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Nelson and Root "Press Box Stories" talk to launch "Hometown Teams" exhibit Oct. 28

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NEWS

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Nelson and Root "Press Box Stories" talk to launch "Hometown Teams" exhibit Oct. 28

October 23, 2017

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Rex Nelson, senior editor of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* and voice of the Ouachita Tigers Football Network, will join his longtime broadcast partner, Dr. Jeff Root, for a presentation about covering local sports as part of Ouachita Baptist University's opening of the Smithsonian "Hometown Teams" exhibit on Saturday night, Oct. 28.

Nelson and Root will present "Press Box Stories" at 7 p.m. in McBeth Recital Hall as part of a full day of sports-related activities on campus. Following the Tigers' home football game against the University of Arkansas at Monticello Saturday afternoon, a tailgate-style dinner will be served on the main campus in conjunction with the opening of the exhibit in Hammons Gallery in Mabee Fine Arts Center.

"Having the Smithsonian's traveling exhibit 'Hometown Teams' is a fabulous opportunity and can lead to many conversations about the community-building aspects of local sports," said Dr. Ray Granade, director of library services. "But perhaps the greatest opportunity is to hear how two childhood friends broke into sports broadcasting and their adventures along the way."

Nelson and Root grew up in the same neighborhood near Ouachita's campus. Nelson was two blocks from Ouachita's A.U. Williams Field, and Root could see the football field from his front yard. Nelson began his journalism career in junior high as a sports reporter for the *Southern Standard* county newspaper. He continued his sports writing career and added broadcasting as a high school disc jockey before calling his first football game as a freshman at Ouachita. Root also was a high school disc jockey at Arkadelphia's KVRC AM and KDEL FM. He joined Nelson in the press box in 1979, when Nelson was a sophomore and Root was a freshman at Ouachita.

"What more American story could there be? And to see how that youthful experience played out through the years gives us a fascinating and often hilarious look at a side of sports we rarely consider," Granade said.

Nelson is the founder of the Ouachita Football Network, airing on seven stations throughout the state as one of the largest NCAA Division II radio networks. He has called Ouachita football since he was a freshman at OBU in 1978, with the exception of a few years when he was living in Washington, D.C., as a correspondent for the statewide newspaper. He also called Ouachita basketball for a number of years, and was the voice of the Arkadelphia High School Badgers in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He has hosted a statewide high school football scoreboard show for several years.

A constant presence in Arkansas journalism, politics and sports since the 1980s, Nelson currently serves as a senior editor and columnist for the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* and is a familiar voice on Little Rock radio. After working as a sports writer for the *Arkansas Democrat*, he served in a number of positions, including political editor for the newspaper. He also worked for almost a decade in the governor's office,

as a policy and communications advisor for Governor Mike Huckabee. He was appointed by President George W. Bush as a co-chairman of the Delta Regional Authority.

Root has worked with Nelson on the Ouachita games since 1980, with the exception of two stints when he was away in graduate school. He became the voice of the Arkadelphia Badgers while teaching social studies and journalism at Arkadelphia High School in the mid-1980s. He left for doctoral studies at Oklahoma State University in 1989, but returned to Arkadelphia to join the Ouachita faculty and was back in his role as the voice of the Badgers by 1992. He continues to serve in that role, calling every fall Friday for the Badgers and with Nelson and the Tigers every Saturday. During the week, Root serves as a professor of communications and dean of Ouachita's School of Humanities. For the past year he also has served as interim dean of the Huckabee School of Education.

"Hometown Teams" has been made possible at Ouachita by the Arkansas Humanities Council. It is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and State Humanities Councils nationwide. Support for Museum on Main Street has been provided by the United States Congress.

["Hometown Teams"](#) will be located in Hammons Gallery in Mabee Fine Arts Center from Oct. 28-Dec. 9 and is free and open to the public. Regular gallery hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays. It also will be open until 8 p.m. each Thursday, and from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 11, the day of Ouachita's Battle of the Ravine rivalry football game.