THE BIG BANG THEORY: 
The Reasons for the Success of the Ready Classes of ’68 and ’69 Reunion

And her name is G. (G) L. (L) O. (O) R. (R) I. (I). yi-yi-yi-yi
G.L.O.R.I.A. (Gloria)
G.L.O.R.I.A. (Gloria)
I’m wanna shout it ev’ry night (Gloria)
I’m wanna shout it ev’ry day (Gloria)
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, all right

Lyrics from the song GLORIA, Written by Van Morrison

By Patti Wynn Brown ‘69

Our Ready Classes of ’68 and ’69 understand, fully, the “beacon guiding us” line of the Ready Alma Mater. Saturday September 20 that beacon guided us to Milestone 229 for the mother of all reunions.

Our theme was: “A Night at the Gloria” because we spent a lot of time, energy, and shoe leather there at the Riverside Drive and Trabue teen club, dancing to songs like “Gloria,” and “Midnight Hour,” “When A Man Loves a Woman,” “Under My Thumb,” and so many more.

Our generous host for our reunion evening was Bill Lager, ’68, and his decision to sponsor our Gloria Night certainly was the topper on the list of ingredients in our success formula. Carolyn McGrail Warner ’69 said, “I can only hope Bill knows what he did for all of us. I love these friends- our fellow Readyites. I have never felt so much warmth and love in one place as I did that night.”

The good, good, good, good vibrations at the restaurant, overlooking Bicentennial Park’s dancing fountains and the lighted Rich
Street Bridge, shook up a full emotion cocktail, with a twist of lime. The ‘mad scientists’, aka The Reunion Committee, concocting this gala affair at their meeting lab, worked hard to select just the right Periodic Table Elements for a terrific time. The results were alchemy drenched in blue and “Ag.” (Please see your Periodic Table of Elements from chemistry class.)

If anyone could had observed our planning meetings with Bill, you would know that the laughs and excitement started months ago when the Big Reunion Bang began to build. These hard workers: Cindy Rains Oddi ‘68, Jane Vanicelli Fox ‘69, Kathy Morbitzer Martensen ‘68, Brad Martensen ‘69, Tim O’Brien ’67 (who helped us with the band and other entertainment), Steve Brown ‘68, Mike Bennett ’69, and as I see it, our perpetual homecoming queen, Pam Mehling Bennett ’69, did a bang-up job. Cindy, Jane, and Pam nobly led the way.

“Ready alumni are like one big family,” Queen Pam said. “It was a perfect summer evening filled with fun and friends and this reunion will be long remembered by all who attended.” Ready alum friends with our classes also attended.

Kathy Morbitzer Martensen told me, “My favorite part was seeing all of my Holy Family/Ready friends so happy, and healthy, and interesting to talk to after all of these years.”

I overheard people say that this extraordinary gathering was even better than their own weddings. What idea originator Bill Lager, helped us conjure was one classy, hilarious, entertaining, comfortable, and swinging night.
The wait staff at Milestone 229 absorbed the Ready spirit filling the night too. One of the servers included Spook Beckman’s grandson. (Some in our era might remember Spook from radio and TV.) This wonderful young man and his fellow server stopped me during the goings-on to say they had never worked with such a fun and polite group. (Thank you Ready Staff for teaching us manners!)

“This reunion was epic,” Tim O’Brien said. Tim’s daughter and her friend added show biz spice to the night as colorful, wispily clad stilt-walkers who spectrally paraded among us, wafting their finery through the crowd with grace and winks and giggles. Tim said, “My daughter Meghan has been performing her stilt act for ten years and she told me this was the best private party they ever booked.”

Entertainment was a key factor in the Big Bang Bag of Tricks. Kathy Casa ’69, in a vibrant red dress that suited her eternally trim figure, and her talented husband Richard performed during the first band break to the crowd’s delight. Beautiful JoAnn Castorano Hummel ’69 and her popular musician husband Bob (“aka Cowboy Bob”) opened their own great set with an aptly titled song for our age group, “You Just Don’t Look Good Naked Anymore.”

JoAnn said, “What stands out for me about that reunion, and what we enjoyed the most, was the sheer energy of the party. It was one big group of long time friends with the volume turned up. And we were loving life!”

The Ready talent pool runs deep so it comes as no surprise that pediatrician Dr. Angel Cadiz ’68 sang a rousing impromptu version of “La Bamba” and he encouraged us to form a conga line. We did. And that snaked in and out of the restaurant doors confirming that we
might not look good naked anymore, but we sure can shake a tail feather.

Tim O’Brien did a fantastic job booking THE MAJESTICS band who knew exactly the music we wanted from the late ‘60s. The crowded dance floor under the stars, of a story book summer night, proved to all that it is indeed a fact: Catholics do have rhythm!

“We danced the night away,” reported Linda Owens Swartz ‘69, who with her husband were the very first people to come into the reunion. We did not hold a dance contest but if we had, the top prize would go to Danny Tarpy ‘67. That man is a human dance machine.

Bill Lager knows how to add, not only, bang, but sizzle and fazizzle to the Big Bang Beaker solution so we even had valet parking, and antique cars from our era lined along the, closed by the city for our benefit, Rich Street. The loaded buffet tables of salmon and cheeses and so much more, sated our hunger but then our sprightly servers offered our favorite, sliders!, on silver trays. There was a fun photo booth and each grad received a CD with music of our era as a parting gift.

