sound of his voice, I suppose.

G: He was.

E: Do you ever recall playing any other games with pottery or using it as a container?

G: No, we never played around about pottery. But at one time there, even the men—not the older men but middle-aged men, they would play—we played marble. We’d have a lot of time, I mean, the lazy times; there wasn’t too many jobs, and a lot of men would be out of work. And we would get over there at the schoolhouse or on the church yard there, and we’d shoot marble. And we’d shoot two or three hours a day, and then we’d pitch horseshoes and got games like that, about the same thing as some of the country boys have now.

E: What kind of marbles did you use?

G: About the same we had here, they seem like they broke more easy at that time.

E: Did you make your own out of clay?

G: No. They had a little old clay marble they called a “pea dab.” We didn’t use those too much ‘cause it was too small, and it was too light.

E: You just use regular marbles. Did you have tournaments with the marbles?

G: No. Maybe we might team up on one or two of ‘em sometime, might win the games. We had other games, too. They’d go down to the bottoms there and had two or three old horses, and they’d play cowboy.

E: Cowboy and Indian? [Laughter]

G: Cowboy and Indians. They’d be in sand, you know, and they’d ride these horses up through the sand, and one that shooting, he’d fall right off of that horse in the sand. He would actually do it.

E: Who wanted to be the cowboys? Did you have trouble getting somebody being a cowboy?

G: No, no trouble. There wasn’t nobody—seemed like the majority of ‘em liked to ride better than to be the cowboy, they want to be the Indian, you know.

E: So, in the game, whoever rode the horses could be the Indians?

G: Indians or cowboys, sometimes—

E: Oh, you just decide, sometimes the cowboy can—. You didn’t have any trouble deciding who was gonna be who?

G: No. Sometimes they may not wanna be the cowboys, you know, they’d rather be the Indians.

E: Did the Indians win sometimes?

G: Well, it's about even you know. Same old group. Those horses, they'd give out, they'd be riding 'em so much. And we'd go in swimming. We used to swim a lot there in the river, which was a good exercise. I don't know of Indian boys over there that drowned.

E: All of 'em were good swimmers?

G: Good swimmers. It didn't take 'em long to swim. And the older men would go in there. I remember at one particular time—they called him Bowleg. His name was Billy, but they called him Billy Bowleg. He went down there, and he just got his clothes off and jumped in the river and swam across—the river was about two or three hundred feet wide—and swam across, turned around, and come back. Put his clothes on and said, "Now, you boys don't try that."

E: [Laughter] But you admired him though, didn't you?

G: Sure did. And I swam the river several times.

E: Is there a current in that river?

G: Oh, yeah. You can follow the current. You can't hardly swim straight across. You've got to follow the current and go angled.

E: You have to be a pretty strong swimmer then?

G: Well, you would if you keep right, follow the current and go across, 'cause there are a lot of rocks there, and it's swift.

E: Did you learn to swim at an early age?

G: Well, I don't really know when I did learn. I think I learned in the **Branks**, down that way, the dammed-up place, you know? Played in there.

E: Do you think most parents made it a point to teach their children to swim?

G: I don't know—I guess they did, 'cause there was a lot of 'em that did fishing, and they needed to learn how to swim.

E: Do you think you spent a good bit of time on the river?

G: Yes, we used to fish quite a bit.

E: How did you fish? With a line and a pole, or—?

G: Yes. Most of the time, people would fish with a line and a pole, especially right after the rain, when they couldn't be farming. There were several farms around there. And when the water got up a little bit, the fish got stirring, and they'd go fishing. And some fished—I mean, Lewis Gordon. He was a man that fished about all the time. Nelson, my wife's father, he fished quite a bit. And they used trot lines—stretched 'em across the river and weighed 'em down and go on and let them catch fish.

E: Did they eat fish regularly?

G: Well, they'd eat fish about every time they could get 'em, 'cause they were good fish at that time.

E: Could they fish in the wintertime, too?

G: Yes, they could fish. I don't think there was too many of 'em fished in the wintertime. Seemed like to me, at that time, the water was colder than they are now.

E: They just didn't do as much fishing then.

G: Well, there was hunting, you know. **Landon**, he liked to hunt.

E: You think maybe they sort of fished in the summertime and hunted in the winter? Might be—

G: Well, they farmed—some of them farmed; some of ‘em hauled wood in the winter. I’d say there was a third of ‘em that did farming; not on a big scale ‘cause they didn’t have too much land to farm, and neither did they have the means to recoup it.

