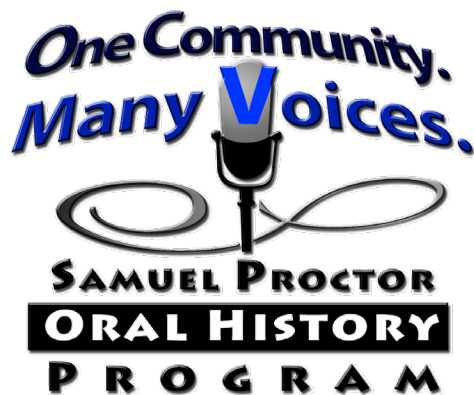


# Donald Richard Brown

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)  
CAT-112**

**Interview by:**

**Edith Frances Canty Wade  
August 7, 1975**



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**14 minutes | 11 pages**

**Abstract:** Donald "Ricky" Brown, a nineteen year old, talks about his childhood living on the reservation, including the home his family lived in and what the school was like. He has plans to go to college at York Tech and his schooling is paid for by a government program supporting Indians. He is part of a group of individuals who are collecting the names and stories of people buried in the old reservation graveyard and believes that collecting and maintaining the history of the Tribe is very important. Brown closes the interview by giving ideas for programs on the reservation that could help the younger generation continue Catawba craft traditions and get them more involved with community affairs.

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

SAMUEL PROCTOR  
ORAL HISTORY  
PROGRAM  
University of Florida

CAT 112

Interviewee: Donald Richard Brown

Interviewer: Edith Frances Canty Wade

Date of Interview: August 7, 1975

W: This is Frances Wade. I live on Route 3, Box 304, Rock Hill, South Carolina. I'm gathering oral history of the Catawba Indians for the University of Florida. Today is August 7, 1975, and I'm talking to Ricky Brown. Ricky, what is your full name?

B: Donald Richard Brown.

W: Maybe you'd better get over closer Ricky. What is your birthdate, Ricky?

B: January 1, 1956.

W: And so, you're nineteen?

B: Right.

W: What is your address?

B: 2460 Celanese Bypass, Apartment H, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

W: Have you ever lived on the reservation?

B: Yeah.

W: How old were you?

B: Up 'til I was about eight.

W: Who are your parents, Ricky?

B: Donald Brown and Joanne Swift, maiden name Swift.

W: Are your parents Indians?

B: My daddy is.

W: Catawba Indian?

B: Yes.

W: Who were your grandparents—first, the grandparents on your mother's side?

B: Frances and John Swift.

W: Who were the grandparents on your father's side?

B: Mary and Richard Brown.

W: What brothers and sisters do you have?

B: I have a brother named Bill, a sister named Teresa, a brother named Wayne, and a sister named Sandy. And I got stepbrothers and all that.

W: Well, I would like for you to name your stepbrothers, too, because this is history.

B: Okay, I've got a stepbrother named Greg, half-brother named Donny, half-brother named Joey, and a half sister named Donna.

W: What kind of work does your father do?

B: He's a mechanic insulator for Daniel's Construction.

W: What kind of work does your mother do?

B: She's a housewife.

W: Ricky, I know that you don't live on the reservation, and you're not around a great deal of Indians—you are now while you're working—but do you remember any old stories that was told to you when you were a child?

B: Only spooky ones. [Laughter]

W: Only spooky ones. What was it like for you at Christmastime when you lived down here on the reservation?

B: Well, we did get stuff like the rest of 'em. And we didn't go out and buy our trees, we went around and cut 'em down. And we always went to a bunch of parties and stuff. We'd go to the schoolhouse. They always had a dance or something like that.

W: I know that you have duties now to perform at your apartment, but what were some of the things you had to do when you were small?

B: Haul water and cut wood.

W: What was your home—what kind of home did you live in?

B: Down here?

W: Mmhm.

B: A wooden house—wooden frame house.

W: Do you know how many rooms it had in it?

B: It had four rooms.

W: Did it have running water?

B: No, ma'am.

W: Did it have bathroom facilities?

B: Nope, it did not.

W: Did you go to church?

