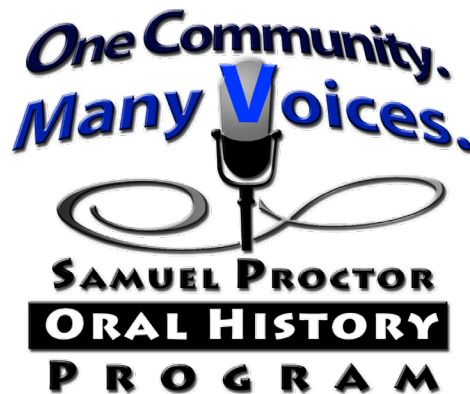


Gary Carden

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project
CHER-010**

Monologue by:

**Gary Carden
February 14, 1975**



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CHER 010 Gary Carden
Southeast Indian Oral History Project (SIOHP)
Monologue by Gary Carden on February 14, 1975
1 hour, 24 minutes | 29 pages

Abstract: Gary Carden was a planner who worked for the Cherokee government, but was not a Cherokee citizen himself. He discusses the various jobs that he has had within the Cherokee reservation and what the reservation was like in the 1940s and 1950s. He talks about the tourism business and the craft shops in Cherokee. Additionally, he discusses the famous drama *Unto These Hills*. Carden also discusses his Appalachian background and what his childhood was like. He discusses his perspective and experiences relating to the relationship between the Cherokee Tribe and the non-Cherokee people who would come to work in the community.

Keywords: [Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; Fess Parker; North Carolina--Cherokee; Discrimination; Communities]

SAMUEL PROCTOR
ORAL HISTORY
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University of Florida

CHER 010

Interviewee: Gary Carden

Date of Interview: February 14, 1975

C: My name is Gary Carden. I'm forty years of age, and I'm making this tape on February 14, 1975. I am employed by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians as a planner. Specifically, I work for the Office of Economic Development, and I've held this position for about three years now. The primary reason I'm making this tape is I'm concerned about the oral history project. It seems to be more or less at a standstill, and I thought possibly all that was necessary is for someone to initiate the process, and even though I'm White and any statement I might make or any information I might give might be of questionable relevance, at least it will initiate the process and maybe get something started. I certainly intend to see if after this tape is submitted if I can follow up and get other people to submit tapes. I was born in Sylva, North Carolina which is seventeen miles from the Qualla Indian boundary. I was borned in [Laughter] what a cousin of mine, who was a doctor, once euphemistically referred to in my presence as gentile poverty, which is a term that fascinates me. I was raised by a grandfather and a grandmother. My father was killed when I was two years old. He was a mountain musician, had a little string band that played at dances in western North Carolina, and he was shot and killed by a fellow bummed out of his head on wood alcohol. Shortly after that, my mother brought me to my grandfather's house, left me, and vanished, and I never saw her again. I'm a product of Appalachian culture and, ironically, I could probably say a great deal more about Appalachian culture than I could Indian culture. I grew up in Appalachian poverty belt, had an asphidity bag around my neck at the age of six. I am acquainted with most of the mountain

remedies. I've helped my grandfather treat a cow for the holler tail, and pigs for the scours, and planting by the signs of the moon, and so forth. I'm not only familiar with, I'm a victim of a great deal of Appalachian remedies and medicine since my grandfather was a great practitioner of folk medicine. From my earliest memories whether it be croup, earache, or redevye, I remember vividly some of his treatments. Living in this close a proximity to the Cherokee Indians, I guess it's logical that there is a kind of overlapping of culture, sort of a blurring of lines. There are elements in this area that are Indian in origin even though they're commonly associated with Appalachian culture and vice versa. My earliest memory of Cherokee was riding into Cherokee on an old oil truck in the late [19]40s. My grandfather worked for the Standard Oil Company and delivered oil onto the Qualla Indian boundary and the little town of Cherokee. We always came down to Gateway, and Harry **Shelton's** place, the prison camp, and straight on out to Albert **Patton's**, and on into Cherokee. And immediately after the Second World War, the late [19]40s, beer was legalized in this area. That was one of the consequences of the veterans returning from the Second World War, and the road between Gateway and Cherokee was covered with little lean-to shanties that sold beer and wine. Although I've heard several Cherokees tell at great length how they were discriminated against in some of these early beer joints, I have no knowledge of that—there's no reason why I should, I suppose. I was really too young. I know Mark Reed, the Tribal interpreter, says that the White people bought beer at the front door, the Blacks bought beer at the back door, and the Indian was not allowed to buy beer at all. And that's quite possibly

true, although I'd like to observe [Laughter] that there were damn few Blacks. There have never been many Blacks in this area of western North Carolina, and to my knowledge they were practically nonexistent on the Qualla Indian boundary. I think it noteworthy to observe that, in terms of discrimination, I have never in my life run into a situation, whether it was in North Georgia, South Alabama, or western North Carolina, where discrimination against Blacks was as pronounced as it was on the Qualla Indian boundary in the late [19]40s and the early [19]50s. I've seen construction crews that employed Blacks come into town and buy food in Cherokee and take it back out of town in paper bags and distribute it to the construction crew. I've seen 'em sleeping in fields while they were working on projects. The first few Blacks I'm aware of in the [19]50s—yeah, [19]52, [19]53—that worked in Cherokee commuted in and out. No one would provide them with rooms on the Qualla Indian boundary, and I remember when the tourist trade began to boom—and it really didn't begin to boom until the 1950s. Quite frequently busloads of Blacks would arrive in Cherokee and either end up camping out in the campgrounds or going on to some other place. They weren't admitted to restaurants on the Qualla Indian boundary, and they weren't allowed to stay in motels. Some of my most vivid memories relate to instances where Blacks came to Cherokee and attempted to enter restaurants or craft shops or make reservations at motels.

