



OKLAHOMA HERITAGE Association
GAYLORD-PICKENS Museum

HERITAGE TIMES

Telling Oklahoma's Story Through Its People

GENEROSITY • INDIVIDUALISM • OPTIMISM • PERSEVERANCE • PIONEER SPIRIT

In **Lesson 7** students will explore some of the personalities that have played a role in Oklahoma's stage and screen history.

Featured Oklahomans

Jimmie Baker
Kristin Chenoweth
James Garner
Ron Howard
Rue McClanahan
Megan Mullally
Chuck Norris
Kelli O'Hara
Tony Randall
Jeanne Tripplehorn
Alfre Woodard

James Hollan "Jimmie" Baker

Born in Muskogee and raised in Tulsa, Baker graduated from Tulsa's Central High School and from Oklahoma State University.

While in college he became a premier drum major and dance band organizer and during World War II directed an Air Force Band and prepared shows to entertain troops. He returned to Stillwater and produced and directed the college's Varsity Review and reassembled his combo, the award-winning Collegians, and toured the nation. After settling in California, Baker worked in ABC's mail room and, within a year, was an assistant producer.

He earned Emmys, Angel Awards and ACE Awards. His star-studded productions included the pilot for "Laugh-In," documentaries on Jazz, Errol Flynn, and "That's Entertainment-50 years of MGM." He developed and produced *Stars of Jazz* and Steve Allen's *Jazz Scene USA*. Baker co-founded the Hollywood Motion Picture and Television Museum and was legendary in forming charitable organizations and benefits for important causes around the country.

Elementary Activity: Pretend to be a drum major and draw a layout for the band members.

Secondary Activity: Explore other Oklahoma producers and their areas of interest.



Megan Mullally

A graduate of Oklahoma City's Casady High School, Megan began dance at the age of 6 and was a soloist for Oklahoma City's Ballet Company and studied at George Balanchine's School of American Ballet. While at Northwestern University she performed in several student plays and decided to pursue a career in show business.

Megan made her film debut as an extra in "Risky Business" and appeared in a number of television shows and on stage before landing the part that changed her career. In 1998 she accepted the role of Karen Walker in the hit sitcom "Will & Grace." For her talent, she has earned Emmys and Screen Actors Guild Awards and has been nominated for four Golden Globe Awards.

Elementary Activity: Make a class list of all shows/productions Mullally had a role in.

Secondary Activity: Compare the career of Mullally with another actor in the lesson. Explore similarities and differences.



Alfre Woodard

A Tulsa native, Woodard was named by her godmother, who claimed she saw a vision of her name written out in gold letters.

A former high school cheerleader and track star, she got the acting bug after being persuaded to audition for a school play. She went on to study acting at Boston University and enjoyed a brief stint on Broadway before moving to Los Angeles. She received her first Os-

car nomination for her performance in "Cross Creek" and went on to appear in a number of television shows, including "Desperate Housewives."

In film, the actress consistently shines in roles that featured her as unconventional woman, generally with a troubled past. In addition, she has done a considerable amount of narration, lending her voice to a variety of documentaries.

Elementary Activity:

Discuss the type of role that would be of the most interest to members of the class.

Secondary Activity: Research the number of celebrities who still use their real name instead of a stage name.



Words of
Wisdom from the
Oklahoma Hall
of Fame

“A standard resume wouldn’t cut it, so I did a thing called ‘Baker’s Pitch.’ I wrote it like a script for a sideshow barker. It was so unique that the head of production at ABC-Television called me and asked if I’d like an interview. That’s how I happened to end up in television.”
- Jimmie Baker
Inducted 1993

“With the exception of my wife and children, there’s nothing I value more than my Oklahoma heritage.”
-James Garner
Inducted 1986

James Garner

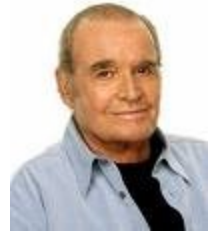
Born in Norman, Garner had a brief stint in the Merchant Marines before joining his father in Hollywood and attending school at Hollywood High School where he was voted most popular.

