

May 19, 1969

Index side A, recording time 25 min.; interview time 1½ hours.

Informant: Zo Ballard Bunch, Bernice, Delaware County  
Oklahoma. An 82-year old Cherokee.

Subject: Her grandfather, Arch Ballard, who lived from 1813 to 1871, was one of the first settlers to establish along Grand River in the early days of Indian Territory, and lived out his life in what is now the Bernice community. He lived on the west side of the river and farmed extensively and was a leader among the early day Indians who came to settle here. Arch established the early day Ballard Cemetery. But this sacred place stood in the way of whiteman progress, sometimes looked on by Indians as modern pillage. With the coming of the Grand River Dam the Ballard Cemetery was moved up on the hill north of Bernice. In reprisal, it could well be that the Ghost of Archibald Ballard comes to haunt the whiteman to-day.

In those early times the Ballards lived in what was known as Oldfield Bend. The Oldfields were also Cherokees who came to Indian Territory in the forced removal from the Eastern states. This was long before the establishment of the towns that now surround the countryside. Downingville, which later became Vinita, and Seneca, Mo. were the nearer of the trading posts.

Zo Ballard was born in the Oldfield Bend country and has spent most of her life in the community. She was the daughter of William and Charlotte Ballard. Her mother was Charlotte Mayes, from the Cherokee family of Mayes who lived farther down the river. Zo married Oscar Bunch, a Cherokee from the old Flint District of the Cherokee Nation.

One of the first schools to be established in her community was Needmore. The school took its name from a condition rather than a place or person. Schools in those early days were few and far between, and possibly the "need" for "more" educational facilities prompted the designation. It was here that she first faced the cold realities of getting an education. After finishing school at Needmore, she attended the Cherokee Female Seminary. With much pride she mentions the fact that she is the niece of Joel Mayes and Samuel Mayes, both of whom served as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.

In her late years now, blind and living alone, Mrs. Bunch lives a happy and contented life filled with many memories of olden times, places, and events. Grand Lake now covers her Indian allotment. From her little home in Bernice many friends and neighbors come to visit often.