E: What kind of crops did they grow?

G: They‘d grow corn and cotton, and they’d have watermelons, vegetables.

E: Did they ever do any truck farming or anything with the trucks?

G: No, I don’t know of any of ‘em that did any truck farming. They may have had several good gardens and may have sold some around a bit.

E: Where did they grow their corn? Do you remember?

G: Well, in the ground—lay it off in rows, and then they’d plant the corn. At that time, I didn’t have a corn planter. They’d drop it, drop it in a little fore and then cover it over with a plow.

E: Do you recall using any special kind of fertilizer or anything?

G: They used compost, which they had in the farm. They’d buy this fertilizer; I don’t know it, it’s not at a high grade, either. They had to use fertilizer up there on the land for cotton. ‘Cause the land was very poor there on the reservation.

E: They didn’t have good land at all?

G: There was one man come ‘round and tested the soil. Up on the road, he took one out at little off the Road and one up on the bank, and they was both about equal. So, there wasn’t much soil there. And I think one of the things, too, that made the soil wash away was the fires. They’d burn off the reservation; regularly, it would be burned off.

E: What do you mean by that?

G: They just set fires to it, you know, in the bottom land there and burn it off. Maybe go down--and several of ‘em with guns—and run the rabbits out of the thick place where we’d farm, and they’d kill ‘em.

E: You mean they burned fires to chase the animals out?

G: Right.

E: And then when the animals came out in the clearing, they would shoot ‘em.

G: The woodland got so low there, it wasn’t but just a very little woodland there on the reservation. Was just more or less scrub, oak and stuff.

E: Now, they didn’t burn areas where there were trees, too, did they?

G: Well, there wasn’t no trees to amount to anything. It’d burn; sometimes, it would get out and burn all of it, the whole reservation there, just about. And it kept the wood cut down so that there wasn’t any. It was just about all gone.

E: You remember, then, that the trees were about all cut down? And that it was just scrubby trees that were growing?

G: Well, and a little scrub brush, you’d say. Some would come up from the stumps of the trees which had been cut down. Now, down there, they’ve got real good timber on the reservation. There haven’t been no fires out in there, and if one get out, the fire department will be there in a little bit and put it out.

E: Do you think burning the fire to get the animals flushed out in the open was a help, or did it in the long run hurt the land?

G: It hurt. It hurt the land. It hurt the hunting, ‘cause it killed out the undergrowth that they had to have protection, you know, to live and graze.

E: Do you think they knew it was hurting the land at the time they did it?

G: Well, I believe, I don't know. Seemed like to me it was just every winter thing that it would happen.

E: Did it make hunting a lot easier?

G: Well, it cleared it off. I mean, you didn't have to hunt. You'd come out, you know.

E: But then, probably the next few years, it made it a little bit harder probably to get the game. Is game plentiful down there now?

G: I don't think there are too many rabbits anywhere around in the county now. What I refer is the quail, and they have a few deer down there, which we hadn't had in years.

E: You think you'll ever see the time when you can hunt deer on the reservation?

G: You can hunt them now—a certain season, it's open. In York County, you can go down there and hunt 'em—not in big numbers, maybe four or five that comes in.

E: Do you think that they will increase? Are they growing more deer? Building stands for the deer?

G: Yes, they get more plentiful. I don't know what'll happen to the reservation. It's in trust to the state. Six hundred and forty acres, the whole reservation there that's in trust to the state. And the state gets to see fit if they want to give it back, then there won't be a acre a head.

E: You're thinking now that if that six hundred and—how many acres?

G: Forty.

E: Six hundred forty acres were divided, it wouldn't mean much.

G: No, it wouldn't. There's about six hundred would share in it.

E: So, you think maybe each Indian would get an acre.

G: He'd get an acre, and some of 'em would get bottomland.

E: Do you think the state will ever give that land to the Indians?

G: Well, I don't know. Seem like to me, the Indians is just about played out, you may say, down there. We don't have no full Indians on the reservation. I think in another generation, we won't have any Indians or Catawbas.

E: Do you think it's better that the state keep this for Indians that would want to go there and live or hunt?

G: Well, I think it would be better for 'em to keep it, 'cause maybe they want to—any Indian can go down in there now and claim off a place and build him a home if he's able. We have the graveyard there, the cemetery, and I think it should be left just like they got it.

E: How did it ever come about in the first place? That this land got divided and leased and given away or sold or whatever—do you know the story on that?

