

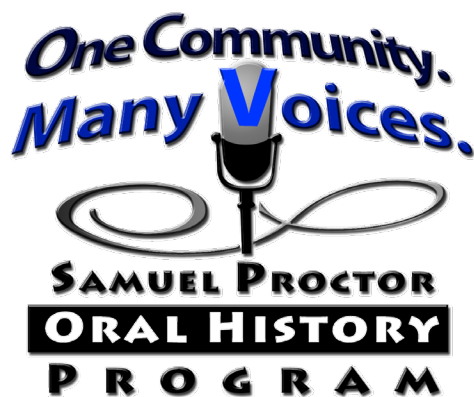
# **Annie Hefner George**

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)**

**CAT-037**

**Interview by:**

**Jerry Lee  
July 26, 1972**



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](http://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 037 Annie Hefner George**  
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**Interviewed by Jerry Lee on July 26, 1972**  
**37 minutes | 22 pages**

**Abstract:** Annie George is a White woman married to Charles Lewis George, a Catawba Indian. Annie answers questions regarding her husband's childhood, schooling, family history, and his career in the Navy. She also discusses their family's experiences with discrimination in the different places they have lived in. She is proud to be married to a Catawba, and tries to teach her children about the Catawba Nation to the best of her ability. She hopes that one day the tribe will reunite and have a Chief again, so that they might be able to preserve their culture.

**Keywords:** [Catawba Nation; Charles Lewis George; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Discrimination; Military participation]

**SAMUEL PROCTOR**  
**ORAL HISTORY**  
**P R O G R A M**  
**University of Florida**

CAT 037

Interviewee: Annie Hefner George

Interviewer: Jerry Lee

Date of Interview: July 26, 1972

L: Today is July 26 and my name is Jerry Lee. I'm interviewing—what is your name, your full name?

G: My name is Annie Hefner George.

L: And where are we at right now, located here in Rock Hill?

G: In Rock Hill here, it's 14 Montford Street.

L: Whose home is this?

G: It's Raymond Hefner, my father.

L: Where do you live at?

G: I live in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

L: What are you doing here in Rock Hill?

G: I'm here on vacation.

L: Is Rock Hill your home?

G: Yes, it's my hometown.

L: Where were you born?

G: In Lando, South Carolina.

L: Who are your parents?

G: Raymond and Viola Hefner.

L: Are you an Indian?

G: No, I'm not an Indian.

L: Is your husband an Indian?

G: Yes, my husband's an Indian.

L: What is his name?

G: His name is Charles Lewis George.

L: And how old is Charles?

G: He's thirty-eight.

L: How old are you?

G: I'm thirty-three.

L: When was your husband born?

G: In July 30, 1933.

L: How long have y'all been married?

G: Since 1957—[19]58! [Laughter]

L: How did you meet your husband?

G: Well, we used to go backwards and forth across the ferry a lot, and he was just a young boy, I think about fifteen then. And we got to noticing him on the ferry, and well, my sister came to know him first, she dated him first. Then she got married, and then I met him and started dating after he got out of the service, and then we got married.

L: What was he doing at the ferry, did he work there?

G: He helped his grandfather; his grandfather pushed the ferry back and forth across the Catawba River. He was down there helping his grandfather work on the ferry.

L: Who was his grandfather?

G: Early Brown.

L: What was his grandmother's name, do you know?

G: His grandmother's name was Edith Brown.

L: Were they full-blooded Indian?

G: I don't know, he sure looked like it.

L: How did they push the ferry back and forth?

G: Well, they did push them with long poles, and then just before they took the ferry out—I guess a couple years before they took it out—you know they put a motor on the side of the ferry and used this. They had a big cable going across the ferry with lines running it up to it to keep it from going down river and I remember hearing my daddy say one time it went downstream, downriver, it broke loose and went down the stream and my father helped get it back up the river.

L: Well, how did the Indians come to work with the ferry? Did they work with the government?

G: Yes, they worked for the government and when my husband's grandfather retired, he got a government pension for this.

L: When did they close down the ferry?

G: I can't remember what year it was, seems like, must have been around [19]61[19]60, [19]61, I guess. I don't remember exactly.

L: Does your husband have any brothers and sisters?

