

BOOK REVIEW SECTION

William R. Burkett and James Edwin Alexander. *The Fall of David Hall*. (Oklahoma City: Macedon Publishing Company, 2000), pp 212. \$16.50 ISBN 0-939965-17-8

Oklahoma's political history is replete with colorful characters and memorable scandals. Former Governor David Hall is arguably the most interesting scoundrel of them all. Through sheer political chutzpah, Hall unseated the incumbent Dewey Bartlett in an election so close that a mere one vote per district would have changed the outcome. Not only had Hall reached the top post in Oklahoma state government, but he was also one of the national Democratic Party's darlings, often discussed seriously as a Vice-Presidential nominee. Through a murky haze of alleged corruption, Hall proved his resilience and political endurance by lasting through the entire four years of his one and only gubernatorial term. He survived a forceful impeachment attempt led by a young governor-to-be, Frank Keating. He was indicted a mere three days after leaving office and was ultimately convicted and sentenced to serve time at a federal prison in Arizona.

This political scandal not only added a little local flavor to the Watergate era, it remains a significant moment in Oklahoma's political history. William R. Burkett, the United States Attorney who lead the prosecution against the infamous governor, and Dr. James Edwin Alexander, Oklahoma City University, offer a comprehensive, well-documented account of the prosecution and trial of David Hall.

They also devote a chapter to the related prosecution of W. W. Taylor, Hall's main co-conspirator. Taylor was a Texas businessman with a scheme that ironically would probably have turned out to be a good deal for the State of Oklahoma.

Hall's underhanded shenanigans to promote Taylor's plan for a price is what makes this a great tragic story. The popular governor's crimes stand in great contrast to his reputed personability and formidable political skills. Unfortunately, the book is not titled *The Rise and Fall of David Hall*. The subject of this book would have been much better served by devoting at least a full chapter or two to the fascinating story of Governor Hall's ascension to the state capitol. But the primary author sticks to what he knows best, the actual court drama that unfolded mostly after Governor Hall left office.

The authors' approach is tightly chronological. Although the book is written in third-person, it very much has the feel of being Burkett's memoirs. The story unfolds through sections identified by dates. The prose seems very dependent upon court records and newspaper accounts with interesting touches often added from Burkett's personal memory. This book is not a scholarly effort, nor does it pretend to be. But the authors have done a great service to students interested in Oklahoma's political history by recording this detailed account of the last days of Hall's public life.

Not only does it document specific events leading to the conviction of Governor Hall, but it also provides real insight into the high-profile prosecution of a politically powerful leader. As a reader, it was difficult not to draw parallels to the Clinton-Starr battles that recently waged at the national level.

This book is fairly easy to read. It would serve as a wonderful complementary text in any seminar course covering political scandals in Oklahoma or in state governments generally, perhaps along with similar efforts such as *Bad Times for Good Ol' Boys: The Oklahoma County Commissioner Scandal* by Harry Holloway and Frank S. Meyers (1993, OU Press). Burkett and Alexander's book is only disappointing in the sense that it is not truly a political biography of Governor Hall.

A complete book about Hall's rise and demise and other books about the political careers of some of our more modern governors are

yet to be written. Hopefully, this endeavor will inspire political observers in Oklahoma to begin writing their own fuller and richer accounts of this state's more noteworthy political personalities.

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LaDonna Harris, edited by H. Henrietta Stockel. *LaDonna Harris: A Comanche Life*. (University of Nebraska Press, 2000), pp 184 \$25.00 ISBN 080322396X

The story on American Indians in the twentieth century remains sketchy and uneven. The scholarship on Indians during this century focus largely on federal policy and relies principally on official government documents.

Primarily concerned with the processes of government paternalism and changes in white society, most scholarly accounts tend to treat Indians as ancillary members of American society, as people acted upon by legislators and bureaucrats rather than as actors in their own rights. Thus, a misleading picture is painted of twentieth century Indians as non-resilient, passive recipients of change. More importantly, the absence of Indian voices limits our understanding of how native groups have reacted imaginatively and resourcefully to recent developments and changes in the larger society. Comanche activist LaDonna Harris, in this important new autobiographical account, helps fill this important void in Indian historiography. In the process, she demonstrates that contemporary Native Americans are members of vibrant societies not frozen in space or time and have been anything but inactive players in the larger political arena and in fact the opposite is true. Moreover, she greatly furthers our understanding of the role of Indian women in both tribal and national issues.

Born on a Comanche allotment in southwestern Oklahoma in the 1930s and descended from the noted Comanche orator Ten Bears, LaDonna Harris has been long active in political reform. Married to presidential candidate and Senator Fred R. Harris, she worked diligently

at campaigning and networking. President Lyndon B. Johnson also appointed her to serve on the National Indian Opportunities Council where she worked with such notable political figures as Hubert Humphrey, Robert Kennedy, and Sargent Shriver. In 1980 she ran as the vice-presidential nominee for the environmentalist Citizen's Party. During the last two decades she founded and remains the current president and executive director of Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO). AIO continues to promote the cultural, social, political, and economic self-sufficiency of tribes. Her national advocacy and consulting group has particularly focused on tribal resource development, environmental protection, and tribal governance. Harris and the AIO scored a major victory in 1971 when they helped secure the return of Taos Blue Lake to the Pueblos of Taos in New Mexico.

Scholar H. Henrietta Stockel, who served as editor for the project, deserves much credit for allowing Harris to tell her story in her own words. Her account is warm, witty, intelligent, and an invaluable insider's view of modern national political scenes. Throughout the book, she relates the guidance she received from her Comanche grandparents. In particular, she has been led by the importance of the role of family, immediate and extended, the sense of ongoing community, and love and respect for differences within peoples.

Aside from Wilma Mankiller and a handful others, most twentieth century Indian women have not documented their life stories. Fortunately, LaDonna Harris has recorded for us her experiences as an important activist. Hopefully, other Indian activists and leaders will follow her lead.

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