G: I've heard, and I've read some about it. Around 1840, or [18]43 or [18]42 or somewhere along there, the state leased a hundred and forty-four thousand acres from the Catawbas, which included from the old reservation, which is in River Bend section down there, to Rock Hill; Fort Mill was in it. They leased this land for ninety-nine years, and they sold it, were gonna wait 'til people settled on it. The city built on it. They appropriated so much money every year that—down in Columbia there, the general assembly—to give to the Indians for the lease, so much a year. And it would increase. I believe at one time, we wasn't getting over five hundred dollars, and I believe that the last time they pay, it had then got to

about nine or ten thousand dollars before the lease was up. Along then, [18]43 or [18]44, the state appropriated seventy-five thousand dollars to buy land for the Catawbas. They turned it over to the federal government to make the settlement. When there was land bought up, there was eight or ten thousand acres. I don't know exactly how much land was bought to six hundred and some acres here on the old Freedom track; about three thousand on the old Springsteen, and there was some joining the old reservation there. Each head that was on the roll in 1943 was entitled to an equal share. Everyone in the roll received the same amount. That was according to where you took your land. If you was up here, it would average a hundred and twenty-five dollars an acre, and you was allowed the value of three hundred dollars. If you got a corner lot on the blacktop, which would've been one acre, three hundred dollars. So, I'd say one-third told you could take money, and the rest take land 'cause the land was all divided up. They took the remainder of the land and sold it to the highest bidder. [inaudible 45:10] was supposed to take money, which would equal three hundred dollars. When they sold the land, they'd come up and say they all got six hundred dollars, which was really right in dividing 'cause we didn't get—

[Break in recording]

G: —Catawbas in 1840s.

E: Do you know what happened, why the state later claims that they bought this land from the Catawba Indians?

G: No. It was just leased for ninety-nine years.

E: To your knowledge, then, you don't know that the state ever bought the land.

G: No.

E: If the state of South Carolina leased the land, or if they bought the land from the Catawbas, either one, how do you account for the fact that many individuals—for example, the Spratt family in Fort Mills—leased land from individual Indians?

G: Well, it wouldn't be legal if they did. If they did, they probably leased it before they leased the land to the state.

E: If individuals--?

G: If any individuals—but I don't see how they could if the state had leased this hundred and forty-four thousand acres, and the Spratts lived in this area, then I don't see how they could've leased the land from them.

E: There's been a lot of dissension and a lot of discussion over this. To your knowledge, has it ever been settled to anybody's satisfaction?

G: I don't think it's been really settled to suit everybody. Now, they had a settlement in 1961, and each individual got so much land or so much money, either risked seventy-five thousand that the state appropriated and give to the federal government to get this settlement. We had a choice to take land or money, which wasn't very much at three hundred dollars per head or that value in land.

E: What's your personal opinion about the settlement?

G: I think it was a good thing. I don't think they got as much as they should, but in making the settlement, it gives the Catawbas more privilege. That is, they was even able to pay tax, which a lot of people don't like to pay, but since they started paying tax, they have the road blacktopped through the reservation, which has been one of the good things about it.

E: I wanna ask you something about the pottery. Why is it that no Indian men make pottery?

G: Well, they didn't like the work. Indian men, what they did was fish and hunt; and they was lawyers, they was the ones that went to law. A squall's done the work.

E: And so even today, they just refuse to make pottery?

G: Well, I think today, they don't know how. And I don't think they would. I don't know, they just seem—they just don't take a knack to it.

E: Do you think that the men would make it if they thought the other men wouldn't kid 'em about it?

G: I don't think it'd be anything like that. It just seems like people are more civilized. They got better jobs, they make more money, and this pottery, you don't make too much money making it, and it's a long, drawn-out thing. You've got to go get the clay, you've got to put patches, you've got to pick the gravel out of it, you've got to strain it, and I don't know what all you have to do; and then after you build it, you scrape it, you rub it, you heat it, then you burn it. It's a long process to make good pottery.

E: Do you think that pottery helped the Indian a lot in the past?

G: It did at one time. That was about the only income that some of 'em had. They would build up pottery and then they'd go out and, as they called it, they'd go trading. They didn't have to take money, I mean, a lot of times they'd take groceries and clothes and things like that, and a little money to—.

E: What do you remember about World War I?

