



Charles Bidwell
Class of 2020

Charles Bidwell graduated from Oroville High School (OHS) in 1938 and played football all four years. In those times, senior students left wills to a junior student of their choice and Charles left the following, *"I leave my capacity as a bench warmer during football season to Jack Jones. The view of the game is nice from down there, Jack."* On another page on the 1938 yearbook entitled Senior Special Page, was printed, Charles Bidwell, Chuck, "fancy steppin", gay. (please note that gay in those days meant jolly).

Following graduation, Charles served in the United States Army Air Corps during World War II and was honorably discharged in 1945 as a Sergeant. He attended Signal Corps Radio School and served as a radio operator in the Philippines. He also served in the Pacific Area Installation doing operation and maintenance on AM/FM Radio Equipment and Diesel Electric Plants.

Upon returning to Oroville after WWII, Charles went to work for Western Pacific Railroad for 20 years where he was a trouble shooter, inspecting and maintaining diesel-electric locomotives and other railroad equipment. He then worked for Oro-Dam Constructors on the construction of the Oroville Dam, operating, servicing and supervising the maintenance of diesel locomotives and railroad equipment used in the building of the dam. He then spent a year employed by Williams & Lane Detroit Diesel Company in Berkeley, CA where he serviced, maintained and rebuilt diesel-electric power plants.

In 1967, Charles availed himself of an opportunity to work on the largest hydro-electric power station in Lake Manapouri, Southland, New Zealand, where he was employed by Fluor as an assistant mechanic. He then served two years as General Superintendent for Morrison-Knudsen in Boise, Idaho, supervising 250 men. Later he returned to Fluor Company in Cujajone, Peru, serving as master mechanic in their Railroad Shop and supervising 450 men. His work career ended in 1982 when he retired from Pacific Coast Producers in Oroville.

Charles had an extensive record of public service in his beloved Palermo. He was chairman of the Palermo Community Swimming Pool Fund Raising and Building Committee that helped design and build the Palermo swimming pool in two years' time. He was a member of the Palermo Improvement Club and a Boy Scout leader for five years, even though he fathered four daughters and no sons.

He also served Palermo as a trustee of the Palermo School District for 15 years, three of those as president and was a founding member of the Palermo Volunteer Fire Department that was chartered in 1960. As a member of the Palermo Improvement Club, he spent countless numbers of hours working on community dinners, dances, Easter egg hunts, and building shower and locker rooms and bathrooms at the new swimming pool.

Organizations to which Charles served as a member included The Masonic Order in the United States and New Zealand, Knights Templar, Royal and Select and Shriner – Ben Ali Temple. He also maintained membership in the Cannery Workers Local 849 and was a lifetime member of the Bidwell Family Association. In 1965, he was recognized by the California Congress of Parents and Teachers with an Honorary Lifetime Membership in the PTA.

Having been born in 1920, and passing away in 1989, Charles never really saw the legacy he left to his daughters and his grandchildren. Grandson Jeremy, son of Nonie Buis, writes in his letter of support, *"It's because of my grandfather's dedication to his community and to the youth of the community that my brothers and I do the same. We volunteered with the local youth soccer league, joined Oroville Sports Initiative Supporters (OASIS), to help get Harrison fixed up, volunteering our time to help with the high school sports at Harrison (running the monitor during football games, the scoreboard and*

monitor during soccer). I, for the past eight years, have run the automatic timing for both the track teams as well as the cross-country teams.”

Charles Bidwell passed away in 1989 at age 69. He is survived by daughter Nonie, also a 2020 OUHSD Hall of Fame inductee, ten grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren.