



Alumni News

Fall 2001 – Volume 40, Issue 3

The Original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home



HELP • HEALING • HOPE

Alumni Dreams Become Reality

It has been a journey of newfound friendship and united efforts to pay tribute to Father Flanagan's legacy and dream of saving children.

The Boys Town National Alumni Association, dedicated alumni, friends and employees at the Home have made the dream a reality – to place identical statues in the cities Father Flanagan's legacy impacted most – Boys Town and Ballymoe, Ireland.

During the July convention, the alumni association unveiled a life-size, bronze statue of Father Flanagan for the children at the Village. "We want to share Father Flanagan's legacy with our brothers and sisters here at the Home," said alumnus and Association president Steve Wolf. The statue will be dedicated next year as part of many activities planned to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the founding of Father Flanagan's Boys' Home.

As the statue was unveiled for the first time, an uncanny energy passed through the people in its presence. The crowd echoed with remarks about the statue. "Look at his bushy eyebrows and the shoe



Father Peter and sculptor Fred Hoppe unveil the bronze Father Flanagan statue for children, alumni and friends at the Home during the 2001 Alumni Convention.

laces...it looks so real," said one Ballymoe visitor. Another onlooker said, "It's absolutely incredible...it's so real...such detail. His eyes look right through you." Many from the older generation of boys can attest to Father Flanagan's ability to see deep into one's soul.

The alumni commissioned internationally known Nebraska artist Fred Hoppe to create the statues honoring Father Flanagan. Hoppe was there to help Father Peter unveil the "dream."

"Everybody here, all your families, all your future families will have all been touched by him; it just goes on indefinitely. So when you look at this sculpture, I want you to think about the good work he did and how it's still going on today," Hoppe said.

On October 6, the alumni association is expected to dedicate a second, identical statue to the people of Father Flanagan's homeland in Ballymoe, Ireland. (The Alumni News Christmas issue will report further details of the Ireland journey.) His care and

insight for helping and reforming children still touches the lives of people throughout the world. The outpouring of support and excitement for honoring Father Flanagan can only grow as the alumni carry on the legacy of Father Edward J. Flanagan. Please continue to pray for his canonization.

The Original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, Boys Town, Nebraska

Girls and Boys Town Commends You

Dear Alumni,

I want to thank each and every one of the alumni who came back to the Village of Boys Town the last weekend in July. It was one of the best alumni reunions ever. Call one of your classmates who was here and ask them. They'll tell you. It was beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.

There are two movements among our alumni that need special focus and commendation.

The first is the idea of the alumni themselves honoring Father Flanagan by having a bronze statue placed in Ballymoe where he was born and here in the Village. Where will it be placed in the Village? You're being asked to decide. There are voting ballots being



mailed to alumni who have paid their dues. Please take part in the balloting so you can decide. This is one of the ways you can say thanks to Father Flanagan for being such a great and courageous person of faith.

The second great focus of the alumni is on learning and teaching more about Father Flanagan, his ways, his dreams and the holiness of his life.

Father Flanagan was a man of prayer. Anyone who wants to see him canonized needs to renew his or her own prayer life. You need to ask Father Flanagan to help you from heaven. He will surely do that for his own children.

Every day after 7 a.m. Mass, I go back to Father Flanagan's tomb. He and I have a nice talk. I can't tell you how many favors Father Flanagan has

done for us in the years I have been here. The Lord is pleased when His saints are honored because to honor them is to honor the Lord in whom they place all their trust.

Thanks for being good sons and daughters of Father Flanagan. Decide in your heart today you are going to get closer to the Lord and you're going to help the Lord's most needy children who are your brothers and sisters.

And don't forget the Home either. Support us with your prayers. Support us financially. Support us with your love. God bless you now and always.

Sincerely yours,

Father Val J. Peter, JCD, STD

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An Alumni Convention Like Never Before

Dear Alumni,

Wow! We did it! The 50th Anniversary celebration of the BTNAA was a barnburner. If you were here, you know what I'm talking about. Never before have we offered so many special events at a convention. Perhaps the most anticipated was the unveiling of the life-size bronze Father E. J. Flanagan statue by artist Fred Hoppe.

The statue received overwhelming approval from the alumni. In a few short weeks, paid up members of the BTNAA will receive a ballot to cast their vote for a location on campus to place the statue. Meanwhile, many of us will be celebrating



Father Flanagan's birth with the second statue unveiling.