G: Well, I remember seeing the some—the Catawbas that went in service after they'd come back on furlough and even after the war was over. They wore these wrapped leggings, you know, there's a little legging wrapped around your legs. And this hat was, looked more like me, a ranger hat that they wore, had these two little balls on it. I remember that about the uniform. The Catawbas, we had—I don't know how many exactly went to World War II. I guess it was six or eight that went to World War I.

E: Were they drafted? Do you know?

G: I think some was drafted and some volunteered. I believe they wasn't all drafted.

E: Did you serve in World War II?

G: Yes, I was in World War II for—I was in service thirty-six months. I was in European theater eleven months.

E: How did you get into the service?

G: Well, at one time, I belonged to the National Guards. One day, me and a fella was bird hunting, and he shot me in the leg, in my foot, with birdshot. Wasn't bad, but I got my discharge out of National Guards, and they put me on the Reserve. So, when the war broke out, it wasn't long 'til all the Reserve was the first called in. And I went in right away; I wasn't too long back home.

E: Being an Indian, did it affect you at all in the service?

G: No, it didn't.

E: It didn't keep you from being promoted?

G: No.

E: Do you think it might've helped you some?

G: Well, I think the things that I did while I was at home did help me in the infantry.

E: Why? In what way?

G: I hunted a lot, I hunted birds, and I did a lot of walking. I never fell out on a hike. We'd take these twenty-five-mile hikes, these forced marches and all, and I never felt out of one while I was in service.

E: You think, then, that your experiences at home helped you?

G: It did.

E: Did you resent going in to serve a country that, maybe a few years earlier, had kept you out of school with the White boys and girls, or maybe hadn't treated you fairly with your land?

G: No. I didn't think nothing about that. We all lived in the United States, and that was what we was fighting for. It's better to go somewhere else and fight a war than to come in.

E: Than to have to fight at home.

G: That's right.

E: Did you have any experiences there that were unforgettable?

G: I did. I sees a lot of things happening there that I would like to forget sometimes. And some things that we accomplished. See the people—children and women out scraping around the garbage cans there—this was after the war was over in Germany—hunting scraps to eat.

E: Did you see a lot of fighting? Were you an active group?

G: Yes, I was on the front lines a hundred and twenty-six days.

E: What rank did you hold?

G: I was a sergeant.

E: And this was in the regular infantry?

G: Yes.

E: Which infantry division were you with?

G: I was with the Sixty-Third Division.

E: Who was the general over that division? Do you remember?

G: I believe it was Gibbs; I'm not sure.

E: You commented to me earlier about sergeants, all of your group was seemed to be made up of sergeants?

G: No, this was a group of the Third Division. We went in over in the [inaudible 56:10] in France to relieve, and they'd been over there so long that all their enlisted men had been wounded or went back, and there were times when they had to promote a lady, you see, as sergeant. These boys had been there so long that they was want for a sergeant. They'd get wounded and go back, and they'd promote somebody else. All of 'em had done got to be first sergeant.

E: Did you get any medals?

G: I got the Bronze Star and the Oak Leaf Cluster, which is bronze star, you know, again, but you just get a cluster.

E: How about the other Catawbas? Did they serve well in the armed forces?

G: All Catawbas that have been in service, I don't believe there was any that ever got a dishonorable discharge.

E: Has there been a loss of life among the Catawbas in the service of their country?

G: Not in World War I. The wars we fought in, up to my recollection that I read about—

E: You're talking now about the Civil War here at home, and the Revolution?

G: That's right. World War I, World War II, there wasn't any killed. In Korean War, there wasn't any killed. We had some wounded in about all the wars. Over in Asia and Vietnam, we've lost two. We've lost Carl Harris and the Simmons boy, Gerald Simmons. Those two have lost their lives over there.

E: Were Carl Harris and Gerald Simmons related?

G: I don't know. I don't believe they was too close.

E: And to your knowledge, these are the only two from the Catawba Indians that have been killed?

G: That's right.

E: In any of our wars.

G: Yes.

E: Do you remember the Depression?

G: Yeah, I remember the Depression. One thing I remember about the Depression: I got married in 1932. I went to work, and I believe I was making about nine dollars a week.

E: Where were you working?

G: I was working at an industrial mill.

E: And it was possible for some Indians to get jobs during the Depression?

G: Well, yes, a few. All along, there'd been Catawbas that worked in mills, factories.

E: Had you worked there earlier? Before the Depression?

G: Yes, yes, I worked there. I went to work there in 1922.

E: You went to work there pretty young.

