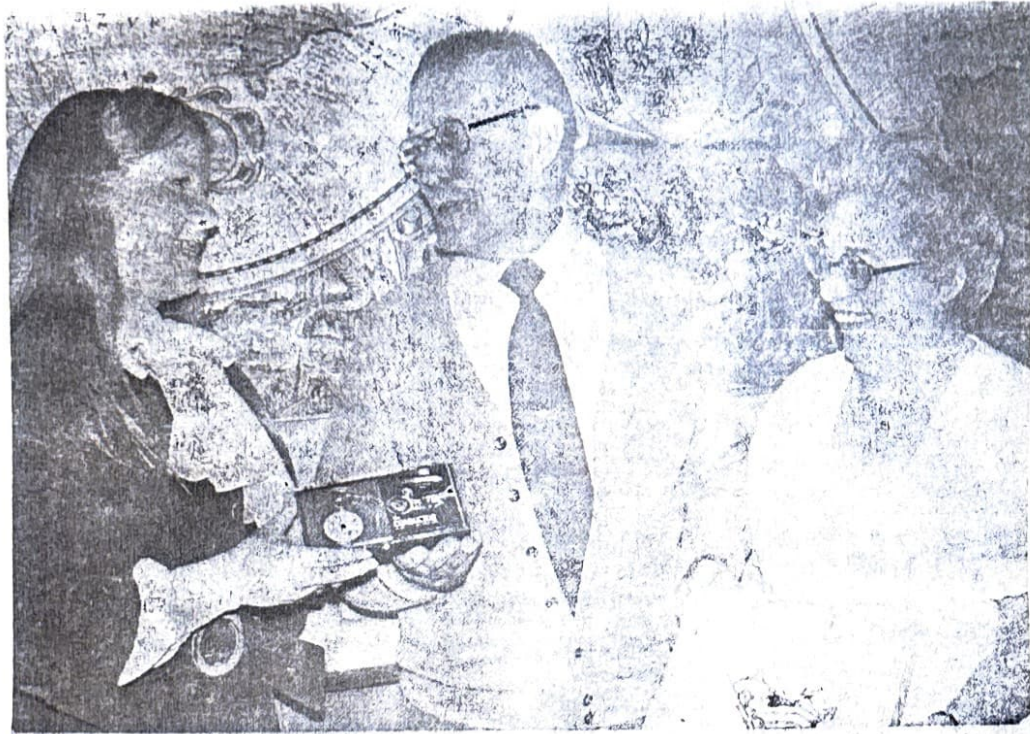




BICENTENNIAL COUPLE — Dyer and Edith Bennett were crowned "Mr. and Mrs. Bicentennial" at the city's 59th birthday party Thursday night by Ko Ann Tingley of the Brea-Olinda High School Bicentennial Committee. The Brea Historical Society event attracted over 150 persons. (Star-Progress Photo)



WALKING TALL at Brea's 59th birthday celebration last week was Jack Winter on his stilts and Dyer and Edith Bennett, the city's Bicentennial Couple. BOHS art teacher Ilona Rymer showed presentation of U.S. folk art from her national tour. (News-Times photo by Susan Gaede)



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Longtime Brea resident Dyer Bennett, 82, dies

BREA — Longtime Brea resident Dyer Bennett died Sunday at his home after a prolonged illness. He was 82.

A native of Arkansas, Dyer moved to Brea in 1926 and went to work for Union Oil. He quickly became known to many as a "sports nut" — a dedicated supporter of Brea Olinda High School and a good friend.

Charles Pryor of Fullerton became one of Bennett's fast friends after meeting him at an Angel game.

"He was such a nut that we took up with each other years ago," said Pryor.

"We met him at the ball game. We were down on the second row at Angel Stadium and he was on the terrace."

Bennett's friends said he had a colorful history. He survived a bout of malaria while stationed in the South Pacific during WWII and, later, became a boilermaker, an electrician and a refrigeration expert.

Dyer and his wife, Edith, who died in 1978, served as the city's Bicentennial Couple in 1976.

Rumor is that Dyer at one time also played some semi-

professional baseball.

"It's probably true," said Carol Israel, an attendance office secretary at the high school.

According to Israel, Bennett attended at least 95 percent of all sports games held at the school.

"Not just varsity, either," she said. "He would go see junior varsity, frosh, sophomore, girls' games — even practices. He was a super guy."

The Bennetts started both a boys' and girls' scholarship funds at the school, she said.

Close friend Rick Jones, a history teacher, said Bennett "just liked sports and kids."

"He cared about their welfare," said Jones, who was with Dyer when he succumbed to pneumonia at 7:15 a.m.

"Baseball was probably his favorite sport, but he lived basketball, too," Jones said. "In his younger days he wouldn't miss a game."

Jones said Dyer had attended games for more than 60 years.

Dyer also served as a speaker for several teachers over the years.

"He had a very vivid memory. He knew a lot of detailed things about the city and he would talk to classes about Brea during the Depression and World War II," said Jones.

Dyer also was instrumental in the building of the school's football stadium.

"He drove a horse and buggy team to turn up the land where the field is now," Jones said.

Baseball coach Steve Hiskey said he believed the Bennetts became involved in youth sports because they themselves were childless.

"I think that's part of it," Hiskey said.

"He was the kind of person, you knew he was going to be around and when he wasn't around you missed him," he added.

Bennett is survived by a sister.

