

After the devastation of the timber lands the Indians still farmed in the valley. At one time the rich and fertile valley produced fine corn, cotton and wheat crops. Again, outsiders could not stand to see the Indians farming this wonderful "Green Country", as it is now called. Thru the mechanics of whiteman laws the Indians have been relieved of most of their lands. Very little farming is done anymore, and in its stead the well manicured ranch pastures and fine homes of white people cover the valley. Some Indians still live back up in the hollows and on their ten-acre hillside places. For many of the older Indians there is little to look forward to except death, and maybe a burial. In the eyes of many foreign to what was once the Cherokee Nation, the impression is given that Indian burials are a waste of time, as one after another Indian cemeteries have been erased or plowed up. The Indian is confused at this attitude, because if the situation was reversed the whiteman would scream like a banshee.

Not far from Proctor is Strawberry Springs the location of the Goingsnake District Courthouse of the old Cherokee Nation days. Nothing remains now of this historic place, but some of the old timers still remember it. Mr. Mayes repeats the oft told account of one of the bloodiest civil battles ever fought in the Cherokee Nation. Factions of the Proctors squared off with the U. S. Marshalls and the Beck-peoples. When the smoke cleared eleven men lay dead and others wounded in the yard of this Courthouse.

Hess reflects again on the days when the railroad came thru his country. All was open range in those days and many head of livestock were killed by the trains. After the railroad was taken out, he says it was missed very much as many depended on it for transportation to Westville or Tanlequah. He says he also missed hearing the train whistle that would echo back and forth between the hills and canyons, and its lonesome sound had a rather soothing effect.

Jess remembers the old days when there was plenty of wild game and one could hunt anywhere he wished. Hogs ran wild and loose in the woods, and an unmarked pig was for the taking, and many ended up as backbone soup, side meat or the base for redeye gravy. Some years were rather lean when he was a boy and roasted rabbit was the bill of fare for many a meal. He recalls one time when snow was on the ground one menfolk of his family went out and killed sixty rabbits. The women cleaned them and made rabbit sausage. That was some of the finest eating he can remember. He recalls when Tyner Creek had some good fishing holes, especially where a drift would build and fish seemed to congregate there. Now days the Creek can be waded its full length, as it has filled up over the years. Just below Proctor was Slate Bluff on Barren Fork River where once it was the best fishing place in the country for noodling, gigging, or just plain fishing.

Jess first went to school in a little log building that was located up against one hill at the north edge of where Proctor is now. In later years he attended the Cherokee Male Seminary at Tahlequah. He has farmed and lived in his home community all of his life.