G: Yeah, I wasn't quite fourteen years old. Your parents had to sign the papers for you to go to work when you become fourteen. So, I was to be fourteen in March, and my mother signed the papers for me to go to work in January. I worked there for quite a while. And later on, [19]32, we moved around and went to the farm. In 1928, we went to the farm. Usually we'd farm in the summer, and then we'd go back to the mills in the winter.

E: In the wintertime. Did the entire family work in the mills?

G: No, just men. I think some of the women later went to work.

E: Did any of the Indian women go to work during the Depression? Did they go to work in the mills at that time?

G: No, not to my knowledge; I don't know of any.

E: When did women first go to work in the mills?

G: Oh, it must have been in the [19]20s. I remember some of 'em working along about then.

E: What was it like during the Depression for you?

G: It was tough. There wasn't nothing much to do. People couldn't get jobs. They couldn't get things that they wanted to eat.

E: Did you have regular work in the mill?

G: Yes. I don't think we was on any short time, but we didn't make much.

E: Do you remember any other families during that time that were not as well off as you were?

G: There was quite a few. Some was on this PWA and WPA.

E: Did that give them an opportunity to work or to get food from working?

G: Well, they got food and got a little money too, I believe. And some of 'em even learned trades while they was on those jobs.

E: At that time, do you remember some of the things they learned to do?

G: They learned to cover a pipe. I know Brother Douglas Harris, he had to cover pipe. He was just a helper and later, he was a piper coverer himself. And that's where he started, up here at Winthrop College, when they were building the building up there.

E: And that was on the WPA when they had him for that?

G: Mmhm.

E: Do you have any other recollections about that?

G: No. A lot of families, they'd get relief, but they couldn't get a job. They had this relief, they called it. They'd get a few flours and meat and stuff, just a little bit of stuff to kind of exist on.

E: You said you got married in 1932. You married Elsie Blue, Chief Blue's daughter. Was that a little bit different, you think, marrying the Chief's daughter?

G: No, I didn't think so. I never even thought of it. Only thing I thought about at that time, he was also a preacher. He was our ranked president at Catawba. I wasn't no church-going man, and that seemed to be a little difference there.

E: Did he tell you you were gonna have to go to church if you courted his daughter?

G: Well, he told me, he kinda talked around about it. I never will get the [inaudible 1:03:39] that he asked about. I asked for her, 'cause we'd already planned, if he

wouldn't give her to me, we would run off. So, I asked him. He told me, said that was his youngest daughter, that was the only one he had at home, and he couldn't give her away. So, I didn't go back and tell on him. I went on home. I just lived across the road. So, the next day, she was drawing water at the well, and I went out there, and he called all of us in. Course he wanted us to get married in the church. It wasn't like the weddings they have now. Everybody that wanted to come, they'd come; had cowbells and anything and making noise; tin cans. They didn't write all over cars cause there wasn't very many. I thought about—me and Elsie, after we got married, we went to a ball game, and I played ball—which other people now would get married, they'd be going to the mountains or beach or some other place. We never did take a honeymoon.

E: When you got married that day, you had the ceremony. How did the ceremony go? Do you remember?

G: I went to York that morning and got my license. There was two missionaries here, and I asked one of 'em about marrying us [inaudible 1:05:22] when I come back, he said, "Let me see what you got." And so, he looked it over, looked my license over. I felt a little scared. I always thought a wedding was something like a funeral. You know, it seems to be sad to me, I don't know. After the marriage was over, and they serenade us a little, they was gonna give us a good one that night at a party they was having here in Rock Hill, but we went to the show. We didn't go to the party.

E: You played ball that afternoon and went to the show that night?

G: That night.

E: You've been married now since 1932?

G: [19]32—been married thirty-nine years.

E: And the fact that she was a daughter of a Chief didn't upset too much?

G: No, it didn't bother me.

E: Do you think it made a difference? Do you think people noticed or commented on the fact that she was the daughter of Chief Blue?

G: I do. Outside people—now, when I say "outside," I mean people not of Catawba. Sometimes you'll meet people that will ask you about Chief Blue, and I say, "Well, I married Chief's daughter," and they say, "You did?" And they seem to be a little surprised and want to see us sometime. That's about all.

E: Your wife reminded me that you were the first couple that was married in the church. Which church is that?

G: That's the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saint.

E: Is that the building that's still standing now?

G: No, the building's been tore down and one built there, and it's been tore down, and then there's a new building not far from it. And we also were married again.

E: Is that right?

G: We got married in Salt Lake Temple.

E: And when was this?

G: This was in [19]61.

