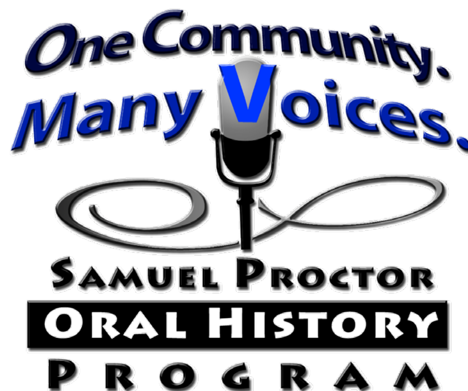
Evans McClure "Buck" George Jr.

Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-046

Interview by:

Jerry Lee
August 12, 1972



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CAT 046 Evans McClure "Buck" George Jr.
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Abstract: Evans McClure "Buck" George describes his family, including members that lived on the reservation. He recalls his father's history, focusing on his education at the Haskell Institute and his employment at an industrial cotton mill. He then speaks about his childhood education in Rock Hill and his time playing football at Clemson University. He discusses how the Catawba federal reservation was terminated, and his thoughts on the current state and future of the Tribe.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; Chief Osley Bird Saunooke; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Education; Politics and government]

SAMUEL PROCTOR ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM University of Florida

CAT 046
Interviewee: Evans McClure “Buck” George Jr.
Interviewer: Jerry Lee
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L: My name is Jerry Lee, and I'm interviewing Buck George, who is a Catawba Indian. This is being done through the oral history program at the University of Florida. What is your full name, George?

G: Evans M. George, Jr. And my uncle's nickname is Buck, so that's kind of stuck with me all my life. It's just been a nickname that most people call me. And it's just stuck with me all my life, and so I'm probably better known by “Buck” than my real name “Evans.” You say, "Hey, does somebody know Evans George?" and they—"Do you mean Buck?"

L: Did he name you after a deer?

G: No, I don't know whether it was that or whether it was right at the time, a cowboy in a western that starred on that was real popular when I was real young, Buck Jones, and my uncle's last name was Jones too. So, I don't know whether it came from that or not, but I stayed with him a lot of the time and he just started calling me Buck, and I don't know whether it was because I was part Indian or whether his last name was Jones or what, but the cowboy was real popular. He was sort of one of the headliners of the time, Buck Jones. The one that was killed in the Chicago Fire, I believe it was. Coconut Grove fire, wherever that's at. But I never did know for sure why he named me Buck, why he started calling me Buck, but it stuck with me anyway.

L: Where are we at right now? I know we're in your home, where is your home located?

G: At 1119 McDowell Drive, in Rock Hill Homes area.

L: And this is in Rock Hill—

G: This is in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

L: What year were you born?

G: I was born January 26, 1932.

L: And how old are you?

G: I'm forty years old right now.

L: Who were your parents?

G: My father was Evans M. George, and my mother is Phoebe Messer George.

L: Were they both Indian?

G: My mother was not Indian, and my father was Indian.

L: Do you remember your grandparents?

G: Yes, J.P. George was my granddaddy, and I never did know much about my grandmother. She died when I—I believe it was when my father was born, or shortly after he was born. And I didn't know very much about her. All I know is that she was not an Indian.

L: Have you always lived in the Rock Hill area?

G: Yes. I've lived in the city of Rock Hill almost all my life except for the short time that I stayed at Princeton. Four years over there.

L: What part Indian are you?

G: I would say I would be about a thirty-second, unless my granddaddy was full-blooded. Now, if he was full-blooded then my father would've been half, and I would be a quarter Indian. But I'm not sure that he was full-blooded himself, but he did look the part. But I'm not sure whether he was or not. But I know that his

wife, my granddaddy's wife, was White. I know that my mother was White. And that would throw me, I figure, about a fourth or a thirty-second. According to how much my granddaddy had in him. And he looked the part, he showed his Indian real well.

L: Do people look at you and say you're an Indian?

G: Oh, there's no doubt it. Look at me and tell it.

L: I wasn’t sure how much it would take because a lot of the times—did you ever live on the reservation?

G: I never have lived on the reservation except for overnight stays with my Aunt Betty when I was real young. I used to go down to the reservation and spend the night with her from time to time. But I was real young at that time, most of the time I've lived on the industrial mill village in Barrel Street.

L: What kind of home did your aunt have?

G: It was an old log cabin with rocks and mud filled in between the cracks. This is my aunt I'm talking about now. And she had—it was just old logs, it looked like to me, hand-cut and cut flat on the top and laid just like the frontier people lay ‘em, end over end on the end, and then in between mud and rock stuck in there, and then boards and things nailed on the inside to try to keep out the weather. But this was a type of house if you can imagine the frontiersmen livin’ in, this was the type of house she was livin’ in.

L: And this was about thirty years ago.

G: This was about thirty years ago. Ah, I guess about thirty-five years ago.

L: Was her last name George?

G: Yes.

L: Did she have running water, or plumbing, or—

G: No, they had a spring down behind the house, that she had to go down to the spring. Most of the houses down there did have at that time. And just like my Aunt Lucy that lived—that died a few years back in a fire, she had to walk down to the spring to get her water. And she did this for years.

L: And most of the homes at the reservation was this way?

G: They were, up until—since the war. Before the war, most of them had a spring or a well that they drew the water from.

L: How about your father, did he ever live on the reservation?

G: My father lived on the reservation here. He was born over in Lancaster County, and he lived on the reservation here. He went to school at Cherokee, and from Cherokee they were sent out to Haskell Institute, and his roommate was the Chief of the Cherokee that passed away a few years ago. Chief Saunooke, I think that's the way you pronounce his name. I used to have a picture of him as a wrestler. He used to be the eastern heavyweight champion for the country, and he was well known by and liked by people all in the eastern part of the country. He fought nearly all over the United States—this was the Cherokee Chief I'm talking about—he was a roommate of Daddy's when they went to Haskell Institute and they knew that one of them could stick it out, and they left. And I think they had—Betty was telling me this—I think it was seven dollars, or either five dollars or seven, and he took—one of 'em took four of it and the other one took three, and one of 'em went west and the other one came back east. And the

next time Daddy saw him, he walked up on the poach over on Barrel Street and just about shook the whole house. He weighed 365 pounds, and that was in the middle of his wrestling career. And later he became Chief of the Cherokee Tribe in North Carolina up until the time of his death, and daddy could go up there at any time—they were just the best of friends—and when they see each other. But Daddy got a fairly good education before he quit school, but he did not finish Haskell, he left before he finished it.

L: Why did he choose to go to Haskell?

G: Well, I think that's the only school at the time for the Indians, and people that were going to school here on the reservation had to be sent if they were going to go any higher they had to be sent up to Cherokee, to go to school there with the Indians there on the reservation in Cherokee.

L: Did they have to work their way through?

G: Yes, and [Laughter] I didn't know it but, they said that they were treated kind of rough by the older boys in the group, the younger boys were. They'd kind of treated 'em pretty rough.

L: And they were—all the instructors were Indian?

G: I don't know about the instructors. I don't know much about them.

