

Mrs. Harris Backs Anti-Poverty Plan

Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Mrs. Fred R. Harris received a dozen long-stemmed roses Thursday from Sargent Shriver, head of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

With the roses, the anti-poverty chief enclosed a card: "To the best witness of all — whose beauty and brains have made the house a home — for the poor." It was signed "Sarge."

The gift was in recognition of an unusual appearance that Mrs. Harris made before the house education and labor committee, which is studying legislation that continues the anti-poverty program.

It was the first time in the memory of veteran observers that the wife of a senator testified before a legislative committee.

Mrs. Harris was introduced by Rep. Carl Albert, majority leader, a member of the committee.

He said that she is "beloved from one end of the state to the other." She is part Comanche Indian and "still rides the plains of Oklahoma" in behalf of the Indian people, Albert said.

Mrs. Harris, better known in some circles by her first name, La Donna, told the committee she was "a little nervous."

Then she read a lengthy

statement in which she urged the anti-poverty program be continued as a separate agency, rather than broken up and parceled out to various departments of the government.

She described various unidentified beneficiaries of anti-poverty programs in Oklahoma, such as "the blonde VISTA volunteer, working in a Vinita mental hospital, whose face is made more beautiful by the shine of inner satisfaction."

Mrs. Harris pretty much covered the state with such references, including "an Indian boy in Anadarko," "an 80-year-old Negro woman in Lawton," "a Mexican-American child in southwestern Oklahoma," "a child crying in the hill country of eastern Oklahoma."

She is president of Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity, which is ending its first year as a sub-contractor from the Office of Economic Opportunity "to help Oklahoma Indians acquire self-confidence, motivation and skills to become active, productive members of the total community in our state."

One of the spectators at the hearing was former Rep. Jed Johnson jr., who has a job at the anti-poverty office recruiting executives for top-level posts in the program.

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Senator's Wife Praises Poverty War Program

World Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—Mrs. Fred Harris, wife of Oklahoma's junior senator, told a House committee Thursday President Johnson's war on poverty is basically a self-reliance program. Mrs. Harris testified before the House Education and Labor committee in favor of a fund authorization bill for the Office of Economic Opportunity.

She praised many phases of the OEO and said it had been particularly helpful to Indians in Oklahoma.

"So many good, decent, Americans speak of the need of self-reliance when they criticize OEO and what it does," Mrs. Harris said. "We must help them see that this is truly a self-reliance program."

She gave examples, including a 45-year-old eastern Oklahoma Indian who was counting on OEO for training that would give him his first good job.

"You stand talking with him beside a polluted well from which his and three other families draw by hand their daily water supply and you don't know whether to laugh or cry when this man, who has never had a steady job and wouldn't have the new skill required in this automated age if one were offered, says 'All I want is steady work so I can send my ds to college.'"

"With this bill," Mrs. Harris said, "under the rural poverty program of OEO, we will give him a chance to put his self-reliance to work."

Although it is not a first, it is a rare occasion for a wife to testify for her senator husband before a Congressional committee.

After her appearance, Mrs. Harris received a bouquet of roses from OEO Director Sargent Shriver with this message:

"To the best witness of all—whose beauty and brains have made the House a home for the poor."

Mrs. Harris is president of Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity and serves on the governing board of Oklahoma Mental Health Association, Oklahoma Health and Welfare Association and the Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies at Norman. She is a consultant to the joint commission on mental health of children.