The family asks that in lieu of flowers, donations be sent to the Edith and Dyer Bennett Scholarship in care of First Interstate Bank, 685 S. Brea Blvd.

Dyer Bennett

Longtime Brea resident Dyer Bennett, 82, died Feb. 3 at his residence. Born in Dyer, Ark., he was an oil worker for 35 years with Union Oil Company of California. He was a member of Citrol Lodge 656 F & AM Brea, Scottish Rite, Shrine El Baekel, Brea Boosters at Brea Olinda High School, Veterans of Foreign Wars of Brea and Brea Congregational Church. He served in World War II with the U.S. Air Force. Survivors include his sister Virginia Selby of Van Buren, Ark. Services will be held Wednesday at 10 a.m. at Neels Brea Mortuary with the Rev. Rick Marshall of Brea Congregational Church and Citrol Lodge 656 officiating. Interment will be at Memory Garden Memorial Park. Donations in Mr. Bennett's memory may be sent to the Edith and Dyer Bennett Scholarship Fund, c/o First Interstate Bank, 685 S. Brea Blvd., Brea, CA. 92621. Neels Brea Mortuary assisted the family.

Dyer Bennett was a fixture for some 60 years at almost every athletic event at Brea High School. He loved the kids and being around the coaches. Dye had not been feeling well lately, and it was not a surprise that two coaches, Rick Jones and Manny Toledo, had been taking turns spending the night with him. Rick was with Dyer when he died in his sleep. Dyer was buried with a

BOHS jacket on and a baseball cap in his hand. Both men will be sadly missed.

He's wild about Cats

By Steven Creech
Staff Writer

A crew cut and a kind word are his trademarks.

They are attributes easily spotted as Dyer Bennett, one of Brea High School's most active athletic boosters, assumes his customary seat during a recent Wildcat home baseball game against Savanna.

"They're great," he says with childlike enthusiasm of the Wildcats, who later went on to win, 3-1.

It is a hot day and, moments earlier, Bennett had the distinction of hitting the first pitch during a dedication ceremony for the new baseball field.

"At a Brea football game last year, they announced I had attended 600 games," he adds. "If I had seen that many football games, then I had seen at least three or four times that number of (Brea's) basketball and baseball games."

Bennett's claim isn't likely to be disputed, either.

After moving to the city to become an oilworker in 1926, Bennett has participated in the athletic endeavors of the Brea School District since its inception that year.

It's 60 years since the Arkansas native left his hometown of Dyer — named, incidentally, after Bennett's grandfather of the same surname — and he estimates during that time he has seen more than 1,000 Brea football games.

Bennett was on hand during the construction of the original Brea Olinda campus and has supported his

Wildcats through the rigors of the depression to the current boom of the high-tech 1990s.

His dedication and good will toward the high school have been met and returned by its students and faculty.

There are the awards lining the oak mantle in the living room of his Brea home: A service award from Brea High School in 1986, and a Rotary Club, "Service Above Self Award," in 1983 are but a few, that he is very proud of, he says.

Bennett, who will be 82 later this month, is one of the few remaining Brea residents from the city's oil and citrus crop beginnings in the 1930s.

At that time, the city's population of 900 depended upon the burgeoning Southern California oil industry for its survival, and Dyer, 18 years old and freshly transplanted from the back hills of Arkansas, soon found himself among the ranks working for \$4 a day.

Bennett said if it wasn't for the oil industry, he never would have met his wife, Edith, who passed away 12 years ago. She was a cheerleader in the first years of Brea High School.

Bennett's love for his community is evident in such contributions as a college scholarship fund for deserving Brea High School athletes.

"It's not a lot of money but it should help them with their first semester of college," he said.

Nicknames such as Brea High's "Mr. Booster," have been penned for him and with his dedication and good will toward the city, it's not hard to see why.



Staff photo by Scott Ruby

Mr. Booster at large: Dyer Bennett, 81, is an active supporter of Brea High School and has seen Brea through many changes.

APRIL 28, 1989

(Star-Progress photo by Barbara Williams)

PERSONAL VIEWPOINT —

Longtime Brea resident Dyer Bennett visits with Brea Junior High eighth-graders Heather Robinson and Dustin Smith after sharing his memories of U.S. history from a back-porch vantage point. Bennett was a guest in the local junior high history class.



Dyer Bennett reviews U.S. history from his doorstep vantage point

By Barbara A. Williams
SP Staff Writer

BREA — Copies of "American Adventures" history books dotted the Brea Junior High School classroom, but the students never opened them. They preferred to listen to the tales of Dyer Bennett, who watched the 20th century unfold from his Brea doorstep.

Bennett, the Arkansas native who came to Brea in 1926, recently reviewed U.S. history from a Brea's vantage point for students in teacher Chris Norby's eighth-grade history classes. Lecturing with arms crossed at the front of the room, Bennett talked of Okies and Arkies, Nash touring cars and speakeasies, the Great Depression and World War II. He reminded the stu-

dents of the lean days when Brea traded with other cities for food, of the glory days when Babe Ruth came to town, and of the "small town" days when Brea was 85 percent oilfields and 15 percent citrus groves.

When asked about his own move to Brea, he bent over the student's desk and reminisced about the lure of oilfield money to a poor young farm boy of 18 who was willing to tackle the 10-day trip west from Dyer, Ark. He averaged three flat tires a day, he said, and camped along the roadway at night. He arrived in Brea toting a straw suitcase and a gunnysack of food and carrying \$13 in his pocket.