L: Did your father ever tell any of the Indian stories when he was a little boy? Or any of the folklore or stories that get handed down father-son? Where the Indians came from, or the proud heritage?

G: Now, I don't remember any stories at the time told but I know that he was real proud of his Indian heritage. And I think you'll find that in most Indians, there's a

certain amount of pride in being an Indian if they have. They're not really ashamed of it, inasmuch as they—I think most of ‘em are proud that they do have some Indian blood in ‘em. And this was the way he felt, he was proud of his heritage. To me, of course, he was my father, but he was one of the best men I believe I've ever known. I think you would say the same thing about your father, but he was real kind and gentle and easygoing, even-tempered, and very hard to rouse as far as his tempers and things.

L: Was he in the Catawba Indian government out there, as far as the council, and did he take part?

G: He took part from time to time in certain things but not exactly as some of them were out there. One time I particularly remember, somebody wrote an article in the paper about the Catawba Indians which he didn't like at all. It wasn't a very good article as far as the way they wrote it. It gave the people the idea of—it seemed like they tried to downgrade the Indians in their description of them and all, and they didn't agree with that. The fact that they—he said that the majority of ‘em or all of them were real lazy and it was just a bad article all the way around. So, he was repudiating this article in the paper and had to publish in the paper, and it was a real good article that he wrote in repudiation of the previous article. And this is one of the times that he was active, and at other times he was just one of the Tribe.

L: He seemed to have a pretty good education for this time and space as a Catawba Indian.

G: Very well. One other that I know of that's probably much better and that's Rob Harris. Rob Harris I really—I don't believe there was many more of ‘em that had much more education than daddy did at the time.

L: Well, did his parents encourage him to an education?

G: I never have heard just how he did go about getting his education, as far as who gave him the incentive to do it. His mother died when he was just a baby. And his father, I don't know whether he pushed him in it or not. He was sort of an orphan in one sense of the word, from the way he had to get his education. When they left, they had to leave from down here and go to school at Cherokee, and that was over half the year, three-quarters of the year, and stay up there at school.

L: Were you close to your grandparents? Did you have a—

G: Yeah, I knew my grandaddy real well.

L: Did he ever tell you of the hardships of the Indians, or the winters, or the war, anything that might come up in your mind?

G: He didn't particularly go into this, but I know that they did have a rough time. You can imagine that everybody back in the early [19]30s and late [19]20s was having a rough time. You can imagine that they were having a rough time just walking around town the Catawbas were having.

L: All got pushed down to the little man.

G: And as the other ones were cutting down low, you know the Catawbas were getting cut down lower. They were really having a rough time.

L: Did your grandparents or your father, did they ever have any—did they ever make any statements that maybe might feel like they felt like they were ever misused by the White man, or given a bad deal?

G: Well, I always referred to it myself as the all-American game. And that's where I guess, sometimes, I might irritate some of the fellas when I say this, when I say I feel like they're gettin' the best of me with the fellas I'm working with, talking with, I tell them I play that all-American game. They say, "What do you mean?" I say, "Let's take it away from the Indians." [Laughter] Or beat the Indians out of it, and I'd always get a laugh out of it, but they get the point of what I mean.

L: And you're serious inside?

G: Yes, I'm very serious the times when I say this. They get the idea. And tell you, one fella asked another fella was I really mad at him. [Laughter] And I wasn't really, but I was just wanting to get a point across to him. He might be taking advantage of me unfairly, and this is just my way of telling him.

L: Did your father have a profession? Or did he learn a trade or a skill?

G: I did hear him say that he had learned a good bit about the shop, but when he tried to get a job he couldn't get a job anywhere in any shop, and he wanted to get into the shops. I'm talking about the machine shop, welding shop, electrical shop, things like this. He said he knew that real well and could do good at it, but there wasn't anybody'd let him go to work for them in the shop.

L: Because he was an Indian.

G: Well, I don't know for sure that it was because he was Indian, but he thinks it was. And he thought it was. But he had to go to work. They did give him a job in

the plant itself as just a hand in the plant, or an operator in the plant, running cards. Or what do you call it? Pictures. Or in the opening room. He, later on, ran drawing and moved up to a scrubber, and from there he became a section hand, fixer, and fixed equipment all the way from where they opened the cotton up in the cotton mill, take it out of the bale, all the way from this point through, up to the spinning room. He was a fixer in this—they call it a section—and he did the caring for and upkeep on the machinery. And from there, later on they gave him a general overseer's job, or a second hand of the third shift, and then from the third shift they gave him second shift, and from second shift they gave him general overseer over the whole mill. As far as the opening room and drawing room, the rubber joiner room, all. He had first shift and was over with over all three of the other shifts, and he was making probably the best money at that time that he'd ever made in his life, and—

L: You know what kind of salary he was making?

G: At that time, I remember it was about seven hundred and something dollars a month, I believe it was.

L: When was this?

G: About 1948.

L: Where was this at?

G: This was around 1948 and this was the industrial cotton mill. I expect up through [19]50, [19]51. And later on, he lost that job, and he got the same job, or the equivalent to the same job in another mill, and then he came back to this mill, and he finally developed an allergy or something to the cotton dust in the mill,

and he got to where he couldn't go even into the card room. Couldn't breathe the dust, and emphysema got so bad—he didn't smoke. The only thing I know that bothered him was the cotton dust, and he could just go into the place, and it would bother him real bad. So, he couldn't even walk back in, they retired him on a medical disability. And he only lasted about two and a half years to three years after he came out of the—it would be closer to two and a half years after he came out of the card room. So, he worked about forty-something years in the side room.

L: When did he move to Rock Hill?

G: Well, like I said, he was born in Lancaster County, right across the river on the other side of the river. And then he lived on the reservation when he was a child and then he went to school at Cherokee and spent most of the time at Cherokee. And then went to school at Haskell Institute in North Kansas. And he came back here then to the Rock Hill area and that's when he went to work at the Rock Hill area. And when he met mother and married, they—I don't know for sure where they first lived, I believed it was over in the industrial mill village, but then he moved over on Barrel Street and we lived there most of our life on Barrel Street.

L: You said you mother was non-White—I mean, your mother was a White woman.

G: Yes.

L: Did her parents or any of her friends object to her marrying an Indian?

G: I don't know, I don't really know how her daddy felt about it at the time. They were from Greenville, South Carolina, and I don't know just how they felt about it at the time.

L: How about his family, do you get along okay?

G: Yes. Since then, we're real friendly. I've always gotten along good since then.

L: Were your parents pretty strict with you and your brothers and sisters?

G: When I was coming up, they were very strict. [Laughter]

L: Can you explain that?

G: Well, if I did anything wrong, I could surely be expected to pay for it. Daddy's strap was always available.

L: Did he do the discipline?

G: He was the discipline as far as—both of them as far as discipline response. I done something real bad, he was the one that took care of it.

L: If there were any decisions to be made, did they kind of conference together and come out with something, or did your father or your mother, one or the other, make the decision?

G: I think they more or less stuck together on their decisions. It wouldn't be hard, like I said, Daddy would beat me. It wouldn't be hard for Mother to sway him one way or the other if she really wanted something, but at the same time I think if he thought it was right the other way, he'd do it the way he wanted it done.