[Break in recording]

C: The first job I ever had was in Cherokee, and that's logical once you understand this area and unemployment in this area. When Cherokee opened up in the late

[19]40s, it became obvious that it was going to develop as a tourist industry aspect that— motels, craft shops, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park—all of these things had potential and would in all likelihood develop into tourist attractions. Mountain boys and girls in this area found that generally if they wanted to work in the summer—and most of us did—about the only employment available was in Cherokee. So it got to be kind of a custom in the late [19]40s and the early [19]50s for boys and girls in their teens from Sylva, Bryson City, sometimes as far away as Franklin and Waynesville, to go into Cherokee in May and find a position. And this usually wasn't difficult to do. They would take your name and phone number and tell you they'd call you in a short period of time, and it really was a short period of time. You would go to work in Cherokee in May and be able to retain a job until the latter part of August and each year it got better, employment increased, and I guess it is peculiar that the majority of the jobs available in Cherokee were held by White Appalachian boys and girls in their teens. There were Indians working in craft shops and motels and restaurants, but I have to say I guess that the majority of employees were White Appalachian kids. Salary wasn't particularly good. Best I remember, I think the average salary in the early [19]50s was twelve dollars and a half to fourteen dollars a week. You got one day off, and it never came on a weekend because that's when the tourist trade was at its peak, always on Saturday and Sunday. So you usually got off on a Tuesday or Wednesday and, with the coming of the drama, this just reinforced it. I guess one reason you could always depend on a job in Cherokee is because of the turnover. If everybody was full up when you

went to Cherokee, there was no vacancies, no employment at all, it would be a relatively short period of time before they would call you—usually a matter of two or three weeks and you would have a job in a restaurant, or in a craft shop, or working with a drama. And this is largely due to the turnover. It was not exactly what I would call pleasant work, and people quit fairly rapidly because of the work hours and the working conditions, and it was a hectic kind of work, dealing with tourists and the public in craft shop trade. I remember that it was sort of a custom in Cherokee, that if you sold a customer—one customer—an excess of say a hundred dollars in merchandise, then your employer would give you your dinner free, and I remember when we actually thought that was something. We would boast about it for weeks when we actually got around to getting a dinner free.

[Break in recording]

C: Right from the beginning, there was almost a carnival atmosphere in Cherokee. [Laughter] I guess it's the aspects that many people living on the Qualla Indian boundary dislike the most, they find most repugnant. Main Street in Cherokee looked more like an area near a beach, really. There were structures that looked like they were temporary, little wooden structures that looked like they were just meant to last for the summer. Cotton candy, shooting galleries, archery ranges, a great deal of noise and loud music, and of course a proliferation of what can quite frankly be called junk. I've always had very definite feelings about this as to what junk shops and some of the merchandise that existed in Cherokee during the early [19]50s and still exists there now, what it indicates, who's responsible

for it. I quite frankly do not feel that the Cherokees are totally responsible for the tremendous amount of merchandise that is sold in Cherokee, that is not ethnic or of Indian culture but originates from Japan or from Mexico. I've sold Chimayo blankets and Mexican pottery and Swedish knives. I'm quite sure in many instances the people who bought them thought they were buying crafts made by the Cherokees. Quite frankly, I've worked in so many craft shops in Cherokee, I feel justified in observing that the tourists are largely responsible for this. I remember several proprietors in Cherokee who opened authentic Cherokee stores in the early [19]50s, would put nothing in them but items that were genuinely Cherokee. They were made by some noted craftsmen or by people in the area, and, certainly, I remember in the spring there were tremendous numbers of people who would come down out of Soco and Big Cove and bring items that they had made during the winter to sell in craft shops, and these were very respectable items. They were definitely authentic. But, quite frankly, when you get right down to it, junk sells in Cherokee because people want it. It took me a long time to realize this, I guess—like the proprietors I mentioned with the Indian stores, they went broke. They couldn't retain a business with authentic Indian crafts, and once you begin to notice how things went in Cherokee—that a typical visitor to Cherokee might be a cotton mill worker from South Carolina with a two-week vacation, and he arrived in Cherokee mad and fed up with three or four kids and his wife, found a parking place, and passed everybody out two dollars or three dollars and said, "Go buy you something". Well, you don't buy an authentic craft for two or three dollars. They usually got exactly what they wanted

