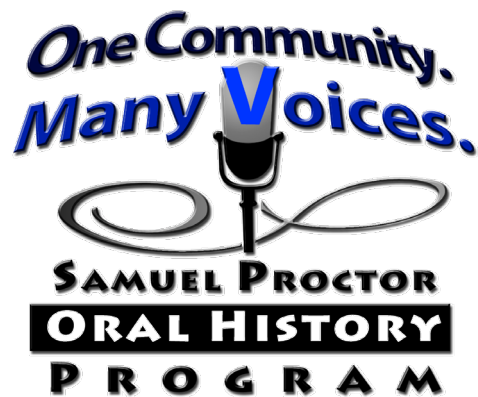


Fred Sanders

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-194**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
November 28, 1992**



University of Florida • Samuel Proctor Oral History Program • Paul Ortiz, Director
P.O. Box 115215, 241 Pugh Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-5215
(352) 392-7168 www.clas.ufl.edu/history/oral

Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Program Director: Dr. Paul Ortiz

241 Pugh Hall
PO Box 115215
Gainesville, FL 32611
(352) 392-7168
<https://oral.history.ufl.edu>

CAT 194 Fred Sanders
Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
Interviewed by Emma Reid Echols on November 28, 1992
17 minutes | 8 pages

Abstract: Fred Sanders describes his history in the military during World War II, covering the camps he was stationed at in the United States and his time in Germany and Austria. He describes his memories of growing up on the Catawba reservation, working to help support his family and attending the reservation school. He discusses an ongoing settlement with the federal government and his feelings that the Catawba are being used for others' political gain. Finally, he speaks about his wife, Judy, who works in American Indian law.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Military participation; Communities]

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
PROGRAM
University of Florida

CAT 194

Interviewee: Fred Sanders

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: November 28, 1992

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, 5150 Sharon Road, Charlotte, North Carolina. I'm recording the oral history of the Catawba Indians, University of Florida, Dr. Sam Proctor. And I'm sitting here at the table, great crowds of people all around, for the festival because this is November 28. By my side is Fred Sanders. Fred is the son of Arzada and Idle Sanders. And I've been a long time trying to catch up with him, 'cause in the early days he was so busy at bringing clay for his mother to make pottery, and later on he was in other businesses. And now I've caught up with him, and here at the table he's gonna record his name and some of the things he's doing. Give us your name and where you work in Charlotte.

S: I'm Fred Sanders, Assistant Chief of the Catawba Indian Reservation, and I was elected in August 30, 1975, and continue to serve today, November 28, 1992, so I've been on the executive council for a long time. I work in Charlotte as a machinist for the General Tire and Rubber Company. And I was employed at the General Tire and Rubber Company in July 1967. Just completed my twenty-fifth year with the company and just approaching my retirement and planning on leaving the public workplace sometime in the first part of the year in 1993. I've worked a number of places in my lifetime after growing up on the Indian reservation and seeing a lot of my older ancestors unable to have gained any type of gainful employment in the public place. I was able to go to work in the textile industry because of World War II come along and many men were taken away to the military service, so it left an opportunity for the Catawba people who were old enough to move into some type of public employment and have some

type of income to provide for themselves. So, I first went to work in the textile industry in 1942 when I was sixteen years old. Worked in the textile industry until I was eighteen, and at the time I was drafted into military service, as many other Catawba people were. I went to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, for introduction in the Army and traveled to Macon, Georgia, to Camp Wheeler for infantry training and later went to Germany in World War II and served with the Company C, the 407th Infantry, the 102nd Infantry Division. My company was captured on April 30, 1945. At the time they were captured, I was fortunate enough—or unfortunate, whichever you want to call it—I was on sick leave, and when I returned from sick leave my whole company had been taken prisoner of war. I remained in Germany until November 1945 and traveled back to the United States for a forty-five-day vacation. I came to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in December of [19]45 and arrived home on Christmas Eve. Remained home until February 1946, which was forty-five days, and went back to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and traveled to Petersburg, Virginia. And from Petersburg to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, and went back to Europe. Went to Bamberg, Germany for a brief pattern for reassignment. And ended up going to Linz, Austria in April in 1946. Assigned to Company D, the 24th Constabulary as a military unit which was responsible for security on the American- and Russian-occupied boundaries on the Blue Danube River in Linz, Austria. I served two and a half years with that unit, approximately, and military security in various areas of Austria on the Blue Danube River. Later returned to the United States in mid-June in 1948, and I went to Fort Bragg temporarily and finally up to Fort Knox, Kentucky. And served in Kentucky for a

while and then decided I would go back in the infantry unit and went to Fort Benning, Georgia, as an infantry instructor at the infantry school. Serving there for some time, and the war broke out in Korea. So, I was at Fort Bragg when the war was declared or hostilities broke out in Korea. Later I traveled to Camp Stoneman, California, and from Camp Stoneman I traveled back to Fort Hood, Texas. I left the military and Fort Hood, Texas, in December 1950.

E: Fred, you've got such an amazing memory of things, of military service. Tell me what you remember about your early days, the first things you remember on the reservation. Your mother told me you used to bring the clay for her. Tell me about your school days and what you remember about as a young boy down here.

S: Well, as a young boy growing up at the Catawba Indian Reservation, we lived—well, my family lived in a very small, small house, which only had three rooms. And there were a number of children. In this home, there was a living room and a bedroom and a kitchen. And my parents occupied the living room with two beds and slept with children and shared the bed with them, and then the boys occupied the bedroom with two beds, and we also shared, so it wasn't unusual for four of us to be sleeping in the same bed at the same time. We grew up having to share with each other. It was an unselfish family setting. Everybody had some responsibility to try to sustain the family. If you went to work cutting timber for firewood and sold the firewood, it wasn't that you could take your money to town and spend it for candy and ice cream or movies or hamburgers. You had to use that monies to put into the family group monies to buy food for

the rest of the children. And that was the responsibility I had as a very young boy. At thirteen years old, I spent many days in the woods with an axe with my brothers—Thomas, Jack, Kirk—chopping wood to be able to get some monies to buy groceries for the home. And I spent a lot of time gathering clay with my older brother, Kirk.

