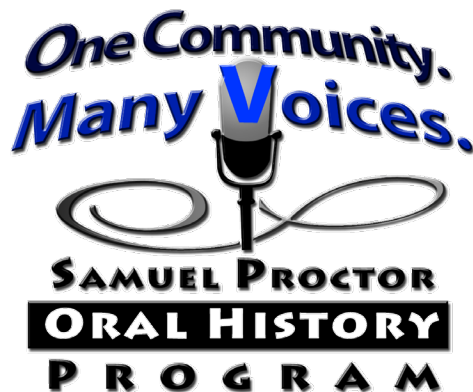


Heywood Jackson Canty Sr.

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
CAT-083**

Interview by:

**Emma Reid Echols
August 1, 1973**



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25 minutes | 19 pages**

Abstract: Heywood Canty recalls his life on the Catawba reservation. He begins by talking about his family and childhood home on the old reservation. He then discusses his school and the schoolteachers he can remember at the time. He especially remembers the camping trips he went on with his classmates and teacher as a kid as well as the difficulty he had commuting. Then, he describes his time in the Navy and his current job at the bleachery. Canty recalls the story of meeting his wife and then talks about his children and their careers. Then, he lists the leaders of the Tribe over his lifetime and his experience as assistant Chief. He shares several anecdotes from Chief Blue's leadership. He ends by talking about traditional dances and what he remembers about Christmas growing up.

Keywords: [Catawba Nation; South Carolina--Rock Hill; Education; Indian reservations]

ORAL HISTORY

P R O G R A M
University of Florida

CAT 083

Interviewee: Heywood Jackson Canty Sr.

Interviewer: Emma Reid Echols

Date of Interview: August 1, 1973

E: This is Emma Reid Echols, Route 6, Box 260, Rock Hill, South Carolina, August 1, 1973. I am visiting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Heywood Canty. And Mr. Canty will make a tape for us, telling us of the oral history of the Catawba Indians. Mr. Canty, what is your full name?

C: Heywood Jackson Canty Sr.

E: Now, how did you get your name? Is it handed down in the family?

C: Part of it wasn't. My mother named me for her brother, Jackson, part of it.

E: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

C: In my family I had about seven sisters, didn't have no brother.

E: So, you were the only boy with seven sisters?

C: Yeah, I think that's seven. Have to count 'em.

E: Now, who was your father and who was your mother?

C: Alonzo Canty's my father and Fanny Harris was my mother.

E: Your mother is dead, I believe, but your father still lives?

C: That's right.

E: Where was your home on the old reservation when you were a young boy?

C: It was right up this hill that's right up in there, with the big oak tree standing there.

E: Within a hundred yards of where we are now, is that right?

C: That's right, yeah.

E: What kind of a home was it? Was it a plank home, built of planks, or what?

C: It was made out of planks, wood.

E: Most of the Indians built their own homes. Did your father and your uncles or anybody help them build that home?

C: I don't know who built it. I don't know who was living there when I was born.

E: Your mother was a great person to make pottery. I suppose she had a big fireplace where she made that pottery, didn't she?

C: Most times she was burning her pots outdoors.

E: Where'd she do her cooking? Around the fireplace or in a stove?

C: Some of it around the fireplace, part of it in the stove. Wood stove.

E: Wood stove. When you were a little boy, you went to school on the reservation, I'm sure. You remember who your first grade teacher was?

C: We called him Brother Davis, I forget his first name.

E: He was a Mormon Elder, I believe, and he was here for a number of years, is that right?

C: Yes, I think he was.

E: Now, tell me about the school, what did it look like?

C: Well, it was a two-room school when I started. One room for two and three grades, and third grade to the seventh was the big room.

E: Did Mr. Davis have someone to help him?

C: Well, when I went there, about a year after I started, Davis left. We got Willard Hayes teaching, and he had some of the older children teaching, helping.

E: Everybody remembers Mr. Willard Hayes. He must have been quite a character. Tell me about him. What did he do with you boys? Did he play games with you as well as teach?