Donations were collected for the Performing Arts at Bishop Ready. Many of us were part of the Ready musicals and there was a large contingent there who danced in our “Shipoopi” number from THE MUSIC MAN (Both “Marians” were in attendance: Kathy Rex ’69 and Kathy Casa ’69, along with a professor “Harold Hill,” Tom Applegate ’69). The Michael J. Lager Foundation (named after Bill’s deceased brother Mike ’67) organized and added to the donation.
It really would not have surprised me, on such a bubbly occasion, if THE MAJESTICS had broken into the Shipoopi song, from THE MUSIC MAN, and we plunged straight into our show dance steps.

The ending of that performance (where the boys lift us all the way up onto one of their shoulders, with their other arm extended into the air) might have necessitated a trip to Grant Hospital for rotator cuff surgery, and the use of a truss for a year, however. My guess is everyone of us would have said it was worth it.

Cindy Rains Oddi became Sister Mary Cindy, in a habit, for part of the reunion awarding Holy Cards to donors to Ready. Steve Brown, my husband and committee member, and I were emcees and so we decided to dress as Catholic School kids. Since our Ready classes had a change of uniform mid-stint at Ready, I chose a uniform (St Michael’s) that was a combo homage to our jumper design; during the red and gray days, and our skirt colors; during the blue and gray days.

Steve dressed like a “Catholic School Boy” but everyone kept asking him if he was supposed to be an airline pilot (this confusion added to the binga-banga-bonga frivolity).

I have conducted my own scientific observations about wearing a Catholic school girl uniform, as a femme d’un certain âge (See: French One), and have come to the conclusion that MEN LOVE THEM! White anklets and patent leather shoes add to the alluring effect. Always a fashion maven, Pat McAndrew ’66, helpfully suggested I roll up the waist to shorten the skirt length.

“It just didn’t last long enough,” committee member Jane Vanicelli Fox ’69, said of our illustrious night of beloved Knights. “It is obvious
that the friends we made in high school are still very special to us. Bill had this crazy vision of high school friends at this beautiful venue, with fabulous eats and drinks, and having our classmates entertain along with the band, and then BANG!... Fireworks to wind up the evening exploding over the Rich Street Bridge. This was an amazing reunion and now part of Ready’s history.”

Jane Dull Pollock ’68 knows a thing or two about fireworks as she came all the way from the place where fireworks were invented. Jane heroically traveled from Shanghai, China, where she and her husband reside. “It was worth flying half way around the world to experience,” Jane said.

“Our class reunion was magical,” committee chair Cindy Rains Oddi said. “There were smiles, laughter, squeals of joy, and some tears. Everything came together so well and I am certain that some of our classmates in heaven had a hand in the success.”

Our ‘La Bamba’ singer, Angel Cadiz, felt that ‘beacon guiding us’ too. He flew in from Miami. Angel’s first wife, Linda Edmonds ’68, passed away too too young, many years ago. Angel and I had a sweet sentimental chat as we both looked at the memorial board of names of our deceased classmates, including Linda’s.

Some of us have known each other all of our school lives. Some of us have rejoiced at each other’s weddings and births of children and grandchildren. Some of us have mourned each other’s losses.

But on this night, “A Night At the Gloria,” we were catapulted into E=mc² (time and space be damned!), to the halls of Bishop Ready High, when our biggest worries and concerns centered around things like:
Getting our Latin homework completed (Emcee Steve Brown explained the way his class accomplished this was to copy Mike Mountain’s homework.) Finding a date for the prom. Creating a perfect flip hairdo resembling Vicki Thomas’ ’68, and a bouffant hairdo like Chris Borchers’ ’69. Not getting caught stapling our hems up another couple inches to fashion a mini-skirt. Learning to use a slide rule (which I would like to formally protest, here and now, as I have never ever ever used one after Ready).

Angel Cadiz, his lovely wife Araceli, and Angel’s sister Maria Cadiz ’67 and her handsome husband Bob were all in attendance. Angel said, “After the party was over, on our way back to the hotel, I felt I had been in a Time Machine. After 46 years, everyone there seemed the same as when we all went to Ready. Sure physically we have changed, but to me no one really has changed because we all retain that good hearted and warm Ready Spirit.”

As the fun drew to a close, the fireworks Bill Lager envisioned at our meetings exploded into a Technicolor sky over the Rich Street Bridge filling the universe’s night canvas with a crazy art palette of dizzying colors, bursts of light, thundering bangs, and the searing sounds of shooting rockets that thrilled every one of us. The smoldering ashes fell to the bridge.

We sang the Alma Mater.

THE MAJESTICS began to play again.

And we continued what we started many many years ago.

We danced and danced and danced.
FROM OUR HOST BILL LAGER (Who believe me, seeks no credit for this illustrious night, but even so, he deserves it!!!)

“The class reunion was a great success. For those unable to attend, you missed a wonderful party. Everyone enjoyed the fantastic venue, delicious food, hilarious emcees of Patti Wynn Brown and Steve Brown, the terrific wait staff, great bartenders, an awesome band (The Majestics), beautiful old cars thanks to Tony Arena and Lynda Galluci, stilt walkers (Tim O’Brien’s daughter Meghan and a friend) and amazing fireworks. We would like to thank the dedicated team of party planners; Cindy Rains Oddi, Pam and Mike Bennett, Jane Vannicelli Fox, Tim O’Brien, Patti and Steve Brown, Brad and Kathy Martensen, and (Bill’s) the support staff. Thanks so much to Kathy Casa and her husband Richard and Bob and JoAnn Hummel for providing such great entertainment. Thank you Angel Cadiz for the rousing La Bamba number.”