"I felt like I was 10,000 miles from home when they let me out in front of Sam's Place. I thought

I'd come to the end of the world," he said, rapping on a desk for emphasis. "I wanted to work in the oilfields. They told me I'd better ask everyone I saw on the street for a job."

He did. He swept and cleaned at a machine shop, cut weeds for the city, worked in a lumberyard, and helped build the high school on Birch Street before the Depression arrived and everyone's "main business was getting food."

He married Edith, the "good-lookin' girl" he'd spotted on the high school campus. He served in World War II for three years and found a career in the oil business, retiring after 35 years with Union Oil.

Along the way, Bennett, who had no children of his own, took

an interest in Brea's youth and their activities. Yes, he said, he has seen every high school basketball game since the first one in 1928. And no, he wasn't about to pick one player who stood out above the rest.

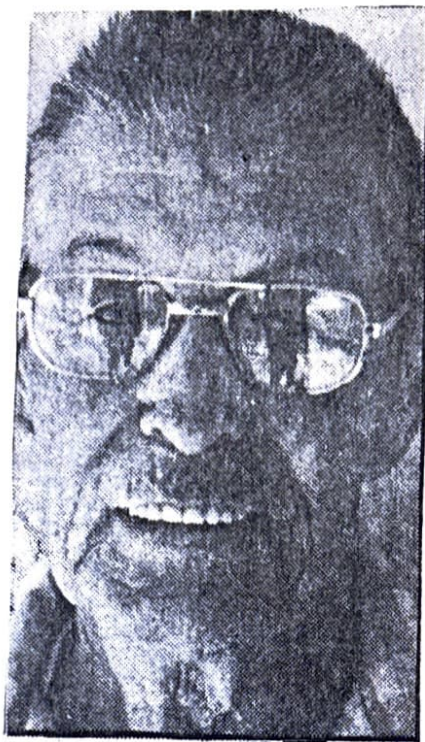
But he did tell the students that he had a message, as well as memories, to share with them.

"You cannot be a success and use drugs," he said. "Just because your friend has grass or beer at a party doesn't mean you have to. You must keep your bodies clean to be successful in life."

Then Bennett made the youngsters agree to a promise.

"I'll try to get to all your games," he told them. "But if you see me there, you have to say 'hi.'"

1984 ?



Dyer Bennett

Devoted volunteer: For his unselfish contributions to the city of Brea since 1926, DYER BENNETT recently received the Brea Rotary Club's Service Above Self Award. This isn't Dyer's first award for his contributions to the community, either. During Brea's centennial celebration, he and his wife EDITH were named Mr. and Mrs. Brea.

Dyer Bennett celebrates a milestone

On Saturday, June 4, the grand patriarch of the Brea Olinda Wildcats, **Dyer Bennett**, will celebrate his 80th birthday. In honor of the occasion, The Brea Booster Foundation is having a fundraiser birthday party and the entire community is invited.

Known as "Dyer" to kids from 8 to 80, he attends most football, basketball and baseball games, cheering on the Wildcats. Several years ago he established a scholarship in memory of his wife Edith, which was to be awarded to an outstanding female athlete of the graduating class. In the last few years, he has also set up a similar one in his name to be presented to a top graduating male athlete. So...everyone come to the Country Western Celebration at Pioneer Hall in honor of Dyer.

There will be a no-host bar beginning at 5 p.m. and a barbeque steak and chicken dinner at 6 p.m., followed by entertainment. Tickets are \$12 per person and \$10 for senior citizen. They can be purchased through May 27 in the high school activities office. All proceeds will go to the athletic booster clubs. Dyer has requested no gifts please. For information call Alvie Kracik at 990-1566 or Connie McCarty at 961-8015.

BENNETT

Continued from Page 12

more than 1,000 counting junior varsity, sophomore and freshmen games.

Bennett was here before the first game at Brea Field was played, before the first students at Brea High opened their books.

"Yep," he said, looking around an area that has gone from a strictly small town atmosphere to a suburban expanse. "I helped them build the school when I came out here from Arkansas in 1926. Drove a team of mules turning over the dirt.

"And the stadium that used to be here was all wood, with ivy running down the sides and back. They didn't have lights in those days—they were all Friday afternoon games, so the whole town of Brea would close down and everybody'd go to see the football games."

Bennett remembers all the numbers and all the names that have worn the green and gold of the Wildcats on this turf.

"A lot of good people played on this field, you know," Bennett said. "The Sweet family, the Ledbetter family—Talbert Ledbetter played back in the 1930s, and Adrian Ledbetter, he was a good one, too.

"Dick Tucker coached here—the 1961 CIF championship team was his, I think. Yes sir, a lot of good memories from this field."

Listening to Bennett's crisp voice, giving life to memories that seem to get more vivid instead of fading with time, it's easy to see why he is often a guest speaker at the high school to tell stories of local history, the Great Depression, and World War II, events that still mark his character to this day.

Bennett doesn't come right out and say so, but it's easy to see why he has such a love affair with the

school, why he thinks he has to give Brea something back—whether it be the lectures, the scholarships that he sponsors, or the many school functions that he attends.

It begins with Edith Mallory, Brea High School Class of '32, the woman that the young oil field worker would meet, fall in love with, and marry. Their marriage lasted 45 years before Edith died of cancer in 1977.