L: What was the first school that you went to?

G: I went to Northside School, entered the first grade at Northside, and when my sister entered the school there were some of them that said they would have to send her to the reservation down there, and my mother said, "I'm not going do it, I'm going to send her to Northside." And my sister and Mrs. Blue's children were the first ones that went into Northside School. And it was an easy thing, it wasn't

any bad feelings about it as far as I know, but they had said before then that we would have to go to the reservation school. But mother said, "Not my children. They're going to Northside." So, she sent them to Northside and that's where I went to school at.

L: What was your sister's name?

G: Frances Davis, that's what her name is now.

L: She was the first one in your family to go?

G: I believe her and the Blue girls were the first ones to go to Northside School as Indians.

L: Do you remember about what year that you entered there?

G: I was born in 1932, and entered the first time when I was not quite old enough to go to school, because my birthday hit in January. So after going about a month-and-a-half I had to sit it out again. They checked the records and found out that I was too young to be in school so they let me wait ‘til the following year to go to school.

L: This was just a mistake, there was no—

G: No, I don't think it was no intended thing, at least I don't think it was, and the following year I entered first grade at seven years old.

L: Did you pal around with the other Indian children there?

G: Well, there weren't that many in school there.

L: You didn't have your own little group of—you know where you all kind of—

G: No.

L: Stayed on the sidelines—you just mingled with all the children, no one had a predetermined? What did you do after you finished Northside?

G: Well, I was going on into Rock Hill High School, it was the only high school here in town other than the current high school, and I went to the Rock Hill High School.

L: Were there a lot of Indian children there?

G: No, there weren't a lot of them, there were not more than ten, I would say. Alberta Canty, at the time, she was in my class all the way through, and she was going to the high school at the time, and Rachel Harris, I believe it was, was going. And I don't believe there was more than ten in high school at the time.

L: Did any of these kids ever say anything to you about being discriminated or feeling like they were getting a bad deal from the teacher or kids making fun of them?

G: No, I don't believe that I—I didn't hear of any of them being discriminated against, although there may have been isolated cases of some of the girls being called certain names and things, but it wasn't a rule as a general thing.

L: How about yourself, did you have any?

G: I don't remember any incidents. In fact, I was in high school and I was accepted pretty good as far as being an Indian. I don't remember of any incidents where they were saying anything against me.

L: If I could just bring out one point, what about the other Indian children? I know a lot of them were entering elementary schools around town and all. Were a lot of

them dropping out at this time? Because it seems like very few actually got to high school.

G: I don't believe too many of them really went on to school at the time.

L: Was this because they were ill-trained to begin with and they could not keep up, or just didn't have an interest to go on?

G: It may have been a little bit of—the family life may have been a little bit of the thing behind it. They may have not been pushed hard enough, and then not had enough money to get on in, as far as buying the right clothes and things or whatever, they may have felt that they didn't have the right clothes or something. And this may have prompted some of them—some of them may not have been making the grades, may have been hurt on that standpoint, as far as the grades that they were making. I don't know if this is true, but I honestly don't know why they didn't go on to school. A number of them did drop out of school, didn't finish. Course I only knew the ones that came to school.

L: Well, how did you get to school from where you lived on Barrel—

G: I rode my bike from where I lived.

L: Did the buses come by then?

G: No, there was very few bussing at the time, and there was very little inner-city bussing at the time. The mile bussing was in the inner-city bussing first started taking place right here in the Rock Hill Homes area. They did have a bus that would come into this area here and pick up these children and carry them into high school, but that was about the only bussing inside the city limits that was done. And this was right on the edge of city limits at that time. And they did turn a

bus into this area right here and picked up—my wife lived next door to where I'm living here now, and they came by and picked her up, and carried her to school. But the bussing did run to the reservation and back, and they ran all out into the country areas, bringing the people that lived in the rural routes from all around the Rock Hill area into Rock Hill High School.

L: Do you know when the busses first started picking up the Indian children?

G: No, I sure don't. Some of the ones that lived down there, though, they probably do know for sure on that.

L: But at one time they could not ride the buses, is that correct?

G: At one time they didn't go to high school here, like I said. At one time Daddy, had to go to Cherokee to finish his education at Cherokee. For the very young ones they had a school on the reservation and then from there, they went on up to Cherokee for the rest of their school.

L: Could the Indians vote back then, the ones you father's age, old enough to vote?

G: Not until 1940 or [19]41. they were considered wards of the state, and I know my dad wasn't a registered voter.

L: He was not allowed to vote.

G: I just don't believe he was, as a ward of the state, I don't believe he was allowed to vote. But up until 1940 or [19]41, all the Catawbas were wards of the state.

L: And what happened in [19]41?

G: Well, they bought the federal reservation here and the federal government took over. And at that time, they were no longer considered wards of the state and were given rights to register to vote if they wanted to.

L: This was when the new reservation—

G: This was the new reservation.

L: Did you work while you were going to high school?

G: I worked part time in the cotton mill during the summertime.

L: What cotton mill?

G: Industrial cotton mill, which is the J.P. Stevens Company mill.

L: And you're given the same salary as someone else?

G: Yes, I was given the same salary as a beginning helper was given.

L: Did you play any sports or go out for track or anything in high school?

G: I went out for football, track, and basketball. My senior year I got a scholarship to Clemson on football. And I got several honors, as far as I made the South Carolina All-State team, I made the Charlotte-Vera All-State team, I made the All-Southern team, and I got several small awards from the different groups in town here, the athletics awards and things for outstanding athletics. As I said, I won a scholarship to Clemson and attended Clemson four years.

L: You still hold some records at Rock Hill High.

G: I did up until last year, and one of the fellas broke the record that I was holding in track. And this was a broad jump record, twenty-three feet, eight inches, I did it my sophomore year. I didn't play track my senior year because I left my senior year, I missed part of the year after Christmas and went to Clemson, Calhoun High School over next to Clemson, so I could see what it was like to work out with the college team. This enabled me to be on the varsity as a freshman the following year, I had to—really, the reason I went over there was I needed an

extra half a unit to finish my work at Rock Hill High School. I was going to have to go to summer school unless I got some extra tutoring in this, so I went over there and I got the extra tutoring and got the course off and went ahead in the summer school at Clemson.

L: I wanna get back to your college career in a minute. Do you remember playing any Indian games as a child, or any games you can relate with Indians?

G: Well, we were always trying to do certain dances and things this way, but I don't know whether they were authentic or not. Chief Blue was living then, and he was noted for going around different places and showing people how to do a dance that he had that evidently was authentic. He would go to the different schools and things and show these dances and all and we were always playing these but most of my playmates were not Indian. Cause when I was in the mill village, most of them didn't have no Indian at all.

L: You or your brothers and sisters, did y'all learn to make pottery? Or know about that?

G: There's nobody in my immediate family that knew how to make pottery. Landrum George's wife knows how to make pottery. Elsie. She knows, she says it's very hard to make and it's a lot of work to it. And I've talked to her about it, and she does know how to make it.

L: Do you have any Indian decorations in your home?

