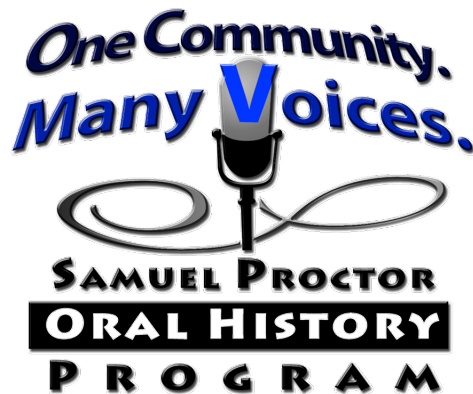


# Kim Blalock

**Southeastern Indian Oral History Project  
MISS CHOC-052**

**Interview by:**

**Staff of Nanih Waiya  
July 20, 1973**



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

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

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

**MISS CHOC 052 Kim Blalock**  
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**25 minutes | 12 pages**

**Abstract:** Kim Blalock explained the methods Indians used for creating arrowheads. He describes various tactics, including percussion and pressure flaking, and the different tools used to chip away at flint until it became an arrowhead. He demonstrates how to attach the arrowhead to the shaft of the arrow. He also describes the kind of stones the Choctaw would use, as well as explaining what concordant fractures are and the differences between arrowheads and spearpoints.

**Keywords:** [Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; Mississippi--Choctaw; Artifacts; Hunting and gathering]

**SAMUEL PROCTOR**  
**ORAL HISTORY**  
**PROGRAM**  
University of Florida

MISS CHOC 052

Interviewee: Kim Blalock

Interviewer: Staff of Nanih Waiya

Date of Interview: July 20, 1973

B: Unless, you know, like, if I was to hit to the side here, well, I could bring off a large plate down the side here. Or if the edge is straight and I hit right straight into it, it will bring out the large plate. But down from here, if I hit it with the side blade, **it'll cut off a small plate**. You just have to use your own judgement as to how you try and cut. One thing I did just now on this side is I just made a few small **slats** that took the sharpness off the edge. You can see right here it's very sharp, I need to just kind of bang on it, that will dull the edge enough that when I'm holding it, if I slip with it, it won't run into my hand and cut it. I'm holding this with my thumb and my index finger. I keep these other fingers just back out of the way so that I won't get cut from it.

U1: Well, do you hold it with pressure? Do you hold it tight or loose or how do you—?

B: Sometimes I hold it tight, sometimes I hold it loose. You know it's just according to the type of place you're trying to get off. If I'm trying to run a long flake up in here, I hold it real loose, 'cause the amount of pressure I exert with my index finger will determine how far that flake will run. If I hold it tight and hit it real hard, when it comes to my finger rather than going under my finger, when it gets to the edge of it it'll just make a kind of a fishtail back up and you'll have a hole in the stone. You're going to have to figure some way of getting out then.

U1: Now are these the original tools that like the Indians used to use, did they just use antler or did they use something else or—? You use the rock and antler, is that how they used to do it? Is that all you're using?

B: Yeah. Besides antler, you can use a piece of wood. But like, an oak tree—sometimes there'll be a limb that will die, but it doesn't fall off to the ground. And that limb will get just real tough through aging that way, and you can use that type of limb. But you can't go out and cut you a limb and expect to use it, because it doesn't age properly. On the deer's antlers you have to have it cut from the deer while the deer is living or right after the killing. You could use antlers that the deer has shed but it's not as good of a quality, because the oils that are in the antler it would bring out, it will become of brittle quality, and it's really not any good to use. And if you get the antler when it's too young, well, it'll have a spongy quality. And the outside layer of the antler is your better quality of material to work with than inside. The inside, you can see this kind of a circle—well, you see this little circle in here? Well, that's just kind of a spongy material, and it's not any good. It's actually just real soft stuff. But this outer white layer of the antlers is going to be good material that you work with. When I'm using pressure—once you get into this inner core of the antler, well, you just well as throw your tool away because it's not any good.