- C: Yes, he taught us, played games, had a Scout class with us in church. Took us on a lot of camping trips.
- E: I bet you enjoyed that.
- C: Yes, I remember that more than anything.
- E: Where did you go camping?
- C: Around the reservation, Fort Mill, Chapel Hill, Saluda, all over—around where the Scouts go.
- E: Did you go in a big truck and then camp out?
- C: When we camped from here, we walked. But when we went up to Scout camporees, some friends and neighbors would take us in a car.
- E: You're the first one that's ever told us about that camping that Mr. Hayes did with you. Then, did you have a ball team that you played other teams around about?
- C: After I come out of service, we had a baseball team that they played tri-county league.
- E: Did you have both Indian and White boys on the team or was just Indian boys?
- C: We had about one or two White boys playing with us from down at Catawba Junction.
- E: Who were some of those White boys played with you?
- C: Bill Thomas, they called him "Wild Bill." He's dead now. Crosby boy played with us.
- E: And Mr. Ernest Patton was in charge of the boys' team down in Catawba?
- C: That was before my time. That was my daddy's time when they played ball with Mr. Ernest Patton.

E: Oh, that's right. That's a little bit early, then, that. Now, then, you went to school here on the reservation until you finished seventh grade, I suppose. What other teachers do you remember besides Mr. Willard Hayes?

C: We had Mrs. Coleman up here, W.C.'s wife, forgot her first name. That about all I know.

E: Let's see, you didn't have ... You did not have Mrs. Macie Stevenson, that was later, before your day?

C: Before my time.

E: Yes, that's before your day. Mr. Lesslie. Did you have either one of the Lesslies?

C: No, I didn't.

E: Did you have Mrs. Cornish or Mrs. Robinson?

C: That was after me.

E: That was after you. Well, I think there's a whole period in there where there were mostly the Mormon Elder teachers. Mr. Hayes was here for quite a long time. Did you feel that you—

C: We had another teacher, I forgot about her, it was Nell Lineberger. She's a Ferguson now.

E: That's right. Do you feel that you got a good education in that little small school or did you miss lots of things that you should have learned?

C: I think we got pretty good, about like the rest of the people's getting, I think.

E: Then after you left there, where did you go to school after that?

C: Rock Hill High.

E: How did you get to and from the high school?

- C: Oh, we didn't get to ride no bus, 'cause they didn't furnish no bus for Indians. We had to ride in a car.
- E: That would mean you'd go early in the morning and get home late at night, if you had to go in a car, wouldn't it?
- C: Yes, that when people going to work, you'd get up and leave about 5:30, 6:00 and come back late that evening.
- E: How did the people treat you at high school, did you get a fair deal all the time at high school?
- C: Yeah, I think so, just about. Some of 'em wasn't, and some of 'em was mostly. All around it was pretty good.
- E: What about athletics, did you go out for football or any of the athletic events in high school?
- C: Only thing I went out for was physical ed when we had a period. We lived so far out from the country, no way to get back and forth to take part in athletics.
- E: That's right. I'm sure that would be true. Did you get your diploma from high school?
- C: I got it from the State of South Carolina after I finished G.I. training. When I come out of the service, I finished high school.
- E: You volunteered for service or were you drafted?
- C: Volunteered.
- E: And you volunteered for what part of service?
- C: Navy.
- E: Where were you stationed?

C: When I started out?

E: Yes.

C: Naval base in Maryland for basic training.

E: Then where'd they send you?

C: Norfolk, Virginia, aboard the U.S.S. New York. After that, I transferred to the U.S.S. Dogman, a destroyer on patrol most of the time in the Atlantic.

E: What special duties did you have on board ship?

C: When I first went in there, I was a real low deckhand just doing what the rest of them doing, swabbing and mopping up and cleaning. I didn't have no training for nothing, so I **stuck** for visual communications. I finally made it for signalman.

E: Made it for what?

C: A signalman.

E: Signalman! Oh, that's an important thing! What were your duties then?

C: That was communicating from one ship to another, anything you could see with flags or with signal lights.

E: That's right. Were you kept very busy doing that kind of work?

C: When you were on duty you was, but you'd be on and off.

E: Now altogether, how long were you in the Navy?

C: Twenty-seven months and five days, I think.

E: When you came home, what happened then? I know you were glad to get home.

C: Yeah, I couldn't wait to get home.

E: Did they have a welcome for you down here on the reservation?

C: They didn't know I was coming in, I slipped in.

