

Presley Twins Bright Examples of Value of Bonny Oaks

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—Times Staff Photos by Jim Cameron.

Justifiable pride enters into Bonny Oaks Supt. Malcolm Adamson's congratulations to award-winner Jesse Presley. Presley, a senior this fall at UC, has won the newly established Creed Bates scholarship, made available by Civitan Club. Presley is a former resident of Bonny Oaks.

By MARION PECK

Bonny Oaks acorns can turn into some mighty fine timber.

Jesse Presley, 23, was transplanted to Bonny Oaks School as a dependent and neglected stripling of 12. In the years since, the list of his achievements has grown with his physical stature.

The latest evidence of his long-ago determination to be somebody in spite of a rough beginning is his winning of the downtown Civitan Club's new Creed F. Bates Scholarship to the University of Chattanooga.

With the continued help of "the best wife on earth," a relatively new job as activities director at his old alma mater, Bonny Oaks, and the scholarship, Presley expects to finish his senior year at UC this coming year.

Presley and his twin brother, Jerry, were placed at Bonny Oaks by the juvenile court after the Humane Society found them abandoned when they were 12.

In Presley's view, "it was by far the best thing that could have happened to us."

They went through the sixth, seventh and eighth grades at Bonny Oaks and the ninth and 10th at Tyner High.

While they were going to Tyner, they entered the Chattanooga Golden Gloves tournaments in 1957.

"We didn't do too well," Presley said, "but later while

we were at Berry Academy in 1960, we entered the Georgia Golden Gloves and I won the high school novice featherweight and Jerry was runner-up in the high school novice lightweight championship."

Twins Win Again

In 1962—still at Berry School—the twins entered the Georgia Golden Gloves tournaments again and Jesse won the lightweight championship and Jerry won the novice welterweight championship.

The trophy case in the Bonny Oaks library is filled with evidence of superior athletic performance by the Presley twins. In addition to the Golden Gloves "singles," there are a number of team effort trophies in softball. From 1956 till 1958, there were five trophies racked up in the Church League and the Bonny Oaks team was champ for three straight years.

In baseball, Jesse was co-captain and Jerry leading hitter, Jesse won a scholarship award in athletics and the team won the district championship.

While they were swinging gloves and bats, the Presleys also were working their way through school and proving their brains were as good as their muscles.

They received "workships" at Berry Academy for their 11th and 12th grades and were graduated in 1960, Jesse an

honor graduate, fourth in his class. Both entered Berry College and completed their freshman year.

Love struck them both at about the same time. Jerry married Miss Madge Lovell, a Berry student, and went to work for Farmers' Chemical Association. They live in Tyner near Jerry's work and are the parents of 1-year-old Janice.

Jesse married Miss Pauline Merritt, who lived at the Baptist Children's Home on Lee Highway, and whom he met while he was at home at Bonny Oaks during a summer vacation from Berry.

When he married Miss Merritt Nov. 26, 1962, Jesse left Berry College but he didn't abandon his education.

He got a part-time job at Loveman's and his wife went to work in the nursery at Erlanger Hospital as a nurse's aid.

Employer Cooperated

"With the cooperation of my employers at Loveman's, I was able to work daytimes and go to UC Evening College and then in 1962 was able to enter day classes. "I'd go to school mornings and work evenings at Loveman's," Jesse said.

"With the help of tuition funds from the National Student Defense Program and my part-time work and the help of the best wife on earth who has worked with one objective in mind—to help me get through

school—we managed to keep alive," he said.

Jesse also managed to make all As and Bs at UC, too.

In March 1963, an opening as activities director at Bonny Oaks occurred and Supt. Malcolm Adamson offered Jesse the job. Since then, incidentally, the Bonny Oaks team in the Frye Junior Golden Gloves won the team championship, losing only one out of nine matches.

Going back to Bonny Oaks as recreation director and coach was like going home to coach his own little brothers.

And about four months ago, Jesse's real little brother, Joe, 11, went to live at Bonny Oaks.

"I believe I can help Joe and all the others," Jesse said. "I've been there. I can understand their special problems."

Jesse expects to get his BS degree in business administration with a major in accounting. After he completes the courses he is taking this summer, he'll just need three more hours on his major.

He is a handsome, warm, out-going young man who apparently has never forgotten a kindness.

"Mr. Adamson has been like a father to us," he said. "There has been no limit to his help. My own father was good to us, too, when we were at Berry School. He worked at

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