G: Yes, he has, uh, his brother's name is Howard, and John, and Wayne, and Philip. And his sisters are Faye, and Susan, and Joanne.

L: What type of complexion do these—

G: They're dark-skinned.

L: Are they darker than most Indians?

G: Well, they're—what do you mean by most Indians?

L: Most of the Catawba Indians now.

G: Yeah, some of them are, see his daddy's Cherokee.

L: And who is his dad?

G: His father is John Marvin George.

L: And who was his mother's name?

G: Her name's Evelyn Brown George.

L: And what were you saying about his father being Cherokee?

G: His father is Cherokee Indian, and his mother is Catawba, which I've heard is a branch of the Sioux.

L: Where did you hear this from?

G: Really when we were living in Georgia. I don't know why we were listening to the radio one night and it was a Charlotte station we were picking up, and they told a lot about the Indians in Catawba, the Catawba Indians, and they said it was a branch of the Sioux and also when we were stationed in Spain, we bought a set of encyclopedias and what it said in the encyclopedias, we got a lot of coupons we could write the encyclopedia company and send them questions and they would answer these questions, find the information and send it back to us. My son sent off last year the question about the Catawba Indians and they sent back about three or four pages and in there it had that they were a branch of the Sioux Tribe.

L: How many children do y'all have?

G: We have five boys.

L: What are their names please?

- G: The oldest one is named Timothy, and the next one's name is Lewis, and the next one's named **Candon**, and Charles, Edward, and Tracy-Allen.
- L: You said you met your husband at the ferry, how long was it before y'all started dating?
- G: Oh gee, it was a long time because he was just a young boy, and like I said he was with my sister before he went with me. I started dating him in—well, he got out of service, I can't remember when he got out of service, um, [19]56 I believe he got out of service the first time. And he was out for a couple years and then I started dating him and we got married. Then he re-enlisted again in 1960, he had been out four years and then he went back in again.
- L: Did your parents object to your sister dating an Indian?
- G: No, but my father didn't much want me to marry him, he said they were lazy, **tired** people.
- L: What else did he say about them?
- G: He said the **old ones** need to really work **because they were** lived up here, the Georges lived up here.
- L: What Georges are you referring to?
- G: Evans George. But we've been very happy, we get along good. My husband's hard working, he's been in the Navy now for sixteen years.
- L: Well, has your father's opinion changed any?
- G: Yeah, my father and him got along fine.
- L: That's true. After you started dating your husband, and marrying him, what did your husband do at the time? What type of work?

- G: When my husband got married, he was working in, um, insulation. He was working with his uncle, **him and**—fiber glass insulation.
- L: Did he travel?
- G: Yes, when we got married, he was working in Virginia at the time. He came home, got off one weekend, we went and got married, and he had to go back. Was gone two weeks.
- L: Do you know the name of the company he worked with?
- G: No, I don't remember.
- L: Or do you remember the type of pay he was making at this time?
- G: Well, then they were on a government job, and he was making good money. He was—
- L: Do you have any idea the—
- G: Oh, I don't think he brought home about two hundred dollars a week.
- L: Did Charles live on the reservation?
- G: He lived on the reservation when he was small. I don't remember when they moved off the reservation, but I can remember he would tell us he had to go chop wood and carry water, this type of thing. They lived in—they didn't live in a very big house, there was, I think, seven children and they just lived in a two-three room house down on the reservation.
- L: Did you know if he got any government help or support, or help feeding, clothe the children?
- G: No, I don't. I know my husband and his brother, and I believe it's one of the girls, went to Cherokee, to the school up there that was government. They have the



school of the Cherokee that they can go up there and stay in, there's a school in Cherokee.

L: What did they study at the school?

G: Just reading, writing, 'rithmetic I guess. I don't really know.

L: Did your husband go to school at the reservation school?

G: He went to Red River. They didn't live on the state reservation, they lived on the part that was the federal reservation. There was two reservations. The one down behind the Mormon Church and where the schoolhouse was, the Indian school was, is the state reservation.

L: That's the old reservation?

G: The old reservation is the state reservation. The other, the part that they lived on was the federal reservation and the federal reservation was the one that they divided up.

L: There's no longer a federal reservation?

G: No, it's individually owned now.

L: How much education did your husband get?

