

SWOSU Music Building Renamed Ed and Winnie Ola Berrong Music Hall

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Ed and Winnie Ola Berrong

Southwestern Oklahoma State University's Music Building has been renamed the Ed and Winnie Ola Berrong Music Hall in honor of the couple who has been long-time supporters of SWOSU. A dedication ceremony was recently held on the Weatherford campus. Pictured with Winnie Ola Berrong (front) are (from left) SWOSU President John Hays and family members: grandson Jeff Berrong, granddaughter Mundy Green, great-grandson Jaxon Green, son Mark Berrong, son Brad Berrong, grandson Michael Berrong, daughter-in-law Jeanine Berrong and daughter-in-law Linda Berrong. Not pictured is Ed and Winnie Ola's son, Ed Berrong Jr., who was unable to attend.

Southwestern Oklahoma State University's Music Building on the Weatherford campus has been renamed the Ed and Winnie Ola Berrong Music Hall in honor of the couple who has been long-time supporters of SWOSU.

Ed (Sr.) passed away in 1998 at the age of 83, while Winnie Ola continues to live in Weatherford.

A dedication ceremony was held recently on the SWOSU campus.

"The Berrong family has been very supportive of the university for many, many years," SWOSU President John Hays said. "In today's environment, support from private sources enhances opportunities for our students and improving educational experiences for SWOSU's students is really what it's all about."

Ed Berrong was a man respected in every profession. He was a graduate and a stalwart supporter of SWOSU. Ed grew up on a farm southeast of Hinton. Ed worked his way through college picking cotton and mowing lawns. On the weekends he would hitchhike home to work for Carl Stephens who owned the Hinton Grocery. Carl was a man that Ed gave much credit to for helping him finish his education.

Ed Berrong, always a leader, worker, and competitor, was college class president his freshman, sophomore, and senior years and was president of the Student Council his junior and senior years. Berrong was a four-year veteran in debate and was elected president of the Senate, a men's organization which was devoted to the study of parliamentary procedure. Ed graduated in 1937 from Southwestern and began working on his law degree at the University of Oklahoma. He taught history and government at Watonga from 1938 to January 1941. At midterm, he became an elementary principal in Clinton. He later accepted an appointment at Chickasha as resident project manager of the National Youth Administration. At the age of 25, he became the youngest NYA area director in the nation.

In 1943, he returned to law school in Oklahoma City, attending night classes and working for Armour and Company during the day. Having completed all coursework, he was licensed to practice law by the State Bar Association. Also in 1943, Ed

volunteered in the United States Navy as an apprentice seaman. After 30 months, he was commanding officer of Sub-Chaser 769 operating in the South Pacific and Southwest Pacific theaters.

Following the war, he was in charge of the veterans training program at Southwestern State College. After serving two years with the veterans training program and turning down the state director position, he and Art Shotts bought the Frank Eaton real estate and insurance agency in 1948. When Art Shotts bought the local Ford dealership, Ed bought out Shotts' interest in the real estate and insurance business in 1950.

In 1949, he was elected mayor of Weatherford for three consecutive, three-year terms. After serving four months of his fourth term as mayor, Berrong resigned after being elected state senator in a special election to succeed K.C. Perryman, who had moved out of the district. Beginning in 1958, Ed served 22 years in the Oklahoma State Senate where he served as chairman of many of the senate committees including the appropriations committee.

Ed was a member of the First Methodist Church, American Legion, VFW, Chamber of Commerce, and Rotary Club. He was inducted in the Western Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1981. Ed was the president of the Oklahoma Motel-Hotel Association and was president of Best Western International for six years during which the Best Western Motel franchise expanded into Europe.

Ed married Winnie Ola Post in 1938. Winnie Ola grew up at Eastview in Greer County. She came to Southwestern at the age of 16 in 1933, and graduated in 1936, at the age of 19, at which time she began her teaching career in Retrop, Oklahoma. She taught in Sayre while Ed was in the Navy during WWII. After Ed returned, they moved to Weatherford where Winnie Ola taught for five years. She retired from teaching to raise their three sons, Ed, Jr., Mark and Brad. All three sons have expanded the business endeavors that were started by their father.

Throughout their lives, Ed and Winnie Ola have served the State of Oklahoma, the City of Weatherford, and SWOSU with many years of generous gifts of their time, talents, and monetary support. The Berrong family established an endowed chair for the Music Department at SWOSU. The gift of \$250,000 was matched by the State Regents for Higher Education to create an endowment of \$500,000. The family has also provided a large scholarship endowment through the SWOSU Foundation.