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New biography, *Giving Until it Feels Good*, details lifelong service of Ouachita Chancellor Ben Elrod

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NEWS

For immediate release

New biography, *Giving Until It Feels Good*, details lifelong service of Ouachita Chancellor Ben Elrod

By Trennis Henderson, OBU Vice President for Communications

October 12, 2016

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Dr. Ben Elrod, who served as Ouachita Baptist University's 13th president from 1988 to 1998, recently was honored with the release of a biography titled *Giving Until It Feels Good – Ben M. Elrod: Arkansas Educator and Fundraiser*.

The 82-page biography, written by Rex Nelson and Ian Cosh, was published by WestBow Press, a division of Thomas Nelson and Zondervan. A book signing by Dr. Elrod will be held Saturday, Oct. 15, from 9 to 11:30 a.m. at the Ben M. Elrod Center for Family and Community on the Ouachita campus in conjunction with Homecoming activities.

Dr. Elrod has served as OBU chancellor since his retirement in 1998. The Elrod Center, which is named in his honor, was established to challenge and equip the university community to live out its faith as servant leaders and community-minded citizens. Among the Elrod Center's signature events is the semi-annual Tiger Serve Day community service emphasis which has compiled almost 80,000 volunteer hours over the past 20 years. He and his wife, Betty Lou, also were honored in 2009 with the dedication of Ben and Betty Elrod Boulevard, the main entrance to Ouachita's campus.

The seven-chapter book, which features photographs from throughout Dr. Elrod's life and career, focuses on his early years and education years as well as Elrod the president, the fundraiser, the economic developer and the passionate volunteer and a closing chapter titled "Final Thoughts."

Co-authors Rex Nelson and Ian Cosh both are Ouachita alumni. Nelson, a 1982 Ouachita graduate, is senior vice president and director of corporate communications for Simmons First National Corporation and former president of Arkansas' Independent Colleges and Universities. Cosh, a 1987 Ouachita graduate, is OBU's vice president for community and international engagement and director of the Elrod Center.

The biography describes Dr. Elrod as "one of Arkansas' most respected leaders in the 20th century" and emphasizes that "Ouachita and the state of Arkansas are better places because he walked among us."

Dr. Elrod said the book's central message "is a reflection of my love for Ouachita." He added that "my story is primarily a story of Ouachita and would not be complete without emphasis on that lifetime, life-changing relationship.

"When I retired from the presidency of Ouachita after 10 years, I was very tired," he recalled. "The last thing I wanted to do was write a book, having endured the pain of that process writing two doctoral theses. Rex Nelson and Ian Cosh were most gracious in writing the book I didn't want to write. I owe them my undying gratitude and I am pleased with how they handled my life's story. This book, along with the completion of the new Elrod Center, made the last two years very pleasant ones."

Concerning the book's significance, Dr. Elrod said, "The lighter side is that a few years from now when a student or faculty member asks, 'Who in the world is Ben Elrod?', he or she can be referred to the book.

The more serious response is that I am pleased to have my story recorded because I believe it to be a clear reflection of God's grace and guidance.”

Cosh noted that Dr. Elrod “has been associated with Ouachita his entire life as a student, donor, trustee, vice president for development and president. As such, he is very much a part of the instructional fabric of the university and his life story needed to be recorded for institutional as well as personal reasons. Rex and I are both pleased that our work will preserve, in written form, an overview of a life well lived.

“Rex and I have both known Dr. Elrod for many years and have a deep respect for him as a friend and as a prominent member of Baptist leadership in the state of Arkansas over many decades,” Cosh said. “Out of our respect for him and his many contributions to higher education in Arkansas, we committed to write a book that would be an enjoyable and informative overview of his life.”

Nelson emphasized that “Ben Elrod is one of the men I respect most in life. When I was a boy, Dr. Elrod lived two houses down in the Ouachita Hills neighborhood. He was the vice president for development at Ouachita at the time. He was a quail hunting partner with my dad, a fishing partner and, for a time, the interim pastor of our church, First Baptist Church of Arkadelphia. I was fortunate to grow up in a college town filled with men of great integrity and accomplishment who could serve as mentors for me. Ben Elrod is both a mentor and an inspiration.

“It’s important that we record the story of Ben Elrod for those who come later,” Nelson added. “He has been so important to Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia and Arkansas. His legacy will live on in this state for decades to come. I hope people will come away with this thought: ‘This is the kind of life I wish to live; a life of integrity with Jesus Christ and my family at the center of it all.’”

Copies of *Giving Until It Feels Good* are available for purchase at the Ouachita Campus Store, westbowpress.com and amazon.com.