G: He went through the ninth grade of school.

L: Do you know where he went to school after he left elementary school?

G: No, he went to Red River, then Ebenezer Avenue School and then he went to that school up in Cherokee, that's all I know.

L: How long did he go to school in Cherokee?

G: I don't remember hearing him say.

L: Does he ever talk about it very much?

G: He tells the kids, 'cause we were up in the mountains about two years ago and—up in Cherokee—and he showed the children where he had gone to school but it's not a place where they send the children anymore, they can't go anymore up there. My children would have liked to have gone, gotten away from home so they say.

L: Has your husband ever mentioned any troubles, any discrimination that he had when he was trying to go to school because he was an Indian.

G: No, I don't recall anything.

L: Was he ever called "Chief" or some of the names, you know, a lot of Indians get stuck with.

G: Well, yes, my husband's in the navy and they call him "Chief." Not because he's a Chief in the navy but because he's an Indian, they call him "Chief."

L: Has he ever mentioned his younger life, his home life, as being poor or extravagant or did he have an average-type life with his brothers and sisters and parents.

G: Well, he doesn't remember it as extravagant, and I don't know whether he'd call it average or what, but he—I can remember he'd tell the kids when they want things all the time that they had to get out and work, chop wood and carrying water, they know what it was when they got a nickel.

L: So, he was living in Red River at the time—

G: Yes, down in the, yeah—No! No, he wasn't living in Red River when we got married, he was living off the ... I can't remember it's off **Wheel** Street.

L: It's here in Rock Hill?

G: Yes, here in Rock Hill.

L: Did his parents or any of his **kinfolks** object you, as you being a White?

G: Not that I know of.

L: Has any of them ever mention it or made any sly remarks to you 'cause you were White?

G: Well, not—I think they've done it in jest but not to hurt me or anyone. I can remember hearing them say "oh White people" or something like that but it **didn't** bother me. [Laughter]

L: How long has your husband been in service, ma'am?

G: He's been in service sixteen years.

L: And is he planning to make a career of it?

G: Yes, **he's got** three year, nine months, and some few days, he'll retire.

L: What is his title?

G: He's a, hopefully he's passed his first class, which is E6, he's supposed to get it in August.

L: And he'll be an E6?

G: He will be E6.

L: He'll receive that pay when he retires?

G: No, he won't receive that pay when he retires, I don't know how much pay he receives when he retires. He just receives a certain percentage of his base pay, I don't know what it is.

L: What do y'all plan to do after you retire?

G: Well, my husband's a diesel mechanic in the Navy, he works on the diesel engines in the ships, and he's talking about the Navy now has a program where you get out three months early, and they pay your salary and he's thinking taking up refrigeration and air conditioning **as the diesel mechanic work**. And we're going to, we have twelve acres of land where they divided up the federal reservation and we're going to build us a house out there.

L: How much land did he receive?

G: My husband?

L: Yes.

G: He got six acres and one of his children got six acres.

L: Have y'all ever been discriminated against, while you and he walked down the street or going to a restaurant, or in all your travels, has anyone every made any remarks about you **marrying** an Indian?

G: No, not that I can recall.

L: You were telling me a story about when you worked at the **Ford** place, can you tell us that?

G: Oh, when he worked for the young Ford company in [19]59, he—it was after dark, and he and a colored guy were taking some two new cars from one lot to another lot and the light changed red and he stopped for the red light and the colored guy was driving the other car behind him and he wasn't paying any attention and he run into the back of the other one. And when they took them down to the police station, well the clerk at the desk, whoever wrote up the ticket wrote down that my husband was a Negro also. My husband looked at it and he

told them that he wasn't a Negro that he was an Indian, and he changed it, so he wrote over it and wrote Indian and then the men at the—the mechanics there at the motor company tried to get him to sue the city of Charlotte for writing him down as a Negro.

L: Why did he choose the service as a career?

G: He lost his job and we was—had two children and I was pregnant with the other one and he went up to talk to the navy man—recruiter—to see what he had to do about getting up to a merchant marine ship out in Charleston. And then the navy recruiter talked to him about going back into the navy. He came home and talked to me about it and then he told me I'd have to sign some papers and I tell him it was up to him whether he went back in or not, but him to decide and then tell me what he wanted to do, and I'd sign the papers. He decided he wanted to go back in.

