

**WAUHILLAU  
LAHAY  
LOHMAN  
1906-1992**



**OKLAHOMA  
CITY TIMES  
“FLYING  
GIRL”**

Wauhillau LaHay was a Cherokee journalist whose career took her from bustling Oklahoma newsrooms to New York City and finally to the White House where she formed friendships with several First Ladies.

She was born in Claremore in July 1906. Her father Joseph named her after the Cherokee word for “Eagle”. His family settled in Claremore after the Civil War. He became an attorney for the Cherokee Nation, often traveling to Washington to represent the tribe, later a senator in the Cherokee Legislature.

The family moved to Muskogee in 1907 due to greater opportunities for Joseph’s legal practice at the federal courthouse. Tragically he died of a heart attack at age 43 in 1911. Wauhillau took a job at the Muskogee Phoenix at age thirteen to help the family financially. She graduated from Muskogee Central High School in 1923 as Senior Class Vice-President, Girls’ Yell Leader, and member of the Scout Staff. She attended Oklahoma A & M College (now OSU), where she wrote for the O’Collegian, the college newspaper. She returned to Muskogee in 1927 and briefly worked at Durnil Dry Goods Store.

She moved to Oklahoma City in 1928 to write for Oklahoma City Times newspaper. When Prince William of Sweden traveled to Oklahoma City in November 1928, the newspaper sent her to interview him. The world-traveling visitor was as handsome as the reporter was beautiful. Wauhillau gushed overwhelmingly, “Oooh, hello prince!” It was probably the last time she stood in awe of anyone.

When female pilots were garnering worldwide attention in 1929, LaHay asked her editors if they would pay for her flying lessons so she would write about her experiences. They agreed and she eventually wrote over three dozen stories about her flying adventures and became known as the “Times Flying Girl”.

During the Great Depression, LaHay switched to radio broadcasting, starting at Oklahoma City’s WKY and becoming successful at Kansas City’s WHB, where she was promoted only one week after arriving. She wrote hundreds of programs every month while performing six different shows under six different names, and performed on-air advertising from sunrise to sunset.

In the early 1940s she wrote for the Chicago Sun newspaper and then moved to New York City to work as a radio and television director for advertising agencies. By 1950 she was one of the nation’s highest-paid advertising executives. Her advertising and promotion work involved advertising celebrities like Jimmy Durante, Peggy Lee, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour and even Rin Tin Tin.

When Lahay’s semi-autobiographical article “Smile When You Call Me Pocahontas” was published in the August 30, 1952 issue of Collier’s Weekly, she criticized her friends who advised her to keep her Cherokee heritage a secret. Her advice to career women was “find a nice man, marry him, have babies and shut up.” Her quote is now in Bartlett’s Quotations. Divorced from Phil Lohman, she had two sons by this time.

LaHay moved to Washington in 1963, to become Scripps-Howard’s White House correspondent. Her charm and wit also earned her a chance to be a bridge partner for First Lady Lady Bird Johnson. On March 11, 1971, she became part of the infamous Nixon tapes (conversation 466-015) during an Oval Office meeting. When she became the first female president of the Washington Press Club in 1973, LaHay also counted First Ladies Pat Nixon and Betty Ford as close friends. She retired from Scripps- Howard in 1974.

Throughout her life, LaHay’s work challenged the conventional ideas of women’s roles in both journalism and advertising, all the while advocating for better treatment of Native Americans and promoting their accomplishments in her articles. In 1977 she was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and Who’s Who in America. Shortly before her death in March 1992, LaHay left instructions to return to the home of her youth and be buried alongside her family in Greenhill Cemetery.