E: And why? I mean, why did you go through another ceremony?

G: Well, that's our belief. We believe that if we're married in the temple the Lord had commanded us to and we get there, then we'll have a life when we die [inaudible 1:08:02]

E: Did you find it difficult, then, working in Rock Hill or trying to start a family at that time, being married? More so than anyone else?

G: No, it didn't bother me too much. Course, I didn't have the privilege that the Whites had. Where I've worked, I've always been treated good. We didn't have no handicap by being Indian. We lived, we moved on the village then, we associated with a lot of people around there and made a lot of friends.

E: You never had any problems, then, out—no fights or anything—simply because you were different?

G: No, no.

E: No trouble being accepted. Did you have trouble accepting others as you moved off the reservation and began to mix with other people? Was their way of life different from yours?

G: Well, at one time it wasn't, but later on, after I was going to church regularly and working in the church, it was. There was things that they did and talked about which wasn't interesting, and I didn't approve of it. Course I didn't condemn 'em about it, but I didn't like it.

E: Most instances, then, was in just, really, your religion. I mean, the way you looked at things. A different attitude about it.

G: That's right.

E: You mentioned one time when you were a boy, about your mother. You made some comments about her, lessons she taught you about a boy's hat. Do you remember that?

G: Yeah. One time, Alonso Canty's father went to town, and he brought Alonso a little straw hat. He was proud of that little hat. He'd come over there to show it to me, and I was jealous about him having it and I didn't have one, so I grabbed the front of his hat and jerked it down on his head and tore the rim off of it. I had some chickens which I'd raised, and I **pulled** a lot of 'em; they were little Brandy chickens. So, Mother made me give Alonso some of my chickens to pay for his hat. It ain't been but a few days ago that Alonso was talking to me down at the church, he said, "Do you remember when you tore my hat up and you had to give me a chicken for it?" I really had forgot about it.

E: Looking back now, do you think your mother was wise dealing with you when you were growing up?

G: Well, I think so. It seemed like back then, they used the whip more. What I mean is the whip is the hickory. You get more whippings. People now, you don't see too many children getting whippings. They get whipped with the tongue more, the talk tongue. I guess that's progression. I think you can deny a child something that he's used to doing or take something that he thinks a lot of away from him, and it hurts him more. Course, sometime, I think a little strap will help out. But you can't win your children with fear. You've got to win 'em with love.

E: Do you think when your mother disciplined you, she did it in such a way that you knew she really loved you?

G: I think she did.

E: Even though she made you give up your chicken at that time. Do you have any other recollections of your mother or anyone else that you might like to recall? Any other incident in your life that sort of stands out?

G: I don't remember, like what would you—?

E: Well, I was just wondering about the time you set fire to the—

G: Oh, yeah. I don't know how old I was at that time, but I must have been about nine years old. At that time, down in the barn there, we had troughs which we would feed mules and horses. And it was up on the wall of the barn there, where the straw was fashioned. And as the mules and horses would eat, the corn would fall down on the hays there where they'd had hay to eat. I played with matches, and I had some in my pocket. My brother Ethan, he was there. He had [inaudible 1:13:37] I mean Eva, which was my youngest sister, and he set her up in the trough. So, I was gonna parch the corn that was on the hay, and I struck the match and put it down, and the hay caught afire, and Ethan couldn't put the fire out. We had a hog in the lot back of the barn, so he took Eva out to the barn and knocked the flank off and let the hog out, and the barn burn up, and I run and crawled under the house. So, Mother and Stepfather come from the field, and Mother called me out from under the house; I say I didn't want to come out. I tried to go further, but I knowed if I didn't come out, I'd just get that much more, so I just come out, and she give me a good whipping.

E: Were you usually into things like this very much?

G: Well, not too much. No more than the average boy would be in.

E: Just one of those things that you did that sort of got out of hand?

G: I think so.

E: Do your other brothers and sisters remember this, remind you of it very often?

G: Well, we'd laugh about it sometime when we'd talk, things that we did back when we was young.

E: You mentioned parching the corn. Did you eat your corn parched, and is this what you were trying to do, to parch it like you'd seen it done?

G: We parched it in the house. We parched it on the stove and in pans, and get it good and brown and eat it, and it was good! Put a little salt on it. About all the old people, I guess, know what parched corn is, but the new ones—the young people now—they wouldn't know what parched corn is. They eat popcorn.

E: And this corn, did it pop?

G: No. You might have one crack open.

E: But it was still good to eat? It was not too hard to chew.