L: Why did he lose his job?

G: I don't remember why he lost his job. They just let some go.

L: Well, the point I was getting at, did he join the service because he couldn't get another good job?

G: He could've gotten a job in the mill, but he was not going to work on a cotton mill.

L: How do you think the Whites react to Indians today?

G: I don't know really, some of them react differently, they're just people to me. I don't really—some of them look down on them, some don't.

L: Why would someone look down on them?

- G: Well, I've heard somebody say once, out on the west coast when I was getting ready to go to California, somebody told me that out on the west coast they thought that the Indians were lower than a dog.
- L: Who told you this?
- G: I don't remember.
- L: You just heard it?
- G: It was somebody made the remark to me when they found out I was going to the west coast, you know, and my husband was an Indian, and they had been out there and they said, "Gee they look down on the Indians out on the west coast, like they were lower than a dog."
- L: How about the Black people? Did they Indians ever marry Black people? Any that you ever heard of?
- G: Yes, I heard of it. I heard that there was one girl from the reservation that she married a colored man.
- L: Was it very frequently that this happened?
- G: No. Not very frequently.
- L: How do you feel about the Black person, do you feel that the Indian is superior to the Blacks?
- G: Really, I don't—maybe I shouldn't say—I don't think even White people is superior to the Blacks, they all have their own feelings, and if they're capable of getting ahead they should. If a Black has a better education than a White, and the Black man and White man both apply for the job, the Black should have a better chance of getting the job.

L: Do you feel the same way between a White and an Indian?

G: Yes.

L: Are you proud of the Indian heritage, of your part in being married to an Indian?

G: Yes, I am.

L: Have you ever been ashamed of it?

G: No, I'm not ashamed I was married to an Indian.

L: Have you ever been extra proud of being married to an Indian?

G: Yes, I have.

L: When was this?

G: When I tell people that I belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Indian plays a big part in the Book of Mormon, and I tell people I'm married to a Lamanite, an Indian.

L: Well, did most of the Indians—what religion are most of the Indians?

G: Most of the ones that I know, well, the only ones I know here in Rock Hill, most of them are Mormon. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

L: Do you happen to know why they joined this type of church?

G: Well, the missionaries came in and taught them in the early 1900's I believe.

L: And did they not have any other missionaries ever come before the Mormon missionaries?

G: I don't know, I never heard.

L: Did you husband kin to any of the Chiefs, such as Chief Blue or Chief Sanders, or the old Indians?

G: I don't know. Chief Blue, the Indian outfit that Chief Blue wore, belonged to my husband's grandfather.

L: Who made that?

G: I don't know where it come from, but it was supposed to have belonged to my husband, but they said it burned up in the house when Chief Blue's house burned down and we were never able to get it, we don't know if somebody else has it, but it was Early Brown's Chief uniform. I don't know if Early Brown had ever been Chief of the Indians or not, but the uniform was his, the Indian outfit, uniform, whatever you call it.

L: Well, had your husband ever mentioned to you what he was taught from his father, his grandfather, and the other Indians—

G: What he was taught?

L: —pertaining to the Indian ways and customs?

G: I know he went fishing a lot and hunting, but that's all I know,

L: Does your husband ever speak any Indian language?

G: He doesn't know any to speak.

L: Does he ever tell you stories or some folklore?

G: No, he doesn't know any that I know of.

L: Well, how about your children. Does he try to teach them any of the Indian ways or anything about the Indian culture?

G: No, he doesn't.

L: Do you?



G: He doesn't know that much about it. Well, I got interested in it. I heard some of the Indian women talk about a book that was in the library, Rock Hill Public Library on Oakland Avenue, and I went up there and looked at it. You can't check it out, you've got to set it there and look at it, and I asked the lady—I sat there and looked at it, and then I asked the lady, and she could order me one. She said that she would try, and it took about two-and-a-half months, something like that, to get it back. It's not very big but it cost me ten dollars to get it because it's very—there weren't many of them, you know, they were hard to find. And so, I finally got it, but there's quite a few interesting stories and the Indian language in it.

L: Do you read these to your children, or do they read them themselves?

G: They read them quite a bit.

