

## Tower of power

### Campus oil derrick project involves 45,000 California school children

By ASHLEY DALEY

*Class of '99*

A 165-foot tower that looms over Beverly's track and is visible from many parts of the campus is about to get a complete make-over.

Artist Ed Massey was a student at Beverly in the late '70s when the oil derrick was erected and now 20 years later he and his brother, Bernie, are in the process of transforming the graying and decaying tower into a work of art that upon completion will have involved nearly 45,000 California children.

The derrick's panels will be painted in a floral motif of the four seasons, with one season represented on each of the tower's four sides, by hospitalized children through a process called creative art therapy.

"It is a heart-warming experience when children in less favorable conditions than anyone would want to be in create something of this magnitude," Ed Massey (Class of '81) said. "They are suffering from life threatening diseases and are giving life back by participating in the project."

The derrick's 100 polyvinyl panels have been taken into 200 schools across the state for students to paint a total of 60,000 square feet of base coats on them. Each panel is painted with three base coats, Bernie Massey (Class of '77) said.

"The paints used in hospitals are very fine and they don't adhere well to the panels," Bernie Massey said. "The base coat paints adhere well to the panels and the paints children in hospitals use adhere well to those paints. [The project] is a partnership between students and hospitalized children."

Beverly students had the opportunity to paint base coats on two of the largest panels of the spring season section which will face Olympic Boulevard on March 30 during lunch and after school for community service credit.

Base coats have been painted on the panels by children at the district's elementary schools and have even been taken to universities such as UCLA and Stanford.

The panels are then taken to the project's headquarters at the Westside Pavilion where black flowers are outlined on the derrick.

Paints painted with base coats in California will likely go to hospitals and illness camps in Northern California and vice versa, Ed Massey said.

The high quality paints and sealants being used on the panels with hopefully allow the panels to last for at least as long as they have up to this point. After they are painted they are sewn in with four inches of fiberglass.

"We take the panels to hospital playrooms and also make bedside visits for children in intensive care or undergoing dialysis," Ed Massey said. "We bring small sections called connectors which are 15-inch pieces that join each leaf and

*'It is a heart-warming experience when children in less favorable conditions than anyone would want to be in create something of this magnitude. They are suffering from life threatening diseases and are giving life back by participating in the project.'*

Ed Massey

flower to children who can't leave their rooms."

For children who can leave their rooms, the panel painting is "a big party," according to social studies teacher Leonard Stern who has been involved with the project for two years and has visited hospitals with the Masseys.

"We go in with art, music and balloons," Stern said. "The children have so much fun they almost don't want to go back to their rooms. The project is really inspiring and we hope helps children get well."

Tape is placed around the outline of the black flowers so that children can paint without feeling obstructed by the lines. Children who are unable to move their lower extremities or are in wheelchairs often use a telescope paint brush which allows them to paint the panels from a distance, Ed Massey said.

Ed Massey even developed a shoebrush so that children who have an IV in their painting hand, a cast on their arm or missing fingers can participate equally in the project. The painting surface is attached using either Velcro or straps to a top of the line shoe donated by Nike.

Ed Massey obtained a patent for the shoe brush a year and a half ago.

"Every child who participates in the project gets a model tower to keep and a set of paints and brushes which have been donated to the project," Ed Massey said. "They also get a hat, certificate of participation and a poster so they feel part of the project."

Every child also gets 10 get well cards that are colored by the school children who painted the base coats, Bernie Massey said. The cards are imprinted with a black outline of the flower that will be seen on the panels.

The Massey brothers will visit any hospital even if there is only one child who wants to paint there.

Ed Massey came up with the idea to turn the

derrick into an art monument four years ago.

"I had seen the tower go up and seen it fall a part of course," Ed Massey said. "Shortly after is maybe when the golden opportunity came. I saw panels of the tower being painted on the ground. I thought that energetic children in hospitals painting the panels would allow for the marriage of the children with the tower."

Ed Massey, who is also a children's book author, had seen the benefits of creative art therapy which is the use of art to get children's minds of their illnesses and enhance day to day activities.

Bernie Massey, the executive director of the Center for American Studies and Culture, an organization that uses art to educate the public about social issues and is working in association with Ed Massey on the project, said the project required many types of approval.

The brothers spent two years getting hospitals involved with the project by making presentations on the benefits of creative art therapy. They had to obtain approval from the Beverly Hills Unified School District as it owns the land on which the derrick was built, according to Bernie Massey.

"We got a unanimous vote of approval from the Board of Education and then we notified the City of Beverly Hills," Bernie Massey said. "The Beverly Hills City Council unanimously approved the project after a formal presentation."

The Masseys also had to get approval from Veneco, the Santa Barbara company that owns the tower.

The project is being supported by donations from individuals, foundations, businesses and corporations. Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein are the honorary co-chairs of the project. Bernie Massey said more politicians are supporting the project as it has expanded to include more regions of California.

Project volunteers include Beverly alumni from many years and Beverly Hills teachers.

"We're about halfway done with the painting process right now," Bernie Massey said. "We are either in a hospital or school or with a youth group every day. We expect that the installation will take place before the end of the year."

The 100 old panels will be taken down at the same time the 100 new panels are put up. One hundred and twenty ton cranes will be used to exchange the panels, Ed Massey said. Dinwiddie Construction, the builders of the Getty Museum, have donated funds to install the panels.

The Masseys are currently looking into taking up similar projects in other states as well as countries in Africa and Asia. Ed Massey is hoping the oil derrick project will generate interest that could allow for other such projects.

"I have good memories of Beverly and en-

See TOWER/ Page 17

## Brothers share passion for making a contribution

TOWER / From page 10

joyed my high school years," Bernie Massey said. "Some of the brightest people I have ever dealt with were [those] at Beverly and I grew to appreciate this more after I had graduated."

Bernie Massey studied economics and sociology at UC Santa Barbara and then became the associate director of the Anti-Defamation League before taking on his current position.

Through the Center for American Studies and Culture he is involved with "Portraits of Hope," a group of projects of which the oil derrick painting is the biggest. The center's "You Think" project uses social commentary art to teach chil-

dren. A project on the ramifications of the Holocaust is currently in development.

Ed Massey, who played four years of volleyball at Beverly and was inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame in 1981, went on to study sociology and Spanish at UCLA and did graduate work at Columbia University.

"The art classes I took at Beverly were very influential in my early years," Ed Massey said. "Beverly offered tremendous opportunities in ceramics and introduced me to sculpture."

Ed Massey has been involved with large scale public art projects for 10 years. He recently made his wife Dawn's wedding dress which was written about in People. The 200-pound dress

has a welded steel frame and is covered with 1,060 molded roses. He was first introduced to welding in a Beverly class.

The Masseys moved to Beverly Hills from the Palisades with their Mexican mother, French father and sister Lily (Class of '73) when they were young. They both attended Beverly Vista before Beverly.

"The beauty of what Ed and I do is that we share a passion for making a contribution to the world," Bernie Massey said. "My social conscience has created the desire [in me] to leave a long lasting effect and it is great to be giving back to my alma mater as Beverly will be the recipient of this incredible monument."