

Every once in a while we stumble upon something that truly surprises and pleases us. I recently received a newsletter from my old high school which has been closed for over 35 years. As I read it, I couldn't help smiling in amazement. The pride and devotion of so many of the alumni of Bishop Fallon High School and its predecessor, Holy Angels Collegiate Institute, continue to astound me. In its entire history, the school produced fewer than 3000 graduates; never more than 140 in a year. Holy Angels averaged 200 students enrolled at any one time and Bishop Fallon approximately 400 at its apex, yet they produced disproportionate numbers of judges, lawyers, doctors, teachers, priests, bankers, businessmen and, most importantly, good Christian family men. Most were first or second generation Americans of Italian or Sicilian descent who grew up on Buffalo's West Side. Their successes were always as important to their families as to these young men themselves. It usually meant financial sacrifices for their parents to pay even their modest tuition, but they did so, happily.

Fr. Daniel O'Leary, OMI, is probably the most remarkable and unique individual among this group. He came to Holy Angels Collegiate from Massachusetts as a young seminarian in 1939. He was a student, then a teacher, and finally he was Bishop Fallon's last Oblate principal until it closed.

The spirit of this little school, which produced its last graduates in 1976, somehow endures and thrives. So many remember it fondly. Its alumni conduct

four different events annually; most notable of which is the Michael P. Kirwan Golf Tournament. Over the last few years it has raised almost \$45,000 to support Catholic education and tuition assistance for deserving but financially needy young students.

There is also an annual "all class reunion," which is attended by approximately 100 people each year, many from far away places, who come occasionally to reconnect with their roots. Many graduates also meet with classmates on a regular basis. One class, the "Fighting 58ers," meets monthly for breakfast. The turnout is usually 10-15 most of whom are retirees. When one considers the class was only 100 strong at graduation in 1958 (and accounts for deaths and out-of-towners) that is amazing. They also have an annual class barbeque that brings 25 to 30 together; some from far away California and Florida.

The alumni maintain an active website and mail a newsletter. They also sponsor a dinner for Hall of fame inductees that is attended by hundreds. They sponsor a mass and a breakfast at the old Oblate Parish, Holy Angels. All this with an ever shrinking base. And it's more remarkable when one remembers that Holy Angels Col-

legiate only existed from 1939 until 1953, and Bishop Fallon from 1954 until 1976: a grand total of 37 years.

You might ask, "Are the alumni running out of candidates for their Hall of Fame?" No! Recently, Michael Andriaccio, one of the world's great classical guitarists was inducted. The alumni haven't yet

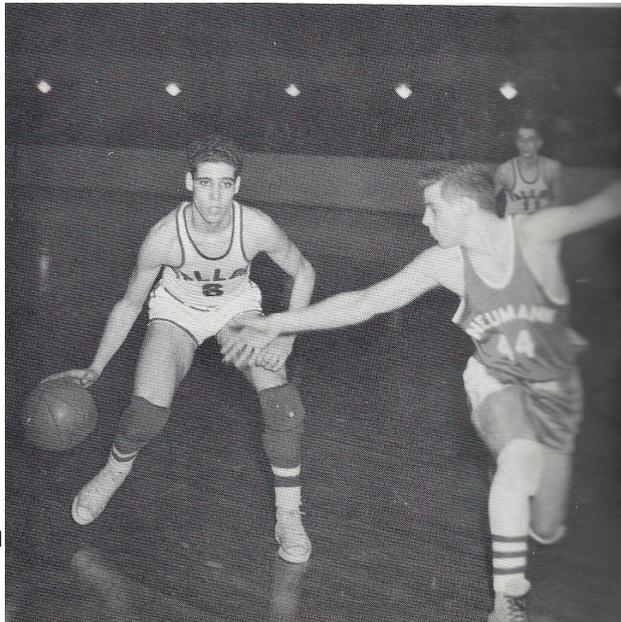


Frank Longo references recent Hall of Fame inductees to Rev. James Fee.

reached a man who quite literally saved a small Catholic college from closing. And there was a businessman who died unexpectedly and left hundreds of thousands of dollars to be invested in Catholic education.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate came to Buffalo in July, 1852 when they purchased land in what was then a "suburban area" known as Prospect Hill. There, they opened Holy Angels Parish. Their educational ministry in Western New York began in 1891 when Holy Angels Collegiate Institute was first opened. Low enrollment and financial realities led to its closing in 1910, except for seminarians, who actually took classes at Canisius High School and Canisius College. Holy Angels Collegiate Institute reopened in 1932 but only for seminarians until 1939. By 1950, the little school on Porter and West had outgrown its facility and happily accepted Bishop Burke's offer to move into the Main Street site that had recently been vacated by St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute upon its move to Kenmore. The school was renamed Bishop Fallon High School for a former pastor of Holy Angels, who later became the Bishop for London, Ontario.

The school and its alumni owe a special debt of gratitude to Peter Durham, Russell Valvo, and Russell Digati, who worked tirelessly to get the alumni effort started in its early days. The late Fr. Jim Higgins, S.J., who was then running Canisius High School, offered to hold all of Fallon's events at Canisius High School. He commented that the Oblates of Mary Immaculate had done something very special for education in Western New York and he desired to capture some of that magic. He often said that the Fallon graduates were



Charlie Tedesco looks for opening in play-off game.

his adopted alumni and he looked forward to the Jesuits having an opportunity to educate their sons, just as they had done from 1910 to 1932.

The soul of Holy Angels Collegiate Institute and Fallon High School lives on because of the seeds planted by the Oblates. As long as there are alumni who celebrate and reflect upon what the experience meant to them, the little school will not die.

Long live Bishop Fallon High School/Holy Angels Collegiate Institute. Go Flyers, go!



Alumnus Peter Durham, a strong alumni supporter, amid mementos of the former Bishop Fallon H.S. - Holy Angels Collegiate Institute.