I suppose. They got a Japanese ashtray, or they got a little carved bear from Japan or from Mexico, or they bought a plaited whip, a little bullwhip that we used to buy in grosses that came from Mexico, and there were other items too. I remember Crisco lard cans with rubber stretched over the end of them and stitched until they made little drums. I guess they're still prevalent in craft shops. Tomahawks that were made out of river rock, painted a little bit, and put in a split stick tied with a rawhide thong and two dollars and a half put on it, or three or four. People bought these items because that's what they wanted. One of my earliest memories is the museum. The old museum in Cherokee was down below the bridge where the Warrior Motel is now, and Tom Underwood was I guess what you would call a curator and he had a very respectable display, and it was very authentic, and it reflected an aspect of Cherokee that was genuine and real. But unfortunately, when I used to go in there and watch tourists come in, I would always get the feeling that they were disappointed—that the Cherokees were not what they thought they were, and by that, I mean a bloodthirsty savage. They wanted an Indian with a Mohawk haircut. They wanted to be told about massacres and murder. And Tom Underwood would show them Sequoyah's little newspaper. He would tell them about Sequoyah's alphabet. He would stress the fact that the Cherokees were primarily agrarian, farmers in nature, that they did not conform to the movie or television concept of what an Indian was. They did not live in tipis, they lived in log huts or cabins. That they did not dress in flamboyant colors and big headdresses, that this was a plains Indian attribute, that the Cherokees at most wore a single feather or two feathers. I remember his

lecture, and I remember mobs of tourists—Bermuda shorts and cameras and a gang of kids—and they became generally dissatisfied. You could see ‘em wandering from place to place in the museum looking for something that reflected violence or bloodshed or something more in keeping with their image of what an Indian was, and the fact that the Cherokees were genuinely a sophisticated Indian Tribe was boring to them. They weren’t particularly pleased to stand and listen to lectures about the Cherokees being peaceful farmers, living in log huts, educated, having their own language, their own government, and a highly sophisticated kind of government. They would interrupt and ask questions about war paint and massacres and so forth, and I guess it was a gradual process of the tourists getting what they wanted. Chiefs began to show up in front of craft shops in Cherokee—and of course that’s ludicrous. I’ve seen tourists come and take pictures of young Indian boys standing outside craft shops with these fantastic war bonnets on that probably came from South Dakota, leather leggings probably from Oklahoma, all sorts of flamboyant Indian articles that originated from maybe five or six different cultures—Plains Indian cultures—and go away thinking that they had met and talked to the Chief of the Cherokees. During peak season in Cherokee, there might be thirty Chiefs or forty, standing up and down the street in front of craft shops. When the actual Chief was a man not unlike a small-town mayor who stayed at the Tribal Council house, and they had no knowledge of him. They met some young Indian with a colorful name and took his picture and went away, and I’m sure returned home

and told their friends and showed them pictures of their meeting with the Chief of the Cherokees.

[Break in recording]

C: I remember one colorful old fellow who claimed to be the most photographed Indian Chief in America—that's what his sign said outside the craft shop—that was a master. He was colorful, and I'm sure in terms of people getting what they paid for, he was a delight. You had to pay him to take his picture. He pretended to know no English except the word tip, which he would say. He'd hold out his hand and say "tip" and if you didn't pay him, he'd turn his war bonnet wrong side out so that you couldn't take his picture. And he functioned in Cherokee almost through the [19]50s, and he always drew a tremendous crowd. He gave 'em a little show but many people left with the impression that he was the Chief of the Cherokees. When some of the local Indians began to realize that being Indian was a sellable commodity, even if they did have to alter their image to conform with the image that a typical tourist would have of an Indian, they began to profit by it. They gave the public what they wanted. Tipis began to show up, which of course has no relation to Cherokee culture—some of 'em were made out of sheeted tin anyway. Women began to show up in Cherokee with babies tied on their back with bedsheets, which to the tourists was a papoose, and they would sit at the bus station and, in the process of a day, make a pretty good living having their picture made by tourists who got on and off the bus at the bus station.

[Break in recording]

C: A great many of the merchants in Cherokee did observe a type of ethic in relation to items that they sold in their craft shops. They would put items on shelves and label them souvenirs, "souvenirs of Cherokee," and of course a souvenir could be anything. It could be a Japanese ashtray, or it could be some practical joke toy. And then another table would have "authentic craft" on it. I remember several craft shop owners that carried craft produced by Tribes in the Midwest and labelled it as such. They would have big displays, and they would be labelled "Navajo" and a little chart on the front of the display that explained that it did come from another Indian Tribe. The Chimayo blankets were labelled as "Chimayo." Any of the artifacts that originated from the Seminoles, or the Miccosukees, or the Senecas was labelled as such. And Zuni jewelry, the turquoise—and this is particularly an item that many of the tourists have never understood—but turquoise jewelry originates from the Midwest. And many of them buy it in Cherokee and assume that they have bought jewelry made by a Cherokee. And quite logically it may be a product of an Indian craftsman, but not in Cherokee, probably in the Midwest in states like Arizona and New Mexico where they have laws that require them to label all jewelry as to whether it was a product of an Indian craftsmen or not.

