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### Nell Mondy (You never fail until you stop trying)

Ashleigh Estes

Office of Communications & Marketing

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*Lead photo: Nell Mondy talking with students in 1981.*

For immediate release

**Nell Mondy (You never fail until you stop trying)**

*By Ashleigh Estes*

March 28, 2024

For more information, contact Ouachita's Office of Communications & Marketing at [comm-mark@obu.edu](mailto:comm-mark@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5206.

*As we recognize Women's History Month this March, we're remembering some of the notable women in Ouachita's history. Nell Mondy '43 was a chemistry professor at Ouachita before going on to teach at Cornell University. The Nell Mondy Lecture series, along with several other areas of campus named in her honor, continue to show the legacy she left at Ouachita. This blog is a small look at her many accomplishments both in education and the nutrition field.*

Throughout Dr. Nell Mondy's life, as she faced the challenges of being a pioneering woman in science, addressing food insecurities in third-world countries and becoming an international potato expert, she often repeated a single phrase to herself: "You never fail until you stop trying."

Mondy had every disadvantage as she entered the world of academics and began her journey in the field of science. She came from a home with a single mother after her dad passed away early in Mondy's life. Additionally, being a woman in the 1940s posed its own disadvantage, especially being a woman in

STEM. Mondy graduated *summa cum laude* with B.S. and B.A. degrees in chemistry from Ouachita in 1943 and a master's in biochemistry from the University of Texas at Austin in 1945. In 1953, she received a Ph. D. in biochemistry from Cornell University where she taught for the majority of her career.



Nell Mondy, undated  
COURTESY OF THE OUACHITA ARCHIVES

Mondy was the definition of a Ouachita student: committed, involved and invested in many areas of campus life. She was vice president of the student body, an honors student, a member of the B.S.U. Council, Chemistry Club and even played in the Ouachita band. Immediately after graduation, she taught chemistry at Ouachita before moving on to her graduate studies. It's clear that while Ouachita helped Mondy develop many of her interests, she left her mark on the campus as well.

Mondy had a passion for education and inspiring people to try their best and then try harder. The Nell Mondy Lecture Series, an academic growth opportunity on Ouachita's campus, was established by Mondy to promote the continued studies of nutrition and food science. This is only a part of the legacy that was left on campus by Mondy, which also includes a chemistry scholarship, organic chemistry lab and endowed faculty chair named in her honor.

Outside of Ouachita, Mondy researched a new solution to nutrition deficits in impoverished areas and presented her findings in 47 countries. Her research proved the potential for an unlikely solution to the nutritional deficits that plague so many countries: the potato. In 1960, NATO awarded Mondy a grant which allowed her to extend her research into other countries and discuss her findings with other scholars. This eventually led to her role in helping to develop the International Food Congress. As Mondy gained expertise and recognition in the field, she was asked to consult for food companies such as Frito-Lay, General Mills, R.T. French Company, Proctor and Gamble and several international companies.

The theme of Mondy's life was saying "yes" to new experiences. She joked that she had a "weakness for work" and that she never knew when to say "no." Because of her strong work ethic and love of life's experiences, Mondy excelled in any area she touched. Mondy's life modeled the power of a love of

learning and is an inspiration in the way she channeled her knowledge of nutrition, chemistry and biochemistry to live a life of meaningful work.



*Ashleigh Estes is a sophomore nursing and communications & media/strategic communications double major from Keller, Texas.*