

The History of ...

## **THE SAN CARLOS CHICKENS' BALL**

The following is quoted from a letter to Miss Wilma Rockman, Chairman of a Chickens' Ball research Committee (and a Principal in the School District) dated January 18, 1957, from Mr. Howard J. Demeke, Originator of the Chickens' Ball.

(1) "The original Chickens' ball is generally understood to have been an annual celebration held in one of the more prominent establishments on the old Barbary Coast. On this night-of-nights, all other such establishments were closed to permit the owners, management, and their guests to gather for the occasion. Each owner contributed to the program his best act and/or performance to represent his establishment in hopes of winning the coveted gold cup – which was emblematic of leadership in a rather highly specialized field which included a very wide assortment of entertainment (to say the least). Each competitive establishment was also required to contribute what might be called an "entry fee." This was done in the form of gold coins and varied in amounts depending on the relative size and prosperity of the competing establishments.

The ultimate winner of the contest was determined by applause of the hilarious group assembled. The owner-sponsor of the winning act was, then and there, publicly presented with the gold cup in recognition of victory. The cup contained all the gold coin collected through entry fees and donations. The proud recipient traditionally, then and there, named his favorite charity to be the recipient of this considerable sum. This action, mostly because of the large sum of money involved and the deserving charity named, brought a considerable amount of fame, even a bit of respectability, to the erstwhile sordid Barbary Coast fraternity. The gold cup, of course, was placed in a prominent position in the winning establishment for all to see during the coming year."

(2) "The thought of recreating a modern version of the Chickens' Ball occurred to me during the years of 1938-1939. At that time, San Carlos was a fast-growing community, containing a large percentage of commuters. Because San Carlos had existed as a small community for a lengthy period of time, it contained a number of older community organizations together with an increasing number of newer ones, which reflected the interests of the newcomers in the growing community. To me, it was quite evident that there was a need to do something to permit people to get to know one another and to understand what was happening in the community as it grew. Since this was largely the work of the various clubs and organizations, it seemed reasonable to me that any opportunity to permit the membership of such organizations to get together in a common enterprise would be a step in the right direction. In other words, if San Carlosians, either individually or through their various organizations, were called upon to share in a common enterprise regularly, there would be a fabric of communication and fellowship woven into the community which would perhaps prevent somewhat, the breaking up into isolated patterns of living which appear so frequently today in our complex modern American communities."

It also goes without saying that the money-raising potential, which I believed to be inherent in the Chickens' Ball idea, presented a fine opportunity to aid a most deserving community team - the San Carlos schools. The fact that I was, at that time, a teacher in search of additional educational supplies and equipment, may have, I admit, somewhat influenced my point of view.

I would, therefore, conclude by respectfully requesting you and the members of your committees to let the following guide your thinking as you endeavor to coordinate and clarify the future of the Chickens' Ball: Let each potential decision you reach be weighed carefully to determine:

"will this action, if taken, serve to bring the individual citizens and the community groups in San Carlos closer together to produce more widespread understanding, cooperation, and fellowship?"