

# The Volunteer Dance

Half a century ago with the 250 working boys in the old attic in Downtown Quito, we loved sharing the realities, some of them hysterically funny, some very harsh. We looked forward to celebrating enormous victories over the misery in the lives of the poor. We didn't know we were already into the main dance celebrating that victory. We stayed loose, enjoyed, laughed, lamented and strained to dance to whatever the music was. We cherished some clear ideas



*We keep on dancing our hearts out!*

about what we were up to. We were welcoming some volunteers to help us and we were asking for and getting donations to provide some needed things. God let us blissfully imagine into the future all that we would accomplish with your donations and volunteer services. So we planned lots of well-equipped Working Boys' Center operations geographically spread far and wide. After 50 years we have two Centers. We can count one on each hand to make them look more spread out. God let us also blissfully hope for numberless miraculous victories over misery in human lives that we have since been able to brag about to some very limited extent. About six or seven thousand of our families have achieved living a prosperity that has replaced a lot of unspeakable deprivations. And now, after 50 years, we're catching on to what's been going on. God decides where and how big the dance should go on.

Our all-powerful God who could make all the misery in the world disappear in less than ten seconds even allowing for slow-wits, tight pockets, feasibility plans and delusions about human powers of sustaining good works - that same all-powerful God lets all the bad be as our invitation to move on it. All the movement comes from God's love in us; but we have to let that movement in. All of us have and have-nots have to volunteer our part in receiving and giving and not be wallflowers at the dance.

## Share Your Memories of the Center!

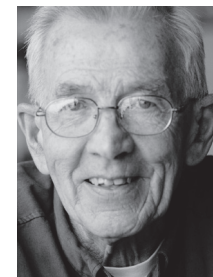
We'd like to collect and compile photos and memories of the past 50 years from all of you - our friends, donors and YLVs. Please submit your reflections and photos to [centermemories@gmail.com](mailto:centermemories@gmail.com) or mail them to our Center for Working Families address. We can't wait to read your stories!

# THE SHOESHINE SPECIAL

NEWS FROM THE WORKING BOYS' CENTER • QUITO, ECUADOR • SPRING 2014



## Padre's Message



DEAR FOLKS,

The Lord's peace be with you.

Our Christmas season and our start-up of the new year have been long lasting and joyful beyond words. We breeze along using the social assistances you provide to help the entire families of working kids who want to hand God a laugh with their own victory over their inherited misery. We can feel God telling us we're achieving that. Some of the ghastly events reported from around the world force us to wonder why God is so good to us. We're pretty sure He wants us to pray for everybody not as fortunate as we are in the Center.

This year 2014 is very special for us at the Working Boys' Center - A Family of Families. The weekend of August 8-10, 2014 will mark the

Center's 50th birthday in Milwaukee, WI. Fifty years is a long enough time in which to forget a lot. We can only vaguely remember some of the frightening circumstances that made us worry about our survival and we completely forget the details of events that made even majestic governments trip and fall over their big shoes. But apparently we succeeded in staying young and unintimidated by the world's overdose of bad daily news. We concentrated on our fun with God, teasing each other into playing nice because God's with us. We also had a deep and constant confidence in your generosity to keep us at it. We still do.

We ask God's blessing on you.

*John J. Halligan, S.J.*

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## Don't Miss the Party!



Mark your calendars now for the big 50th anniversary bash taking place the weekend of **August 8-10, 2014** in Milwaukee, WI at Marquette University! Hundreds of former year long volunteers, their families and our loyal prayerful and financial supporters will celebrate our rich history alongside Padre, the Madres, Carlos, Marco and other Center staff. You do not want to miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime weekend of festivities! Check out all the details online at [www.c4wf.org/get-involved/50th-anniversary-reunion](http://www.c4wf.org/get-involved/50th-anniversary-reunion). To stay updated on party plans as they develop, please send your current email address to [patricia.jessup@c4wf.org](mailto:patricia.jessup@c4wf.org).

**See you at the fiesta!**



# A Fifty-Year Start-Up

Our big gathering in Milwaukee this coming August will proclaim the Working Boys' Center's first half century correcting some major damages done to our self esteem by original sin. The Center has gently taught thousands of very poor families to create their own prosperity with the practice of the values just as Christ taught them. That's the kind of victory Christ wants: you benefactors helping us help others to help others on down the line. Marquette University is the ideal spot to celebrate that because it's a community whose happiness is in helping others. In explaining why fifty years is just a start-up for the Center, we older folks run the danger of giving too much credit to the keeping of rules and regulations that has created success in our love affair with the folks. So I thought it better to interview the kids who have the life of the spirit of the Center in their hearts and would be ideal spokespersons about our pride, our joy and so on. I completely forgot in my reverie that some of them are little savages.



Padre Juan and the potato lovers.

