

Oklahoma Books and Authors News and Articles

Oklahoma City attorney celebrates Broken Bow centennial with 100th book

Bob Burke will release his 100th book Friday. The book, "Broken Bow: The First Century," is about his hometown and will be unveiled at a school reunion.

BY CARRIE COPPERNOLL  0

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One of Oklahoma's most prolific authors will celebrate his hometown's centennial with a 100th milestone of his own.

Bob Burke will unveil his 100th book, "Broken Bow: The First Century," at an all-class reunion Friday.

Burke, an Oklahoma City attorney, has chronicled Oklahoma history through stories of the state's heroes, lawmakers, business leaders and legends. He writes before he goes to work and almost always works on several projects concurrently.

Burke chose his hometown for his 100th book after a chance meeting a few years ago, he said. His mother was recovering from hip replacement surgery, and by chance, her hospital roommate was a friend from Broken Bow. Burke visited with the roommate's daughter, Harriett Martin, and the two decided a book should be written for Broken Bow's centennial this year.

Broken Bow was born in summer 1910, when a pair of brothers decided to build a timber mill. A tent city sprung up, and in 1911, people began buying lots to build permanent homes. The brothers named the new town after their hometown: Broken Bow, Neb.

Leaders decided to mark the centennial over two years, so Burke, Martin and other co-authors Kenneth Hamilton and Paulette LaGasse decided to finish the project in time for the start of the town's centennial celebration.

The Broken Bow Alumni Association appointed a research committee to gather information and stories for the project. The team was composed of people Burke had known his whole life — teachers, his family doctor, a pharmacist and others.

Working on the project gave Burke a chance to look at his town in a new way, he said.

"I got to reunite my friendship with (people in town)," he said. "In writing the story of one's hometown, you simply get to relive your own childhood. I got to write about characters in town or great people in town that I hadn't thought about in 40 years."

Burke was in a two-room house at the end of Broadway Street in 1948.

"I knew everybody in town," he said. "Everybody knew me. It was a great sense of accountability. If I got a paddling in school for talking too much, by the time I got home, my parents already knew it."

That accountability pushed Burke to succeed; the people supported him and still do. He included his hometown inside the dust jacket of all his books.

Though he's hit 100 books, Burke has another goal in mind: 105. Famous Western author Louis L'Amour wrote 104 books. Burke hopes to pass him.

Book 101 is nearly finished; "Voice of Bedlam" is a biography of Oklahoma sportscaster Bob Barry Sr.

Book 102 is in the works; Burke will profile Ralph Thompson, a retired federal judge and legislator.

After that, he's not sure. "There's always a dozen potential projects out there," he said.

"Everybody needs a hobby. I think my hobby is preserving Oklahoma history. ... I love Oklahoma so much. And the one thing I believe that I can contribute is preserving these stories that might not otherwise be preserved."



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