E: They did! Then who did you see when you first came in that night?

C: When I first came in, the first person I seen that I know wasn't no Indian, it was ...
It must've been Ed Brown's wife was down at the hospital or something when I
got off the bus at the bus station.

E: Oh, yes. How did you get from the bus station out here?

C: Taxi.

E: Taxi. Your father was living, of course. Was your mother living then?

C: Yeah.

E: Well, I know they had a big reunion, happy to have you home.

C: No, they didn't have no reunion, I was living with Frances and Gary Williams
then.

E: Oh, you were living with Frances and Gary. That was your sister.

[Break in recording]

E: Before you entered service, you were working at the bleachery. That's the Rock
Hill Printing and Finishing Company. When you came home from service, did you
get your old job back?

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: You remember your boss man?

C: Yeah, I remember. His name was John Hoag.

E: Yes, I've heard of him. So, you went back to the bleachery to work and you were
living with Frances and Gary. Then, I guess, you began to think about finding a
girl and getting married. How did you happen to meet your wife?

C: Wasn't thinking about finding one. [Laughter] Looking for anyone.

E: Did she find you instead?

C: I don't know.

E: How did you happen to meet her?

C: I was down at the ferry down there where my grandmother stayed. One Sunday, standing around down at the riverbank, her daddy brought her down in the truck, her and her sisters, I believe.

E: She lived not far from Catawba, and so you were not very far down there, close. So, you got to talk to her, see what a pretty girl she was.

C: Oh, she had a bunch of pretty sisters, all of 'em pretty.

E: That's right. That was a big family of girls, wasn't it, and you all were a big family of boys.

C: No, I wasn't no big family of boys, just me. A big family of girls in mine.

E: Well, yeah, I'm backwards. You're the one boy that had lots of sisters, that's right. Then how soon did you begin having dates and going places?

C: I don't know. I think I asked her to go for a boat ride that first day and paddled across the river and back. Her pa didn't even let her have no dates. Only time I could get to go down there was after work and we never did make no date, I don't think.

E: Then where were you married?

C: Married in Rock Hill at some preacher's house, I don't know.

U: Reverend Greg.

E: Reverend Grace?

U: Reverend Greg.

E: Reverend Greg.

U: Down on Main Street.

E: Yes, that's the presbyterian minister, First Presbyterian Church on Main Street.

Give me your wife's name.

C: My wife's name?

E: Yes, before she married. Who was she?

C: Sarah Elizabeth Potts.

E: Sarah Elizabeth Potts. Then after your marriage in Rock Hill, where did you come to live?

C: I lived with Frances a couple of weeks, then I moved up with Rachel Brown.

E: What kin are you to Rachel Brown? Is she your aunt?

C: We call her an aunt and she's kin. I don't know how much.

E: So, you went to live with her. When did you establish your own home down here?

C: Oh, about eight or nine months.

E: After that. Tell me about your children. What children do you have? Who's your oldest child?

C: Oldest is a boy, he's Heywood Jr. The next one is a girl. Her name is Lynn Waterman.

E: The second was who? Lynn?

C: Lynn Waterman.

E: Yes, all right.

C: The other three is Dean, he's a boy, Ronald, the youngest boy, and Ellen, a girl.

- E: Now, all your children are in school or have finished school. Let's see, what's Heywood Jr. doing now?
- C: I think he's a computer operator for General Power.
- E: That's a good job, isn't it? Did he finish high school—
- C: Think so. Yes, ma'am, he finished high school.
- E: How about Lynn?
- C: She finished high school, too. She's a housewife. She's got too many children now.
- E: How many children does she have?
- C: Four.
- E: Four children. And who did she marry?
- C: Kenneth Waterman.
- E: Oh yes. And then Dean?
- C: Dean, he's working with Shillinglaw's Heating and Air Conditioning.
- E: That's right. He finished high school, though, first, didn't he?
- C: Yes, ma'am.
- E: And Ronald?
- C: He's still going to school. He's just working in the summertime right now.
- E: Then the other one, Ellen?
- C: She ain't doing nothing, just hanging around home. She's still going to school.
- E: She's in school. Do you think all five of them will finish high school?
- C: I think so, hope so.

E: That's a fine thing. You finished high school when you came back from service. Is that correct?

