

Blackburn and Irby to be Inducted into SWOSU Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame

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Dr. Bob L. Blackburn and Lowell M. Irby are being inducted into Southwestern Oklahoma State University's Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame during the 2010 Convocation on the Weatherford campus.

Blackburn is executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, and Irby is a long-time successful pharmacist/businessman in Artesia, N.M.

Both Blackburn and Irby will be honored at the May 8 SWOSU Convocation on the Weatherford campus and will be the featured speakers. The ceremony begins at 10 a.m. at Milam Stadium on the SWOSU campus.

Bob Blackburn, a native Oklahoman, has served as executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society since 1999. He joined the OHS in 1980 as editor of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* and became deputy director for agency operations in 1990.

Blackburn is a 1973 graduate of SWOSU where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history. He earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in history from Oklahoma State University. Blackburn grew up in Edmond and graduated from Putnam City High School in 1969.

Blackburn published several articles and his first book while still in graduate school and has since written or co-authored 18 books and numerous articles, journal entries, and screen plays. He is a steady source of historical information to the media and has appeared numerous times on the History Channel.

He was instrumental in planning and building the Oklahoma History Center, a 215,000 square foot museum and research center. Blackburn has served on numerous national and regional boards and committees, including the Western History Association, the Oklahoma Association of Professional Historians, the AIA, and Leadership Oklahoma City.

His hobbies are reading, running, carpentry, landscaping and golf. He is married to former State Representative Debbie Blackburn and they have one son, Beau, who is a professional photographer in San Diego, California.

Lowell M. Irby is a 1955 graduate of Southwestern Oklahoma State University where he obtained his B.S. degree in pharmacy. He was honored by the SWOSU College of Pharmacy in 1999 as its "alum of the year."

In 1958, Irby opened Lowell's Pharmacy in Artesia, N.M. and he, along with sons Kirk and Wade, continue to operate the business. Irby also has an oilfield well service and trucking business and is the primary stockholder and board member of Western Bank of Artesia.

Irby was a walk-on member of the SWOSU football team in 1951. He became a starter by the second game and earned his letter that season. Irby jokes that his football career ended after one season when he discovered that he could not pass Botany lab

by cutting class to go to football practice. While at SWOSU, Irby worked various jobs including assistant to the house mother at Neff Hall, lab assistant and he drove a school bus for Weatherford Public Schools.

Irby has been involved in so many activities at the local and state levels. He was recognized by the New Mexico School Board Association for having served on a N.M. Board of Education longer than anyone else. He has served 34 consecutive years on the Artesia Board of

Education. Over the years, he has also been very involved with the New Mexico Pharmacist Association. He, along with two other pharmacists, helped reorganize the association into the powerful lobbying force that it is today.

He and his wife, Norberta, have been married for 49 years. They have three sons and one daughter. Oldest son L. Kirk and youngest son T. Wade are both graduates of the SWOSU College of Pharmacy. His brother, Dillard, is also a SWOSU pharmacy graduate. Lowell and Norberta have long been involved with SWOSU, and they have provided numerous scholarship opportunities for many students at SWOSU.