

C*Sac Bee**Wed Aug 2, 1995***R.E. GRASWICH**

Fund-raising goes back to its roots

There is never enough money, not even when the school dates back to the last century and some alumni members are millionaires and the cause is good and the appeal is honest.

So Don Gillott is starting from the beginning. He is digging into the archives at Christian Brothers High School and learning how they raised money for sports six decades ago. He is updating the pitch for a contemporary market. And he is finding — lo and behold — that the old ways still work.

Gillott, president of Christian Brothers, is reviving something called the La Salle Club, an association of alumni and parents and friends that began in 1939 to buy football equipment.

Back then, athletes from Christian Brothers were required to use second-hand sporting gear — stuff inferior even to the meager pads and shoes and jerseys found on the feet and shoulders of athletes from public schools.

Alarmed by their inability to compete with the likes of Sacramento High School those dark and economically depressed days, several Christian Brothers boosters passed the hat and collected \$20.25. In 1939, \$20.25 would buy a week's lodgings.

Now the figure serves as a symbolic reminder of chores unfinished. The reborn La Salle Club, which had its first meeting this week, set \$20.25 as the minimum dues.

"You should have seen the \$20 bills and quarters flying," Gillott said. "I think we've really tapped into something."

People still want to give money. Gillott knows it. The trick is finding the gateway to their generosity — the words and purpose that will make them open their checkbooks and deliver their donations to the cause

They all could use more cash for football uniforms and baseball pitching machines and musical instruments for the marching band.

What Gillott has in his favor is a school rich in accomplishment and history, a school whose roots reach down as deep as any in Sacramento. He also has a tenacious attitude and a sense of political fearlessness owed to his status as a temporary president working for part-time wages.

Gillott, 64, a respected university administrator who retired after 17 years as dean of the engineering school at Sacramento State, agreed to become Christian Brothers' president on the condition that the prep school not complain if a golf date required him to leave his desk early.

"I took the job for just one year," Gillott said. "Now I'm starting my third year. I didn't know anything about secondary education when I got here, but I'm finding it's all the same from an administrative standpoint. We've got to find ways to raise money and keep the debate open among people with different ideas, whether we're talking about sports or a new campus."

For a part-time employee, Gillott is establishing impressive credentials. In January, he offered a simple compromise to the controversial plan to close the school's ancient Oak Park campus and move to North Natomas.

"It was tearing us apart," Gillott said. "I finally said, 'We can't afford to have factions. Let's build the North Natomas campus and upgrade our facilities in Oak Park.' It passed unanimously. Now all we have to do is raise \$15 million."

Gillott envisions varsity sports facilities — a stadium and big gymnasium — at the new North Natomas campus. Instructional and junior varsity programs will remain in Oak Park. Performing arts programs will be established in reverse, with Oak Park playing host to the varsity.

Traditions won't be forgotten. Not long after Gillott announced the rebirth of the La Salle Club, he was presented with a check for \$5,000 from Nob Keiunji and Bert Bonomi. The money represented 10 years of hat-passing for a Christian Brothers baseball stadium named in memory of Joe Marty, a Brothers alum who made it to the majors.

"You've got to take care of people like that," Gillott said. "They want nice dug-outs and a nice big sign with Joe's name, and they'll get it. That's my commitment."

And that's the essence of fund-raising.

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