

Interviewer: Emma Echols

Interviewee: Terry Helsley

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CAT234A

E:I am visiting with the superintendent of Rock hill school district number three. This is March the seventh. I am especially interested in knowing the relationship of the schools today, to the pupils that are here, we recorded many, many tapes of the school that used to be, but now we will do what we are doing today. I will let you put your name and your address on for me.

T:My name is Terry Helsley and I am the secondary social studies coordinator for Rock Hill School District, and I live at one North Pine Court in Columbia, South Carolina.

E:Tell us what your wife does.

T:My wife is the director of public programs at the State Archives, and she has been there twenty-five years, working mainly in the search room and the areas that meet the public, and also works with the records at the state archives, in Columbia.

E:Now, do you have any idea how many Catawba children are in your Rock Hill Schools now?

T:I am sorry to say I do not.

E:They tell me that when they register now, that they put the name on the registration as an Indian. Is that right?

T:They can, yes. Right--I think they do.

E:Now you have minority groups here. You have the Catawbas, of course you have a lot of Blacks, you have Chinese, and you have Koreans, and maybe some others. Is there any special program for those special children that you know of?

T:Now there are special programs, but they are not there by race; we have remedial programs for those students who do not score well on our standardized tests, our state standardized tests. We have gifted programs, and many other programs, but they are not--and of course could not be offered by race, because of the civil rights laws.

E: The Indians are so talented with certain things such as pottery making. In the schools sometimes a potter will come to demonstrate. The children will have little pieces of clay to make (objects), but the Indians themselves would be a valuable asset, if they could come and do that.

T:Well we think so, too. As a matter of fact about a year ago--a little over a year ago, we had an in service for all of the third grade and eighth grade history teachers in the district, with three potters in our training room here at the district office. Dr. Thomas Bloomer, Dr. Tom Stanley from Winthrop (joined us). We were hoping to see potters come in our schools in great numbers after that in service,

and I am not sure that that has happened. We were hoping that it would.

E:Would there be any remuneration for them, if they came into your school?

T:We could certainly arrange that, certainly.

E:They would need that because they would have to have their transportation.

T:Certainly.

E:It takes hours for them to do that. There is a limited number (of potters). In the article that I wrote about them, Frances Wade made the list for me, and I have twenty to twenty-five; we did not want to leave any name off. So I have a list of those potters; there are around twenty to twenty-five of them. Dr. Stanley told me that there was a kit prepared--eight or ten kits--that would have some history, some pottery, and some pictures, things like that. I have not found out--what happened to those kits?

T:That is a good question, I (had) heard about the kits, too. We are going to have to find out where they went. The idea was that we were going to have some at the district office, some were going to be in the schools, and they would move around as they were needed. But I am glad you brought that up; I do not know where they are either, but I will find out.

E:Well, one of the teachers told me (that) the one she had seen was sort of battered and worn.

T:Is that right?

E:--usual. (laughter) You have some very dedicated teachers who take a special interest in (those projects). I am interested in seeing what you will be doing in the future. You have had some famous athletes with you, and Indians who are in your system (who are) mechanically minded. So many of them work in Charlotte (eight or ten of them work in Charlotte). Some of them work here, and they are mechanically minded. Many of the Indian children of the old school were taught to memorize. They did not have anything in comparison (to) our schools today. The math was difficult (for white children and Indian children) to write down, but what they would do is come up with the correct answer by figuring it in their head. And so they were very clever about that. I am interested in the teachers in the whole system taking a personal interest in these Indians that come in.

T:I think it is not important only for the Indians, because we are looking fo high interest things to put into our social studies classes. What could be higher interest than these people over by the river, right here, who do things like pottery and have all these talents that you have mentioned. I think it is a natural fit, for our (us).

E:Dr. Bloomer has a brochure, I have a copy of it on the pottery. I am sure that a number of the schools have it,

It costs four dollars, but every school ought to have a copy of that. There is no reason why there should not be a brochure about the schools years ago and the schools today.

There could be a section written on the biographies of the pottery makers, of some of their leaders. Fascinating stories of Buck George, and Carson Blue, and the old chieftains. The children do not know any of that. Do you have anything in your textbook about the Catawbas, and (if so) at what grade level?

T:I do not think (that) there are mentioned. Let me check the Eighth grade text here.

E:Wait I will turn (the recorder) off.

(tape interruption)

E:I would like for you to tell me--we have been talking about the possibility of stories, and biographies, and speakers to come in the classrooms, and pottery makers, and so forth. What is your feeling about education for every boy and girl in your system?

T:Well we have been--no matter what we think--and I believe in that with all my heart, that we need to provide the best opportunity for every child in our system. We have been mandated to do that by the state of South Carolina, and by the tax money given to us by all the citizens of South Carolina. So we need to make sure that every student has as rich and varied an educational experience as we can provide.

In the social studies, particularly, we have an obligation to bring in a lot of different experiences; especially things, like the Catawba, that are here in our neighborhood, that are here in our countryside. (Things) that we can bring into the schools. So I would love to see us--

E:--You need books for your library, and you need workbooks for the classroom, do you not?

T:That is right. We need all of that. We need to systematically bring in potters to bring in people to tell stories, Chief Blue and others, who know about the stories of the Catawbas. It just adds to the richness of our common experience in the Rock Hill area, and our county.

E:Some (one) of these days you will have a list of the Catawba students who are outstanding in education, or in mechanical things, or in sports?

T:That is right. We need to know about those successes, like the Black children need to know about the successes of their people. So the Catawba children need to know the same about their own fathers and grandfathers, grandmothers and mothers.

E:Well, it has been interesting to see the things that you are showing me, and I am hoping to meet your wife one of these days, and she will add to our information.

end