Father Val Peter will attend this event, as will the Prime Minister of Ireland, the Emerald Isle's Papal Nuncio, Bishop of Elphin Christopher Jones, the U.S. Ambassador, and others too numerous to mention. Alumni and friends have signed up for two very special tours - one a five day "business trip" and the other an 11 day tour of Ireland.

We have 18" miniature replicas of the Father Flanagan statue available for a very low price of \$1,850. These small bronzes are collectors' items that are sure to increase in value. Only 100 were made with the purpose of paying for the two life-size bronzes, one of which was sent to Ireland. We need your support to make sure Father Flanagan is hon-

ored in his own country, so call and reserve yours. Payment plans are available and credit cards accepted.

Our next issue of the Alumni News will feature stories and photographs of the statue unveiling in Ireland, as well as news regarding next year's mini-convention site selection. If you have questions or concerns feel free to contact your regional representative on the BTNAA Board of Trustees (see page 14 for reference), or write president Steve Wolf at P.O. Box 2, Boys Town, NE 68010. Good luck and good health.

All the best,

Stan Struble '68

Post Office Dedicated In Memory of Witcofski

On Saturday, July 28, the Alumni posthumously dedicated the original Boys Town post office building, now the Home's financial building, to Al Witcofski who served at the Village of Boys Town for more than 80 years in various capacities.

Witcofski's many duties included being Father Flanagan's personal driver, farmer, repairman, volunteer fireman and, perhaps most notably, mailman. As Father Flanagan's right hand man, Witcofski carried out Father's request for Boys Town's first post office.

To the generations of youth and staff, Al was a quiet hero and Boys Town's "everyman," doing anything and everything that needed to be done to keep the nuts and bolts of the Home running.

He was "a legacy symbolizing Boys Town as its best," National Alumni Director Stan Struble said. "He lived his life in a way that serves as a benchmark to the rest of us to measure our contribution to society and the Home."



Al Witcofski's two sons, Ronald and Dennis, remember their father at the dedication of the Witcofski Building this past alumni convention.

Where Are They Now?

JACK BRIGGS '52

Greetings to all fellow alumni. Next year will be 50 years since I graduated from Boys Town. You might say I am now a short timer. I truly believe in Boys Town and all it has done for the youth of America.

When I organized the New England Alumni Chapter back in 1955, we had great times at meetings and picnics. After moving to Florida in 1971, I organized the Florida Chapter even though it took some time to obtain our charter. As president of the chapter, I tried to hold the group together for 15 years. I hope the renewed efforts to bring the chapter back are successful. We all owe Boys Town so much.

The last 10 years of my life have been downhill due to Post Polio Syndrome, and I have lost 90 percent of my mobility. This time around there is no cure or treatment, and I have moved to an assisted living facility. It would be nice to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Jack Briggs

PATRICIA HALE-DAY '89

Patty Hale-Day is a stay-at-home mom married to Wayne, an electrician. They have three children ranging from 9 months to 9 years old. They moved from Omaha to Greenville, Ohio, three years ago. She worked initially as a classified advertisement clerk for the local newspaper, but then began staying home with her children after the last was born.

Patty is very active in her local United Methodist Church, serving on the council and as director of youth programs. She recalls volunteering at the old Protestant chapel in the Field House when Pastors Sarton and Giese were Boys Town staff. She says, "Boys Town changed my life, and Mrs. Val Struble was an excellent role model for me."

MARY GRAY '99

Mary is stationed at Sasebo, Japan on the USS Germantown as an E-4, Petty Officer 3rd Class.

CHAD DODENHOF '99

Chad completed basic training and AIT as a field artillery surveyor at Fort Sill in Oklahoma after graduating from Boys Town. He completed airborne training in Fort Benning, Ga. Chad qualified as a paratrooper, received his wings and was transferred to Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. There he received his air assault wings. Chad received an Army Accommodation Medal prior to being honorably discharged on July 26, 2001. Chad is returning to Omaha. Welcome home, Chad.

CHRISTOPHER MURRAY '91

Captain Murray is Chief of Military Equal Opportunity at Beale Air Force Base in California.