B: Yes.

W: Do you belong to a church?

B: Yes.

W: What church do you belong to?

B: The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints.

W: How did you get to church when you were much younger?

B: My daddy brung me.

W: Did you go in a car, or did you walk?

B: I'd come in a car, I guess. [Laughter]

W: Did you ever go to school down on the reservation?

B: Yes. I went up through the first grade.

W: Can you remember anything about going to school down here?

B: Yeah, let's see. We got to raise the flag. We played out there on them old pine trees. The graveyard was behind us. The teacher was Miss White. She was the principal and the school only had two rooms. It went to the fourth grade when I went there. And I was in the first, and someone used to cook, cook us meals all the time. She'd bring 'em to the class.

W: Ricky, how far in school have you gone?

B: Completed twelve years of school.

W: What's the name of the high school you attended?

B: Northwestern High School.

W: And you graduated this spring?

B: Right.

W: You are going to continue your education?

B: Right.

W: Where are you going?

B: York Tech.

W: What are you taking?

B: Graphic engineering technology.

W: Would you elaborate just a little bit on that?

B: I'm going to be a design draftsman. Designing engineer.

W: Ricky, I know it doesn't cost as much to go to York Tech as it does to college.  
How are you going? How are you paying your way?

B: I'm going on the Indian program and by working down here during the summer.

W: When you talk about the Indian program, do you know really what the Indian program is about?

B: It's just about Indians that need—that can't really go to school. They need some money to go, and the government's helping out and all that.

W: And you're one of the fortunate people who has gotten a slot?

B: Yeah.

W: Do you like sports?

B: Yeah.

W: What sports do you like?

B: I like baseball, football, and basketball.

W: Did you take part in sports at school?

B: Yeah, I wrestled.

W: You wrestled?

B: Mmhm.

W: How did you do?

B: I did pretty good. [Laughter]

W: [Laughter]

B: I pinned the turkey for Rock Hill High.

W: Oh, well, you did all right then. Do you hunt?

B: Yes.

W: What do you hunt?

B: Mainly squirrels.

W: What kind of gun do you have?

B: I have a twelve-gauge single shot, and a four-ten pump.

W: Do you fish?

B: Yeah. I don't have a rod with me, it broke. [Laughter]

W: What kind of fish do you usually catch?

B: I usually catch bream, but mostly we would go at night to catch catfish, and occasionally we'd fish for bass and crappie.

W: Ricky, I know you haven't been in service, and you know that a lot of young people today, they think that it's wrong to go in service. What is your attitude?

B: I think it's pretty good, but I'd go in the navy myself, 'cause you can get more education there. They, the navy—the army and all that—they give you training, but the navy gives you the best training. If you go in the service and you need training, that's where you can get it from.

W: Would you volunteer, or would you have to be drafted?

B: I think I'd volunteer.

W: What do you think about the young men who think they shouldn't go to service?

B: Well, that's their business. Some of 'em have religious rights and some of 'em don't. Some of them just don't wanna go because they're scared, and some of them just don't wanna go 'cause they're lazy.

W: I know you're not married, Ricky, but do you have any prospects?

B: Not right now I don't. [Laughter]



W: I don't know if you've given this any thought either, but when you marry, do you want children?

B: Yeah.

W: Have you ever thought about whether you would want to own your own home?

B: Yes.

W: When you're married, you would?

B: Design my own home.

W: Well, that's really good. How many children do you think you would like to have?

B: Two.

W: Do you ever think about marrying somebody from your own race, or have you given that any thought?

B: Yeah. I've thought about marrying people from—marrying another Indian, but I don't know. It depends on—if she's right, she's right, no matter if she's White or Indian. [Laughter]

W: I know how you feel about that. Do you think, Ricky, that the opportunities today for Indians are much different than they were when you were just a child?

B: Yes, 'cause my daddy and my grandmother used to tell me that Indians didn't even get to ride the bus at one time to school, and that they couldn't go to some stores. Some people wouldn't even hire 'em and so nowadays they will.

W: Ricky, do you get along well with the Black people?