A high school gym teacher recommended him for a job modeling bathing suits. It paid well, \$25 dollars an hour, but he said he hated modeling and returned to Norman. There, he played football and basketball, as well as competing on the track and golf teams, for Norman High School.

He served with the U. S. Army during the Korean War and was awarded a Purple Heart before returning to Hollywood. His first role was on Broadway in “The Caine Mutiny Court Martial.” He then appeared in television commercials and starred in his first movie in 1956. Since that time he has achieved one of the most successful and consistent Hollywood careers.

Garner has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, was inducted into the Western Performers Hall of Fame at the

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, and received the Screen Actor's Guild's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005.



Elementary Activity: Explore the history of Norman.

Secondary Activity: Explore the criteria for which a Purple Heart is awarded. Research Purple Heart recipients in the area.

Ron Howard

Howard was born in Duncan and appeared in his first movie at 18 months. He landed the role of Opie on “The Andy Griffith Show” before becoming America’s favorite teenager as Richie Cunningham in “Happy Days.”

Throughout his career Howard attended public school, even playing basketball for his high school team.



With a dream of directing, Howard began shooting films at the age of 15 and following high school graduation studied film for two years at the University of Southern California.

The financing for Howard’s first film was a trade—Howard agreed to star in “Eat My Dust” and in turn Roger Corman would produce “Grand Theft Auto” directed by Howard. His first film

was a success and today he is one of the most respected and sought after directors in Hollywood.

Elementary Activity: Design a movie poster with the student listed as the director.

Secondary Activity: In each of Howard’s films there is a cameo by the same individual. Research to find who that individual is.

Rue McClanahan

McClanahan was born in Healdton and is of Irish and Choctaw Indian descent. She grew up in Ardmore and graduated from Ardmore High School. At the University of Tulsa she majored in German and Theater.

She began acting on stage, but her role on the daytime soap opera “Another World” is considered her breakout role.

Following stints on a variety of television shows, including

“Mama’s Family,” she took the role of Blanche Devereaux in “The Golden Girls,” broadcast from 1985 until 1992. She received an Emmy Award in 1987 for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series for her role. In one episode she even gave a nod to her beginnings when, with everyone home sick with the flu, Blanche wanted to watch “Another World” over the strenuous objections of her roommates.

Elementary Activity: The town of Healdton was established because of what type of energy industry?

Secondary Activity: McClanahan’s hometown of Healdton is the site of one of the largest oil discoveries. Explore the history of the field.



Kristin Chenoweth

Chenoweth was born in Broken Arrow and attended Oklahoma City University. She earned a degree in musical theater and a master's degree in opera performance. She was named Miss OCU and was second runner-up in the Miss Oklahoma pageant.

While helping a friend move to New York, she auditioned for the Paper Mill Playhouse's production of the musical *Animal Crackers* and got the role of Ara-



bella Rittenhouse and made her Broadway debut in a production of Molière's *Scapin*.

With guest appearances in a number of primetime shows, she most recently is one of the main characters in "Pushing Daisies." Her film career includes "Bewitched," "The Pink Panther," and "Running With Scissors."

In addition to television, film, and stage, Chenoweth is a successful recording art-

ist. Her most recent album, "A Lovely Way to Spend Christmas."

She will star next in "Legally Mad" and will be releasing her memoirs titled *A Little Bit Wicked: Life, Love, and Faith in Stages* in 2009.

Elementary Activity:

Map the boundaries of Tulsa and the outlying areas.

Secondary Activity: Oklahoma City University has produced a number of stage and screen stars. Research other talent from OCU.

Kelli O'Hara

O'Hara grew up in Oklahoma and graduated from Deer Creek High School. She attended Oklahoma City University, graduating with a Bachelor's of Music in vocal performance/opera

O'Hara has been nominated for three Tony Awards, one for her performance as Clara Johnson in *The Light in the Piazza*, one for her performance as Babe Williams in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of *The Pajama Game* where

she starred alongside Harry Connick, Jr. and Michael McKean, and most recently for her performance as Nellie Forbush in the Lincoln Center Theater revival of *South Pacific*.

O'Hara was recently seen as Dot/Marie in the L.A. Repre-prise! concert staging of *Sunday in the Park with George*. She can be heard as the voice of producer Beth Totenbag on PBS's 2008 animated series *Click and Clack's As the Wrench Turns*.