G: Yes, I have some pottery here that is supposedly a hundred years old at least. That was handed down. I don't know for sure how it was dated, it doesn't have any markings or anything on it. This is one thing. Had four stems, which was

common pottery down there that you see, most of them that know how to make pottery, you'll see them with the four stems on it, it'll either be four or six or eight stems.

L: Did they actually smoke there?

G: They would take a hollow stick into each part here on the side entrance and put their tobacco in here and they would start to smoke them. And this was part of their social life, was their smoking. This was one of the bad habits we gave y'all. [Laughter]

L: Well, was this used as a peace pipe?

G: This was more like a social smoking pipe here.

L: And the actual small peace pipes that the Indians supposedly passed around, they still use that too?

G: Yes, but this was not the ceremonial pipe, this was just a social pipe here that they used when they were together, more than one.

L: Was the Catawba pottery unique?

G: I think so, I can recognize Catawba pottery from any other pottery that I've seen. I've seen some at Cherokee when I was passing through on the shelves and the counters and I immediately recognized the fact that it was Catawba pottery and I asked the man, "You want to know, is that from Rock Hill?" and tell him yes, and I said, "Well, that's Catawba pottery." [Laughter]

L: Do you all observe any Indian traditions in your home? Such as special occasions like Christmas or births or deaths, anything that would be termed Indian the way it’s carried out?

G: No. We don't have any traditions that have been handed down.

L: Do any of the Indian families that you know of?

G: I don't know of any in the Catawba group that do.

L: You told me before you have a lot of pictures of your ancestors.

G: Yes, I have some pictures back there that date back to the early twentieth, and one picture at the turn of the century back there. I have some pictures of Sarah Owl, one of the Catawbas who married one of the Chiefs of the Cherokee in North Carolina. And I have a picture of her back there. I have several pictures here, and they're real interesting.

L: Well, if Dr. Proctor in the oral history program could use these, would you let him make them a copy if they come see you about it?

G: Yes, I'd be glad to.

L: Or let you have them made for them, since you know they'd be in good hands. Do you feel that you have something in common with all Indians?

G: Yes, I think so. I think that I have a—this might be just my own feelings, it might be just one that you might have, but I have a—I don't know, a feeling of—I feel the nature more than I would think the ordinary person. By this I mean that if a bug crawled across the floor here, instead of getting up and smashing him with my foot, I might get up and take a tissue paper and pick him up and put him back outside. Now I don't mean to say that I don't go and spray for the harmful ones, but if he's not bothering me, I don't feel like I want to bother him.

L: Do you feel this is because you're an Indian?

G: I think so, I really do. I think it's something that is kind of inbred into me, and I have this feeling. Also I have—in school, it may have been that I just didn't study hard enough—but I have a hard time with the English language. And I felt like the reason I had such a hard time with the English language was the fact that maybe I was part Indian, and I had my ancestors, and all hadn't been speaking it and the family didn't speak it as fluently as maybe other families that had handed it down all the years.

L: I understand that when you go hunting for deer you use a bow and arrow. Can you talk about that?

G: [Laughter] I do. I can hit one standing still as far as the target, but I use a manufactured bow, which is a real strong one—about sixty pounds—and I haven't as yet killed a deer and I stopped hunting them, so it doesn't look like I'm going to be able to get one. But the more I see ‘em and how pretty they are, the less I really want to kill one.

L: Nora was telling me a story of how one of her boyfriends was here you didn't particularly like, and you would bring your bow in here and start stringing it up and shooting him kind of dirty looks. Is that true?

G: [Laughter] I did bring the bow in and show it to him, but I don't know what effect that had on him. [Laughter]

[Break in recording]

L: Are you familiar with the kind of medical and dental treatment that Indians had on the reservation?

G: I'm sorry, I—

L: Are you familiar, or have you heard anyone talk about the kind of medical treatment and dental treatment the Indians on the reservation would receive from the government?

G: Well, at this time they don't receive any help from the government as far as medical help and dental help is concerned. This is one of the points in the termination of the reservation, which I didn't vote for. And I expressed my opinion and I didn't want to vote for it at the time, because actually it was shared at the time was really not anything worth what the benefit that they could have gotten. And at that time, I didn't even really know the benefits. It was only after the vote for the termination of the reservation that some of the benefits were explained and some of the Indians were made aware of what really benefits they had. For example, in education, any Indian child that had finished their elementary school and high school and passed their work could have gone free to any college in the country that they wanted to. And this was not explained to any of the Indians on the reservation, none of them knew of it. And certainly, if I had known about it, I wouldn't have had to even go on a football scholarship. See, I didn't know it, but at that time this scholarship was available for me to have gone on—and I'm sure that probably my sisters would have taken—my older sister would have taken advantage of a chance to go to college if she had known about it. But this was a thing that was available to us that we didn't even know was available. And nobody bothered to explain them to us. And as far as living conditions, they were supposed to have made available to them sewage for each home, running water and electricity. This was my understanding that all of this was supposed to have

been made available to them. But this was not explained to them, and I only found out about it after I was talking with the man who was sent here to make the termination. I was up at his office late one night talking to him. And he told me some of the advantages that they were giving up. At the time, they only got about three-and-a-half acres of land. Each individual or member of the Tribe got about, I'd say, an average of about two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half acres according to where it was located, of land. And this, if it was three-and-a-half acres or it was two-and-a-half acres, it was an average of around eighty-five or ninety dollars an acre. And this was their only share that they were getting. And you can see if just one child, every two or three years, had gone on to college from different groups of families—there's the Harrises, there's the Georges, the Cantys—any of those just had one child going every four or five years to school—and I'm talking about the whole group of the Tribe—it would have been well worth not terminating the reservation. Just that one thing alone.

L: Why was this not explained?

G: I don't believe they wanted them to know, really.

L: You don't believe the government—

G: I don't believe the agents who were responsible to this area really wanted them to know. Now I will say this, and on his behalf, the agent, when we did have a problem or anything, he was working out of the offices in Cherokee, and so this may have accounted for one reason why that they didn't know. And another thing they may have not even wanted them to know, but certainly as far as I know they

didn't any of them know that any Indian child finishing high school could have gone on to college free.

L: Who was this agent?

G: I don't know who the agents were.

L: You don't know any of the names, or—

G: **Artson** was the one who came here to terminate the reservation, he was the one—

L: What was his name?

G: **Artson**.

L: **Artson**?

G: **Artson**. He was from Colorado, I believe it was, somewhere from around in that section, Montana or Colorado. That was his last name. It's on file, who the man was that was here. I think he has passed away since then. But he explained to me that the Indians could have gotten a free education at any time, just so that they had a passing grade, and applied for it.

L: Well, when was the Tribe terminated?

G: The actual date I don't know, but it was in the early [19]50s when the termination—Let's see, let me think for a second. It was the late [19]50s, early [19]60s when it was terminated.

L: Did they have White secretaries or record keepers down there?

G: They had a Seneca Indian woman who was the secretary on this termination thing, and they had a White man who was the agent in charge of the termination.

L: Do you know the secretary's name?

G: [Laughter] I'm a little hard to recall that. I took her out one day to buy some fabric. I didn't **tell** any, but I don't remember her name **I'm afraid**, but she was a Seneca Indian secretary here at the time.