U2: What kind of tools do you use?

B: I just—I use a hammerstone for when I shape the beginning of it, but I use this antler here as my—I call it a baton, or it's what a hammer does. I use for percussion flaking. Then I use one of the spikes from antlers for my tool that I press with. I use a board with a piece of rubber on it to press into it.

U1: What did the Indians use to use?

B: I've been told they used to use leather from the neck of a deer, because there's a real thick piece of the hide. And they drape it over a log and then sit, straddle the log, and press into it. So, you just need to have something to cushion the stone so that you don't break the stone in two. And if you want to, we'll just pretend by hammering we've already got this original plate down to a piece like this so that it's down to just the triangular shape. You got it down to the thinness that we want. You got it squared off on one end and coming to a point at the other. And when you get it down to that stage, you're ready to begin pressure flaking this point of antler that I showed you.

U1: The last time you [inaudible 5:32] on this side, is that what you're going to get into now?

B: No, see this plate that I broke off, I didn't have to do that 'cause it's already down to its sharp edge. I can show you about that. Say we got this plate that's got a square edge to it. We'll bring a big flake off of this. We've got to get it to a sharp edge. So, I use the antler to begin a zig-zag pattern which will eventually bring this down to a sharp edge. See, I took one flake off from here and I gave it a striking platform. Then I'm going to take another one off here. And see, we've gone from that square edge down to a sharp edge but it's in a real bad zig-zag pattern. And then by coming on the ridges that are left in here, see this little—it's got a ridge here, it's got a couple here, down this way—you're able to smooth the edge out so that you can work with it better later on. That just shows you why it's not just really not needed according to [inaudible 7:51] We've got this trimmed out down through here. And the edges of this is not exactly straight. So, I'm

gonna take the corner of the antler and I place the corner of the antler about halfway. You're starting about halfway in the middle of the corner of the antler. And I press in, if I got enough pressure going right straight in, I pull the stone back just the least bit and press down on the antler. Most of the pressure's going to be in my wrist rather than in my shoulder or elbow. And this is just like it was when I was using **the stone** to bring flakes off. I press with the top side and the flakes come off the back side.

U1: But they're just smaller flakes, right?

B: Yeah, they're smaller flakes. And you can determine exactly where you want your flake to come off. And if you've got enough strength in your wrist, well, you can bring it off better. When I was using percussion flaking you could try and get a flake off in a particular area and if you're aim was good enough you could. But it's kind of a hit and miss thing.

U1: Oh, so swinging this at the bigger pieces is called percussion and with that it's pressure?

B: It's pressure flaking.

U1: So, it's percussion flaking and pressure flaking.

B: Yeah, that's the two basic types of flaking that you have.

U1: And they use pressure flaking for making the sharp edge, right? The final touches?

B: Yeah, to smooth up the edges and making your notches in it and bringing it to a fine point.

U3: Is that deer horn, what you've been using all these years?

B: Yes, sir.

U3: Deer horn is harder than the rock?

B: No, sir, it's tougher than the rock is. The rock is just a whole harder than the antler is, but the antler is so tough that you don't have to worry about it breaking up. It'll just slowly grind itself away. Do you want to ask me about heat treating the rock? This rock, it's in its natural state. But sometimes you'll find a flint that's a good quality of flint, but it doesn't chip as well as it should. And you can take it and if you're going to do it the way the prehistoric man did, you go out in your yard, take your stones, pile them up in a big pile, and put sand on all over it, and build you a big fire around it, cook it for maybe five or six hours, or more. And then just go away and leave it for about twenty-four hours, at least. And that changes the crystallization of the stone. Well, if you had material that was just fairly good to begin, you'll have real good quality of material to work with.

U1: Do you build the fire on top of the sand or around it?