STEVE FORD '87

Steve is presently part of a pre-commissioning detachment for a DDG 84, the Bulkeley, as Petty Officer 1st Class, Information Technician.

SEAN KUDLACZ '98

Lance Corporal Kudlacz is presently stationed at the Marine Corp Air Depot as an Ordnance Technician.

Remembering Those Who Passed On

Donald Stodola, D '46, May 11, 2001, Omaha, Neb.

Leo Reesor, D '41, May 24, 2001, Saint Cloud, Minn.

Joseph Miller, '28, July 17, 2001, Corpus Christi, Texas

Laurence Roper, '43, July 23, 1999, Colorado Springs, Co.

Harold Glissman, former supervisor of lawns, July 31, 2001, Syracuse, N.Y.

Warren Safford, former Career Center teacher, September 1, 2001, Omaha, Neb.

Arthur Haight, '53, former BTNAA board member, August 29, 2001, Altamonte Springs, Fla.

Where are you now?

Please write the alumni office and let us know about you.

BTNAA

P.O. Box 2

Boys Town, NE 68010

alumni@girlsandboystown.org

Alumni Inducted Into Hall of Fame

The Hall of History was filled to capacity on a hot July afternoon during the recent Alumni Convention. Cameras flashed and spectators smiled proudly for five special alumni soon to be inducted into the Boys Town Hall of Fame, which was established in 1986.

On July 27, Lloyd "Pete" Bucher, Joe Ortega, Fred Estevane, Dr. Max Rittgers and Joe Renteria (who was unable to attend), were inducted into the Boys Town Hall of Fame for their positive contributions to their communities.

A committee composed of members of the Alumni Board of Directors selected the inductees.

Lloyd "Pete" Bucher '47

While he was at Boys Town, Lloyd "Pete" Bucher excelled both in the classroom and on the gridiron. Pete was elected mayor of Boys Town in 1946 and graduated in 1947.

After serving two years in the Navy, Pete returned to the University of Nebraska at Omaha, where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Geology and a commission in the US Navy.

In 1968, while serving as a captain on the USS Pueblo, Pete and his crew were captured, beaten and tortured by the North Koreans. He distinguished himself by his handling of events that occurred during captivity and afterwards, championing the rights of his crewmen and standing firm in the face of character assassination and ridicule. Pete was eventually exonerated and decorated for his heroic actions.

Pete summed up his thoughts on Boys Town's influence on his life: "There's no way I would have grown up with the character, sense of honor and sense of team-

work I did, if I did not have the opportunity to be at Boys Town. I thank God every day for it."

Joseph Ortega '47

Alumni of Boys Town remember Joe as a very good student who excelled at football and track. After graduating from Boys Town in 1947, he first attended Wayne State College in Nebraska, then joined the Air Force in 1950.



From left to right: Alumni - Joe Ortega, Fred Estevane, Lloyd "Pete" Bucher and Dr. Max Rittgers - inducted into the Boys Town Hall of Fame at the 2001 Convention.

During Joe's 24 years of service in the military, his many duty stations included tours in Korea and Japan. While stationed in Japan, Joe's duties included running a school and child welfare program for Japanese children and military dependents.

In 1958, the Prime Minister of Japan awarded Joe with a certificate of merit for his work with handicapped children. He also received recognition from the Northern Japanese Defense Commander for promoting good Japanese-American relations. After retiring from the military, he worked as a successful entrepreneur for several years.

Joe has always maintained contact with

Boys Town, which eventually led to a six-year stint as Director of Personnel at Boys Town.

Joe then went on to establish Youth City USA, a home for disadvantaged youths. He is a former president of both the Omaha Chapter and Boys Town National Alumni Association. Joe is retired and lives in Davenport, Fla.

Fred Estevane '51

Fred Estevane graduated from Boys Town in 1951. During a stint with the Marines, Fred spent 14 months in Korea. He studied Engineering and Business Administration while attending San Diego State University.

Fred has held a series of high-level jobs with military and domestic engineering manufacturing companies, and has served as a Teacher/Coordinator for a dropout prevention program at Mar Vista High School in Imperial Beach, Calif.

