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Interviewer,
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An Interview with John Charles Chamberlain,
Cherokee, "Old timer",
720 South St. Louis Avenue,
Tulsa, Oklahoma.

I was born in Perry County, Illinois, on an Indian Reservation. The date of my birth is not recorded, only as I have given it previously in the county here, and that would make my age 74 now. I had rather think it 70 or 71 from the way I feel. My parents kept no records of our births. They probably told me, but I at the time didn't give it any serious thought, so now I do not know my exact age.

I remember many things I actually saw and experienced in my life with the Indians, and some things told me by my parents and by others.

My parents and we children loaded up the wagon, for an extended trip. Our wagons had canvas covers. This was in 1880. I remember crossing the river at St. Louis and travelling through Missouri to Kansas, which was our first destination. There were six children in the family

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when we left Illinois but on the way to Kansas two of the children died and were buried. They didn't die at the same time, so were buried at different burial grounds. I was young and do not recall to mind where these children were buried, however, I do know they were buried in regular Indian burial grounds in the vicinity where death overtook them.

My parents had twelve children in all. My father was Shawnee- Delaware and Spanish mixed. My mother was of the Cherokee tribe. We lived in Kansas two years and came into Indian Territory in 1882. I have lived here since and have grown up with the country.

I have been associated with Indians all my life and have observed their customs and practices.

One was the early custom of hunting and traveling. A few days previous to the day of departure a boy would be sent around among the Indians, telling

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them of the intended trip and when and where they were going. This ^{was} up in the Sac and Fox County, on the Cimarron River. All would meet at the appointed place and travel on their ponies and take their guns or bows and arrows. I remember being on these trips where a lot of the Indians carried bows and arrows. I have hunted with the bow and arrow myself, and now have several at my home. These parties numbered from fifteen to twenty-five men. Each carried some groceries, and we killed game as we advanced.

These Indians were guided by strange signs. One of these signs watched and religiously observed, was the snake sign. If a rattlesnake was found stretched out, that was a sign to continue on the way, and that all was well, but if a rattlesnake was seen coiled up ready to strike, that was an evil omen and a warning of danger ahead. So the party would return to their homes and make a new start later. This was fifty years ago and there were bunches of wild Indians roaming the

plains, and sometimes trouble was had with them.

Our Indians were peaceable and wanted to avoid any unnecessary trouble, so tried to miss these parties.

Another custom was the fire. At evening when they made camp and built a fire, if the smoke arose, that was a sign of fair and fine weather, but if the smoke settled near the ground that indicated the approach of a storm. If we were near home we returned. We were very careful to put out all fires before dark. One reason was to prevent other bands of Indians from locating us, and another of course, was to prevent the spread of fire when we were asleep.

Indians were prone to gamble for pretty high stakes. Sometimes at cards and other time at shooting matches.

There is a tale of two Indians of the Sac and Fox Reservation, which was where Oklahoma City now stands, who had been out west of there on the Iowa Indian Reservation. This was west of the Sac and Fox Reservation. They had been out on a gambling spree

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and were returning when they met the "King". This occurred on Dry Creek and the "King" was concealed by the bushes. However, the King spoke them a prophecy. He told them that Jesus Christ said that on a certain day a certain one of them would die. He also told them to return to their people and prepare to warn them of the exodus of their people; that their lands would be taken from them (Sac and Fox Indians); that they would be scattered, (this was in 1885); and for them to call together all the people at their stomping ground where they were to be told about the vision and warning. This removal was to occur four years from that date, and the Indians were to beat their drums continuously from that time on until the removal.

The man died on the day appointed and sure enough the Sac and Fox Indians were scattered in 1889 or 1890, some going to Iowa, some to Montana, but most of them stayed in northern Iowa. Some are still in the Osage County.

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I attended many of their dances during this four years.

The Indians were great fisherman. I saw five thousands of them fed, not the scriptural five thousand, but great crowds. The way they secured this quantity of fish was by poisoning the streams. They gathered certain herbs and put them in sacks and beat them thoroughly. This was placed in the stream and left long enough to poison the water sufficiently to addle the fish or make them drunk. They were easily caught then, and a sufficient number would be obtained to feed great crowds.

The Indians were always ready to open their doors and share their food and home with travelers who passed through, without charge. But traitors- better beware, as they were treated badly.