

As one of his former athletes, Neil Johnson, '15ba, '17Law, remembers tales of his coaching days, the guest of honor, Bennie Owen, wipes the mist away.

Bennie's Big Night

More than 500 former athletes and friends gathered November 25 to pay their respects to the man who had been their coach, teacher, and friend.

TELEVISION CAMERAS whirred as Bennie and Mrs. Owen entered the doors of the Union Ballroom. "This is just like a Hollywood premiere," Mrs. Owen said. "I wonder why they didn't do this 50 years ago when I could have used it," Bennie said. This was Bennie Owen's night and everyone in the room wanted it to be a night to be remembered.

Players he had coached as a young man when he came to Oklahoma in 1905 were there. Those he had coached his final season of 1926 were there, also. More than 500 friends and former players listened to stories of Bennie's coaching days and of his contributions to O. U. Bennie's were not the only misty eyes as an evening of remembrances came to a close.

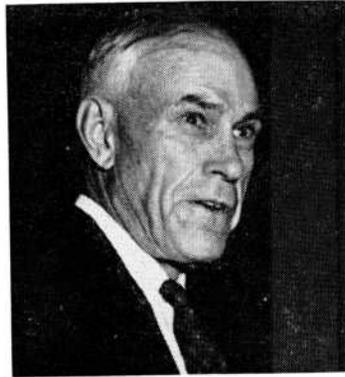
As His Former Athletes Reminiscenced . . .



SNORTER LUSTER



FRANK BUTTRAM



ARTIE REEDS



CHARLES ORR



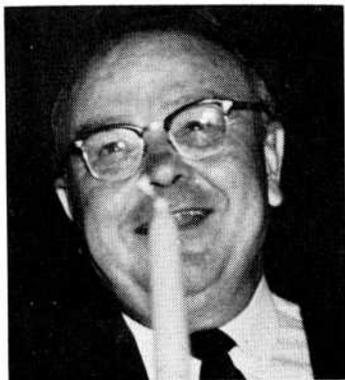
Wistfully, Bennie listens. When he entered ballroom, a shout went up, "Gee Cly, Guy!" remark he substituted for harsher expletives.



Mrs. Owen, sharing her husband's tribute, looks at audience while Bennie smiles pleasure at more than 500 friends, former athletes.



H. McCASLAND



PAUL X. JOHNSTON



W. DOW HAMM



MIKE MONRONEY

... Bennie's Face Showed These Emotions



The stories of his coaching days at O.U. stretched across 22 years. Bennie, nodding his head and smiling, remembered with his "boys."



Cause of his mirth? Any one of a hundred stories could have been responsible. There were no unhappy moments at Bennie's dinner.



Bud Wilkinson joined the band of speakers to pay respects to a predecessor who, as athletic director, had done so much to provide an excellent physical plant for athletics at O.U. With the Owens and Wilkinson are Mr. and Mrs. Luster and L. E. "Jap" Haskell, '22geol, chairman of dinner committee.



Haskell presented Owen with a citation from the Alumni Association which applauded his contributions to football, to the athletic program, to his University through his 50 years' association with O.U.

Ram Morrison, '25Law, served as a representative of the lettermen and made presentation of a gift of luggage to Mr. and Mrs. Owen.



No More Than He Deserved

BENJAMIN GILBERT OWEN has achieved about all the football immortality any coach can. His name is listed in two national football halls of fame. The stadium he helped build as football coach for 22 years and as athletic director bears his name. But perhaps no honor was as fitting as the spoken and unspoken tribute offered Bennie November 25.

Frank Buttram, '10ba, '12ma, Oklahoma City, at the outset of the dinner announced the establishment of a Bennie Owen Memorial trust fund. Income would be used for student scholarships as a permanent living memorial to Owen.

Under the guidance of toastmaster Dewey "Snorter" Luster, '22ba, '22Law, Bennie's boys recounted tales of O.U. athletic teams under Bennie's coaching. Bud Wilkinson also joined in paying tribute.

Ram Morrison, '25Law, presented the Owens with a set of luggage as a gift from former lettermen. L. E. "Jap" Haskell, '22geol, general chairman for the event, presented Bennie a citation which read, "The University of Oklahoma Association presents to Ben G. Owen this certificate of appreciation on the occasion of his 50th anniversary at the University of Oklahoma, for his inspirational leadership as a teacher and coach, for his skill and resourcefulness in originating many innovations in football strategy, for his personal qualities of good sportsmanship, integrity, and clean play, which he imparted so effectively to his athletes."

Then came Bennie's turn. He said all he had heard speak were men and he had once coached women's basketball. He wondered if any of his former women athletes were present. One stood. She was Mrs. Elizabeth Eagleton Courtright, '14ba, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Like many others in the crowded ballroom, she and her husband, Raymond Courtright, '14ba, had come a great distance to share this moment with their coach.

Referring to the honor done him, Bennie said, "It's a lot more than we deserve. We all appreciate Bud Wilkinson and his fine staff, and that we're No. 1. It's all wonderful that you all would remember back to our small beginnings." There was no doubt that the crowd remembered. It was a big night for Bennie Owen.