



Bob Burke, '70
Attorney and Author

For Bob Burke, his time at the University of Oklahoma prepared him for a writing-focused career. Whether he is practicing law or writing nonfiction books, the 1970 broadcast journalism graduate has applied the skills he learned in college throughout his career. Burke recently shared more about his time on campus, influential people he met while a student, his career path and more.

What is your favorite memory from your time at the J-school?

I greatly enjoyed camaraderie with fellow students and professors, some of whom had been journalism professionals. It was an incredible learning experience to talk about writing with someone who had a book published.

Do you have a favorite faculty/staff member at the J-school?

I got to know Jack Bickham his first year at OU. He was only 39 and went

I don't play golf or have other outside interests (other than my six children and 10 incredible grandchildren) so I use huge periods of my 60-hour work week for writing. My family life does not suffer because I go to the office really early each morning and do much of my writing before 9 a.m.

How did the J-school prepare you for your future career?

OU journalism equipped me in a great way for my career both as an attorney and author. Much of practicing law involves writing briefs and preparing oral arguments in a simple and straightforward way to convince a judge of your position. OU gave me a strong foundation for writing.

What advice would you give to current students aspiring to a career in mass communication?

Gaylord College students should spend as much time as possible with faculty members who have so much

out of his way to talk to students outside class. We frequently met at the coffee shop in the Union. By the time he came to OU, he already had two dozen novels published. I still have an autographed copy of "Hangman's Territory" he gave me.

In 1970, I was still 15 years away from even thinking about writing a book, but Jack laid out a work regimen that I remembered when I did get involved in writing. Someday, I am going to dedicate one of my books to Jack, who died way too young.

Tell us about your career path.

After graduating from OU, I was secretary of commerce in the administration of Gov. David Boren and earned a law degree from Oklahoma City University. For 41 years, I have represented injured workers in the state workers' compensation system. For 30 years I was able to write many of the laws that govern the rights of workers and employers.

Describe your current role.

In the past 10 years, I have split my time between practicing law and writing books. To date, I have written or co-written 140 books about Oklahoma people and places. It has been said that I have written more historical nonfiction books than anyone in history. AND, at age 73, I am just getting started.

knowledge about the world of journalism. Class time is important, but informal times drinking coffee or sharing a meal can benefit students in ways that can't be measured. The word "networking" is perhaps overused, but after graduation, students should stay in contact with faculty who may help guide them in the right career path.

Are there any other organizations or projects you're involved with that you want to highlight?

I serve on the boards of many Oklahoma nonprofits such as the First Americans Museum, the Jim Thorpe Association, the Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame and the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. I also am a trustee of the Oklahoma Bar Foundation and a member of the Oklahoma Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Elections.

It was a great moment in 2006 when I was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, Oklahoma's highest honor. I am also a member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame and the Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame.

Editor's Note: Bob Burke has been a generous donor to the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication, and we are grateful for his support. Recently, the college created the Bob Burke Native American Reporting Center, which you can [read more about here](#).



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