L: What happened to the records that they did keep?

G: You talking about when they terminated?

L: Yes.

G: I expect they're back in the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C.

L: Did you receive land?

G: I received a share, and my daughter received a share. And ours was together, which was about six acres.

L: Did you have a choice of taking this or money, or not doing anything?

G: I had a choice to take either the money or the land.

L: Or just stay away.

G: Or just stay away from it.

L: Those were the only choices you had.

G: They had a vote, and they sent out a questionnaire and a voting for whether you were for or against termination. And I sent mine back in against termination of the reservation.

L: Did it have an overwhelming majority? Or—

G: I don't know what the vote was for. They had just said that it was carried, and there would be a termination of the reservation.

L: Was it at this time the Indians were made citizens? Or considered citizens?

G: I think it was in the [19]30s, that's what I was talking about a while ago, or early [19]40s when this bill was passed, and they were no longer a ward of the state, that they were actually made a citizen. But as far as living on the reservation—if you lived on the reservation out there, the main thing was that you could have a section of the land, and you could build a house on it and maintain this house and all, and the land, and it was yours and you could pass it down to your children, but you never could really have ownership to it. And this was the thing that the White people kept telling them, that you can't have ownership to this land, you're terminated. So that you can have ownership of your land, then you'll own your land, and they can let you do what you want to do, you can go borrow money on it or whatever you want to on it. I figured then that most of ‘em wouldn't even hang onto the land for a year or two years at least, it'd be gone.

L: Did most of them sell the land?

G: I believe a good percentage of them have sold the land.

L: Well, did the Indian agent or any of the real estate men, did they stand to gain a lot by getting them to terminate?

G: Well, this section of the county had blocked off any progress in that direction, and—

L: County-wise?

G: County-wise. And city-wise too. The city is growing in that direction, and it blocked off any growth in that direction, as far as the reservation. The reservation came all the way up to what is now the edge of the city limits out here.

L: Up near the technical institute?

G: It came up to the back of the tech center, see. The tech center joins onto it, what is now the old part of the federal reservation. They also have now going through there the trade street extension going out through as part of the old reservation—I mean the federal reservation—they have I-77 going through the middle of the federal reservation, and this would have been a big boost in the economy that were the ones put on that I-77 along that line.

L: Do you think this was part of the all-American game? [Laughter]

G: I think they played the modern-day all-American game. I really do.

L: Well, is the old reservation still intact?

G: The old reservation for the state of South Carolina is still intact just as it was. And it's still intact just as it was before the federal reservation came in, and the state of South Carolina was holding on to the old reservation.

L: People live on the old reservation?

G: Any Catawba Indians who wishes to can go and file a homestead on it. The one restriction, I believe it is, you have to be about ninety feet or something like this from his neighbor, his closest neighbor. [Laughter] And it's only about six hundred acres, so it would be pretty well filled up if all of them went down there and got on their ninety feet from each other. [Laughter]

L: You actually could go down and build you a home?

G: Yes, you could go down there and build a home.

L: If you ever left, you'd have to lose your dwelling there, or you couldn't sell it to anyone?

G: No, it would have to be left there, and you couldn't sell it to anyone else, as far as an outsider.

L: Will this land stay there forever do you guess, or until—

G: I would think it would, because the state of South Carolina I don't believe can afford to settle up with the Catawba Indians.

L: Why's that?

G: Because at one time they owned the whole upper part of South Carolina.

L: Didn't—way back in the early history—didn't South Carolina claim to have bought and paid for a lot of this? Yet they have no actual receipts or deeds or anything signed by the Chiefs that shows money changed hands or—

G: They tried when the feeling was so high and bad against the Indians in the early 1870s, I believe it was. They tried to send them to—during the Jackson time—they tried to send them—as president—they tried to send them west into Oklahoma along with the Cherokees and any other Indians that were east of the Mississippi River. They agreed to buy some land in North Carolina for some of the Catawba. The Catawbas didn't want to go west, so they agreed to buy some land in North Carolina, in the mountains at the time, to give to some of the Catawbas. They moved up there a short time later. They didn't follow up on what they promised. At least this is what I've read, that they didn't follow up on what they promised them. So, they came back to this way, and they've always lived here for something like four or five hundred years, they've been right in this section. It was a range of three or four hundred miles in any direction, but this

section right in here is—where they're at now is where they've been settled for something like four hundred, five hundred years.

L: What religion is your family?

G: My family are Baptists, but the majority of the Catawbas are Mormon. I'm only one of a small percentage of them that are otherwise. The vast majority of the Catawbas are Mormon. But one reason for this is when they were having so much trouble in the early turn of the century, the Mormons was one of the ones that leant them a hand and opened the church to them and invited them in. And the Catawbas in turn have felt close to them along this line.

L: Was your father a Mormon?

G: My father was a Baptist.

L: If I understand correct, he was one of the first to join their church.

G: I believe he was, I don't remember any of the rest of them being Baptist or any other denomination. They're all Mormons.

L: Well, do the Mormons accept the Indians fully?

G: Yes, they've always treated them real well. In fact, a couple of the Indians have gone to Brigham Young University on a scholarship. Evidently, somebody from Brigham Young University knew about these laws and things about a free education, because one of the George girls, I believe it's Diane George, she finished Brigham Young University.

L: Well do you have to be a Mormon or just an Indian to go to Brigham Young?

G: Through the Mormon church they made it available to her to go to Brigham Young University. But they were just more or less helping the Indian further her education.

L: A non-Mormon Indian could go on the scholarship.

G: I mean, I don't know about that.

L: I was referring, like, to say you—you're Baptist—

G: Oh, yes—

L: Could you have went to Brigham Young University—

G: I think if I had gone and inquired about it through the church, the Church of Latter-day Saints here on the reservation, that they had made it available to me.

L: How do you find the government could have helped the Indians as far as paying, a better education, and more jobs available?

G: I think that if they had explained, truly, all the aid that was available to them. The aid that was available to them that they knew about was doctors. That they could go to an appointed doctor, which was Dr. Blackman at this time. And later on when Dr. Blackman got older they assigned another doctor, but Blackman for years was the doctor, and any time the Indians wanted to go to a doctor they could go to him, and he didn't charge them anything. And the federal government paid him in return for treatment of the Indians. And I've gone to his office when I was real young for different things. In fact, I've got a scar here where he lanced this finger for an infection when I was about ten years old. And this was free. This was one of the benefits that was made available to us that we did know about. Another one was that at the beginning of the school year, we could go to White

Printing Company and get some school supplies for the coming year. And they gave you a certain amount for school supplies that was supposed to last you the year.

L: You wasn't aware of this?

G: Yes, they made this available to us. And these were some of the few benefits that we knew were available to us.

L: Did many of the Indians take advantage of this?

G: Oh, I think most of them that were going to school did, would go and get what was allotted out to them.

L: Did you ever heard any of the old Indians talk about how it felt to be considered a non-citizen, of what this did to their human dignity?

