

1 T-512

August 26, 1969

Index side A, recording time 15 min; interview time one hour.

Informant: Ross Bowlin, 60-year-old full blood Cherokee,  
Iron Post Community, Mayes County, Oklahoma

Subject:

At his home in the southeast corner of Mayes County, Ross looks out across the section line road into Cherokee County. His nearest neighbor is over a mile away, but this is where he wants to live, away from the crowds and to be in the woodland hill country. Ross was born on Snake Creek in the Little Rock Indian Community, but has lived at different places in this area.

For Ross much of the country has changed in his time. New roads and fences have been one of the big changes, which came with the white man who owns nearly all of the land now. As we drive around the hill country, Ross points out different places where he used to hunt, but now it is all fenced, although few people live here. He finds it hard to understand that the whitemen don't live here, but come and fence up the land and refuse to let anyone hunt. This is the story most Indian tell - the loss of their hunting right, their way. We pass a couple of whitemen driving new pickup trucks with stock racks, but there is no exchange of greeting.

As we enter Snake Creek Canyon, Ross points out the old road that used to come from Markham Prairie and Grand River going to Rose and Lowrey Prairies. Up toward the head of the canyon was a place known long ago as Dark Hollow, a forbidding stretch with high rock bluffs on either side, heavily timbered and harboring all kinds of creatures and evils the mind cared to devise.

Over on a stretch of woodland Ross tells that it was once the finest huckleberry place in the country. But no one is allowed in there now, and the "Warning! Keep out!" signs on the new fence bespeak the land owner's greedy wishes. Speaking as one of them, Ross says that the Cherokees have never liked to see outsiders come into their country and destroy the woodlands, but the government has seen to it that there is nothing they can do about it. He says there is no longer any Cherokee Nation.

Some three miles or so northwest of his home we stop and Ross leads the way up the side of a high hill. Half way up there is a little flat place. Here long ago was a Cherokee burial ground. There are no markers, but each grave is outlined with stones. Here Ross tells are some of his people - Littledave, Christie, Downing, and others. As a little boy, Ross remembers the graveyard, and down the hill and across the road there was the log building of the Flint Church.

Ross tells that in the old days the older people did not tell the younger ones much about the history of their people. Perhaps many