L: Are your children interested in the Indians?

G: Yes, they are.

L: Could you explain this, by their actions, some of the important things they do that makes you feel they're interested?

G: Well, they're—quite often they're out here and tell other people about the little stories and things that were in the book that they read, and when anybody comes in, they'll often get it and show it to them.

L: I know this morning they were showing me some arrow heads, where did they get these arrow heads at?

G: My father found them. My sister was interested in it, and he'd been out here where they were digging I-77 through, and he went out there and found them.

Then my uncle is in Lando, South Carolina, he was digging his garden and he found the tomahawk head.

L: The arrowheads they dug up came from—

G: From here in Rock Hill.

L: —the old Indian reservation where they cut the road through?

G: I don't know whether it was Indian reservation or not, I mean all of Rock Hill at one time was a reservation.

L: Has your husband ever commented about how the Indian people could be helped, or does he feel they had been mistreated as a race?

G: He doesn't really talk that much about it; he doesn't say much about it. I think I comment more than he does.

L: Does your husband vote?

G: No, he doesn't.

L: He doesn't take part in civic or political—

G: No, he's gone, he's in the navy, and we've been gone, and he doesn't even— somebody said you can hand in a—what is it when you're gone, and you can—

L: Absentee ballot.

G: Yeah, he doesn't do that either.

L: Have you ever wondered why the Catawba Indians at the reservation didn't become industrious, and have a lot of tourist attractions and sell more pottery out of Catawba than what they did?

G: Yes, I think they tried at one time, and it didn't work too well. I think they need more signs, and they don't have anything out there to look at, to me. If they had

tried to set up some tepees and things like up in Cherokee, I think they have teepees, and if they tried to learn some Indian dances and put on little shows like they did up in Cherokee, they might draw more tourist attractions, especially with this new **Carowinds** place coming here, that the reservation might get more tourists through there

L: You feel like it's too late for this to happen now?

G: No, not really, if they would try.

L: You feel the Catawba Nation, as a whole, are they headed for extinction?

G: Yes, I do feel they are. There's not—in that book I told you about earlier that there was—I sent off and got some answers from the encyclopedia company and there was only just a few, just a handful of them that were left and now I don't think there's a full-blooded Indian left here.

L: How long do you think it'll be before there's no Indians at all?

G: Well, they've intermarried with Whites, and it won't be too long.

L: You were telling me earlier, about when your mother-in-law went to get a fishing license one time, what happened when she went to get her fishing license?

G: Last year she went to get her fishing license, and she said that the lady didn't ask her nationality, she just wrote down White—her race rather—but she just wrote down White. Said when she looked at it, said she handed it back to her and told her she wasn't White, that she was an Indian, and made her change it. Then she went back in this year, and she went back to the same lady, and I guess the same lady recognized her and when she wrote it down that time, she put down Indian.

L: And she felt like she was proud of being an Indian?

G: Yes.

L: What happened to your brother-in-law Phillip? Same type of story happened, tell us about that.

G: Well, when his child was born, he was in the navy out in California, and when he was born, they put down White as his race and my brother-in-law told them that he was not White, that he was an Indian and they didn't want to change it, but he made them change it anyway, made them put down Indian.

L: You mentioned that a couple of his brothers, your husband's brothers, were in the service. How many of his brothers went in service?

G: My husband, and Phillip, and John were in the navy. Wayne was in the Marines, and my husband and Phillip are making careers of it.

L: Why did they choose to make careers in the military?

G: I don't know if they think it's an easier job or what. [Laughter] Your money is steady, and you know you're not going to get laid off and you get that check every month whether you're sick or in the hospital or what.

L: Have you had to travel around a lot because of your husband's work?

G: Yes, we have. The first place we moved to was in 1962, he was stationed in California, and we went to California, and we lived there for two years. Then the next place he was stationed in was Charleston, South Carolina, and we lived there for eighteen months, and then he went to Rota, Spain and we went over there in January 1967, and we came back in July of [19]68. Then we were

stationed in Brunswick, Georgia, naval air station, and we lived there for two years, and now we're stationed in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

L: You think you'll be in Virginia very long?

G: Well, my husband reenlists again in October of this year, and just as soon as he gets his orders out, we don't know whether we'll be getting orders to stay there again or, we're hoping to get Charleston, South Carolina.