B: Around the sand and on top of the sand, just completely engulf it. But you're gonna need to have a thick enough layer to stand around your stone that it will insulate it, so when it begins to cool off, it'll cool off gradually. It cools off real fast—and, if it begins to rain while that you're cooking this stone, rather than getting better, well, it'll destroy the stone where it won't be any good at all.

U3: How much are the black ones, are they for sale?

B: Which ones?

U1: Black ones.

B: Those are not for sale.

U1: Do you press into the thing or down or what?

B: I press in when I begin, and when I feel I've got enough pressure to it, I change my direction of pressure 'til I'm going straight into it, really pressing in. And then when I feel like I've got it right, then I go down and I also do this with a little bit of a twist too, if I can.

[Break in recording]

U4: Are those the same color or do you color them in?

B: No, that's just the way that they look. Now, I don't do anything to them as far as changing the color of them. Sometimes when you're cooking 'em, like I was telling you, well, it'll change the color just a little bit, but I don't hang them up or anything like that. After you finish your pressure flaking, as far as getting your sides straight and all the type of stuff, to put your notch on the base there, you take your antler and if it's going to be the corner notch, you just come right to the corner, you press in, you take one flake out.

U1: Corner notch, is that what you're saying? Corner notch?

B: Corner notch. And then you turn it over, and you come in from the opposite side and do the same thing, so and then you turn back again. The reason that you turn it each time is, when you just work from one side you'll get your round edge, and that rounded edge makes it so that you can't make your antler take a bite on the stone. And by turning it, you always keep—well, most of the time—you'll keep a sharp edge so that you can press the antler well it'll take hold and keep on bringing the flakes out. Every once in a while, you'll bring off too large a flake and it'll mess up your pattern but you have to break it off and start over again.



U1: How many different types of notches do they make? You said they had the cornered notch, and don't they make one from the side, or—?

B: Yes, there's any number of different varieties of notches that you can make. I'm not real familiar with the different names. The main thing I do, I just begin working on them and whatever kind of notch I think would look best in it, that's the type that I go ahead and put on. I don't follow any set pattern each time.

U1: Well, do you know if the Indians preferred a notch over another? Like, were more arrowheads found with the corner notches, or does it vary with the width and length of the corner?

B: It usually varies with the part of the country it comes from. Like up in the Midwest, well, people was bringing in points to show me that had a dovetail, which looks just like a bird's fanned-out tail feathers. And then you have the willow arrowhead which looks like a willow leaf, and then you have just a—there's no telling, so many hundreds of different types of arrowheads that evolved through the years through different Tribes. I'm not really sure all about that type of stuff. I would say we got this arrowhead chipped all the way down, and you got your notches in it, and then if you were going to mount it on the shaft, you take your shaft that you have made and split it and slide the arrow—Let's see if I got it....

[Break in recording]

B: Slide this portion of the arrow up in the shaft—

U1: Inside of it?

B: Yeah, inside the split here. And then if you're going to do it as authentic as you can, you take the sinew out of the deer's legs. That's the muscles in his forelegs.

[Laughter] Pull you out a strand of it while it's still moist and all, and you wrap it around smooth just as you can get it. And then when you get it wrapped from one end to the other, you take it, and you tie it. You put it out and let it dry, as it dries it will contract and it'll become very tight. And then this muscle has also got some fatty material in it that acts as a glue, and when it completely dries out it'll be just about impossible for you to pull the arrow off of the shaft. It will be on there fixed good enough that you shoot it at something without having to worry about when it hit that it would fall off.

U1: Well, let's say you've got a high spot like on one of these arrows here, and it was hard to notch your arrow there and make it streamlined. How would you take a big high spot off an arrowhead like that without tearing it all to pieces and breaking it?

B: Well, you'd hold the high spot facing when you come into the edge that's nearest the high spot and begin hitting down, just with a downward motion with this base portion of antler. And you do that until you've got you a real nice striking platform to hit from. And then you turn the thing over and with the high spot facing down, you're holding it in your hands. You hit using the narrow portion of the antler to make you bring up your big flakes, so you'll be hitting towards that high spot. And if you're lucky, you can get it off that way. But every once in a while, it just doesn't work out that way.