To Bennett, *Brea High* gave him Edith—something that he believes he can never repay. Edith's sister was a film editor in Hollywood during the 1920s and 30s, and thanks to her, Bennett was able to meet actress Joan Crawford, director John Huston, and singer Patty Page.

More important, Edith was there when Dyer came home from World War II. Edith was Dyer's world, making the heartbreak and repulsion of war bearable.

Was she pretty, Dyer?

"Was she ever!" Bennett said. "She was a cheerleader and a songleader. Editor of the annual. Very active in the school. Good citizenship, too. One of the top, top people I ever met.

"Why, there were some hard times then, people wearing cardboard to patch their shoes or clothes with, but a feller could take his gal to the movies in Fullerton, get a hamburger, popcorn and a Coke, and still have change from his dollar.

"Of course, it cost a nickel extra to sit in the loges, but you could neck there, so we went all of the time."

Bennett says a major reason why he revels in the success of Brea sports teams is that he simply gets a kick out of watching youngsters grow and learn what lessons in life they can from winning and losing

on the athletic field.

You see, Bennett saw his share of children who didn't have those types of opportunities during World War II, when he served as a navigator with the 5th Air Force in the Pacific. Bennett fought in the Battle of the Coral Sea and still has the papers from a dead Japanese soldier he came up against in the Philippines.

Also, as an airman, Bennett was one of the first people to view the carnage and destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the weeks after the atomic bombings of those cities in August, 1945.

Here, Bennett speaks very softly, very reverently.

"You just can't imagine that kind of destruction—you just can't imagine it. They wouldn't let us fly below 1,000 feet because of the radiation. A concrete building that has melted is something to behold. It [Hiroshima] was black as far as you could see.

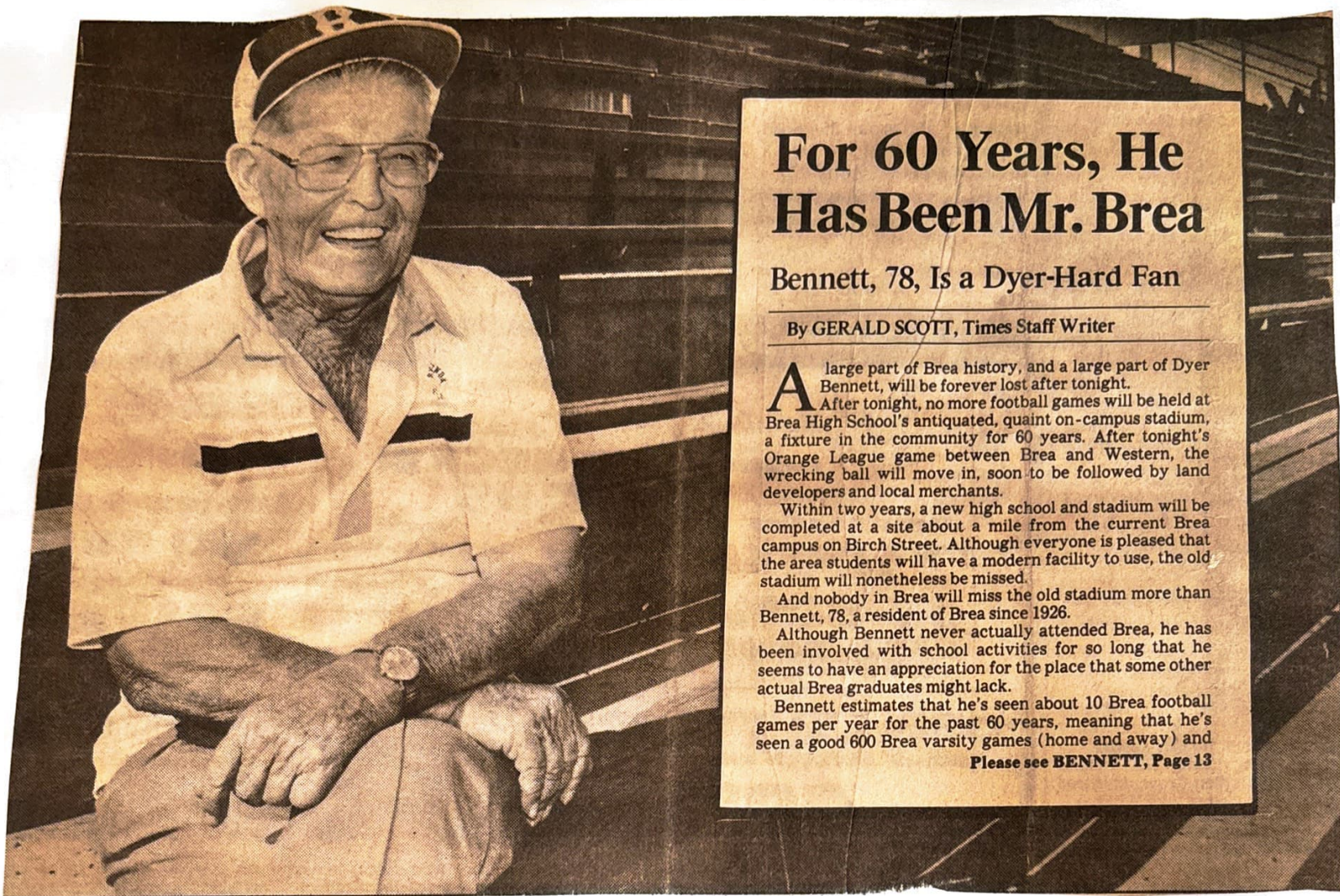
"Seeing that still bothers me to this day, you know."

