

## BIOGRAPHY OF CHIEF TOM CARTER

Chief Tom “Standing Deer” Carter

Tribal Affiliation: Coharie

Born: March 7, 1927

Died: January 7, 1997

Married: Erdice O. Simmons Carter

Children: Mel S. Carter, Valerie C. Guin, Toby Carter, and JaNella C. Williams

His Role with Coharie: Chief Tom Carter was the Coharie Tribal Chief from 1976 until his death in 1997. He was the longest reigning Chief in Coharie history. Tom was instrumental in assisting the Tribe with becoming State-Recognized, back in 1971.

As chief of his people he fought to gain title to the former Native American High School (East Carolina Indian High School) which is now the Coharie Tribal Offices and is used to house the Tribal Administrative offices, Arts Programs, Title VII Educational Program, Commission of Indian Affairs, the Indian Memorial Gallery, and many other functions. He was the recipient of numerous awards such as Distinguished Service Award-United Tribes of North Carolina, Distinguished Service Award-North Carolina Association of Educators, and Educator of the Year Award, Elder of the Year Award, School Teacher Award-NC State Department of Education, and Volunteer Service Award. Tom was honored and respected by his fellow leaders and the citizens of Sampson County. His hard work and dedication for his fellow man makes him an excellent candidate for the Hall of Fame Award.

Throughout his life Tom wore many hats— husband, father, grandfather, chief, chairman, leader, educator, politician, charmer, and most of all a lover of life. He has now departed this life but his words of encouragement, his leadership, and his ardent zeal for life is still an influence on the lives of all who knew him. As evident by the materials in this packet, he lived with a burning desire to help all people. His last attempt to help the Coharie people was to establish the Coharie Indian Memorial Gallery. He spent the last month of his life making a video and donating many of his Native American treasures to the Tribe. He took time to explain each item and tell where it came from. Often times he did this with joy and at other times with tears. Today, many of his Native American possessions are displayed in the Coharie Indian Memorial Gallery and in the Sampson County History Museum.

Tom was a veteran of World War II and Korea, Chairman of Coharie People, Inc., Chairman of Coharie Intra-Tribal Council, Inc., Board Member of Commission of Indian Affairs, Vice-Chairman of Commission of Indian Affairs, Jr. Vice-Commander of District Eight of the VFW, Sr. Vice-Commander of VFW Post 2843, Educator – Teacher Sampson County Schools, Board Member Sampson-Duplin Mental Health, Vice-President of Herring Voting Precinct, Clement School Representative to the NC Association of Educators, Vice-President of Sampson County Association of Educators, Member of Sampson County School Math Committee, Instructor at the Sampson Community College GED Program, Chairman of the Educational Committee of the Commission of Indian Affairs, Member of the Advisory Council of Indian Education, Board Member of NC Indian Cultural Center, and a Board Member of the NC Indian Housing Authority.

He was also a member of New Bethel Baptist Church, a Sunday school teacher for 25 years, a Bible Scholar, Director of the Brotherhood, Missions projects carpenter and chef. Baseball and basketball coach (school, church, and recreational department teams), and raised thousands of dollars annually for approximately 15 years for Jerry’s Kids. From the above it is obvious Tom Carter believed in giving of himself and getting involved. His motto: Worship the Lord, serve the People.