

His father, Henry Ross, spent much time in Cherokee Nation politics, and for several years was a senator and a representative to the Cherokee Nation Capitol. Henry Ross also served as Supreme Judge of the Cherokee Nation at one time. Among other offices, Henry Ross also served as Treasurer and handled what Joe calls "scrippets", payments from the government and others. Joe recalls that every year his father always had to have a little patch of corn, mostly just to have something growing.

When this country was still Indian Territory, Joe tells that an Indian could claim and farm or graze all land one-quarter of a mile each direction from his home. The land could not be sold, but the improvements to the property could be disposed of. Except for the fenced and cultivated lands the Indian Nation was open and free range and cattle, horses and hogs roamed at will. When a family wanted to build a house, neighbors would come for a 'log raising' and a house could be built in one day. He says times then were a lot better than they are now. There are just too many people in this country now, and there seems to no way of getting rid of most of them. He thinks they are going to over-populate and pollute themselves out of existence.

He recalls in the olden times when they had camp meetings on Saline Creek, Spring River and Snake Creek, as well as along Grand River. It was a custom before a meeting for people to send or bring corn and hay to be stored for the coming event. A corn crib was provided at the meeting grounds and the contributions always filled it so that the horses were always taken care of. The camp meetings were one of the main events in the life of the Indian people of that long ago, and the meetings would sometimes last several days.

As well as he remembers, he says that John Price had one of the first stores in the Markham Prairie country. It was located about three miles north of where Locust Grove is now. Later Joel Bryan put in a store just south of Saline Creek near the river. It was in this store that the Pecan Post office was established to give the people of that area their first local mail service. Regarding the Price Store, he says it was there a long time before he was born in 1881. Another prominent Indian of those early days, Sogy Sanders, operated a store east of Locust Grove at the edge of Howe Prairie.

He recalls one time when a small boy he was riding with his father on a wagon on their way to the Price Store. They met a man walking and gave him a ride. The man said he was going to the store to get his arrow. This seemed most unusual to Joe, until they got to the store, and the man was going to pick up a copy of the "Arrow" Newspaper, one of the early day papers printed in the Cherokee Nation.

In Joe's early life he recalls when bacon rinds served more purposes than making 'cracklin' bread. He tells that a strip of greasy rind made good lubricant for wagon wheels, and was used on other farm equipment. Thin strips could be stuck in a clay bottle and used for a night light. A piece of salty bacon rind was also good treatment for bug bites. In the old days Joe says families always had a 'sugar bucket'. This wooden bucket was a container for crystalized molasses.

Joe Ross also attended the Cherokee Male Seminary. He tells that both the C.M.S. and the C.F.S. were fine buildings and all the woodwork was put together with wooden pegs. As a young boy at the Seminary, he still remembers that most of the older men of that day wore handle bar mustaches, and they were a fierce looking lot.