

In 1953 the Dads' Club and the Mothers' Guild got together and produced what became an annual event, THE GOLDEN BELL DINNER AND DANCE, to benefit Bellarmine.

The leaders of this event, along with their spouses were: Dr. Sal Campisi (current BDC President), Mr. Sal Sanfillipo (future BDC President), Mr. Sam Liccardo (former BDC President and whose feats of volunteerism we spoke of last month) and Mr. Bill Weston (future BDC President and who was also a teacher here at Bellarmine).

The Golden Bell Dinner and Dance continued until 1975. The mom's and dads used world destinations and exotic places as the theme for each event Italy, Spain, China, France, England, etc. The first ticket price to attend was \$50 per person, an unheard of price in those days for a charity event. Because of this "steep" price, the event quickly became a celebrity and society event for all of the Santa Clara Valley.

The Golden Bell Dinner and Dance was held in the "old gymnasium" which was located almost exactly where the present-day Wayne Valley Gymnasium stands. The "old Gym" was one of the original buildings that came with the purchase of the 17 ½ acre campus purchased from the University of Pacific that moved to Stockton in 1925. The Samuel A. Liccardo Center was built and dedicated in 1965 and the Center became the new venue for the Golden Bell Dinner and Dance. The Dads' Club would set up a tent outside the old gym and prepared the meal, for which the entree' was always barbequed steak.

Jesuit priests, scholastics and parents were the waiters and bartenders. But, everyone understood the need for the event. Some of the event profits were used just to keep the operation of the school going and some of it was used to provide tuition/scholarship aid for needy students.

While we do not have records of how much the event raised each year, we do know that the last year it was held, 1975, it netted about \$6000. Fr. Bob Mathewson, S.J., who had been principal for the previous 9 years, had just then been promoted to be president of the school. With some encouragement by the parents who wanted to find other ways to help the school raise desperately needed revenue, the Golden Bell Dinner Dance was replaced in 1976 by a Casino Night, chaired by parents of 4 Bellarmine graduates, Mel Micheletti '49 (BDC President) and his wife Lorna (MG President). The event raised some \$15,000-\$20,000, a significant improvement over the later years' net income from the Dinner and Dance.

During these changing times, Fr. Bob Mathewson, S.J. was being strongly urged by Fr. Pat Cahalan, S.J., a graduate of Bellarmine, Class of 1952 and president of Loyola High school in Los Angeles, to initiate an auction which had proven itself to be a more successful fundraising and friend-raising event. Loyola High School in Los Angeles was then into it's third year of doing one, an event that had been created and established by another Jesuit High School several years earlier, Loyola Academy at Wilmette, a suburb of Chicago. So, the Casino Night was replaced the next year, 1977, with the auction which continues today in almost the identical format as when it was started.

Wanting to sooth the feelings of those parents and parents of alumni who had for so many years been an integral part of the establishment and successes of the almost 25 year run of the Golden Bell Dinner and Dance format, it was decided to call the new auction event, The LE GRAND GOLDEN BELL DINNER AND AUCTION in order to "transition" the past with the future! The first Golden Bell Dinner and Auction netted \$76,000!

Le Grand Golden Bell Dinner and Auction last year netted \$1.2 million dollars for financial aid and campus improvements!

Written and recalled per his memory, by Ron Pine with review by Fr. Bob Mathewson, S.J. 10/21/07