After the war, Bennett returned to Brea and finished his working career at Union Oil, retiring in 1969. Other than the war years or an occasional sickness, watching the Brea football team was a way of life.

Bennett took another look at the sidelines and goalposts and the wooden bleachers. Here, tears welled in his eyes.

"Maybe nobody world famous ever came out of Brea," he said. "But I've been all over the world—the Philippines, Japan, Corregidor, Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea—and some of the finest people in the world are right here, let me tell you.

"Yes sir, some of the finest people in the world are right here in Brea, and you better not forget that, mister."



For 60 Years, He Has Been Mr. Brea

Bennett, 78, Is a Dyer-Hard Fan

By GERALD SCOTT, Times Staff Writer

A large part of Brea history, and a large part of Dyer Bennett, will be forever lost after tonight. After tonight, no more football games will be held at Brea High School's antiquated, quaint on-campus stadium, a fixture in the community for 60 years. After tonight's Orange League game between Brea and Western, the wrecking ball will move in, soon to be followed by land developers and local merchants.

Within two years, a new high school and stadium will be completed at a site about a mile from the current Brea campus on Birch Street. Although everyone is pleased that the area students will have a modern facility to use, the old stadium will nonetheless be missed.

And nobody in Brea will miss the old stadium more than Bennett, 78, a resident of Brea since 1926.

Although Bennett never actually attended Brea, he has been involved with school activities for so long that he seems to have an appreciation for the place that some other actual Brea graduates might lack.

Bennett estimates that he's seen about 10 Brea football games per year for the past 60 years, meaning that he's seen a good 600 Brea varsity games (home and away) and

Please see **BENNETT**, Page 13

BOOSTER: He's been rooting for the Wildcats since 1926

BREA — Dyre Bennett started courting his wife-to-be, Edith, in 1926, when she was a junior at Brea-Olinda High School.

Because they shared an interest in sports, many of their dates were spent watching one of the school's athletic teams in action. Bennett eventually married Edith, and their marriage lasted until she died in 1978.

But Bennett's courtship with Edith wasn't the only love affair that got started in 1926. And his love affair with the school's athletic teams continues today.

Bennett, 79, estimates he has seen more than 1,000 basketball games, 600 football games and hundreds of other events. In fact, with the exception of three years of combat during World War II, he has been a constant spectator at Wildcats contests.

"I'm a sports nut, always have been," Bennett said as he watched the Lady Cats basketball team play Irvine High School. "Edith was very active, so we both enjoyed sports and going to the games.

"It's something we continued to do together until she died."

In his green Brea Boosters jacket, Bennett has become an institution. From the moment he walks into the gym or stadium, he's greeted by Brea alumni, parents and coaches, who all go out of their way to shake his hand and ask how he's doing.

"The people in Brea are the greatest in the world," Bennett said. "You won't find any finer people anywhere."

During his many years of watching Brea teams, he has seen most of the memorable moments and has had the chance to see the best players in school history.

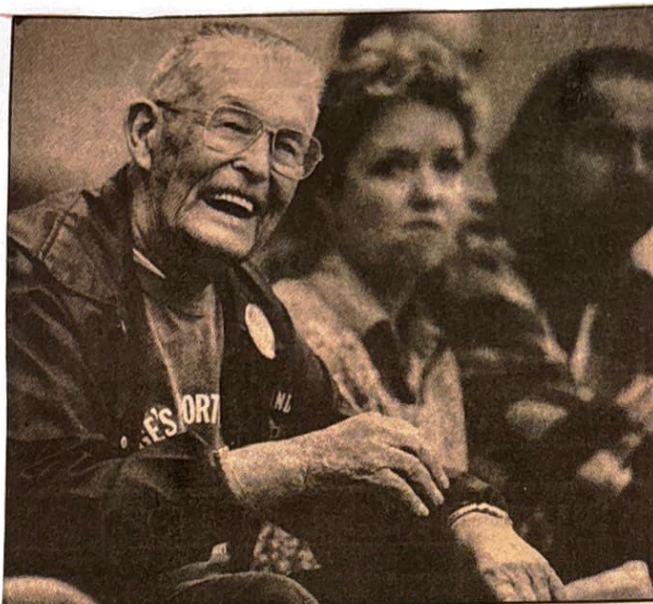
But when asked to list the best players, he graciously declines.

"If you do that, you'll get calls from grandmothers who'll want to know why their grandchild wasn't included," Bennett said. "To me, they're all great players."

Bennett said his favorite sport is baseball, which he excelled in during high school, but he enjoys watching them all. And although he seldom admits it, it's easy to see that he prefers girls sports to boys.

"They've (girls sports) changed so much since I first started watching them," he said. "Today, the players are so good.

Dyre Bennett, 79, estimates he has seen more than 1,000 Brea-Olinda High School basketball games, 600 football games and hundreds of other events. In fact, with the exception of three years of combat during World War II, he has been a constant spectator at Wildcats contests.



Tracy Lee Silveria/The Register
Dyre Bennett added to his bleacher-based support of Brea-Olinda High athletics by starting up scholarship programs for student athletes.

They do some things which I never thought I'd see a gal do.

"They have such an energy about them. It's amazing to see them out there. Even when I was young, I don't remember having so much energy."