U1: So, on the same side that the hump is, you hit it until you make a slide form on the opposite side, turn it over and then strike that and knock off the high spot on that side.

B: Yeah. At least, that's what you try to do.

U1: Right, that's right.

B: Do you got any other questions, of—?

U1: Yeah, the other day we was talking about the different sizes of the arrowheads, like in the box you've got—do you know what they're for? Like these wider ones? Did they hunt with the wider arrowhead over a thin one like that? Did you know anything about that, or—?

B: Well, actually, an arrowhead is not over an inch and a half long. Anything that would be as long as this one that I've been working on is, they consider it a spearpoint. And rather than being shot from a bow, you would throw it by hand. On these points, they would be an inch and a half or less—say, three quarters of an inch or maybe a little bit less—would be considered your arrowheads, and they would be shot in a bow. But when you get down below that size, you got your birdpoints or warpoints. They would be used to shoot in a blowgun or something of that nature. And your smaller points, like the blowgun size and all, would be used for war purposes or bringing down small game, things of that nature. Larger points were that you use them in a spear, throw them in a spear, and that would be to bring down your larger game. At least that's what I've been told about 'em.

U1: I've heard maybe you can know something about people heating arrowheads to—heating them and then dropping water on them. Is there any truth behind that, or have you heard of or know of any Indians that use that method?

B: I've heard that story just about as long as I've been doing this, but it's always somebody else who has seen somebody do it. There's nobody that I have ever seen that says, "I personally have seen such-and-such person chip arrowheads by heating up the stone and dropping water on it." And as far as I'm concerned, well, it's just an impractical idea. The guy that used to be the Tribal chairman here, Emmet York, his theory of how that that got started was that one of the Indians would go out to gather their chipping material. A lot of times they'd find a large boulder, you know, good flint, and they wouldn't have anything to break it up. And they would use what's called "poor man's dynamite." They would come around and get the boulder out where that they could build a fire around it and they'd build up as large a fire as they could. And then when it got as hot as they thought was necessary, they would bring buckets of water to pour on it, and that would cause the stone to break up. And then they'd take the smaller pieces and break them up by hand. **To make them smaller**, a little bit. Flint was the only thing you used.

U1: I mean like can quartz—you're talking about all rocks being flint that flake. Is quartz considered a type of flint?

B: Yeah, there's types of quartz that would break in a **disc concordant** fracture. You find a lot of materials that the old arrowheads were made out of that didn't break in the concordant fractures I was telling you about. Like you have some sugar quartz. The Choctaws, around this area, use a material called quartzite that didn't necessarily break with the concordant fracture, but since it was only native material that they had in reserve, well, they had to go ahead and use it

anyway. So, the majority of their arrowheads you find in this area is made from something that actually doesn't make real good arrowheads but since it was the only thing they had, they just had to go ahead and use it.

U1: You were talking about concorded fracture. Concorded?

B: Concordant.

U1: Concordant?

B: Look it up. [Laughter]

U1: Yeah, okay.

B: If you've ever broken a piece of glass, it will have a little ripple-y effect to it. Well, it's any stone that breaks in that nature. Once you're out looking for your chipping material, you look for material that has a real close grain to it **so when it's your feel of it**, it feels glassy smooth, like you can feel of this. Well, this is broken with a concordant fracture. You can see the little wavy effect to it, and it's got a real smooth texture. They got enough contrast that you can—

U1: How long do you think it took the Indians to make an arrowhead? Just no longer than it takes you then, I guess. Fifteen minutes. You know, if you had to have one in a hurry, could you make one that would work in like twenty minutes?

B: You could make one that would work in maybe ten minutes' time. Most, if you'll notice, that that most arrows—

[End of interview]

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