[Break in recording]

C: Now a lot of the local Indian people are repulsed by what Cherokee has become commercially. They talk about the prostitution of their culture and so forth, and justifiably so. But at the same time the fact remains, I think, that Cherokee is giving the public what it wants. It is a shock for an outsider, particularly an Indian

from another Tribe to come into Cherokee. By the time he goes through Maggie Valley and passes things like Frontier Land and Santa's Land and comes on down into Cherokee and sees all that seething commercialism that goes on in the summer and the signs—you know, anything from a dancing chicken to a chair lift, to "see the live bear" floor shows, types that are given outside on platforms of Indian dances— works his way through all of that, he's a little stunned by what he's encountered. And frequently you run into young Indians who greatly resent what they have had to do while they were growing up. A lot of them worked in craft shops or have been a Chief or participated in some way in the commercial aspect of Cherokee, and they greatly resent what they have had to do to survive economically. They would like to see it authentic, genuine, honest, something they could be proud of. And of course, things like the drama have done a lot to give a genuine image of Cherokee and things like the Oconaluftee Indian village, but still, I suppose there will always be this other aspect of Cherokee. The junk shops that are filled with junk that would be the same items that you would find in a junk shop at Niagara Falls, or in South Florida, or off the interstate in Georgia. I know I've been surprised at some of the items that are common to Cherokee, I've found them in strange place, at Knoxville and Nashville, Tennessee. When I've been in Phoenix, I've seen them in shops out there. Mass-produced souvenirs that show up anywhere close to an Indian Tribe, but nowhere to my knowledge is there a Tribe that is as heavily commercialized and oriented toward tourist trade as the Cherokees. And a lot of this is just sheer accident since the Cherokees happen to be so close to the Great Smoky Mountains and people come to the

park and as a consequence come into Cherokee and directly into the commercial district.

[Break in recording]

C: A typical hard-headed businessman, a proprietor of one of these shops in Cherokee, would quite frankly tell you that he sees nothing unethical about it and many of them justify it historically—you know, considering what has been done to the Cherokees by the White man, then it is of little significance in terms of justice or ethics what they might sell White men that is not what the White man thinks it is. Quite frequently you run into the attitude “rip them off, we deserve it, if we do it from now and for the next hundred years, it will not repay what has been done to us as a people here.” Now, in terms of ill feelings between Indians and Whites—quite frankly now this is just my attitude—I feel like it’s the other way around. My first job in Cherokee—I guess it was when I was fourteen years old, I came to Cherokee and worked. As a matter of fact, I held two jobs, and while I was in college at Western Carolina it even got to the point where I held three jobs in an attempt to make enough money to return to school, I found generally that it took quite some time for me to develop a friendly relationship with the local Indians. They were by nature guarded, cautious, you make any little overtures of friendship, they would not be accepted immediately. Now eventually if they got to know you, eventually if they genuinely felt that you were an honest and sincere individual, they were no different from anyone else. But I always felt I was in the position of having to prove myself to them and not vice versa. And I guess that’s as it should be because. after all, I was encroaching on their territory. I was

working in Cherokee; they were not working in Sylva. I came there, and it was their home. And I think this is generally true in the attitude of most young Indian people to outside Whites. I know a particularly touchy issue when I was growing up was dating Indian girls. This was just something that was not advisable. When I used to come to Cherokee when I was sixteen, seventeen years old and I'd see attractive Indian girls, if I wanted to assure myself of animosity, all I had to do was approach these girls or try to talk to them in the presence of Indian boys. They generally resented it very much. I remember one grim night when I took a little girl home, a little Indian girl at the tom tom. Took her way up in Soco somewhere, and I was not aware that this was virtually a taboo—that a White boy from Sylva did not date the local Indian girls, that the Indian boys didn't approve of it. And I had been seen picking her up and on the way home we picked up a couple of cars that were driving very close to the back of my car and I finally said, "Well, I wonder who that is," and she said, "Oh, I can tell you who that is, that's my two brothers and they intend to beat the hell out of you just as quick as you get me home." Well, fortunately they decided to wait for me to come back, and after I took her home and started back down the road, there they were. They had their cars across the road, and they were out in front of their cars with something that looked like axe handles, had their headlights on, and, my god, I didn't know what to do. I, finally, had a little old thirty-nine Ford, I took to a potato patch off to the left, and beat my brains out against the roof, and went completely around them, and bounced into a ditch and out again and back into the road, and I never got out of second gear 'til I got to Dillsboro. And I can assure you it

definitely altered my attitude about Indian girls, and this was generally true for the boys of my period in the 1950s. Now I don't know what the situation is now, but during the 1950s it was not advisable at all for White Appalachian boys to attempt to court Indian girls. There used to be up in Soco, a big square dance hall, and it really boomed on Saturday night. And if you were looking for trouble, the thing to do would be to go to that square dance in Soco, Maggie Valley, and attempt to square dance with a lot of Indian girls. It was quite common practice. You'd hear about it every Monday morning, where some poor devil had danced with one girl several times and found himself laying in a parking lot outside the square dance building when he attempted to leave. And usually four or five Indian boys, all relatives of the girl, were the ones that would tend to the fellow.