C: That's right.

E: How did you finish high school? We didn't find that out.

C: After I got back out of service, I been married about three or four years and I started in G.I. training out there at Rock Hill High School, going at night.

E: That was furnished by the government, it was free for you, wasn't it?

C: Yeah.

E: That gave you your high school diploma.

C: No, I had to go to the University of South Carolina to take the test to get the diploma and I passed it.

E: Of course, you'd pass it. You'd expect that. What kind of a job do you have at the bleachery now? In what department do you work?

C: With the white department. I line up the cloth, line up for frames to get it ready to print, get it prepared and they print it.

E: Have you had any promotion since you've been home from service?

C: No, get a little raise once in while, not no promotion. **If I done a good job, I** might get a promotion every once in a while.

E: Do you feel like it's a good job, that you'll continue to get raises?

C: I guess I will, I guess a better job than that tanning leather now.

E: But you're doing mighty well. You live on the old reservation, so you do not own the land, but you own the house, is that correct?

C: That's right.

- E: Are you glad that you live on the old reservation rather than own land?
- C: Well, I got land, too, but I live down here. I don't have to pay taxes now on it.
- E: What land do you have?
- C: Me and my family have about thirty-eight acres on the new reservation.
- E: That would be back of Tech?
- C: No, this is deeded to our family when they divided the land up.
- E: Yes, that's right. So that for you and your whole family. Is your tract of land near your father's tract?
- C: No, mine's right across the hill over here like you're going towards the Catawba Junction.
- E: Oh yes. Well, that would be—
- C: Adjoins the old reservation.
- E: Adjoins the old reservation. Someday you hope to develop that and sell off lots for homes or what are you going to do with your land?
- C: No, I'm going to divide it up and give it to my children.
- E: That'd be a good idea. Would it be good farming land? Can they farm and raise crops on it?
- C: It'd be about like it is around here. They could farm if they want to, but it wouldn't be much farming there after they divided it up, wouldn't be enough land.

[Break in recording]

- E: What Indians you remember especially as being leaders of your Tribe? You remember Chief Blue, don't you?
- C: Yes, ma'am.

E: Tell me about Chief Blue. What do you remember about him? Did people respect him and like him?

C: Yeah, I think most of them did. I guess some of 'em might of not, about all of them did. I remember him all my life since I was born.

E: What other ones do you remember as being leaders of the Tribe?

C: He's about the only one. I had an uncle that was Chief one time.

E: Who was he?

C: Raymond Harris.

E: Was he Chief for two years, or how long was he Chief?

C: I don't know how long he was. When Chief Blue was Chief, I was assistant Chief to him for a year.

E: You were assistant Chief for a year.

C: No, it was longer than that, about three or four years, I guess.

E: He needed some help 'cause he had a lot of problems about that time, didn't he?

C: He always had problems.

E: In what way did you help as the assistant Chief?

C: We had an assistant Chiefs' council. If anything come up, we'd all meet and decide on what to do.

E: Where would you have your meetings, in the church?

C: In the school there. Then we had our government gave us a little house down the road and we'd meet in there, too.

E: Did your meetings all end peacefully or did you sometimes have some quarrels and fusses about it?

- C: When we met, just as the four or five of us, there wasn't no quarrels, but when we got the whole Tribe together, then they'd have some fusses and quarrels going on.
- E: Well, that's natural, I suppose, surely. What other leaders do you remember besides Chief Blue?
- C: His son was the Chief one time. I believe Nelson was the Chief at one time or he was on the council, once. Roy Brown, Albert Sanders—
- E: Albert Sanders was the last Chief, I believe, when the land was divided up.
- C: Yeah, I think he was.
- E: I believe Gladys Thomas was the secretary at that time. What do you think will happen to the old reservation? Do you think it will always belong to you Indians?
- C: I don't know whether it will or not. I guess it will as long as there's an Indian around.
- E: How do you feel about the way that people once treated you and how do you feel about the way you're treated today?
- C: Well, I don't know. I know we wasn't treated too good a long time ago. It looks like things are changing now. We're treated better around here, but somebody told me they were not treated too good elsewhere.
- E: That's true. Some people who have traveled around think that this Tribe here has better land and better homes and better opportunities. Do you find any job discrimination, or do you think that your boys or you could get a job as easily as any White person or Black person could?

