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Review of *LaDonna Harris: A Comanche Life* By La Donna Harris

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the political agenda for American Indian issues in the 1960s and beyond. Stockel does not write Harris's story but rather edits it, allowing Harris free rein to give her perspective on life as an American Indian woman.

In the initial chapters I became intrigued with the history of Harris's family. Most Comanches are aware of the battles at Adobe Walls and Palo Duro. My own family's accounts of these events have been shared through several generations. Like Harris's ancestors, my family talks of heroism and endurance. I enjoyed recognizing people, places, and events while reading her book.

Harris describes growing up on her grandparents' allotment and her relationship with her large extended family. Harris's mother and grandmother emerge as strong women who kept traditions and Comanche values alive, values that have guided Harris throughout her life and greatly influenced the decisions she made after moving away from her grandparents' home. She tells of her marriage to Fred Harris and raising her family in Norman, Oklahoma, while becoming savvy to politics. The chapter "Politics and Partnership" reveals her husband's steady rise in the Democratic Party and Harris's own evolution as an activist. It is at this point in her life that she established Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity (OIO), the non-profit organization that became her vehicle for addressing the problems American Indians faced in Oklahoma. The Harrises' years in Washington, D.C., provide wonderful insights into a time when politics was less driven by media frenzy.

It was rare in the 1960s for an American Indian woman to assume a leadership role, not only in tribal politics, but also at the national level. Her husband's years in college and those spent in Lawton working for a law firm placed Harris in a new position not common for any ethnic minority woman in the '60s. She was crucial in helping to eliminate segregation in local restaurants in Lawton. This experience prepared her for her role as a member on newly created commissions studying

LaDonna Harris: A Comanche Life. By LaDonna Harris. Edited by H. Henrietta Stockel. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. Photographs, notes, index. xxv + 147 pp. \$25.00.

This autobiographical account of LaDonna Harris, a Comanche woman from rural southwest Oklahoma, describes an individual who by all accounts was not initially a candidate for the activist life she has led. As one reads her life's story, however, one understands how Harris has been able to take part in shaping

poverty, mental health, education, and employment at the national level. The book's final chapters are accounts of her running for vice-president on the Citizens' Party ticket in 1980 and creating the Ambassadors, a program training the best and brightest of American Indian youth to become leaders in their communities.

Stockel has assisted Harris in telling her life story convincingly, inserting footnotes necessary for the non-Indian and non-Oklahoman. The book, then, is not only the autobiography of an unlikely leader, but a history of the '60s and an insider's view of being an American Indian during those times. *LaDonna Harris: A Comanche Life* will be helpful to those studying the history of contemporary issues for American Indians. It will also serve as a testament to the survival of tribal cultural values in White America.

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