

A Brief History of the Edwards Gymnasium

For many decades, the following verse from Proverbs was placed on the gymnasium alcove wall and aptly summarizes the desires of the BCS community. "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Opened in 1961 through the school's very first planned gift from the estate of Albert Ninian Edwards and God's winsome providence, the gym on the Clyde Hill campus has been home to some of the most memorable and meaningful events in Bellevue Christian School history.

How It Came About...

Desiring to continue to remain faithful to God's call for Bellevue Christian School to be a school that strives towards excellence and improvement, the school began to work with the State of Washington on accreditation. One requirement of accreditation status was a gymnasium and the community began to pray for God's provision and timing.

Major funding came from the Albert Ninian Edwards' estate. Joe and Albert Greene's great uncle, Albert Edwards, came to the area from the Midwest to live with Al & Thelma Greene in the final years of his life. During the 1950's, Mr. Edwards had anonymously donated almost \$50,000 for various building projects and then left the remainder of his estate, \$250,000, to the school upon his death. As a result, he became the major donor for the building of the gymnasium.

God's providence was also evident in the "find" of the main beams for the gym. These beams had originally been purchased by Bellevue Public School for use in a new gym for Sammamish High School. However, due to a strike, the beams were not able to be used when delivered and were not well-protected from the weather. As a result, Bellevue Public would not use them. Joe and Al caught wind of the beams, had an expert from the University of Washington verify the soundness of them and then purchased the beams at a reduced cost.

The Blessing...

The inaugural event of the newly christened Edwards Gymnasium was the 1961 Christmas Concert. The Edwards Gym continued to serve as the venue for concerts until the Greene Commons was built in 1992. Because it was large enough for the rising school enrollment, the gym was also used for chapels, assemblies, pep rallies and parent meetings.

Another community event which dates its beginnings from building of the Edwards Gymnasium was the "Clothesline Sale." In the 1970's, the Clothesline Sale was housed in the gym and was widely attended by the BCS and greater Bellevue community each year. During the 1980's – 1990's, the Family Night Auction was also held in the gym.

Joe Greene Tarping the Gym...

Because the gym was used for events other than sports and physical education, Joe Greene found and had the school purchase surplus US Army tarps which were, and continue to be, used to cover the gym floor during Carnival and other events. Many will recall with great fondness, Joe painstakingly "sewing" these tarps together prior to non-athletic events.

Community Concerts...

Many will remember the Edwards gym was also the venue for musicians and speakers such as Jester Hairston, Ken Medema and the late Andrae Crouch.

And...Athletics...

Of course the main use of the Edwards Gymnasium was, and is, for physical education classes and athletics. Pep-rallies, basketball & volleyball games, early wrestling competitions with other schools were, and continue to be, an important part of the BCS student experience. Classmates cheer on and encourage their peers to excel and honor the Lord as they play for one another and Him. While the banners on gym walls highlight the external successes of the teams over the last 60 years, they cannot convey the faith instruction and soul transformation which has occurred in students and coaches. Many alumni continue to point to their relationships with coaches and teammates as some of the most influential of their BCS experience.

The above story of the Edwards Gym was summarized from the book, "Bellevue Christian School: The First Fifty Years" and from conversations with Charlie Brown and Judi Fowler.