B: I got good terms with some of 'em. Some of 'em I don't, some of 'em I do.

W: Do you get along pretty well with the Whites?

B: Oh, yeah. I've had a few girlfriends. [Laughter]

W: [Laughter] What do you think about our government today? Do you think it's on pretty sound ground?

B: Nope.

W: What do you think is wrong with it, Ricky?

B: You mean how are they doing about the Indians, or just the whole government?

W: Well, the whole government, and the Indians too.

B: All right they should, well they're not really—they say we had a energy shortage, but we ain't got that no more. We got a gas shortage, and the gas is going up like crazy. And Ford promised to do all kinds of stuff to get it out, but he ain't done nothing. Nixon, they should've just kept him in there. He, at least, kept his promises and even though they did have a little mix-up with that Watergate thing. And the Indians, well, they're just—the ones out south, I mean out in North Dakota and South Carolina—they just **defended our** rights and what the treaty said that they would get, and the government never did keep it. The government just keeps going back on their word all the time and everything. And if they'd just let each state take care of their own problems, they might be able to work something out there.

W: How do you think the Catawba Indians are faring?

B: Well, at one time they were getting pretty bad, but now they're doing pretty good. They're getting better.

W: Do you think that it's a good idea that we have elected a Chief and council?

B: Yeah. They can at least go to these meetings and make everybody, you know, ask everybody to come to these meetings and let everybody know and then he can be the spokesman for the Tribe and all that.

W: What do you think about the culture? Ricky, I believe I heard you say one day that you knew how to make the bead work?

B: Well, I took some of it in school and I got three years of art behind me, and I took some ceramics.

W: Would you—we're thinking about opening—having a class get started here on the reservation reviving the bead work. If you had the opportunity, would you go to that class?

B: Yeah.

W: Well, what do you think about the pottery? Now, you were one of the young men who went and dug pan clay last week, and we gave to the elderly people. What do you think about the pottery making? Should we just forget about it, or should we continue it, or what do you think about that?

B: I think we should continue it, 'cause everybody's going—if we let it go, we're gonna let one of the things that the Indians have had on for a long time. They needed it to survive, and I think we should keep our cultures going and everything.

W: Ricky, you have already told me what you would like to do when you get out of school, when you finish completely. Do you think that you've accomplished very much up to this point?

B: Well, yeah. I work, I've worked for a long time. I went through school, I'm going through school again, and I own a car, I live in an apartment, and I get along pretty good.

W: And I would like to just insert here that Ricky, his parents are divorced, and he still finished school.

B: They're divorced for about eleven years.

W: So, this young man, on his own, he has the initiative and the will to make something of himself and he's doing exactly that. If you could change the situation here for the Indians, what is the one thing you would do, Ricky?

B: I'd try to get everybody to start coming to meetings, at least helping out on the land, and start coming to classes like learning their language back and doing their culture and their history of the Indians and all that. And try to get some Indians in some of these things up here, like at the hospital and the police force, and working different places and all that. Let 'em learn different trades.

W: Ricky, you were one of the young men who had started making a list of the Indians who were buried on the old reservation. Did you enjoy doing this work, or do you think it's important?

B: Yes, I did. Yes, I do.

W: Why do you think it's important?

B: Because we can learn about who was buried down there, how they were killed, and their history and all that. And maybe find out some history about the Indians and all that and know everybody that was down there and things about 'em. And maybe we can find things out.

W: Ricky, are you proud to be an Indian?

B: Yes, I am.

W: Does everybody know that you're an Indian?

B: Yes, they do.

W: In what way do you defend—?

B: Well, I ain't gotten in but one fight about it. And the rest of it, they just say, "Well, I don't care."

W: [Laughter] Ricky is a fine young man and I know that he's going to accomplish all of the things that he wants to accomplish. I would like to kind of describe him if I can. How tall are you, Ricky?

B: Five ten and a half.

W: How much do you weigh?

B: 145 pounds.

W: And he's got big brown, they look almost black, eyes. He has black, wavy hair, and he has the kind of good-looking skin that all young men, I think, would like to have.

[End of interview]

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