Chris Norby, a history teacher at Brea and a Fullerton city councilman, said Bennett is not a passive observer.

"He gets on the refs from the moment they step on the court," Norby said. "He expresses his opinion and lets everyone

know who he's rooting for.

"He's a colorful character and a big part of this community."

Bennett came to Brea from Arkansas in 1926 with a straw suitcase in one hand and \$13 to his name.

He came seeking his fortune in the oil fields and was fortunate to meet someone who offered to put him up in his garage.

For two months he called the garage home as he searched for work.

He did a variety of jobs from driving a

truck to working in a boiler factory to helping build parts of Brea High School. It was during his construction days that he spotted Edith and began dating her.

Bennett romanced her through the early Depression years, and when he landed a job with Shell Oil Co. in 1933, they were married. With the exception of the three years in the military, he's lived in Brea since then — observing the city's development and change.

A few years ago, Norby and other history teachers at the school began using him as a guest speaker to talk about the early days of Brea, the Depression years and World War II.

"He links the past with the present," Norby said. "He gives the kids a different insight into various times that we talk about in class.

"They respond to him very well and he's great with them. He's very aware of where they're coming from. He gets them involved. And because they all know him, they tend to respond."

Bennett loves going to the school and being around the students. He spends every afternoon on campus either lecturing in class or bouncing from practice to practice.

"Being around the kids keeps me young, no doubt about it," Bennett said. "I like getting a chance to talk with the kids. They seem to enjoy hearing me tell stories about taking Edith to Fullerton for a

movie and dinner and it costing less than a dollar.

"The kids want to know what it was like back then and I try to fill them in. But really, I get more out of being around them than they do around me."

After Edith died, Bennett wanted a way to preserve her memory. He finally decided that because of their ties with the athletic programs that the best way would be to sponsor a scholarship in her name for a deserving girl athlete.

A few years later, he started a boys scholarship in his name.

A few years ago, Chris Norby and other Brea-Olinda High School history teachers at the school began using him as a guest speaker to talk about the early days of Brea, the Depression years and World War II.

"I'm not wealthy, but I've done all right," Bennett said. "Because of living through the Depression, Edith and I were tight with our money. After I retired, we enjoyed ourselves. But now that I'm alone, I don't have many needs.

"The scholarships help some deserving kids. Every kid that has won has been deserving."

On his 75th birthday, the athletic-booster club threw a party for Bennett. And the members plan on doing the same next May when he turns 80.

"Lord willing, I'll be around," Bennett said. "You never know when you reach my age how long He'll let you hang around.

"Hopefully, I've got a few more years because we have some freshmen and sophomores who are going to be dynamite, and I want to be around to see them play on the varsity."

Memories



This football holds a special place of honor among Bennett's collection of memories.

Bennett aids students through scholarships

By Francine McMillian
The Register

As far as 76-year-old Dyer Bennett is concerned, he's just a man who loves high school sports and young people.

For the past 50 years, Bennett has been involved with Brea-Olinda High School athletics, cheering students on at most sporting events and rejoicing in their achievements at awards banquets.

And, in recent years, he has given college scholarships to 16 students who participated in the school's athletic program.

For his unyielding support, Bennett has been named a life member of the Brea Booster Club.

"I just enjoy watching the competitiveness of young people," said Bennett, a physically fit man who says he walks four miles a day.

"To see them competing and enjoying themselves makes me happy. That gives me a charge that I believe will help me live many more years."

Bennett also gets a charge out of talking about young people. While being interviewed in his home, he pointed to portraits of Brea graduates displayed on a living room mantel and to the many snapshots of neighbors' kids and other local graduates that blanket the door of his refrigerator.

Bennett's relationship with Brea-Olinda High School began shortly after he moved to the city in 1926 from his native Dyer, Ark. His late wife, Edith, was a student at Brea-Olinda, a cheerleader and a sports enthusiast.

Over their years together, Bennett said, he and his wife spent many happy hours at Brea sports events.

"It was a lot of fun for the two of us," he said. "Why, when we first started going to games, that was back during the Depression. Times were hard. But we could see high school games for 50 cents apiece and spend three hours there. That was the enjoyment."

"I guess you could just call me an athletic nut. I've been that way all my life. It doesn't matter if it's girls' soccer or volleyball or football. I like them all."

Bennett started giving athletic scholarships after his wife died eight years ago. His program gives scholarships to two students each year. The students must have B averages, perfect attendance in their senior year and a good citizenship record, Bennett said.

Recipients are selected by a committee of seven, which includes Bennett, the school's athletic director, the principal, two Booster Club members and two counselors.

Bennett is certain his wife would approve of the program.

"If I could call her up and ask her what she thinks of it, I believe she'd probably ask me why haven't I increased it," he said.

He declined to reveal the amount of the scholarships, but said he hopes to increase the amount of the awards within the next few years.

"It's not a whole lot, but it will take care of the first semester of college," he said.

Bennett said he believes sports can play a positive role in high school students' lives, which is another reason he supports such activities.

"I don't know about other schools," he said, "but at Brea, if you want to participate in sports, you have to be clean, keep your grades up and have good citizenship."

"I have seen this school go from a graduating class of 15 to 20 into the hundreds ... I've seen people who've participated in sports leave the school and go on to become first-class citizens that you can be proud of."



Daniel A. Anderson/The Register

Dyer Bennett reminisces about his years of involvement with Brea-Olinda High School sports.