The first inning I can't really call an "interview." It was three against me; and I never had a chance. I was dumb enough to have it in a room with a sofa and easy chairs on which they could bounce up and down in an ecstatic

jumble along with their thoughts. In desperation I fed them a possible pious answer to: "Do you like the Center because it's where God gives you good things and friends to share with?" But the bright-eyed, joyous answer started by one and chorused by the other two while they bounced was, "I like the potatoes!" I tried valiantly for the glory of God with: "So, you're grateful to God that He gives you meals here every day?" They didn't say: "No!" They just kept bouncing and saying louder and louder: "I like the potatoes! I like the potatoes! I like the potatoes!" Grown men do cry.



Miguel can hardly wait for the December 5th celebration.

after grammar school. His favorite day of the year is our December 5th WBC birthday, a day when the Center's festivities outdo the miracle of the one hundred forty gallons of wine at the Cana wedding. You have to put both those things: our once a year wild party and the Mass, into Miguel's context of the unspeakably miserable shack his family lives in, in order to rejoice at the victory of our God giving Miguel a healthy young fellow's confidence in God's Divine plan for all of us to have a good time helping each other get to Heaven.

Santiago Chimbo is a good sized 11 year old in 6th grade without the slightest self-consciousness about still being a shoeshine boy. That's where the money is that his family needs. His guardian angel has an easy job because Santiago, just like Miguel, keeps the finish line in clear sight. As I expected, his view of what we are celebrating includes all the details of a decent chance at growing up happy that he found 4 years ago as a new member. But I asked him to summarize: "What do you want to tell all those readers of the Shoeshine Special?" He pondered for a split second and said, "Tell them they should really come to the Center because the Center can surely help them too."

In the second interview, God raised my self-esteem from under the crush of 50 precious years spent promoting my enemies' love for potatoes. This conversation was a return to civilization with Miguel Carrion, 10 years old and in 5th grade. He said he likes to be in the Center because a person can relax all his feelings here. He likes to attend Mass. He can hardly wait to study metal mechanics



Santiago thinks we could all use the Center's values.



Richard instructs Maicol in the art of shining shoes.

I cross paths and converse with Richard Leon every day. But it's ages since I've tried to figure him out. He's 10 years old, in 6th grade, a non-stop worker when not in classes or some activity at the Center, and he never causes trouble. If his poverty were more hidden and the shoeshine box out of sight, one could imagine the soul inside this sophisticated young fellow as clearly born into royalty with the silver spoon handy and a big inheritance already in the bank. He enthused over communicating to you his deep satisfaction with the food, the classes, the friendships, the hot water, the private lockers and the fun games we play. I asked for a summary to communicate to you who help us so much and he took away all my boredom with our easy conversation. I hope you don't get mad at me for what he said. He said, "Tell them to come here and learn good habits if they want to get ahead in life"; and he said it all in capital letters. I'm just telling you what HE said.

The next interview needs some background about one of our little heroes in the struggle for human re-development. She is 11-year-old Katherine Asqui who is only in 3rd grade because this is only the third year since her mother was motivated to join the Center with all the kids for a better shot at the breaks in life. Up until that time, Katherine was helping sell things on the streets and, on the side, achieving all the smarts and combat training the streets offer. We could brag about the Center's good programs, tough love, collective wisdom and whatever. But we'll never know how God and Katherine re-configured some of the ugly pieces in her life into one of the most beautiful little girls you would ever want to meet.

I had always wanted to talk personally with Katherine. But I knew she could never stand or sit still for such an agony unless it was with her two pals, Silvia Pualasin and Nataly Cando. This interview about the women's opinion of the Center was my opportunity. It took on added value as a conversation with all three. They're of different ages and in different school grades. But they eat lunch together every day and their friendship is very close like an armored car that keeps the valuables tight and secure on the way. Even though, like I said, Katherine and I had never actually talked to each other before the interview, she and I were close in our own way. On three different occasions and always right after Mass, she has run at me crash course arms wide open, grabbed and squeezed and run away faster than she ran at me. I always figured she was using me in her own liturgy to tell God how much she loves Him. We didn't talk about that in the interview. All four of us talked easily with the usual laughs about which are the best meals, teachers, games, special events and times in the Center. Silvia was interesting in her enthusiasm for all the professions taught at the Center. She herself wants to study cosmetology and run her own beauty salon. Her big sister is already studying industrial sewing; her brother is in baking school along with her parents because they want to open a family bakery. Nataly also wants to study cosmetology and she brags about all of her family studying various professions. Sure enough I was a priest doing the interview; but I don't think that's why she said that the Mass each day is her favorite time. Nataly concentrated seriously about what's important to tell and she asks you to never take away our U.S.A. college grad volunteers whom the kids like so much. Katherine obviously wants the threesome to be forever united, so she's going to study cosmetology too. But the lights in her eyes came up when she talked about how much our special education tutor has meant to her. All this chitchat broke up the ice in the correct things layer and helped us get through and down to admitting that what we got here in the Center is a powerful love affair. I can share that much but I should also keep some of the other confidences.



From left to right: Silvia, Nataly and Katherine.