G: [Laughter] I think it did hurt in some ways. They were proud of being an Indian, but most of them just wanted to be treated equal. They don't want to get ahead of anybody or anything I believe, I think if the rules are laid out, they want to go by those rules, whatever those rules are, and they don't want to be ahead of everybody and try to break the rules and not expect to be punished for them, but they want the rules to be the same for everybody.

L: Were the Indian marriages, Indian-White marriages, considered legal?

G: Not—and this is something that I didn't know about, but I didn't know that they weren't supposed to—in the state of South Carolina, there was not supposed to have been a marriage between an Indian and a White. And you weren't supposed to be able to secure a license. And this was only—the law was only passed in 1961 or [19]62, somewhere along this by the state legislature has

made it in the early [19]60s. Now, I didn't know about this law, and I got my license in Anderson County, at the Anderson courthouse, in Anderson, South Carolina. But the girl didn't say anything to me when I got my license. And I just told her who I was, and who I wanted a license for—

L: What is your wife's name?

G: Her name then was Kay Merchant. Ethel Kay Merchant. But they didn't say anything about getting the license. And I understand at times there were some of them that were asked about their license, whether they were getting married to an Indian—whether it was a White or an Indian being married, they would ask them and one particular person—if I'm thinking, I believe it was my father—said that the person said, "Aw, go on, give them the license." And they went ahead and gave ‘em the license. And this was a thing that had taken place over and over, and then all of the sudden in 1960—early [19]60s, they say none of the licenses are legal. And so that's the reason the legislature cleared this up.

L: Well, did all these people that were married before then have to go back and get remarried?

G: No, they just made it legal.

L: Declared it legal? Someone I was interviewing said that about this time, a lady came down to the reservation and was kind of fanatical, like saying all the Indians were living in adultery, those that hadn't married, you know, Whites, and saying their marriages were not legal. And had a big uproar about this. Did you ever hear of—?

G: Well, I don't know about that, but I kind of felt uneasy about it since it was for about three or four days there, three or four weeks there, it was running in the *Indian Herald* several stories about it. And it kind of made me feel uneasy. I didn't think that I'd ever done anything wrong, and that I thought everything was legal. And it did make me feel kind of uneasy. I called my lawyer up and talked to him, which was Mr. Hayes, and he told me that just don't worry about it, everything will be all right. Just don't worry about it.

L: So was this another dig at your being a human being [inaudible 1:10:30]

G: This was coming out of the era somewhere along the Jackson era. This was the feeling of the laws that were passed back was in that era that never were corrected, it was still on the books. And to bring them up now, it kind of in a way humiliated you some, made you feel a little bit less than—but really, to me it was kind of a joke too, but like I said, it bothered me enough that I did call my lawyer. And talked with him about it. And I was quite upset the day I called my lawyer.

L: Well, did your wife's family have any objections to her marrying an Indian?

G: I don't believe so.

L: You all get along fine, even to this day?

G: Yes.

L: Never any remarks, or—?

G: Nothing other than ordinary domestic disagreements.

L: Did the Blacks intermarry with Indians?

G: As far as I know, there's not one case of this in the Catawbas.

L: Do the Indians feel superior to the Blacks?

G: No, I don't think they feel superior to them. It's just that they just don't ... I don't know, associate or something, may be the word. They just don't intermingle with them that much. They don't feel superior to them. I got some friends that I work with incorporate them as well as I know how, and I don't feel superior to them. In fact, there's one fella that drives a Central Motor Line truck out of Charlotte, North Carolina, and every time I see him I always blow the horn at him and wave at him, cause I respect him in other ways. He's just that kind of fella, and that's a way, I think, most of the Catawbas feel.

L: Do the Indians have a sympathy with the Blacks? Them being a minority also?

G: I don't particularly think that—they think that they probably may have been mistreated in times past, but I think that they think now they have obtained that freedom that they want, and that now they're overdoing it. They're going beyond those laws that I was telling you about that were laid down for everybody and everybody could follow them, anybody that breaks them should be punished, but they don't get their punishment. And this is not right.

L: Do you feel like the government's supporting the Blacks too much, whereas they could help the Indians a lot more?

G: I think that there is a good bit of this, because of some of the things that I've seen away—that if you're Indian and you try to get something, you're a minority but you're the wrong minority. I mean, if you try to get a loan or anything from the federal government that are available to minority groups to start any type of business or anything, this is not as available to the Indian as it is to the colored person or the Black man.

L: Do you feel the Indian tradition is important and it should be upheld?

G: I think that this was one of the worst things the federal government could have done to them, is to forbid them to carry on their traditions, which they did in the early, very early years. They forbid them to even speak their language on the reservation. And this is one reason that our language has died out like it did. They wouldn't allow them to even speak the language on the reservation.

L: What was the purpose of this, to try to socialize—

G: This was to try to bring progress along and try to, more or less, blend them in with them, change their color, change everything, which is really something that I think was a real shame. They could have had some of their old traditions blended in with the new.

L: Well, you're the first person I've talked to that has said this. I wasn't aware of this wasn’t able to speak the language, that's quite interesting.

G: Yes, there was a time that they was not allowed to speak the Indian language, but were asked and made to speak the English language.

L: Have you taught your children about the Catawba Indians?

G: Well, I've told them as much as I can about them, but like I said, today many of the traditions are lost, and there's just not very much traditions left.

L: What will happen to the once-great Catawba nation?

G: Well, I don't believe—we've been down before, in fact, at one time we were down to about seventy-something members of the Tribe—

L: When was this?

G: This was at one time in the history—I believe it was in the early part of the eighteenth century, somewhere along there—when they were almost wiped out with smallpox. They had a smallpox epidemic hit the Tribe three different times, and the last time only left us with a small number in the Tribe.

L: Did the White man introduce the smallpox?

G: It was—the Indians didn't know smallpox. In fact, they were subject to colds and things of this nature, and chicken pox and measles and things like this. There were any type of chest things that may have been brought over that were very bad for the Indians.

L: Venereal disease was another White man introduction, wasn't it?

G: I don't know about this. I don't know about venereal disease, but I do know that the smallpox, the measles, the chicken pox and things. This way that the Indians were made real sick from these, and the smallpox that killed out over half of them the first time around, the second time got at least half or more of them, and the third time it almost annihilated. And just this one Tribe I'm talking about, now this thing repeated in the other Tribes throughout the country.

L: Would you like to see the Tribes united in some form?

G: I would definitely like to see them re-establish, even if it's just a token thing, a Chief or a council who maybe meet once or twice a year, just to keep some traditions alive. This was something that they voted on. Every few years they voted on another Chief. I've forgotten if it was every year or every three years that they voted on a Chief, and the last one that was voted on before termination was Albert Sanders, I believe it was. And then there was another one of the

Sanders at one time had been voted as the Chief, and there was two of the Blue men that were voted in the Chief, and all of these served—Nelson Blue served as Chief at one time, and then the recognized Chief by most outsiders and the Tribe was old Chief Blue. He was more or less—not the one that was voted on—he was just recognized as a Chief for the people, and he was a leader. He was a good talker and all. I just regret that I didn't have more association with him than I did, because he did talk well and it was interesting, and I'm just sorry that I didn't have more association with him than I did. I know he wrote Coach Howard one time, and told Coach Howard that "that was our boy." [Laughter]

L: Coach Frank Howard.