City mourns 'Mr. Brea'

FEB 14, 1991

They called him "Mr. Brea," the city's most widely recognized private citizen and a beloved, familiar figure strolling along Brea Boulevard. At 82 years old, Dyer Bennett could still be seen twice daily in Ted Hermann's baseball card shop, behind the counter.

"Dyer helped me in here voluntarily," said Hermann. "But then, you see, this was his chance to be with the kids who come in here. That, and surrounding himself with baseball memorabilia. He had season tickets for the California Angels for 18 years. Most of all, though, he loved kids."

That he did.

He was the quintessential sports fan, and Dyer Bennett's name is etched across the campus of Brea-Olinda High Schools, new and old. Until two years ago, when he slowed up a bit, Dyer took his seat on many a high school bus, or at home games, exchanging quips and tactics with youthful players and spectators alike. Bennett estimated he'd watched 1,600 Brea games of basketball and football, always clad in his green booster jacket and cap, which he wore with such pride.

The wiry, slender Dyer first settled in small-town Brea as a mere slip of a lad himself, and the place had 900 residents and an atmosphere reminiscent of his birthplace — Dyer, Ark., a little town in the Ozarks near the Oklahoma border, which had been founded by his grandfather.

As a boy, Bennett toiled in Arkansas' often-harsh climate, picking fruit 12 hours a day for 75 cents an hour. The state's nickname, the Land of Opportunity, didn't impress Dyer, who'd heard word, wafting across the flat plains of Crawford County, that untold riches were there for the grabbing in the oilfields bubbling with crude in that movie star place...Southern California, and in particular, from someplace called Brea.

"Bree," as Bennett first pronounced the word, seemed like the kind of settlement where a fella could get rich in double quick.



Dyer Bennett

After graduating from his Arkansas high school in June 1926, Bennett and an equally youthful buddy set off for the West in an ancient Nash — a 10-day adventure riddled with flat tires and painful memories of a weeping, widowed mother.

Reminisced Dyer recently, "My buddy left me off in front of Sam's Place. I had \$13, and everything else I owned in the world in a gunny sack. I hitched another ride through town with a guy who called me 'Okie.' Make it 'Arky,' I told him!"

Crewcut Bennett's six decades of love and devotion to the demolished Brea-Olinda High School and its fine Doric columns began only weeks after he'd arrived in town — he was among the construction crew which readied the building for the first graduating class of 1927.

Bennett's lifetime affiliation for the lovely old school had its roots with a demure coed whom young Dyer, then employed by the Union Oil Co., admired as she daily passed the sparsely furnished back room he rented, overlooking a still-used alley on the southeast corner of Brea Boulevard and Imperial Highway.

"Got to lookin' at her while she passed through the alley on her way to the school. Asked her out when I just happened to be outside one day. Took four tries and three weeks before she said yes."

Edith Mallory's Brea-Olinda High School graduation picture of 1923 depicts a prime candidate for "Sweetheart of Sigma Chi" status. Darkly appealing with fashionable bangs, luminous brown eyes and a radiant smile, the five-foot, 90-pound native of New York's highly urban Brooklyn had crossed the continent by train to live with an aunt in Brea.

Country boy Dyer took his diminutive,

urbanized dream girl to a Fullerton movie for their first date. Duded up in his only suit, he blew a whole dollar on two seats, soft drinks and popcorn to see his hero, cowboy star Hoot Gibson, in the latest oater.

"It was a night I'll never, never forget," Mr. Brea recalled.

"See, I was an orphan by then and very lonely here. Sparky was orphaned, too. Oh, that's what I used to call her, 'Sparky.'"

Sparky, seven years Dyer's junior, wasn't just another pretty face at Brea-Olinda High, either. An outstanding student, she joined the ranks of ink-stained wretches in becoming editor of her school's award-winning yearbook, the "Gusher."

Dyer and his Sparky were married in Brea in October 1933, and lived at 247 N. Brea Blvd. in a small, still-occupied house.

Another lamented, vanished relic, like the old high school, the Brea Theater's enticing intimacy attracted the Bennetts regularly, as did the golden age of radio. The newlyweds also loved dancing at Balboa's Pavilion to the music of Paul Whiteman.

"My favorite was 'Wonderful One,'" Mr. Brea said, smiling tenderly. "And Sparky liked 'Ramone.'" Since his wife enjoyed sports, too, Dyer rarely missed a high school game. Edith just went along.

In 45 years of marriage, the Bennetts saw their little Brea snowball into ever-expanding maturity.

Bennett went to war as a sergeant-navigator with the 5th Air Force, surviving the battles of the Coral Sea, the Philippines and Corregidor. The young Brea was among the first servicemen to fly over the devastated Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, just days after their granulation by the United States'

atomic bombs. While her husband was away, Edith "Sparky" Bennett kept the home fires burning by working in a Brea Boulevard bakery.

In 1978, the little colleen who had so impressed young Dyer Bennett as she passed along his back alley window, died. A sorely grieving Dyer set up a scholarship in her name at the high school for a female athlete, adding another later in his own name for a male athlete, all the while stressing academic achievement as well as athletic ability.

Early on the Sunday morning of Feb. 3, 1991, Mr. Brea passed away in his neat, little Flower Street home.