C: I think they can now, the way it is. Not too long ago, though, you had to be kin to somebody before you could get a job.

E: But your boys have jobs and you have, and so it seems you're doing real well now. Tell me about your church activities. Do you enjoy going to church?

C: I go to church all the time, take all my family. They have activities in church for the young people. This weekend the boys and the menfolk are going to Mount Airy, North Carolina, for a softball tournament. I like to watch them. I always played ball anyway and I still watch them play.

E: You played ball when you were a youngster, and you like to see them play, too. Do all of you remember the rule of not smoking and drinking coffee and tea? Do lots of the Indians still abide by those rules?

C: A lot of them do. It's been taught in the church ever since I can remember. Ever since it started, I guess. Smoking, coffee wasn't good for you.

[Break in recording]

E: Heywood, what do you think about the conditions on the reservation today as compared to many years ago? Do you think there's progress and hope on the reservation?

C: I think there is. Long time ago, there wasn't but one or two had jobs out at the reservation. Most of them had to work around, farm a little bit. A lot of them stole, too, I think, to get something to eat.

E: They had to, maybe.

C: Now, about everybody's got a job, everybody's working, paying their own way.

E: Tell me some of the jobs that Indians that you know have now. Some of them are working in Rock Hill, Columbia, Charlotte. What kind of jobs do they have?

C: They range from laborers on up to skilled workers. Some of them in management.

E: So, who's the highest paid Indian you know? I mean what's the highest paid salary that an Indian can get?

C: [Laughter] I don't know. I never asked none of 'em their salary.

E: [laughter] That wouldn't be a very polite way to do it. But some of 'em—I'm just real proud that some of them do have real good jobs. I see them painting, and improving their houses, riding in better cars and holding down good jobs. Most of all, your children are getting an education and getting training. You got your training and they're getting theirs too. When you were a little boy, they one time wanted to move some of the Indians off this reservation. Tell me about that.

C: There were just rumors you'd hear all the time, that they wanted to move us down to another part of the state somewhere. I, thinking to myself, that this Indian wouldn't go down there. He'd just stay in the woods somewhere. To get him down there, they'd have to kill him first to take him. Stayed here.

E: This Indian, you couldn't take him away. He wanted to stay on this reservation. And this is the reservation you are on now. Heywood, tell me, down on the old church there was a bell in the steeple, and I believe they rang it for special occasions. What kind of occasions did they ring that bell for?

C: It wasn't no bell, it was an old tire rim they'd ring. Take a piece of iron and hit the tire rim and it'd sound all over the Nation, anybody'd hear it. And if there's

anything you wanted to know, Uncle Sam would ring the bell and then people would gather up.

E: Uncle Sam, that would be Chief Blue.

C: That's right.

E: What kind of occasion did you ring it for?

C: Well, it was rung for about every occasion that was important. If they wanted people to know something—deaths, even when Sunday School starts in the morning.

E: One time it was very dry down here, what about that?

C: He rung the bell one evening and everybody gathered up over there at the church. He was about the only one doing the farming, I guess. He needed the rain, asked 'em to do rain dance. I don't know how many did it. I don't know whether he got any results or not.

E: But you all gathered to do the rain dance.

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: Can you do any of that dance today?

C: I don't know whether I was doing it then or not, I was just in the crowd.

E: The crowd was doing the rain dance! Was boys and girls both doing the rain dance?

C: All of them were doing it together.

E: All of them doing it together.

C: Grown people and children.

E: But you don't remember whether it rained or not.

C: No, ma'am.

E: What other kind of dances would you have? Ever have any dances at the end of a harvest?

C: I think they did. I never did see any of it. I've seen Uncle Sam do the bear dance. Never knew what that was for.

E: What about Christmas? Did you have any special festivals at Christmas that you remember are different?

C: At school, the children would have to have a play—have a Christmas program on Christmas Eve.

E: All your parents would come.

C: Yes, ma'am.

E: What do you remember that Santa Claus would bring you when you were a little boy?

C: I don't know, I think he brought me a little red wagon and a little airplane one time.

E: Most of the things you did just like other children, except not quite as much, maybe.

C: That's right.

[End of interview]

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