G: No.

E: Did you parch fresh corn that was soft, or dried corn?

G: No, it was dried corn. Now, fresh corn, we'd roast it—put it in the stove and roast it, get it good and brown. It was good.

E: Did you eat a lot of corn?

G: I ate a good bit. We didn't have too much more to eat. Bread and a little meat and a few little things to go with it.

E: Do you think you ate more corn than other vegetables? Was corn the main vegetable?

G: No. We'd only eat fresh corn in the season, wasn't nothing like it is now. You can get it year-round. Dried corn, we'd usually parch it in the wintertime.

E: You mentioned one-time barbecuing cow. Do you remember that?

G: Yeah, one time, I offered Johnnie George—he got a cow down there, and we was gonna have a big dinner there, everybody on the reservation, which we usually had around the Fourth of July. I don't remember whether this particular time was the Fourth or not. We used to have some big dinners there on the Fourth. Everybody'd bring a basket, and we'd make lemonade and play games and really have a good time. So, this particular time, we'd got a cow, and we didn't have nobody to barbecue it, so my Uncle Johnnie said he could barbecue. So, he dugged a pit and put a rack on it, had a fire built there, and he throwed the whole cow on there, slab of it. Put a little paste—I don't know what he was putting on it, but anyway, he burnt him up pretty bad. He didn't brown it—**I mean** burn it. People was wanting to eat barbecue, and some of it was done and some of it wasn't. We thought about that, and we tell on my uncle about it years later: "Let's have a barbecue and get you to cook it."

E: It didn't turn out quite the way you hoped?

G: No, it wasn't as good as we thought it was gonna be. And later on, one time around there on the Fourth of July, my brother was vice president at that time of the church. Ray got a cow and had it barbecued at John Porters, which is the barbecue man, and it was good. Everybody enjoyed it and liked it. What an improvement there between that one and the one my uncle cooked.

E: The barbecue that your uncle cooked, is that the one that the senator came and visited with you?

G: Well, the senator had come down. He was coming down from Washington there to see how the conditions of the Catawbas—and see what help that they could get. It seemed that the Catawbas couldn't get no help because they never signed a treaty with the United States government. They always fought wars with the government, I mean with the White. And so, he was asking questions—how many animals they had there on the reservation? So, my uncle told him they had four or five old mules and said they fed 'em with three W's: wind, water, and whip. And the senator, he didn't like this. He told him he wasn't down there for jokes and wisecracks; he was down there to find out the condition. Well, the old horses and mules—as poor as they was, they wasn't getting too much feed.

E: So really, that wind and water and whip was not far from the truth?

G: It was helping 'em along.

E: Why didn't they have cattle in fairly large numbers? What was the problem?

G: Well, they weren't able to buy 'em. I mean, they wasn't able to buy 'em, and then they couldn't feed 'em; they have nothing to feed 'em with.

E: When you say "they," are you talking about as a Tribe? Did they have to do everything as a Tribe when the government came down to help 'em? Did they include everybody? Was this a difficult--?

G: Well, it was all included. They'd come 'round there, say, "Well," every family was gonna have a cow and a yard and had promised 'em a lot of things that they never did get.

E: So, every family never really got a cow?

G: No, there wasn't any of 'em but one from federal government. And ones that had 'em were the ones that bought 'em and did a little farming to make stuff to feed 'em with.

E: Why didn't they all get a cow?

G: I don't know what happened. Seemed like, more or less, everything was just talk. There wasn't nothing ever done about it.

E: When government officials came down to the reservation, do they make promises and then—?

G: Yeah, they said they would do this and do that, and it never did materialize.

E: Do you think maybe you didn't have a communication with 'em, or why do you think it turned out that way?

G: I think the biggest thing was we didn't have—our biggest trouble was with the state. Our struggles had been coming from the state and from the federal government. We didn't sign no treaty with the federal government; the Catawbas always fought wrong side with the White.

E: To your knowledge, did the state and the federal government argue over the Indian, I mean, what to do about the Indian situation?

G: No, I think about every time we would try to get help from the federal government, they would refer you back to the state.

E: And then if you went to the state, what happened?

G: The state'd say, "Well, we're gonna try to get a little more done, and maybe we can get the federal government to come and help."

E: Do you think you got the runaround?

G: Well, I don't know; I think so. It seemed like one or two times there, they hired lawyers to work on this lease business. They would go so far, and then they would quit, which I think they must've come in at the back door and got a little handout and quit working at it.