Fred has picked up and delivered food for such organizations as St. Vincent de Paul, the Rescue Mission and

Rachel's Center. He currently volunteers with Mother Teresa's Needs and the Augustinian orphanage La Gloria in Tijuana, Mexico. Fred has been active in Boys Town alumni affairs for many years, including six years of service on the national board of trustees. Most of those who have worked with Fred can never remember him turning down a request for help. He exemplifies all that is good about Boys Town. Fred's feelings about the Home mirror those sentiments: "I am the product of Boys Town - every day of my life I try to be a great role model."

continued on next page

Joseph Renteria '35

Dr. Max Rittgers '56

During his time at Boys Town, Max Rittgers excelled in academics and athletics. He graduated from Boys Town in 1956.

While attending Augustana College in Sioux Falls, S.D. on a football scholarship, Max earned a bachelor's degree in Physics and Biology. He eventually went on to earn his doctorate in divinity, and worked as an ordained United Methodist Minister before retiring.

Dr. Rittgers has been involved in religious and public service for much of his life. He has volunteered as an A.I.D.S. counselor in prisons and worked in a hospice for the dying. In 1974 he was part of a joint Catholic/Protestant effort to distribute the "Good Book" in mainland China.

In 1982 he received the prestigious Paul Harris Fellow Award for his efforts to help build a clinic for children in the Dominican Republic.

As an entrepreneur of Dakota Vineyards in Chiefland, Fla., Dr. Rittgers is involved in humanitarian missions to Cuba, where he takes medical supplies to children. He has also takes supplies to the families of Cuban prisoners on the penal island of Isla Pina, using money out of his own pocket to provide aid and comfort.

Dr. Rittgers is a credit to Boys Town and a role model for our children. "I am grateful for the privilege to try to do something of value, something of service to others in the name of humanity and children," Rittgers says.

As a 1935 graduate, Joe Renteria's claim to fame while at Boys Town was his loss to Boys Town's first mayor, Tony Villone. The loss wasn't important over time, but the way Joe handled the loss was crucial.



Running under the "Help Our Town Party," Joe did just that by encouraging his supporters to back the new mayor for the good of the town.

Over the last 65 years he has consistently applied his own style of problem solving and consensus building to every project he has undertaken.

Joe served 20 years in the military, with stints in both the Army and Navy. He is a nationally recognized leader on Native American issues and has given his time and talent to various Native American organizations for the past 45 years.

Joe was recognized in 1994 for 15 years of service to the Indian Human Resources Center. He was also recognized by the California State Assembly as a Cherokee Tribe Role Model in 1996 in conjunction with his induction into the Southern California Latino-Native American Hall of Fame.

Joe has served on the Southern California Board of Directors since 1994 and has been instrumental in the success of many of their activities.

Forty-Year Celebrants

The Class of 1961 held a forty-year reunion at this year's alumni convention. Organized by Harvey Lawrence of Wyandotte, Michigan, the Class of '61 was able to entice a sizeable number of its classmates to the weekend festivities.

They interacted as a group at all the

events, including the banquet Saturday night where they were given reserved seating close to the head table. Thanks to the Class of '61 for their commitment to gather and celebrate their 40th! We hope you all had a great time.

Auxiliary Column

Dear Auxiliary,



I have been diligently working on a way to communicate more efficiently. Our own newsletter is being reviewed by the auxiliary board and will soon be delivered to you either by mail or email.

The convention this year was extremely moving. What a joy it was to visit with old friends and share in this historical moment.

I would like to convey my deepest gratitude to those members who volunteered at the registration and auxiliary tables and who sold raffle tickets. Thank You!

I'm looking forward to serving you and God Bless.

Sincerely yours,

Sue Ann Burgess,
Auxiliary President

2001 AUXILIARY AWARDS

Dorothy Loptin - For her outstanding work at Boys Town

Elmer Marshall - Received a plaque in memory of his wife, Jo

Monsignor Ariano Celebrates 50th Jubilee



Monsignor Joseph W. Ariano, '40, came Home to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ordination as a Catholic priest Sunday, July 29 at Dowd Chapel during the alumni convention.

Monsignor Ariano — the first African American priest ordained in the Omaha Archdiocese — was ordained in 1951 at St. Cecilia's Cathedral. He served as a priest, teacher and dean of boys at Boys Town until 1956. In 1957, Ariano was commissioned as a U.S. Air Force chaplain. He served in that capacity for 22 years, achieving the rank of Colonel. He later served as Vice Chancellor of the Archdiocese for the Military Services in Washington, D.C. Upon his retirement from the Air Force in 1991, Monsignor Ariano assumed duties as Special Assistant to Father Peter while residing in Washington, D.C.