[Break in recording]

C: Now since I've been working in Cherokee, I've had Indians who were about the same age as I am tell me of incidents that occurred to them when they were young and growing up, that they bitterly resented, that indicated prejudice or bigotry on the part of mountain Whites. Such instances as being in the Cherokee High School band and playing in a parade at Bryson City or Waynesville or Sylva, and having insults yelled at them from the sidelines. I've even heard them tell of instances where people would spit on 'em. I've never observed anything like this, that doesn't necessarily mean it's not true, but I have never seen it. Now I've seen discrimination against Indians in Philadelphia, Mississippi where the Choctaws are and its by no means cleared up yet—that's still a grim place to be an Indian. But generally, I have never witnessed instances where Indians were

mistreated. I don't mean to imply that it didn't exist at all, because usually it came out in the form of conversation. Now I've heard poor mountain Whites express bitter resentment against the Indians because they have this misguided concept that the Indian has a free ride—that he has money provided by the government, his medical bills are paid by the government, his education is paid for by the government, if he doesn't work, he receives money and groceries. And, in comparison with their own situation, they bitterly resented this. I guess I know of two instances in my entire life where there was some reluctance on the part of parents of a White girl who married an Indian boy. They were a little disturbed by it, but I don't think it had anything to do with bigotry as much as it had to do with concern for their welfare, functioning in two cultures—you know, where were they going to live, what were they going to do, what was the girl getting into, was she going to live on the Indian reservation, how would she be treated in Cherokee. Or the other way around, if they live outside the reservation and he is functioning in a White world, is he going to encounter trouble? That seemed to be the primary motivation and in most instances that I knew of this the parents were fairly sophisticated and educated people.

[Break in recording]

C: And there's no doubt about it, marriage between an Indian and a White produces definite hardships. I could cite numerous instances of that. This is just as true from the Indian side it is from the White side I think. There's a deep Tribal awareness of bloodlines and blood degrees and of the need to retain as high a percentage of the Indian blood as possible. I guess this is one of the most

frequent references you hear. There are many Indians in Cherokee who feel it is more or less an obligation to your people that you marry within the Tribe, that you retain bloodlines as much as possible. There's a small cult or a group in Cherokee that calls itself the fullbloods and to them it is absolutely essential that you retain your ethnic identity and what it means to be a Cherokee Indian by remaining within your culture, and marrying within your culture, and raising your children within that culture. I, speaking for myself, I've had trouble being accepted, and there's little wonder because I hold a position within the Tribal government as a planner and of course since the attitude in recent years has been very much oriented toward self-determination— that the Indian must determine his own destiny—my presence is a contradiction. You know, why isn't an Indian sitting there? What am I doing planning the economic future of the Cherokees? I ran into a great deal of antagonism during the first few months I was there, and they're certainly honest. They'll confront you directly. I've had young Indian boys walk into my office and bluntly say "Why are you here, [Cherokee spoken 42:59]" which roughly translates as "White man" although it loses something in the translation. "Are you a Indian?" and of course I obviously wasn't and then they would tell me at length that my position should be held by an Indian. And frankly I agree with them, my position should be held by an Indian and I'm sure that eventually one of these days it will be. But right now, I'm a necessary evil, as far as self-determination is concerned. I function within the Tribal government but my purpose in being there and my modus is frequently misinterpreted. This gives you a peculiar sense of guilt, you find yourself

constantly trying to assure them that your presence is worthwhile, that you are doing things that are good for the Indian people. You go out of your way to make them aware of this, because it's a justifiable criticism, especially in an area that has as high an unemployment rate as Cherokee does. At present, unemployment in Cherokee is up to twenty-two percent and here you have the rest of the nation distressed because of a seven percent unemployment ratio. But in the area of western North Carolina where Cherokee is located, tourism is such a tremendous factor that, after August, employment potential dwindles rapidly. It fluctuates to the extent that unemployment will get as low as two percent or in some instances even one percent in the month of July. But by the following January it will be up to eighteen percent, and it's even more this particular year because an industry closed recently in Cherokee, **Vassar**. And in general, there's been cutback in other employment agencies in Cherokee that provide permanent employment, and so unemployment is critical. One of the peculiar side effects of this is that the majority of industrial employment on the Qualla Indian boundary is oriented toward females. Most of the plants—

[Break in recording]

C: And that I was a minority. There were very few Whites in the Tribal government that function there in a major capacity. But as time has gone on, I have been able to stay, and I hope that I'll be able to stay for quite some time and—well the reason for that I think is especially interesting. I was not able to find work in Jackson County, where I'm originally from. I taught school for twelve years; I was a college instructor. I returned to Jackson County in 1972, and I could not find

work anywhere. And the basic reason that I couldn't is because it was economically depressed—factors I've already mentioned about unemployment in this area anyways, but in Jackson County it was highly political, and I could not get a job on the basis of my qualifications. It was extremely frustrating to me to time and time again encounter situations where I was unable to get a job. And I stayed out of work for five months, and other people eventually got the job with very few qualifications and, in some instances, none at all. And it became increasingly obvious to me that qualifications had very little to do with it, that I was trying to get a job in a county where political influence was essential to even get a minor job—even to the extent of getting a job clerking in a store, much less getting a job teaching school. Even such things as custodians, minor employees in the town government, all these things, driving the garbage truck or whatever, were highly political. And in Cherokee, I was given an opportunity to function according to my ability and, ironically, I much prefer a situation where I am allowed to stay because I am valuable. Not because my relatives have political influence, or because of who my grandfather was, but because I preform a duty. I've been told quite frankly, that if I do not produce, if I cannot produce efficiently, then certainly I'll be fired. And the very fact that I'm still there is indicative to me that I do produce effectively and as long as I do so, I can stay. There's a great deal of satisfaction in that. I might even say it's a satisfaction I never got from teaching. As much as I like teaching, I never knew really whether I was performing effectively. In Cherokee, evidently, I am. I am accepted now. I have friends, but I have no illusions about things like that. I frequently run into other