E: What teachers do you remember in your school?

S: Well, the teachers that I had was locally. We had a small school on the reservation, and it only went up to the elementary level, and I had several teachers. I had Jim Davis in the beginning, and then I had Willard Hayes, and then Shelby Berry, who had come to the reservation. These missionaries were all Mormons, and they were sent here pretty much through the influence of the Mormon Church. And then they had what they called teachers' assistants, so they had Georgia Harris would come in occasionally and teach as assistant, then they had . . . Sam Beck would come in occasionally and teach, and some of the other older students would help to teach us at different times. And my mom cooked meals at this school. When I last attended a reservation school, they had surplus government commodities that provided food to the reservation schools, so those were the lunches that we were able to have.

E: And after your mother served that lunch, she went in the classroom and demonstrated making pottery—

S: Yes. She spent a lot of time trying to continue to teach the pottery to the students who were attending school. So, the tradition of the pottery making has always had someone at the reservation continually teaching the process to people who

were willing to learn. But I guess my brother Kirk and I used to go to the clay holes over in the Lancaster side, which meant we had to cross the river. And we had an old community boat that—

U: [inaudible 11:16]

S: Hey there, Roy.

U: How you doing?

S: Fine.

[Break in recording]

S: I think the Tribe has been amazing to me, growing up at the reservation as a young boy, not knowing what the future might be for the Catawba Indians. I was born during the Depression, at the beginning of the Depression, and saw some terrible times for the non-Indian people, and it was an awfully terrible time for the Catawba people.

E: The new settlement that comes—we hope—how's it going to affect you or the others?

S: Well, I hope that we'll get a settlement that is equitable. At the present time it's not really in favor of the Tribe, it's in favor of the State of South Carolina and the political people who are working the process. It's an opportunity for the politicians to at least feel—they feel it's an opportunity for them to gain some political power, to further their political career. And I think that makes me feel real bad that the Tribe is being used and placed in that position to think of someone else's gain. But also, the state—the state is taking the position that they would like to come in and entertain a settlement, but in entertaining the settlement they want to

mandate or issue proclamations that would cause the Tribe to have to go to the state to achieve its goals and maintain its future with the state having a lot of input with what may and may not happen at the reservation. I think this is a disaster for the Tribe because an American Indian Tribe—as Catawba Indians, we were here. The state came, and the people that populated the area came, and it's kind of disturbing to think that the Tribe is going to be dictated what you should or shouldn't do as an American Indian Tribe. Hopefully we'll work those things out before we can continue to grow, but it's just amazing to me that we've been able to survive these five hundred years since Columbus arrived. And still intact and still in the same area, reduced in land base by many, many acres, thousands of acres are profited that the Tribe called home, living on a small parcel of land at the present time, but I hope the future is gonna be much better. Things are looking better at Catawba. People are still participating in activities. Today we have a festival here and a lot of visitors coming to Catawba, and they're able to sell their pottery and other things like baskets and bows and arrows and things of that nature and artwork, so I think the future is great for the Catawba.

E: It's interesting to me to go back in your education and [inaudible 14:28] and all through the years and the ones who have made good. And you're one of the ones that are standing out as a businessman and yet so interested in yours, and I'm proud to follow through on those of you who have really made good out of the public life. You feel happy—and you know others have done the same thing you're doing, don't you?

S: Well, it's been a struggle, but, you know, the thing of it is I see myself as living well in the two worlds. I never gave up on being who I am.

E: I like that.

S: Everywhere I've gone in the world, regardless of whether it was in the military or it was a place of public employment or whatever the duties might have been that I was affiliated with, I've always been proud to be a Catawba and always advocated I was a Catawba and always talked about my community and et cetera. And I think the other thing, in the mainstream world, I function very well in the mainstream as well.

E: Well, I'm glad to meet you today and to meet your wife. Tell me one more thing. Tell me about where you got your wife.

S: Where I got my wife? Well, isn't that interesting.

[Laughter]

S: Yeah. Yeah, that's, uh . . . Judy's ancestors moved from Catawba years ago. Her great-great grandmother was North Carolina, and she has Cherokee and Catawba ancestry. So, Judy's mother was born in Oklahoma-Kansas border. And her grandmother was born in that same territory, so they had constant association with the Cherokee Oklahoma territory.

E: She's a beautiful person, you know that?

S: Judy's a very beautiful lady. Judy's a military child. Her father was a military chaplain, served in the military until he retired. Her mother was a registered nurse, both of which has expired. Judy's an attorney practicing law, American Indian law. Very dedicated to working for the American Indian population in legal

matters. Judy grew up, thought she wanted to be a schoolteacher, but then after she taught school for a while, she thought maybe she wanted to do something different, so she went to school to study American Indian law and has been very helpful with me and working and serving with the Tribe.

E: Well, I'm awfully glad to meet you 'cause your father and your mother were my first friends on the reservation. And that was 1971, I think I have the first tape I ever made, and now I have a hundred to a hundred and twenty-five. Your mother and your father were my first friends, and they're always my friends.

[End of interview]

Transcribed by: Evangeline Giaconia, January 26, 2022

Audit-edited by: Lauren King, April 8, 2022

Final edited by: Indica Mattson, July 28, 2022