



## Billy Bigheart

March 14, 1942 - September 26, 2020

Billy Joe (“Bill”) Bigheart of Miami, Oklahoma, passed away on September 26, 2020 after a short illness. He was comforted in his last moments by the company of his youngest daughter.

Bill was born in Pawhuska, Oklahoma on March 14, 1942 to Ed and Juanita (Rutherford) Bigheart. His paternal grandparents were Edward Bigheart and Cecilia Rattlingourd. His maternal grandparents were Willie and Ara (Lawson) Rutherford. His great-grandparents were Wah-she-wah-hah (John or “Wash”) Bigheart and Hlu-a-to-me (Grace) Bigheart.

He was raised in Pawhuska, graduating from Pawhuska High School in 1960 after spending his grade school years at Seneca Indian Boarding School in Wyandotte, OK. Bill was an accomplished clarinetist and earned a degree in instrumental music education at the University of Oklahoma before teaching band and chorus in the public schools of Broken Bow, Afton, and Vinita, OK. He was well-respected and admired by students and faculty as his students often earned superior ratings in state competitions.

In 1968, Bill met and married the love of his life, Nickey (Kaylor) Pogue, and embraced her three young children Janis, Nicky Jo, and Jimmy as his own. As their family grew, Bill began working for the BIA as a school administrator serving Native students at facilities in Ft. Sill, OK, and Crownpoint and Pueblo Pintado, NM. Ever one to go where he felt needed, he returned to Oklahoma to care for his mother and spent the next 40 years working for various tribal Nations. His expertise in Tribal Sovereignty and Tribal Governments, Section

8(a) Small Business Administration, Grants and Contracts, Programs Development, Directing Programs and Projects, Tribal Constitutional Development, Educational Programs in Title I, II, III, IV, VI, VII (Elementary-Secondary Education Act – ESEA), and School Administration for elementary and secondary education was instrumental in his ability to write numerous successful grants approved by the USDA, EDA, HUD, DOJ, BIA, Department of Education, EPA and DHHS.

Bill's greatest contribution to Indian Country included the establishment of the Domestic Violence Emergency Shelter Services (DVESS) – a program he created For the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma and contracted with the U.S. Department of Justice and Housing and Urban Development Agencies. DVESS provided intervention services for victims of family, domestic and child violence and abuse for the Northeast portion of Oklahoma. Bill was most proud of his work in this area as one of his main core values was helping others in need – a task he did selflessly and tirelessly. The work that Bill and his wife did here was so exemplary that he was selected as an advisory member of the National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA) and of the national advisory committee for the Native American programs through the U.S. Office of Victims of Crime in Washington, D.C.

Over the years, Bill's passion for strengthening tribal communities lead him to serve on various tribal, state, regional, and national boards, whether it be President of the Inter-tribal Region VI Indian Community Development Block Grant Association; CASA Volunteer for Judicial District 23, State of Oklahoma; or panelist for the Tribal Sovereignty Symposiums – State of Oklahoma. In his spare time, he taught Tribal and Constitutional Government courses at Northeastern A&M College as an adjunct professor.

Other positive impacts Bill had on tribal nations include developing a good working model for small tribal governments to address their involvement in obtaining professional personnel to assist them in the areas of Housing Programs, Tribal Lands & Land Acquisitions, Financing and Accounting (Trust Funds Management), Social Services, and Education; writing, negotiating,

and implementing the first major contracting effort of a tribe with the BIA regarding the management of its mineral resources, for the Osage Nation; and assisting in the development and establishment of the Tribal Domestic Violence Coalition for the State of Oklahoma.

His accomplishments are too numerous to cover. What is offered here is a glimpse of those he spoke about most often as he felt they served the greater good in Indian Country. Bill was of the Ponca Peace Maker Clan and his Osage name was Ne.Kah.Stah.Ska. His life's work was dedicated to making this world a better place. Those who knew Bill describe him as kind and caring...because he was.