Monsignor Ariano has earned many honors during his distinguished career including the Bronze Star, Vietnam



Monsignor Ariano blesses alumni, youth and regular church parishoners as they receive communion at his 50th anniversary Mass.

Campaign Medal, Outstanding Unit Medal, Longevity Medal and Meritorious Service Medal. He was inducted into the Boys Town Hall of Fame and received Boys Town's Distinguished Service Award in 1992.

Dowd Chapel was filled to capacity with alumni, boys and girls, families and

regular church attendees for Monsignor Ariano's celebration Mass. Monsignor Dunne said to Monsignor Ariano, "You stand on the threshold of a new age at Boys Town — Girls and Boys Town. These children here today need your link to the past and they need your kind of dedication and love for the future."

105 Purple Heart Recipients Remembered



From left to right: Sean Kudlacz, '98; Robert Dean "Bob" Mitchell, '49; (back) Captain Christopher Murray, '91; (front) Joseph E. Wherry, '66; Lavern L. Bush, '47; Joe Ortega, '47; Steve Fard, '87.

The Girls and Boys Town Junior ROTC opened the Purple Heart ceremony with the presentation of colors on Saturday, July 28 at the Alumni Armed Forces Memorial on campus. At the ceremony, the Omaha Purple Heart chapter in Omaha honored 105 alumni who have received the prestigious Purple Heart award from World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Admiral Meis, Commander in Chief United States Strategic Command Offutt Air Force Base, spoke about the similarity between the Purple Heart and Boys Town. "There is a strong link between the ideals of the Purple Heart and Boys Town — selflessness and devotion to a cause higher than yourself," he said.

A plaque from the local Purple Heart chapter listing the names of those who received the world's oldest military decoration was presented to several Purple Heart recipients who accepted on behalf of the Home and their fellow soldiers.

Alumni Came Home and Celebrated BIG



Brothers reunite and reminisce at the Alumni picnic.

Alumni came home again. From all over the country they came, to revisit the land where their roots were replanted.

Msgr. Ariano and an entourage helped celebrate his 50th anniversary as a priest. Six Irish friends from Ballymoe, Ireland and four Franciscan nuns from the early days at Boys Town were in attendance.

Admiral Mies, the Commander in Chief of America's nuclear strike force gave a short, but rousing speech at a ceremony recognizing 105 Purple Heart Recipients.

Two unveilings of the Father Flanagan statues were held.

Alumni reminisced, ate, sang, golfed, dedicated buildings, unveiled monuments, honored heroes and worshipped. In short, they celebrated big at the Home during the biennial convention of 2001.

God bless everyone!



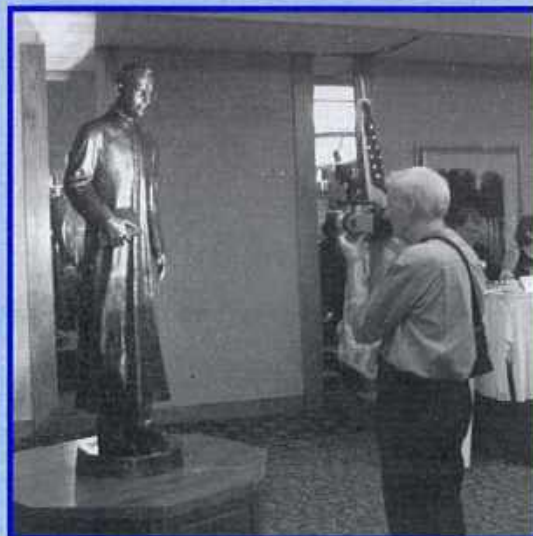
Quintin Webb, '75, searches for photographs at the Hall of History.



