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Country Lawyer makes it into print

By Jeff Massie, Sun staff writer
The Sunday Sun

It's the first time James Howell has had a book written about him. He's done a lot in his lifetime. He's been a teacher, a state senator, a lawyer and even a college basketball player, but the subject of a book? Never, until now.

"Country Lawyer, the Life and Times of James F. Howell" by David C. Craighead did not begin as a biography. Instead, it was supposed to be a collection of stories, but during the two years that the book was in production it quickly turned into more. During this time, the Oklahoma Heritage Association decided it was a project it wanted to back as part of the Oklahoma Track Maker Series.

Howell is a master storyteller. It seems he has an interesting quip or anecdote for any direction the conversation might go. A friendly man, it's hard not to like him. He will greet a complete stranger with a handshake and a "glad to know ya." Because of this, Howell has generated many contacts and a wealth of stories, ones he felt were important to preserve.

"I hated for those great stories to be lost," Howell said. "I just thought it's important that the history of Midwest City would be memorialized and not just forgotten."

Originally from outside the small town of Wewoka, Howell admits that his dream of being a lawyer seemed daunting at times. Often, he kept his goal a secret.

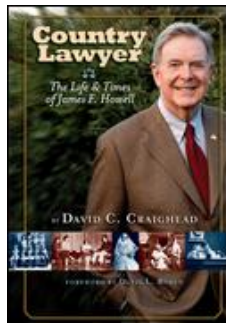
"If I would have told them, they would have laughed me out of town," Howell said. "I thought it would take a miracle to make it in law.

Howell began practicing law after working a brief stint as a teacher. It was teaching that brought him to Midwest City when his friend and former colleague offered him a job at Monroney Junior High.

Howell went on to serve as a judge in the area. Under the impression that lawyers make the best politicians, he decided to throw his hat into the ring and was elected as a state Senator. In the Senate, he championed the cause of education, particularly the salary for teachers. For much of his 16-year tenure he served as the chair of the education committee. He is proud of the fact that under his guidance, teacher's pay was raised, as well as their retirement benefits.

After his long stint in the Senate, Howell returned to the private

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sector where he now practices law in Midwest City.

"Country Lawyer" was made possible by donations from individuals, businesses and other entities. The book details the life of this influential Oklahoman and presents one interesting story after another. Complete with a wide collection of historical pictures, Country Lawyer is sure to be entertaining.

The book is available at Barnes and Noble bookstores and soon the shelves of local libraries. Howell will be attending many book signings and also welcomes anyone interested in getting an autographed copy to come by his office at 1840 S. Douglas Blvd.



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