G: Yeah, he wrote Coach Howard over there and it was in the paper, the note he wrote in about. Coach came down to tell me about it, that he had wrote in and told him that "that was one of our boys," and when he was referring to "our boys," he was talking about the Catawba. There was another one went over there, Connie Wade, but he, Connie, never did, I don't think, reach his potential as far as ball playing in college and things. He was a great prospect. We've had had several outstanding athletes off the reservation. They did fairly well, but Connie, I expect, could have gone further than any of us, but he didn't quite. He ran into several things. A broke elbow was one of them, that knocked him out of a year, and then he had a hurt hand, and he just ran into some bad luck all the way around and had other problems too. He just didn't reach his potential and I thought he could have.

L: Would you participate in an effort to reunite the Tribes? Would you actually go out and talk to the Indians?

G: I would, and got a second or third cousin, who I think will be—if they're ever reunited again—probably will be the leader of the Tribe, or one of them.

L: Who is this?

G: This is Gilbert Blue. I think Gilbert will, probably, help more than anybody else in uniting them if they're united at all. Gilbert has gotten to be a real good leader in the church, the Mormon church, and—

L: Do you find this would be one of the qualifications? Being—

G: I don't know whether it would or not, but I think he'd have to be able to get up before a group of people and talk, and I've seen Gilbert to this. And I never would have when I was growing up with him thought he would have. Gilbert and I used to play together a lot when I was small and we used to play—we were talking about a game, that was the only Indian boy that I played with much when I was a child. And we grew up together. I just never would have thought that he could get up before a group of people and talk as well as he does now. He does real well.

L: And you would support him—

G: I absolutely would if I could.

L: Have you ever thought about why the Cherokee Indians were industrious and had their teepees and stores and sold all this pottery and had a lot to trade, and the Catawbas didn't?

G: Well—

L: Do you have any feeling on this?

G: I think one thing here is we lost our traditions as far as some of the—our skills at doing things, as far as making arrows and arrowheads, and some of the other Indians still had lost most of these by the time this type of stuff was considered sellable or interesting to people enough to become a trade. We already lost these. The Cherokees still maintain a good bit of theirs today. They still have—if you go back into some of those places back in Cherokee, back up in the back country up there, you run into some of them that are really—they might make you or some other person feel a little eerie, or.

L: Have you been interviewed before?

G: I have been interviewed for my sports. I think as far as what I was doing today, actually. Finishing up Clemson but I've never been, as far as I can remember, I've never been interviewed about the Catawbas. I've had people come here and ask me questions, a lot of people, and I've had a scout group want me to come over to Fort Mill and talk to them about the Catawba Indians, and I did that for a friend of mine. It was a Girl Scout leader.

L: And couldn't you have furnished a lot of information for Ms. Brown?

G: I helped her in her research for some pictures and things, I got them together. This was some of the pictures that we was talking about a little bit ago. That I gathered up, and they really haven't been redistributed to the people that they belong to. And one of them that I got a lot of 'em from was a cousin of mine, and he has passed away since then, so I just held onto the pictures.

L: Did the Tribe ever have a meeting place, a museum or something? This would be a good start, and copies of this, plus all these interviews and gets all these

artifacts—I mean, lot of Indian women do have old molds for making pottery, and a lot of artifacts people don't even know exist around in the home.

G: It's like, now I have a pipe here that I shared with you, and I have serving dishes, fruit dishes, I have one or two of them, and I have a drinking dish. I guess they would use liquid in them or something. I've got around four or five pieces of pottery that they say is close to hundred years old.

L: Do you believe in our political system and do you participate as far as register to vote and support candidates, or at least get out and vote or talk about—

G: Yes, I'm a registered voter, and I do vote. [Laughter] But I still think that people ought to choose the president instead of the way they send the delegates to do our talking for us. I think the majority of the vote ought to be the ones that elects the president.

L: I'd like to talk to you now about your college career, which I know is one of the great loves of your life. Is that right?

G: [Laughter] Well, I did enjoy it very much, and it gave me a chance to get all over this country and do things I wouldn't have had a chance to do.

L: Would your parents have been able to send you to school had you not won a scholarship?

G: They would have had they know about it. But like I said a while ago, they didn't know—

L: I mean, could they have afforded to have sent you?

G: No, they couldn't.

L: Had it not been for your football ability, you wouldn't have a college education?

G: That's right.

L: Did you have other offers besides Clemson?

G: Oh, yes. University of Georgia and University of Tennessee, North Carolina State, University of South Carolina, Furman, Citadel, Crawford, several others.

L: These are all powerhouses in those days, still are. Why did you choose Clemson?

G: Well, my mother had this idea about—she wanted me to go to college in South Carolina because no Catawba, as far as we know, has ever been to a school in the state of South Carolina. And she didn't want me to go up north to school, and she wanted me to go here in the state of South Carolina to either Clemson or South Carolina. So, I chose Clemson.

L: Was Clemson a hard school—

G: It was to me, it was very hard to pass. Especially my English, I must have failed English four times, at least.

L: You had to keep taking it.

G: Yes.

L: Did you graduate from Clemson?

G: I finished my requirements, but I **lacked the grade point to** graduate.

L: Did you have any particular hard professors or were you ever discriminated upon because of being Indian?

G: I don't know whether it was because of being an Indian. I think it was more because of being an athlete than being an Indian at the time. I walked into a psychology professor's room and he told me, or told the class, that the majority of

‘em signed up for his course because it was a trip, and that he wasn't going to be a trip that year, and said, "Some of you, I can tell you right now, you'd better get out, you're not gonna pass," and he pointed right my way and looked right at me. So, I knew he was talking about me. And one of the friends, I talked to him about it, and he said, "No, Buck, just stay in there, he's just saying this." So, I took his word and stayed in there, and the fellow that I'm talking about, he got a D out of the course and I got an F out of the course. [Laughter] He failed about half the class that year.

L: What kind of honors did you win at Clemson?

G: I won, my freshman year I won the Trackman award, the Blue Key award, which was the Trackman of the Year award at Clemson, which was—to me, I really cherished that. I participated in the broad jump, the forty-yard dash, and javelin throw.

[tape stops]

L: Do you remember where we’re at?

G: Yeah.

L: What year did you enter Clemson?

G: At the end of 1950. The school year was [19]51-[19]52.

L: Where did you live? Did you stay in a dorm?

G: Well, to start with, I had room by myself, which was real good. Let's see, I don't know whether I can say this or not, but it was out by myself, because I was going to summer school, I'd come over early. And they put me up in this room when summer school started. Well, when summer school started, I didn't want to give

up my room and go out to the barracks, so I stayed on in this room until fall semester started. And then when fall semester started I was supposed to go to the room, but I kept my room over there and the room in the barracks too for a while, and then they finally made me give up the room over there and I moved on into the barracks. They had military at this time, which I just could not be. I mean, it's all right, but I just couldn't see military the way it was over there at the time.

L: It was real strict.

G: It was very strict at the time. You had to meet in formations in the morning and march into the mess hall and this was the breakfast. And then you had to meet formation twice a week and drill for an hour from 4:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon. And I didn't like this military at all.