Lavern Bush, '47 and Bob Mitchell, '49



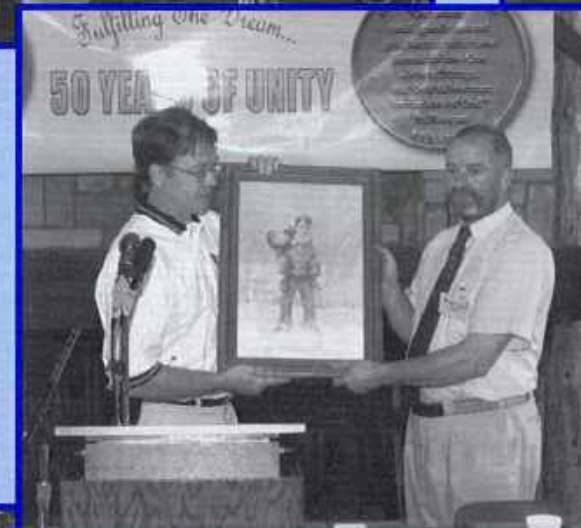
Keery Wolf at her home reception for the Irish visitors



Irishman Michael Gaffey photographs the Father Flanagan statue.



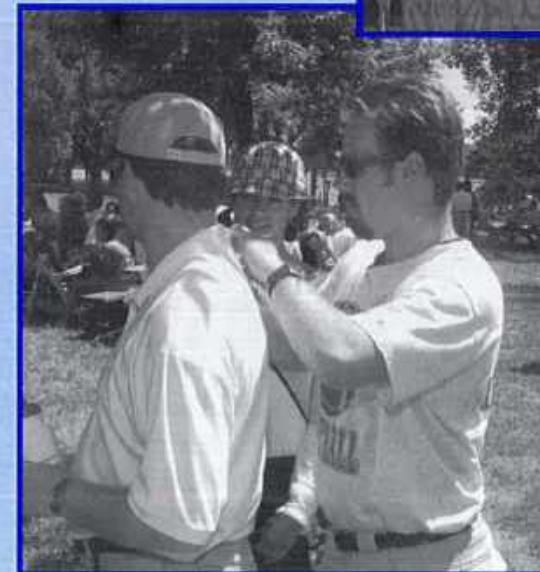
Sean Kudlacz, '98, meets Joe Wherry, '66, at the Alumni Luncheon.



Steve Wolf, '80, BTNAA President, presents a two-brothers statue carved by John Griffin, Chairman of Ballymoe Boys Town Association.



Bryan Burgess, D '51, (left) and Elmer Marshall, '51, (right) pose with Elmer's granddaughter and Spencer Tracy's Academy Award.



Jeff Randall, '95, writes his address for Steve Wolf as Jeff's friend Patricia looks on.



Father Dunne with the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago.

Franciscan Sisters Rekindle Memories of Father Flanagan and The Boys

Over a period of 26 years, 75 Franciscan Sisters dedicated 540 years of service to the youth at Boys Town. At the recent Boys Town Alumni Convention, three Sisters who lived and worked at Boys Town, and one who lived here as a child, visited Boys Town again.

The Franciscan Sisters played a pivotal role in Boys Town's early history. The sisters, who first came to Boys Town in June 1940, initially served as Father Flanagan's only co-workers. They filled many shoes, including secretary, counselor, sacristan, seamstress, housekeeper, laundress, infirmiry worker, cook, teacher and housemother to the 400 boys that lived in the four dormitories during their years of service.

The sisters served as surrogate mothers to the boys. When the boys had problems they brought them to the sisters. "They seemed to have confidence in us," Sister Bertille Geffert, one of the first sisters to arrive at Boys Town, says. When Sister Epiphany Gorski complimented a young boy for doing a job well, he began to cry. She asked him what was wrong. "He said his mother never said that to him," Sister Gorski says. "I cried for him and thought, oh Lord, give him a mother because he really needs one."

Sister Bertille lived and worked as a cook and housekeeper at Boys Town until 1948. She remembers her first day. "We arrived in the evening and Nellie (Father Flanagan's sister) told me I was going to work for Father Flanagan in his residence," she recalls. "I said, 'what do I do?'" She was told to fix breakfast, so she did. "I didn't even know where to find anything," she says.

Sister Praesentia Grzybowski, a sacristan in the chapel for most of the 15 years she spent at Boys Town, has similar

memories. "They wanted me to be their mother. They used to come to me with all their troubles," she says.

Sister Georgeann Kinel, Sister Superior and elementary school teacher for five years, remembers mothering the boys as well. "We used to supervise the boys and teach them religion, but the best part was when we tucked them into bed," she says.