Elementary Activity: Design a playbill for a play at school.

Secondary Activity: Research to find others who have played the role of Nellie Forbush in *South Pacific*.



Chuck Norris

A native of Ryan, Norris began training in Tang Soo Do while stationed at the Osan Air Base in South Korea. He created United Fighting Arts Federation and KickStart, formerly Kick Drugs Out of America, a middle school and high school-based program intended to give at-risk children a focus point in life through the martial arts. Following his discharge, he opened a



chain of karate schools.

In 1969, he won Karate's triple crown for the most tournament wins of the year, and the Fighter of the Year Award by *Black Belt Magazine*. In that same year, Norris made his acting debut in the Dean Martin movie *The Wrecking Crew*. He acted as Bruce Lee's nemesis in the movie "Return of the Dragon," which is widely

credited with launching his way into stardom.

He starred as Cordell Walker for eight years in "Walker, Texas Ranger," still rerun in syndication today.

Elementary Activity:

Locate Ryan, Oklahoma, and research the founding of the town and its current population.

Secondary Activity: Explore KickStart and similar programs for schools.

Did you Know?

from the
*Oklahoma Hall
of Fame*

Jimmie Baker was only 15 when he appeared on CBS radio's "Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour" in New York City and met another of the show's talented kids – Frank Sinatra.

Jeanne Tripplehorn's grandmother, Jean Neely, appeared in the film "Reality Bites" in which Tripplehorn also had a role

Brad Pitt was born in Shawnee, Oklahoma.

Educational opportunities annually offered by the **Oklahoma Heritage Association** include:

- More than \$4,000,000 in scholarships to high school students.
- Heritage Week competitions for students in grades 3 through 12.
- Teen Board for students grades 9-12.
- Interactive Versus Series compare and contrast an Oklahoman from our past with his or her contemporary.
- Field trips to the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum—voted Nickelodeon’s Parents’ Choice Best Pick for Teens.
- “I Am Oklahoma” program for students of all ages.
- *Oklahoma: Magazine of the Oklahoma Heritage Association* is distributed to high school libraries statewide.

Jeanne Tripplehorn

After graduating from her Tulsa high school, Tripplehorn became a disc jockey at Tulsa’s KMOD Radio Station using the name “Jeanie Summers.” She also was a television host and stage trained at Juilliard.

Tripplehorn is best known for her roles starring opposite Michael Douglas in “Basic Instinct,” Kevin Costner in “Waterworld,” and Tom Cruise in “The Firm.” Tripplehorn also played the leading role of Barbara Henrickson in the HBO drama “Big Love.”



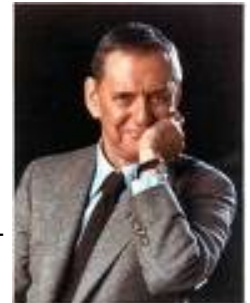
Elementary Activity: Create call letters for a school radio station.

Secondary Activity: Many actors/actresses were trained at Juilliard. Research other Oklahomans who attended the school.

Tony Randall

Randall was born Arthur Leonard Rosenberg in Tulsa. He attended Northwestern University before traveling to New York City to study at the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre. Under the name Anthony Randall, he worked onstage in *Candida* and *The Corn Is Green*. Randall then served for four years with the United States Army Signal Corps in World War II, refusing an entertainment assignment with Special Services.

Randall began his career on the stage, appearing in minor roles on Broadway, and supporting roles on tours. He is perhaps best known for his work on television. His breakthrough role was as gym teacher Harvey Weskit in “Mr. Peepers”. He had the starring role in an NBC-TV special “The Secret of Freedom” which was filmed during the summer of 1959 in Mount Holly, New Jersey, and broadcast on the network during the fall of 1959 and again in early 1960. After a long hiatus from the medium, he returned as fust-budget Felix Unger in “*The Odd Couple*” opposite Jack Klugman, a role he would keep for five years.



Elementary Activity: Speculate on the differences between stage and television acting.

Secondary Activity: Research the real names of other Oklahoma actors/actresses.

www.oklahomaheritage.com



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