His funeral procession moved slowly along the Brea Boulevard he knew so well, and 240 mourners attended the earlier service. Dyer was laid to rest beside Sparky, in Memory Garden on Central Avenue, amid floral tributes mostly in green and gold, the Brea High School colors. He was buried in his treasured green jacket and cap.

The high school's hugely successful girls' basketball team, the Ladycats, observed one minute's silence for its latest booster, before last Tuesday night's game against Valencia in the Brea gym.

Brea won't — can't — be the same again. But so long as the Fourth of July fair attracts Breans on hot afternoons, and every time a Marine Band plays "Stars and Stripes Forever" in the twilight at the park's gazebo, Mr. Brea will find a way to be there.

He'll still be applauding vigorously at every leap, kick and jump of his Ladycats, Wildcats and Polecats.

He'll be rubbing his hands briskly as the sun penetrates the early morning fog on wintry Brea Boulevard, and sniffing appreciatively at a whiff of orange blossoms on a balmy evening.

We'll not forget Dyer Bennett, Mr. Brea, anymore than he'll forget any of us. He just stepped up from a country boy to God's Brea Hall of Fame.

Brea Beat

School on Birch is dear to 'Mr. Brea'

By Leslie Stuart Carter

There's a niche in Brea's Hall of Fame that's reserved for a man who was actually born in a log cabin in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas and, like so many others before him, was wafted to our city on the wings of the oil boom.

Dyer Bennett is 80 years old and spryly whimsical about those far-off days in Dyer, Ark., a small town founded by his grandfather. As a lad, Dyer worked



12 hours a day for the princely sum of 75 cents an hour picking peaches and apples, not to mention a stint as a lowly cotton picker.

The youthful Bennett soon heard of the untold riches prevalent in that odd-sounding Southern California place, Brea, and its oilfields, so he made his way here to see for himself. He returned prodigally to rural Dyer

brimming over with accounts of the unlimited sunshine, abundant orange groves and four whole dollars a day just for coaxing black gold from the bowels of Brea's soil.

So back here he came after graduating from his Ozark high school in 1926. He travelled west in an old Nash with a friend on an epic 10-day, flat-tire ridden odyssey, leaving behind a tearful, widowed mother and a beckoning life of dire poverty.

"My buddy left me off right in front of Sam's Place, with 13 bucks and my life's possessions in a gunny sack. I got another ride through town with a guy who called me 'Okie.' Make it 'Arky,' I told him."

Within a week the handsome youngster got work in a boiler shop on the site of what is now the Cohen and Christianson accounting firm on North Brea Boulevard, a red-letter day in the fortunes of the man who came to earn the sobriquet "Mr. Brea."

If that June day in 1926 looms large in Dyer Bennett's store of "Days to Remember," then the Wednesday afternoon when Edith Mallory finally consented to let him take her to a Fullerton movie is top of his list.

Edith, darkly and demurely beautiful with enormous brown eyes and a lights-up-the-room smile, was still a co-ed at Brea-Olinda High School. Only 5 feet tall and 90 pounds, she had lived in quiet Whittier after moving west from her birthplace in New York's teeming Brooklyn. Edith's and Dyer's paths crossed when little Miss Mallory came to Brea to housekeep for an aunt.

"I got to lookin' at her while she was on her way to school. I asked her out but it took four attempts before she said 'yes.'"

It was from the sparsely furnished, \$5-per-week room that he rented overlooking the alley off the southeast corner of Imperial and Brea boulevards, that Dyer Bennett first saw her. It was there, too, that he got all slicked up in his one and only suit before blowing a whole dollar on two movie seats to see cowboy Hoot Gibson's latest, and hamburgers, soft drinks and popcorn.

"It was a night I'll never forget," said crewcut

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Bennett, "By that time I was an orphan and very lonely here. 'Sparky' was an orphan, too. That's what I used to call her—Sparky."

Seven years younger than Dyer, Edith Mallory graduated from Brea Olinda High School in 1932 with an impressive record of achievements as an outstanding student and as editor of her school's annual, "The Gusher."

In October of 1933, Edith and Dyer were married and went to live in a small wooden house still standing at 247 N. Brea Blvd. They patronized the Brea Theater, enjoyed their radio in that golden age of broadcasting and danced at the Balboa Pavilion to the orchestras of both Paul Whiteman and Harry James. The music they loved then as newlyweds is immortal: "Wonderful One," "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi" and Edith's favorite, "Ramona."

In 45 years of marriage, the Bennetts saw their little 900-resident town sprout into full maturity.

When Dyer went to war, Edith kept the home fires burning all through the conflict, working at a bakery on Brea Boulevard. Her husband, a sergeant-navigator in the Fifth Air Force, survived the battles of Coral Sea, Corregidor and the Philippines and flew over the devastated Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima only days after both had been granulated by the United States' atomic bombs.

In 1978 Edith Mallory Bennett, the stunning-looking little colleen that young Dyer Bennett had admired as he saw her pass by his alley window, passed from the worldly scene but not—not ever—from the hearts of those who knew her. Edith's name is perpetuated at the high school where she had shone so brightly, through sports scholarships founded by Dyer. The 60-year-old school on Birch Street is very dear indeed to Mr. Brea: it gave him something—someone—for whom he can never really compensate fully.

But he can try.

Brea Beat is a regular feature of the Brea Highlander. Leslie Stuart Carter is a 21-year resident of Brea and native of London, England. He has written freelance articles for a variety of newspapers and magazines. Comments and suggestions for future columns are welcome.