Whites functioning in jobs similar to mine in Cherokee who I feel labor under the illusion that they have been accepted, absorbed into a culture, and I do not believe this. It's possible for me to continue to work in Cherokee, and it is quite true that I can make friends there, that they genuinely like me, which I greatly appreciate. When you're liked in Cherokee, it's indicative that you have something to offer, particularly if you're White and they like you. I do feel that I am liked by everyone I work with, but I have no illusions about being absorbed into the culture. I know that I am forever an outsider there, and that's as it should be. There is a line, finally. The Cherokees have their own culture and their own identity, and I cannot enter into that. Now I hear Whites talk a great deal about how they've been absorbed into the culture and people are sharing information with 'em and telling 'em about their background and their tradition and their history, but I don't feel that this indicates in any way that you have been totally accepted. The very nature of the Cherokee culture and being Indian I feel is such that there is an uneasy alliance between the Indian and the White man. I have Indian friends that I am quite sure would loan me money if I wanted it, would get me out of trouble if I got into trouble, would assist me in any way if some sort of tragedy befell me. But I am not a Cherokee, and I never will be. I cannot share their ethnic identity; I cannot share their culture. Frankly, I envy them—their culture and identity. To me, it's much more admirable than my own. But I have no illusions about being absorbed into the culture. I think this a misguided liberal concept that a lot of White people have. I sometimes hear teachers make statements like this or crusading oral history people. For example, people editing

books on the history of Cherokee. No, they have been accepted to the extent that they are deserving of friendship. But they're not Cherokee, and they never will be.

[Break in recording]

C: I frankly feel that one of the most unfortunate mistakes that a non-Indian can make is to hoist the standard, and become a crusader, and rush madly about, and make a lot of to-do about the injustice that has been done to the Indian. There is always something embarrassing to me to be in the presence of a White man who sits and makes critical statements of his own race and professes shame at what his people have done to the Indians. And frankly I feel that the average Indian can react in no way but with contempt for a White man that makes a constant practice of talking in this manner. All this sentimental, maudlin crusading that goes on in Cherokee, quite frankly, I feel undermines your effectiveness. I've sat in meetings where Anglos, non-Indians, made statements that sounded like confessions of guilt, and how they were ashamed of their own people, and their own culture for the tremendous injustice that they had done the Indian, and how to them a meaningful pursuit would be in some way for them to repay the injustice done, uh, pseudo-crusading. I have ran into the same thing with the Appalachian White culture and crusaders there—pseudo-hicks that show up with plaid shirts and brogans on and make all sorts of dramatic overtures about how they have discovered the wisdom, the stoic fortitude of mountain people, and how this isn't appreciated, and how they intend to devote their life to correcting the image of the poor, Appalachian White, the mountaineer. I don't buy

any of this, mainly because I am Appalachian White. I know what it is to be White poor, or what is frequently called in this area “White trash.” I know what it is to grow up in an environment that is dirty, the smell of rotten cabbage—this is things I remember from my childhood—the little shanty stuck on the side of the hill, the old, wrecked car in the front yard, the refrigerator upended down in the gully, the kids playing in the front yard, and a game of gang chickens roosting under the front porch. And suddenly someone appears, who finds a nobility in all of this and that’s crap, frankly. It is not noble. There is much in Appalachian culture that is ignorant, that is unjust, that is cruel, and any attempt to whitewash it, to ennoble it are misguided tendencies to go overboard. “It is all good.” It was not all good, and I think the same thing is true in relation to working with the Indians. As much as I like the drama, I feel that in many respects, it does this. It casts everybody as good and evil. There seems to be no shading in it; there’s no gray, no middle-ground. There’s either the villain, whether it be Andrew Jackson or one of the White Christian missionaries, Schermerhorn, and there’s the good guys, Solly, Junaluska. And this is no more true than the misguided concept that there is something wise and stoic and almost mystical about a mountaineer living in the Appalachian poverty belt.

[Break in recording]

C: Of course, the fact remains that there is much in the Appalachian culture that is admirable. At the same time, in terms of the injustice done the Indians, a terrible injustice was done to Cherokees, but it does not assume the status of Dachau or the persecution of the Jews in the Second World War—this tendency to

telescope out of all perspective I think is detrimental to effectiveness. To be truly effective working with the Cherokees, I've decided during the past three years, requires a certain detachment. You do not start saying "we." "We are going to do this," under the assumption that you have become a Cherokee. You continue to say "you". "You will do this" and "you will benefit from this, and then you will have this". You are at a definite disadvantage when you begin to assume that you are working with them to the extent that you are one of them. They're very sensitive to this, they notice when people start saying "we." "We have suffered an injustice," as though my great-great-grandfather died on the Trail of Tears. He didn't. He died following Gettysburg, which is a different thing altogether and has a nobility of its own, and there's no point in my trying to transpose my heritage and become a Cherokee.