L: You sound like you've been well traveled. In all the places that you've lived around the world, and here in the States, how did the people accept you and your husband, as a navy man and as an Indian?

G: When I was living in California I never—after the person had told me that the Indians were looked down like dogs, worse than dogs—I never found this to be true. The Indians out in California are, I should've done so well as to marry one of them [Laughter] they're quite wealthy, the Indians out in California, up there near San Francisco, the Indians up there are quite wealthy. They own all this land up in San Francisco where all the big buildings are, and this one little girl out there, I think she was a millionaire and wasn't but about six years old then and they were—I didn't feel that they were looked down on as that person had said. But when we were in Spain, the people asked me what nationality my husband was and I told them he was an American and by him being dark-skinned, well, they thought he was something else other than American and I told them he was an American Indian, he's an Indian.

L: Guess you got along real well with the Spanish people?

G: Oh, they were a delight to know, we'd love to go back over there and have another tour of duty.

L: Do y'all associate with Indians very much? I mean, do you go out of your way to **walk into** California, you ran across Indians, and there at Cherokee. What seems to pull you towards these Indians? Is it because your husband's an Indian or do you just happen to run into them?

G: I guess just because we run into them. My husband's said he's known several Indians that were in service, that were on the ship with him.

L: In your personal opinion, do you feel that the Catawba Indians are a hardworking, industrious group of people or are they tend to be on the lazy side?

G: Well, my father had thought so, but I don't feel this way. I think they work.

L: How about as far as the government goes, and their schools, and their chance for advancement, do the Catawba Indians, do they have a chance to go to school, to go to college, to learn **skill** as well as White kids?

G: Yes, they do, but the government doesn't provide any of this. I have heard that some of the Tribes, the government they have gotten up these law—when the government, I don't know how to say this, the government pays the children's tuition to go to college and trade school, it pays for them to go to school, and they don't here. This is one of the things that should've happened when they broke up the Tribe here, this is one of the things they should have, I think they should have said, put in the pact or whatever they made with the government that the children should have a college education.

L: Has your husband expressed those same views?

- G: My husband doesn't say much about anything.
- U1: He won't leave me alone.
- U2: You better let me in, Kevin.
- L: Have your kids ever been discriminated against at school, or do they ever come home and tell you that someone was making fun of them?
- G: Yes, my—Lewis has told me that he has been, that they say something about him being an Indian.
- L: How old is Lewis?
- G: He's twelve.
- L: Where was he going to school?
- G: Ebenezer Avenue School in Rock Hill.
- L: And they just kidding him, or do you know exactly what they were doing?
- G: No, I don't know what they were doing. He just come home and said they were making fun of him about being an Indian.
- L: Was he that upset, or he just passed it off as just kids?
- G: Ah, just children.
- L: Well, in conclusion, do you have any comments that you'd like to make, as far as Indians, or yourself being a white woman married to an Indian, or your children, or their past heritage to the Catawbas?
- G: Well, I don't know, last year—I believe it's last year when I lived up here—Albert Sanders is the Chief now, he went to, I believe Florida to some kind of meeting and they were talking about trying to get some kind of housing unit here for the Indians, and said something about getting the Tribe back and having a Chief. He

was the last Chief that they had when they broke up the Tribe and divided up the reservation, he was the last Chief to be elected. They was saying something about that they would have to get the Tribe back together as a Tribe and have a Chief over them to get this done by the government, or something.

L: Do you think this'll ever come about?

G: I don't know. It might be nice. The Indians, most of 'em, well, I don't know most of 'em, but some of 'em they have good jobs, and they have nice brick homes, just like the White people do.

L: Do you have any hopes for the Catawba Indians of ever rejoining together and being a Tribe again?

G: Yes, I'd like to see them get back as a Tribe, I would like to see, maybe they wouldn't marry a Catawba Indian, but I wouldn't mind my children maybe going out west and finding an Indian to marry. Keep the Tribe alive.

L: Well, I appreciate you very much taking up your time, I know you're on vacation this week, and I hate to bother you, but I know this'll make a contribution to the Catawba cause. I appreciate you very much and thank you.

G: You're welcome.

[End of interview]

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