

Bennett turned hobby 'for fun' into U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame career

1st photographer to be inducted will enter with Class of 2025



© Bruce Bennett

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The 2025 U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame induction is Dec. 10. This year's class includes Joe Pavelski, Zach Parise, Scott Gomez, Tara Mounsey and Bruce Bennett. Here, NHL.com senior writer Dan Rosen profiles Bennett.

NEW YORK -- Bruce Bennett was 18 years old when he sat up in the old blue seats at Madison Square Garden and started taking pictures during the 1973-74 season.

Bennett's photography hobby also brought him to Nassau Coliseum, where he summoned the courage to sneak into the photo booth at ice level to take pictures of warmups before a game between the New York Islanders and Pittsburgh Penguins.

"I put all those photos together, and they were horrendous, and sent them to Ken McKenzie, who was the publisher of The Hockey News up in Montreal at that time," Bennett told NHL.com before a recent New York Rangers game at Madison Square Garden. "He offered me a few bucks a photo. There was no email, so we were just going by letters. The classic letter he wrote back was him telling me they'll give me three bucks a photo and can you get into games on your own or do you need a photo pass?"

"I said, 'I'll opt for the photo pass.' Then I just waited for that return letter to come to say we've arranged it, this is who you call at the Rangers, this is who you call at the Islanders. In 1974-75, I started shooting in both buildings."

More than 50 years later, Bennett is still doing it in a career that is now taking him into the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame. He'll become the first photographer inducted when he is enshrined with the Class of 2025 that also includes [Scott Gomez](#), [Zach Parise](#), [Joe Pavelski](#) and Tara Mounsey.

The induction ceremony will take place in St. Paul, Minnesota, on Dec. 10.

"Shocked," Bennett said of how he feels about the honor. "I mean, really, I'm at a loss for words. When you think about it, no other photographer is in the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame or the Hockey Hall of Fame. I'd like to think it's the first of many. There are a lot of great photographers out there who haven't been recognized for their work except for that six-point photo credit on the side of their images. But, yeah, I think back to when I started, I was just doing it for fun and somehow turned it into a career. Fifty years later I blinked and I'm still doing it."



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Bennett has been doing it for Getty Images for nearly 22 years after operating his own business, BBS (Bruce Bennett Studios), for 30 years. Getty bought Bennett's entire archive of photos and hired him to run their hockey department in 2004.

He estimates that he has covered 6,350 hockey games, including 5,300 NHL games. He will cover his seventh Olympics in February, when he leads Getty's hockey team at the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.

Bennett has covered games in 58 NHL venues and shot 45 Stanley Cup deciding games.

"Bruce is an absolute marvel," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said. "They say a picture is worth a thousand words. His pictures are worth many thousands of words. He knows exactly where to be and when to capture the exact moment that's the most significant and most important. And whenever I'm at an event or a game he's always there. I see him everywhere. It's like he always knows where to be. I think Bruce will always have a legacy that is extraordinary because as people trace the history of our game and they look at his photographs tracing that history there's probably nobody who has been able to document our game over the decades the way that Bruce has."

Bennett calls photography for him "a hobby that turned into a profession." He has a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from C.W. Post, which is now part of Long Island University.

"What I was looking forward to was graduating and making \$20,000 a year as an accountant," Bennett said. "That was the goal."

But he started shooting hockey games while in college and doing some photography work for the school's public relations department. Three years into his schooling, he told his father his plan was to become a photographer.

"He was spending like \$1,000 a semester for me to go there, actually it was \$1,024 I believe," Bennett said. "See, the accounting is kicking in. So, I got the finger in the face from him, and he basically said, 'Oh, you will graduate with your degree. Then if you want to try something for a while go ahead and try it, but you're not walking away from the accounting degree.'"

He got his degree.

"Now I need it for how many games I've shot," Bennett joked.

Bennett's career path carried him through [Wayne Gretzky](#)'s career from the World Hockey Association to the NHL. He developed a lasting relationship with Gretzky but said he was not even close to his favorite subject to shoot.



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"In 2004, when I sold my company to Getty Images, I had 7,800 pictures of Gretzky in the archive they took over, but he wasn't so much fun to shoot," Bennett said. "Look, the guy was great, and I love the guy, but the setting up behind the net wasn't a great photo unless he spun in front and tried to pop it in. The fluid skaters are who I enjoy shooting."

[Mario Lemieux](#) was a favorite, and [Connor McDavid](#) is now.

"He's a highlight reel and the challenge of trying to keep him in the frame pretty much wakes you up every game," Bennett said.

One of his all-time favorite images is [Bobby Nystrom](#)'s celebration after scoring the Stanley Cup winning goal for the Islanders in 1980.

"I often tell people my top 10 changes every day, every year, but that's consistently in the top 10 not only because it was tack sharp in the day of manual focus, the turning toward me, the symmetry in the frame, but also deep inside me I'm a Long Islander," Bennett said. "I love the region. I love the area. I love the people there. When I lecture to college kids I tell them you have to get your emotion out of the equation, and I think in that image I was able to separate the two, so that I think was also a watershed moment for that career, understanding what it takes to be a professional and not be taking sides when you're shooting a game."

Bennett said his last 22 years at Getty has given him a second wind in the business. The buzz he still gets from every game he attends and the team he gets to work with are the reasons why he keeps going.

"He's obviously a heck of a photographer who has made so many iconic photos, but to me what really is the best at is his relationships, the relationships he's built in hockey," said

Maxx Wolfson, director of sports partnerships, sports content and business development at Getty Images.

Wolfson was Bennett's boss for seven years. Before that, Bennett was one of his mentors, showing him the ropes in the hockey photography world but also teaching him how to run a team.

"There's nobody like him at Getty," Wolfson said. "Nobody handles a sport like he does from the top down. Bruce is able to handle so much of it himself. He knows every single person in hockey. We would go to an All-Star Game or a Stanley Cup Final, and he would send us in the mail a three-ring binder of everything we would need from hotel recommendations, where the best place is to get food, arena maps, key contacts, where to set up remotes. He just made everything so easy for us, and I learned so much from him.

"We're so proud of the person Bruce is and the way he's represented us for 20 years. It's incredible to have someone like him."