[Break in recording]

C: I remember twenty years ago when I first started working in craft shops. That frequently I would be standing talking to a group of people and among that group would be several Cherokees, and it would have all the appearance of a typical conversation between young people, but then sometimes the Indians would suddenly start talking to each other in Cherokee. [Laughter] Sometimes this would give you a little feeling of paranoia, you know. You had no idea what they were saying, but I think maybe that's more or less an example of what I mean. They would withdrawal and talk with each other. I've seen the same thing happen in stores where a Cherokee man would enter a store with his wife and he would inquire as to the price of something—maybe it's a big item, a refrigerator. And

then after discussing it with the proprietor of the store, he would retire to the back, and he and his wife would discuss it in Cherokee. Then he would come back and either say he found the price acceptable or unacceptable. [Laughter]

When I first started working nights in Cherokee, I had a rotten job, I remember. Night watchmen in front of one of the big craft shops downtown where he had a great deal of merchandise that was awkward to move and heavy. And so he just left it out a night and paid me to stay out there until I think it was about 12:30 or one o'clock when I was relieved and another fellow came. And Cherokee would close down usually about nine o'clock, and it'd be pretty lonely out there. And young Indian boys and girls would ride up and down the street just like they do in any small town, turn around at one end of Cherokee, and drive up to the other end and turn around, and sometimes they'd stop, and they'd yell things at me in Cherokee. And they always seemed friendly, and they'd wave, and they'd holler things at me, and I'd memorize them—grin like an idiot and wave back, and I'd memorize what they said. They'd say things like [Cherokee language spoken 1:04:11]. Well, hell, I had no idea I was being insulted. [Laughter] I would wave back and grin and usually the next day I would go down to the Reservation Grill—that's a big restaurant that used to be in the center of Cherokee, it doesn't exist anymore. And there was an old Indian there named **Skedesky**, always ate his dinner there at the same time every day, and I'd ask him. And he would laugh and tell me what they had actually said to me that I thought was a compliment. Well, the consequences of all of this is that when Indians spoke Cherokee, you were always at a distinct disadvantage. You didn't know whether you were being

insulted, or whether they were talking about something totally unrelated to you. I don't hear that as often as I used to. It used to be very common twenty years ago. The old post office used to be directly across the street from the craft shop where I was a night watchman, and late in the afternoon old Indians would gather and sit on the steps of that post office and all the way around the porch and talk Cherokee in sort of a sleepy, lilted murmur that would go on up until ten and eleven o'clock at night when they would go home. Of course, the old post office is gone, and I don't know whether there's a gathering place similar to that now. It's unfortunate if there isn't because one of the concerns in Cherokee, along with their loss of the culture—so much is already gone that can't be retrieved—is the feeling that they could lose their language. There's just not that many people who converse fluently in Cherokee anymore, or so I'm told. Now by what they mean "not that many", I don't know whether that means two hundred, three hundred, a thousand, what. But it is a genuine concern of the Tribe that the number is dwindling, and that young people aren't as receptive to learning Cherokee as they were. That they're like all young people, they are struggling with a generation gap, and many of the young Indians seem more oriented toward being a part of youth culture in the larger sense. You know, their own fads, music, what would interest a typical young person anywhere, rather than finding something admirable and something worth preserving in their own culture, that there's a tendency to break away. They teach Cherokee in the school system, and you run into differing attitudes as to why it isn't successful. Is it the fact that

they young reject it, or is it the fact that it is taught in such a boring, monotonous, or inefficient manner that they're just not receptive to it?

[Break in recording]

C: When the drama *Unto These Hills* first opened in Cherokee—I don't remember exactly, it was either 1952, 1953—I remember I wrote little essay in school that got me free tickets to the first performance. Cherokee underwent considerable cultural shock that summer. *Unto These Hills*, ironically, was not staffed by Indians. A lot of the local Indians got parts—minor parts, mob scenes, got to work behind the scenes, changing scenery, concessions, that sort of thing. But the acting, the big roles in the drama, went primarily to drama majors and theatrical people. I think the majority of 'em came from the University of North Carolina. And the summer that *Unto These Hills* opened and that cast arrived in Cherokee was something to remember. Being a former drama instructor myself, I can say [Laughter] I feel that the average person that showed up in person to work with the drama in a prominent role, particularly the dancers and some of the major speaking roles, were flamboyant to say the least. The mannerisms that the majority of them had puzzled the local people in Cherokee considerably. The males were a little difficult to identify and—this was in the [19]50s, this was long before long hair became fashionable—and a lot of them were somewhat puzzling in terms of their behavior as to whether they were a male or female. A considerable number of the cast was made up of young boys with peroxided hair and who wore bathing suits all the time. And when they first began to come downtown in Cherokee and for the next several years, it was something to

witness. The local people never did adjust to the cast from the drama. They usually came in a large crowd, and they were usually quite noisy and flamboyantly dressed, or certainly dressed to attract attention. Several business establishments refused to let them in because of little scenes they made, [Laughter] embarrassing situations that developed while they were in restaurants. They used to stay at the Reservation Grill quite a lot and down at the bus station quite a lot.

[Break in recording]

C: I guess what's significant about [Laughter] that entire period, and to some degree is still significant, is the fact that Indians have such a small part in the production of a drama that is supposed to depict their own tragic history. This has been a source of much ill feeling in Cherokee. You can encounter it just about anywhere. It goes beyond the fact that the actors, many of them depicting Cherokees, are actually drama majors from the University of North Carolina or in some instances dance majors, professional dance majors from New York. The whole purpose of the drama and what it represents economically in Cherokee is a touchy issue, because so much derived directly from the drama is not given to the Cherokees. It's amazing how little of the profits, which originate directly from the drama, are absorbed by the Cherokees. Most of them are absorbed by *Unto These Hills* itself.

