Bryant To Speak At Tech Banquet

Paul (Bear) Bryant, a living legend in college football, will be guest speaker for Virginia Tech’s revitalized football banquet, May 22, at the Roanoke Civic Center.

The banquet will be open to the public ($8.50 a ticket). Reservations may be made through three outlets in Salem (Tarpyle’s, Security National Bank and Billy’s Barn) and several in Roanoke, including Holiday Inn Airport, and a number of banks or through members of the Tech Student Aid Board of Directors.

The buffet style meal will be served at 7 p.m. The program will include Bryant’s talk plus introduction of Tech’s football squad.

Bryant, subject and co-author of a current best-seller book, “Bear,” has had many close ties with Tech during his career, first of which was his first loss as a head coach to the Gobblers here in old Miles Stadium.

His most recent association with Hokie-land of course is that Tech head coach Jimmy Sharpe played and coached under Bryant before coming here in 1974.

“In the future we intend to have our annual banquet shortly after the end of the football season,” Sharpe said, “but for this particular time I can’t think of a more appropriate way to reward our football team, honor our 1974 seniors and to show appreciation for what has been accomplished in the off-season and what we feel certain will be achieved in Spring practice.

“Coach Bryant is not only a man with a message for all of college football, but he is also a philosophical motivator for life. He’s the greatest . . . of the most moving people I’ve ever been around.”

Bryant, whose phenomenal coaching record is well known, has made several visits to the Tech campus, but this will be his first appearance before an official Tech function.

Tech’s football banquet was held for several years in Roanoke, became limited to Blacksburg and finally was curtailed completely in 1970 when funds for that purpose were diverted to a contribution to a special fund at Marshall University after a tragic plane crash involving that school’s football team and coaching staff. (Rick Tolley, head coach, and one of his assistants, Frank Loria, were former Tech players who were killed in that tragedy).

The banquet is being resurrected by Roanoke Valley members of the Tech Student Aid Association.

“We’re very pleased that Roanoke Valley supporters wanted to do this as a way to be involved with and to recognize Virginia Tech’s football . . . and that they want to put in back on an annual basis,” Sharpe said.

“It will help maintain enthusiasm which has been building here, and it will be a big boost in setting the tone for next Fall.”