

SWOSU Students Shine Light on Noteworthy Western Oklahomans

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What began as a classroom research assignment has blossomed into a literary triumph for many Southwestern Oklahoma State University students on the Sayre campus.

Terry Ford, instructor at the Sayre campus, gave her English Composition II classes a challenge: research and write a paper on a noteworthy individual from western Oklahoma.

More than 70 students submitted papers on a host of often-forgotten, obscure, colorful pioneer men and women from western Oklahoma who left an indelible mark on the state of Oklahoma and some even on the United States.

The success of the students' efforts has led to not only a collaboration with author Bob Burke on a book soon to be published, but it also earned the students literary credits by having their articles featured in the **Oklahoma** magazine, a publication of the Oklahoma Heritage Association.

Burke is a well-known prolific author of books on Oklahoma's personalities and history.

The collaboration with Ford's students will be showcased in a book edited by Burke called **Western Oklahomans: A Hearty People**. The Oklahoma Heritage Association also plans to publish in its monthly magazine several of the articles by the students.

Three stories have already been published. Dani Ferrell of Elk City wrote an article on "W.C. Austin – The Man behind the Dam" and the effort to get the dam built at Quartz Mountain State Park. Merinda Dawson of Wheeler (TX) wrote on "Maxi Anderson – The Sky is the Limit." Anderson was a world class balloonist from Sayre who set world records and was inducted into the Balloonist Hall of Fame. And, Loretta Hash of Sayre wrote the story of "Mattie Beal: The Belle of Lawton." Beal was a determined woman of the prairie who was the second name drawn in the land lottery of the Lawton District, an arena usually reserved for men to compete in. She went on to convert her 160 acres into individual town lots that saw her rise in Lawton prominence and influence.

For anyone interested in reading these articles can go to the Heritage Society's website at www.oklahomaheritage.com/Publishing/OklahomaMagazine.aspx; or wait and purchase the book that will soon be published.