[Break in recording]

C: Now of course, the attitude of the drama personnel is that *Unto These Hills* is a tremendous benefit to Cherokee, because even if the Tribe does not benefit

directly from *Unto These Hills* by sharing in the profits, that the drama draws people to Cherokee—that as a consequence of it being here, everything else flourishes, because people come to the drama, they eat in restaurants, they stay in motels, they buy items in craft shops. Which may be true to an extent, and certainly *Unto These Hills* is the most successful outdoor drama in the Southeast and quite possibly in the United States. But it remains an issue every spring when tryouts occur for *Unto These Hills* that the major roles are acquired by non-Indians, they are acquired by theatrical people, people outside the Cherokee Indian culture. And yet here we have a drama depicting an injustice suffered by the Cherokees. You commonly hear the attitude that the drama itself is an injustice inflicted on the Cherokees.

[Break in recording]

C: Back in the early [19]50s just after the drama opened, there was another incident that occurred in Cherokee that I remember vividly. That's when Walt Disney came to Cherokee to film Davy Crockett. I think we all lost our sanity. Everybody decided to quit their job and go up and be an extra, and I had to suffer the indignity of being rejected because I wasn't tall enough. They filmed about half of Davy Crockett in Cherokee, and a lot of my friends at that time, young Indian boys, made a killing because Disney paid well for extras. As a matter of fact, we were all a little unaccustomed to the amount of money that Disney was providing for extras. I remember Mickey Little John really made a killing. There was a whole sequence of shots that were filmed on the Oconaluftee river, and Mickey, with a Mohawk haircut, would tumble from a tree into the river, from a rock into

the river, fall from the bank into the river. I don't know how many times he was killed in that movie, but it was an amazing amount of money. I'd hesitate to say how much it was now, but at that time it was an amazing amount of money. I know the mob scenes paid twelve dollars a day just simply to stand in a mob in a costume that they gave you. And Fess Parker—played Davy Crockett—would frequently come downtown in Cherokee, and he always accumulated a mob around him when he came up the street. A remarkably tall man, always sticking head and shoulders above everybody else. And some mornings when I would come to work—we all rode in from Sylva and Swain and **Carl Oats**, and we always had a carpool— somebody else's responsibility, you know, we'd alternate days as to who had to provide the transportation. At that time, I was riding with the butcher at the B&C Grocery, which was an old log grocery store that's been torn down now that was down next to the museum where the Redskin Motel is now. I believe I said earlier on this tape that it was the Warrior Motel. It was the Redskin Motel that is located now where the old B&C Grocery used to be and where the museum used to be. And some mornings when we were coming into Cherokee they would be filming, just at the break of day in that river. There would be fog on the river, and they would be filming a sequence, usually a hunt and chase sequence that would involve a lot of young people. And everybody became celebrities of a sort. There were seven or eight local Cherokees that became minor celebrities. You saw them everyday up and down the streets, and they had more money than anybody else.

[Break in recording]

C: I remember I was working in the Dairy Queen at that time—another lousy job, I worked for a man who was so stingy he made me go out every afternoon and pick up all those little plastic spoons and sterilize them and put them back in the cup again, use them over and over and over. And the Chief who was at the next craft shop, you know he stood out with the big headdress on was recruited by Disney. And I thought for several days that he had recruited him to play in one of the massacre scenes and come to find out he took this particular Chief with him when he left Cherokee and went to Texas to film the Alamo sequence because he looked remarkably like a Mexican. He was perfect for a Mexican officer in some of the fight sequences out there. So instead of being a Cherokee, he was a Mexican officer. [Laughter] The girl that worked in the same craft shop had a baby about two or three months old and it became a big star in the film, and there was a big sequence in the film where it was found in a corn field by Davy Crockett and taken home.

[Break in recording]

C: A lot of us just forgot about work. We just quit work, lost our jobs because we were so fascinated by the whole movie apparatus that we followed it around, and I remember I spent a week before finally my grandfather made me go back to work. Following the filming around—they were filming at the entrance to the park, I remember a lot of us went up and sat up in the woods and watched them film a bloody massacre sequence, and they had wires that ran from little machines that they fired arrows from, and the arrows were hollow, and they went down the wire into a cork disk that would be strapped on someone's back or chest. And we got

to watch all of the makeup, sit up there and watch them create bruises and huge gashes in people's heads for the bloody sequences. Sometimes they would recruit thirty or forty local boys to do nothing but dress in Indian costume, which was not Cherokee [Laughter] and they would walk up the hill and then they would walk down the hill and they would walk across the hill. It was amazing how much of a film could be filmed in the same area and give the impression that it covered miles and miles of travel.

[Break in recording]

C: I remember one afternoon when they were filming a sequence when Davy Crockett was supposed to be knocked unconscious, and just before he was to be scalped, or his head cracked with an Indian tomahawk, why, Buddy Ebsen shot the Indian that was attacking him and saved Davy Crockett's life. But, in the sequence the boy that was supposed to hit Fess Parker misunderstood the instructions and really did hit him. It was a rubber tomahawk and of course it was a minor wound, but he stunned Fess Parker temporarily. And they had to explain to him then, show him how the apparatus worked and that he did not actually hit him and that they had to go and go through a makeup sequence and then come back and take up filming from the point where the wound was inflicted.

[End of interview]

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