Gladys Reba McCormick O’Neal was recently inducted into the WOSC Alumni Association Hall of Fame just shy of her 103rd birthday. As an inductee, she was honored through the presentation of a personalized plaque and the addition of the plaque to the Alumni Hall of Fame wall at Western. Her achievements in life and contributions to the community of Altus made her a prime candidate for this honor.

Gladys Reba McCormick was born February 19, 1907, southwest of Altus. She attended Porter High School, graduating in 1925, and enrolled at Oklahoma College for Women in Chickasha. After one year of study, she left in 1926 to marry Jack O’Neal and relocate to Altus. She has been an active and influential member of the community since her return.

After a 12 year absence from college, O’Neal enrolled at Altus Junior College, completing her Associate Degree in May of 1939. O’Neal went on to earn a Bachelor’s in Education Degree from Southwestern Oklahoma State University and enjoyed a teaching career for 32 years at both Porter School and Washington Elementary. The majority of her teaching career, O’Neal spent teaching grade school teaching, and is a member of both the Oklahoma Education Association and the Retired Educators Association.

Aside from her years of service within the school system and to her students, O’Neal played an active role in the church history of Altus United Methodist Women, Council on Ministries First United Methodist Church and was an active member in serving her community. In 1939, O’Neal joined Altus Junior College, completing her Associate Degree in May of 1939. O’Neal went on to earn a Bachelor’s in Education Degree from Southwestern Oklahoma State University and enjoyed a teaching career for 32 years at both Porter School and Washington Elementary. The majority of her teaching career, O’Neal spent teaching grade school teaching, and is a member of both the Oklahoma Education Association and the Retired Educators Association.

As to why Gladys was chosen as this year’s hall of fame inductee, Duffy said, “Gladys O’Neal is the epitome of what college and universities refer to as a non traditional student and Mrs. O’Neal made the sacrifice to return to college to finish her education during a time in history where it was not the norm.

“Altus Junior College played a very important role in helping her achieve her goal to return to college. Her determination to become a teacher and her commitment to the profession is a true testimony to why she was selected as our Western Oklahoma State College Alumni Association 2010 Hall of Fame recipient,” Duffy said.

Traditionally, the WOSC Alumni Association holds an annual banquet to recognize the induction of the new hall of fame member and thank all WOSC Foundation, Inc. donors. This year, rather than a banquet, the induction was in a private ceremony as was the comfort and wish of Mrs. O’Neal. When asked why she did not want a celebration, O’Neal said, “I am just so saddened by the recent loss of so many of my friends and all the problems that people have been having. I just don’t feel like it is the right time to celebrate.”

O’Neal said, “I am just so honored and do not feel worthy of such a nice honor.” With a smile on her face, O’Neal expressed her love for her friends and how much she enjoyed seeing and hearing from every one. From all of her experience and now her induction into the WOSC Alumni Association Hall of Fame, O’Neal said she hopes to encourage those who are hesitant to return to college to do so. Her life’s course would have been drastically altered had she not made that choice.

O’Neal pictured with Chad Wiginton (left) and Larry Duffy (standing)