E: You mean somebody paid the lawyer to drop the case?

G: I don't know it, but that's what I believe. I believe they was paid not to go further.

E: What about York County during these years? Did they work with the Indians at all?

G: You mean in giving 'em help?

E: Well, yes. Do you ever recall a county agent coming out and teaching you how to farm or—?

G: We had one after this land was bought up when the state appropriated us seventy-five thousand dollars and bought the land. We had several agents come out at different times to learn 'em to farm and different trades that they had. Now, there was this one time we could take up. Some of 'em learned to be barbers, some to be nurses, and other trades that they trained 'em to do. But this wasn't York County altogether was doing this. It's through the federal government.

E: Did the Catawba Indians have any health problems?

G: Yeah. Well, I know of one time myself, and I read of a bout of another. At one time, the Catawbas was a strong Tribe. Smallpox broke out, and they'd run high fevers, and they didn't know what to do. And they'd jump in the river to cool off. It killed 'em all down to about eighty people. It was just about eighty head,

according to what I've read and been told. Now, 1918, we had a flu epidemic, which was all over the country I understand. It hit some of the homes there in Catawba, just about cleaned 'em out. I know of one that they had four or five deaths there.

E: Did the Catawbas use home remedies over the years?

G: Yes, some of 'em did. They used some kind of herbs, especially the older ones.

E: Have you ever used any of the herbs?

G: I took some of this yellow root, they called it, which is a—claim to give you appetite. Course I don't need it now.

E: What kind of root?

G: It's yellow root.

E: Gallow?

G: Yellow, yellow.

E: Yellow, the color. Where is the yellow root found?

G: You can find it on branches, different places. It's not plentiful. You can find a good bit of it around if you know it when you see it.

E: What does it look like?

G: It's just a little yellow root. You pull it up, and on the roots, it's yellow.

E: Does it look like a sweet potato?

G: No, it's not that big. It's just a small—it's about as big as a pencil. Now some may be bigger. You take it and wash these roots off, and then you put it in water. If you're gonna keep it a long time, then you have to put some kind of alcohol in there, a little whiskey to preserve it, 'cause it'll sour if you keep it too long.

E: And then what do you do with it?

G: Well, you drink it. You drink it, and it gives you a good appetite, claims to purify your blood. I've tasted so many of 'em old herbs that they take. I see Chief Blue, he used to get this bear root, and they make salve out of it.

E: And that's a bear, like a—?

G: It's got a leaf on it. The leaf looks just like a bear's track. When you see it, you can tell what it is by the shape of it. Like the track of a bear.

E: About how high does that grow?

G: It grows up about, I'd say three or four feet.

E: Are the leaves plentiful on the stem? Lot of leaves like a bush?

G: About like these lilies. You see these lilies, you know, about two or three stems running up.

E: Kind of like an iris?

G: Something like that. But they don't have but one big leaf right at the top.

E: Oh, just one leaf. And what does that root look like, the bear root?

G: It's a little ball, like a—.

E: A round—like a turnip?

G: Something like that.

E: And what do you do with that?

G: You can make tonic out of it, and you can make salve out of it. And it's good for rheumatism and things.

E: The tonic's good for rheumatism. What about the salve? Do you rub that on?

G: You rub it on.

E: What does it cure?

G: It cures rheumatism.

E: It's for soreness in the muscles and things like it. Getting back to that yellow root, what did the top of it look like? Did it have a leaf, too?

G: No, it's got a leaf, but it's a little small one, and there's a lot of these little leaves on it and then it has **bouldering** one.

E: What are the leaves shaped like on that?

G: Oh, I don't know what shape they are. They're something like—you see the leaf on this poison ivy; it's something similar to it. It's not quite in that shape, but it grows something like poison oak.

E: Are there any other herbs or roots or things that the Indians use that you can remember hearing 'em talk about?

G: They used—I forget what they called this—one that's shaped like a heart. They used it for the animals. Certain herbs, they used for the animals, you know, to make 'em eat and for different purposes.

E: Besides these things that they took, were there any herbs or leaves or any growing thing that they would use to protect 'em, to protect the Indian or for good luck? Like a lot of people carry rabbit's foot. Did they—?

G: No, you'd see 'em like this. Everybody do this back when—years back, they'd have these little balls—

[End of interview]

Transcribed by: Lauren King, January 31, 2022

Audit-edited by: Callum Karoleski, February 28, 2022

Final edited by: Evangeline Giaconia, July 11, 2022