

THE STORY BEHIND THE VENGEANCE BELL

By Paul Eitel

From my childhood on I remember visiting my favorite Aunt and Uncle, Charlotte and Roy Steffen at their home in the Chicago suburbs and always loved their handsome Vengeance bell.

When Roy retired, like many Eitels, he and Charlotte moved to Santa Barbara and settled in Montecito.

After Roy passed away Billie and I visited Charlotte and noticed the bell sitting on a redwood table on the patio.

When I asked Charlotte what she planned to do with Roy's bell, she said she was thinking of donating it to the San Francisco Maritime Museum. I told her they have a room full of bells on shelves and it would never be noticed there. Then I suggested that it be displayed at a yacht club where it would be seen and loved by boaters every day.

At the time we had long been members of the California Yacht Club in Marina Del Rey and I invited her to have lunch with us there the next time she was in LA, to see if it would be a good place for the bell. She did, loved the idea of having it displayed there, and asked me to handle the whole transaction.

With friends I moved the bell south and at a "Valentine's Day Celebration" at the club, Charlotte was crowned "Valentine of the Year" as four of us carried the bell in on a 4X4.

One of our members, whose business was building sets for the movies, created the stand that you now see holding the bell. It was placed in the entrance foyer at the head of the stairs at CYC and was there until Billie and I moved to Santa Barbara, where we'd always wanted to live, in 1994, and joined the SBYC.

One day, then Vice Commodore Lou Goodfield and I were talking about the "Vengeance" bell and I asked him if the SBYC would like to have it and he said it would be treasured here. So, between Lou, his truck and with the help of some volunteers, the very heavy bell was moved to SBYC and originally placed in the entry, where we are delighted it will now be returned.

Billie and Paul Eitel