L: Did all students have to do this?

G: This was all students at Clemson had to do this.

L: Was it a military school?

G: It was a military school at the time.

L: What was the name of the school? It was Clemson College?

G: It was Clemson College, yeah.

L: Did you find any particular difficulties assimilating into a big college like that?

G: The only thing I felt is that I was standing on quicksand. I didn't have the background to really study. A lot of my freshman year was just learning how to study. And after that I made fairly good grades, but my sophomore year especially, I had a rough time. And freshman year, I did fair, but my sophomore year I had a real hard time. And then junior year I began to find out how to study

a little more. Like I said, some of the things that I was having I never had heard of before. And some of the words, they were just common words, they were, I didn't know some of them. They just weren't used around me that much, I didn't get an association with them. I just had to learn them all, look them up in the dictionary and study them see what the definition was. It wasn't through association with them that I learned this thing, it was just looking it up, studying it to see what it was, digging around.

L: Did you have time to study between class and athletics and—

G: I had time, but I didn't feel like it.

L: You were tired?

G: After practicing, you'd come in from football practice and you'd say, "I'm gonna study." You'd go over to that desk and start to sit down, two of us in the room together, and you'd sit down and start studying and the next thing you know you can't hardly hold your eyes open, you're so sleepy, and next thing you know you're in a dead sleep.

L: Did any Blacks go to Clemson?

G: Not at that time, no.

L: Do you remember when the first Black was admitted to Clemson?

G: Yeah, Harvey Gantt. Right after, oh, a couple years after the [19]55.

L: The Segregation.

G: Segregation Act of [19]55, Harvey Gantt let an application to Clemson, and he finished in architectural engineering, I believe he was an architect. I believe he's working in—

L: What was your major?

G: Textile manufacturing.

L: What kind of work do you do now?

G: I work with Celanese as a development technician. We've got different projects that we work on and try to develop new processes and things, and I do most of the work as far as, for a certain project, the actual foot plating work on it and all.

L: Were any of the fellow football players or trackmen jealous or interested in your because you were an Indian, or did they ever feel like you got any special treatment?

G: I was on a team that was sort of clannish at the time. They were different groups, so it wasn't because of me being an Indian, but there were certain groups on this team, they didn't have the team spirit. And I don’t think this had anything to do with me, but this was just a faction on the team that said this. I think this is one thing that kept them from winning too many games my senior year. Which was in [19]54.

L: Did you join any fraternities?

G: They didn't have fraternities at the time. They had the Blue Key, which was a national fraternity, but they didn't have Sigma Pi and all these things that they have at the other universities. But now they do have it at Clemson, they have Sigma Pi and all this. My daughter's going to Clemson, and she's already been invited to be in one or two of these things.

L: What kind of a football team did y'all have?

G: We had my freshman year one good enough to go the Gator Bowl and play the University of Miami in the Gator Bowl.

L: Did you play?

G: Yes, I played.

L: As a freshman?

G: As a freshman.

L: What position did you play?

G: I played wingback. We ran the old single-wing formation and I played wingback.

L: Where you a starter?

G: I was, first time.

L: And it's quite unusual for freshman?

G: It was, it was a few that made it that far.

L: How did y'all do in the bowl game?

G: Oh, about fourteen to nine.

L: How about your sophomore year?

G: My sophomore year, we had a real bad year. [Laughter] My junior year, we had another year that wasn't too good, and senior year we had a five hundred year, we won half of them and lost half of them. But this was a thing that I think could have gone as well as losing half and winning half, it should have gone, say, eight-two.

L: Did y'all play pretty powerful schools?

G: We played Maryland, which was number one team in the nation at the time. We played Baldwin, played **New York McFarlin**, played Rice, and that was the first

touchdown, against Rice. About a thirty-five-yard touchdown against the University of Rice.

L: Did you win any kind of awards from football playing in college?

G: No, not in particular.

L: You won an All-American one.

G: No, I was just—

L: I thought you were All-American.

G: No, I held onto the record for all-state, and that was it. I hold a few records over at Clemson now, but—

L: What kind of records do you hold?

G: I hold—right now they are the student for the longest jump, ninety yards, and I hold [inaudible 1:40:13] and there's one other but I don't remember what it is, I can't remember.

L: Some of these records are being broken?

G: I believe they will, they have some real good material coming this year.

L: Ninety yards---

G: [inaudible 1:40:29]

L: The ninety yards, that's going to be hard to lose for the whole field. Do the people of Rock Hill look at you, your playing ability, as a Rock Hillian, or Catawba Indian, or—are the people of Rock Hill proud of you?

G: I'd like to think so. And they look at me as a Rock Hill private.

L: Do they ever support you, or send you letters and cards—

G: Yes, I've had, when I was a student, letters from businessmen in the Rock Hill area writing for me.

L: Were the Indian people proud of you, especially the younger children that could look up and say, "Look at Buck George, he's one of our own?"

G: I don't know. I really, again, I like to think that I was some type of inspiration to some of them because—better themselves some way, and Connie said he always got out with his idols when I was in school, but I don't know. And he did go on to be a pretty good football player. He's now a high school player, and he could have done better in college.

L: Do you work with the young people now in sports or in church or—

G: I work at church in the training infantry, and I have worked for the last eight years with different young groups, football, basketball, softball. And I coached the Gray Y football team for about eight years. We held some pretty good records at that time, we won one championship, and we came in second about three years in a row.

L: Well, I know your grandma's waiting out. I'd like to ask you one more question. You mentioned the termination of the federal reservation, you know the termination was not the end for the Indian Nation. Can you go into that little bit?

G: When they terminated the reservation, most of the papers and everybody around just seemed to think, "Well, that's the termination of the Catawbas." But it was the termination of the federal reservation, and in my way of thinking it was not the termination of the Catawbas because the Catawbas are still here, we still have a state reservation, and as far as I'm concerned Albert Sanders is still the Chief.

L: You would support him in any moves that—

G: I would. He—as far as I might disagree on certain things, but I recognize him as the Chief.

L: Do you have any other comments or statements you'd like to make?

G: No, I don't know of any.

L: Well, listen George, I certainly appreciate the time and the effort you've put in the tape, and I know you're busy and I'll have to come back if you'll allow me and look through pictures later, ‘cause I know y'all are in a hurry to leave. And I'm sure that Proctor and the whole foundation will appreciate it. And we'll conclude by saying this is August 12, and we'll now conclude this interview at this time. Thank you.

[tape stops]

L: I’d like to make one final note. Buck George definitely finished his college career. He did sign a contract with the Washington Redskins and shortly after in practice, he had an accident on his knee, and he had to have his kneecap removed. The doctor told him if he continued to play, he could possibly have a good career and a long playing time, but in a moment, he could be hurt and could have a stiff knee and be crippled and could not be able to play or even walk and upon his decision, Mr. George decided to retire from football. And he’s well-remembered and respected in Rock Hill as an Indian and as a football player. This fall, his daughter Wynona, who I interviewed earlier, also enters at Clemson University. This is the last time I’m gonna say this is the end of this tape. This is the end.

[End of interview]

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