



10-15-1985

She Gives Away Her Art

Randy Morrison

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview>

Recommended Citation

Morrison, Randy (1985) "She Gives Away Her Art," *Westview*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol5/iss1/7>

This Nonfiction is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Westview by an authorized administrator of SWOSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.





Effie Sorrells

She Gives Away Her Art

by Randy Morrison

All her life, Effie Sorrells has been a giver and not a taker. Therefore, it was no surprise to her friends when she became an artist and started giving her art away.

Effie Travis was born in Manitou, Oklahoma, on January 3, 1916 — the last of nine children born to Mr. and Mrs. James A. Travis. When Effie was three years old, she and her family moved to the Rush Springs area because her mother had had a long bout with pneumonia, and her doctor recommended the better water in the Rush Springs area. As things turned out, the prescription worked, Mrs. Travis recuperated, worked hard, and lived to be 80 years of age.

Effie began her education at Oakdale, a small country school near Rush Springs. She graduated from high school at Ninnekah, a small town between Rush Springs and Chickasha. She worked a year at anything she could find — at a restaurant, at a five-and-dime store, at housekeeping work — before going to Oklahoma College for Women (OCW) at Chickasha. While in college, she worked for the J. C. Penny Company. She never finished college, however, instead, she began a new life as the wife of Willis J. (Pete) Sorrells.

Pete and Effie were separated for four years by World War II. During that time, the County Superintendent of Schools, Joe Mosley, who was also one of Effie's former teachers, called upon her to teach at Cottonwood, a school near Cement. She had grades one through eight in one room, but

she was unable to teach there the next year because her father was ill, and she wanted to be closer to him.

Fortunately, there was a school, College Mound, near Rush Springs, where her father lived, that needed a teacher. There, as at Cottonwood, she was teacher, janitor, and coach. Although Effie knew nothing about baseball and basketball, she was called upon to be the coach of both the baseball and basketball teams. Being a resourceful person, she went to Chickasha and bought a rule book for each sport. She memorized both books, and during recess the students studied the books like regular subjects. Although the students knew the procedures and the rules, they hadn't been properly trained; therefore, they weren't very good players. During the time Effie was teaching there, a one-eyed man who had once been a professional player came into the community. He saw the students playing baseball and noticed they weren't playing very well, so he went to the school and helped Effie with her coaching. The players learned how to run, jump, hit, and catch better than anyone else around.

When time came for the County Tournament, the team members knew they could win; but on the day of the big game, the mother of one of the children jumped into a cistern and killed herself. So Effie's team didn't play that day. A few weeks after the tragedy, her team challenged the winning team, Oakdale, ironically the school at which she had begun her education. The College Mound team was beating Oakdale so badly that the Oakdale

coach called the game off about halfway through.

After the war, Pete and Effie moved to Western Oklahoma where Pete began work with the Soil Conservation Service, and Pete was called back into service for two years during the Korean War. In 1960, a few years after he was discharged, he moved his family to Weatherford. A special tie that bound Pete and Effie together was their interest in and love for education. They availed themselves of many learning opportunities by taking numerous college courses — mathematics, accounting, whatever had a special interest to the two of them.

The year 1967 was a sad one for Effie Sorrells. After several weeks of illness, her beloved Pete died.

Effie also began to take art lessons that year. Actually, she needed the lessons only in order to allow to surface the artistic talent she had always had. She started with private lessons from Evelyn Diffendaffer of Rocky and then took courses at Southwestern from George Calvert and Fred Olds. One of her classmates was Brent Gibson, who also gave her private lessons later.

Until 1980, when she had to have two heart by-passes, Effie led a very active life as an artist. She was slowed down by surgery but only for a while. After the surgery, she began an exercise program in which she is still involved. She remains active in her church, First Baptist of Weatherford, and is there for every service unless she's out of town visiting her children.

Pete and Effie had three children. The oldest, Harlene, was born in 1937. Jane was born in 1947, and Joan in 1950. Jane and Joan are both public-school teachers — Jane in Western Heights of Oklahoma City and Joan in Fort Collins, Colorado; Harlene works for the Federal Government in Arlington, Texas.

In Western Oklahoma, there are many people who consider Effie Sorrells their friend. They are the better for it because when there's a good deed needed, Effie is there to do it. When transportation is a problem, Effie provides it. When someone has sagging spirits, Effie is there with good words. And as she approaches 70, she keeps on giving away her influence and her art. ♡