He is survived by his sister Janie Larson; daughter Janis Powell and husband Billy; daughter Nickey Jo Carriger and partner Hugh; son Jim Pogue; daughter Amanda Smelser and husband Loren; daughter Juanita Bigheart; daughter Rebecca Wright and husband Tracy; honorary daughter Kelly Eisenberger; ten grandchildren: Jared and wife Candy, Chase and wife Ana, Brian and wife Kim, Brad and wife Lauren, Tori and husband Brett, Chelsea, Eric, Andrew, Sara and JT; and a host of cousins, nieces and nephews.

He is preceded in death by his wife Nickey; his beloved granddaughter Rachel Wright; his brother Ed "Scurv" Bigheart; his parents, Juanita Rutherford and Ed Bigheart; his paternal grandparents, Edward Bigheart and Cecelia Rattlingourd; and his maternal grandparents, William Rutherford and Ara Lawson.

Bill will lie in state at the Wyandotte Nation Cultural Center where visitation will begin on Monday, September 28, 2020 at 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. and continue 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday, September 29, 2020. Those who desire to pay their respects must follow COVID guidelines by wearing a mask and using social distance. Masks will be provided for those who do not have one.

A traditional service, for family only, will be held at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, September 30, 2020 at Wyandotte Nation Cultural Center in Wyandotte, OK. Billy Friend will officiate with interment following at Glen Abbey Memorial

Gardens in Miami, OK.

The family wishes to hold a celebration of life in one year when it is safer for everyone to attend.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions be made at Peoples bank of Seneca, MO, to the Rachel Wright Agricultural Science Memorial Scholarship, or that individuals make a donation, in his honor, to their local domestic violence shelter.

# Cemetery Details

## Glen-Abbey Memorial Garden

58915 East 100 Road  
PO Box 1511  
Miami, OK 74355  
(918) 919-9904

# Previous Events

## Visitation

SEP **28.** 4:00 PM - 9:00 PM (CT)

Wyandotte Cultural Center  
Wyandotte, OK 74370

## Visitation

SEP **29.** 9:00 AM - 9:00 PM (CT)

Wyandotte Cultural Center  
Wyandotte, OK 74370

# Tribute Wall

RW

“ *Rebecca Wright lit a candle in memory of Billy Bigheart*



Rebecca Wright - September 30, 2020 at 04:00 AM

EW

“ *Prayers for you all ! The Lord has him now !*

Everett M Waller - September 29, 2020 at 09:32 PM

BG

“ *Billy was my band director at Afton High School in 1965-1966. He was a wonderful Director and an even better friend. He changed many lives for the better.*

Bill Gaddis - September 29, 2020 at 05:45 PM

JG

“ *One of the kindest man I've ever met.*

Janet Glenn - September 29, 2020 at 05:25 PM

LM

“ *Lynn Mustain lit a candle in memory of Billy Bigheart*



Lynn Mustain - September 29, 2020 at 12:25 PM

RW

“ *Rebecca Wright lit a candle in memory of Billy Bigheart*



Rebecca Wright - September 29, 2020 at 02:11 AM

EC

“ *I worked with him a long time ago and then would see him every so often when he'd come in for lunches. He was the sweetest man I'd ever met. Never had a mean bone in his body. Praying for the family as he's finally reunited with his love and granddaughter. He had the biggest heart I've ever seen. Heaven definitely gained an angel. You will be missed!!!*

Erin Corbit - September 28, 2020 at 03:04 PM



“ *Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Billy Bigheart.*



September 28, 2020 at 01:00 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Billy Bigheart.*



September 28, 2020 at 12:39 PM

AF

“ Aunt Ruby, Cheryl Faye Vickie Kevin Don families purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Billy Bigheart.



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**Aunt Ruby, Cheryl Faye Vickie Kevin Don families -**  
September 28, 2020 at 11:32 AM

RW

“ Rebecca Wright lit a candle in memory of Billy Bigheart



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**Rebecca Wright -** September 28, 2020 at 10:55 AM