Sister Kathleen Melia, whose father worked as an engineer at Boys Town in the '40s, spoke of how hard all the sisters worked to care for the boys. Her father recalls tiny Sister Simon Glowacki working in the laundry "slinging clothes."



Franciscan Sisters of Chicago rekindled memories of their years spent at Boys Town during the 2001 Alumni Convention. Back row: Sister Kathleen Melia, Sister Praesentia (1940-43; 1962-75). Front Row: Sister Bertille (1940-48), and Sister Georgeann (1964-69).

The difficult job was made worse by the heat and humidity of Nebraska summers, without benefit of air conditioning.

All the sisters cherish memories of the family atmosphere at Boys Town. While they were "mothers" to the boys, Father Flanagan served as a father figure to them. He visited often, inquiring if the boys had enough to eat and were behaving themselves.

"He was concerned about the boys all the time," says Sister Epiphany. She

related this anecdote: One winter the boys wanted to go sledding, but had no sleds. They took large kitchen trays and used them for sleds. Father Flanagan was so aghast that he immediately went out and bought them all sleds.

When the last of the Franciscan Sisters left Boys Town in June 1976, those at Boys Town had heavy hearts. In a letter to the superior general of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago about their parting, the Right Reverend Monsignor Francis Schmitt, founder of the Boys Town Music Department and the Boys Town Concert Choir, wrote of the sisters' influence: "The most important work

done for the boys was not so much by dint of high organization, but by their casual association with people of character, moral power, religious example and love."

The Dowd Memorial Chapel bulletin on June 13, 1976—the day before the Sisters returned to Chicago—

contained a tribute to them: "Without the donation of their talents at very meager salaries, without their total dedication to a task that was not popular at the time, without their joy, interest and love, Boys Town as we know it simply would not exist. We owe them a great debt of gratitude."

Even though they have been long parted from Boys Town, many of the Franciscan Sisters - to this day- keep in touch with the boys they once cared for at the Home.

Fulfilling the Dream ... 50 Years of Unity

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Our 50th anniversary convention was one of the most harmonious and moving homecomings most anyone can remember. It was a grand family reunion built on the theme "Fulfilling the Dream... 50 Years of Unity." For those of you who did not make it home this time, you were missed, but not forgotten.

I thank all the alumni who helped Girls and Boys Town staff, and especially Father Peter as host of this world-class celebration of our Home and family. People put more than their time and sweat into this event; they gave us their hearts!

While we stand on a golden platform with half a century behind us, let's pause for a moment and peer into the future. What exactly are we going to do with this legacy of unity and where can it take us?



As your new president, I stand before all of you humble and ready to serve our best interest - unity.

Our unity has faced challenges over the years. The biggest challenge seems to be the acceptance of change. There are only two absolutes in life, constant change and death.

Where would any of us be without the positive change brought into our lives at Boys Town? Change is a process that needs to be managed, not feared.

Girls and Boys Town is now helping more youth in a year than it did in the previous seven decades. It is still the premiere youth-care program in the world. Father Flanagan pushed the envelope constantly in his lifetime to help more kids. He has to be very proud that his life's work is touching more lives than anyone from his era could have imagined.

The BTNAA's top priorities for the next two years are to manage necessary changes that will make our organization more important in your life and to strengthen the relationship with our Home and the people who serve its mission.

Your board of directors recognizes that we have to do more than stare into the past. You do not need to belong to the alumni association to keep your memories. We need to be an organization of men and women who are working toward a future.

We have to earn your interest, time and dues. We must focus those attributes into a unifying force and purpose. Our chapters need to be revived and the national association needs to facilitate that process through a clearly articulated vision, mission, values and goals. Our job is to identify a model for success and provide the tools for you to build on that model.

Stay tuned to the Alumni News and watch our future unfold. Better yet, get involved by contacting the alumni office, your regional director or myself at BTNAAPresident@home.com

Your Brother,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Wolf".

Steve Wolf '80

Class of '54 Together Again at Convention

The Class of 1954 has earned the distinction of being the most active group of alumni ever to graduate from Boys Town High School.

Gene Heslin, '54, publishes a quarterly newsletter to update his classmates on how the rest are faring. Everyone actively seeks out other classmates that have lost contact with the Home.

They gather at mini-conventions and at whatever special occasion will draw them together.

In 2000 they all met at the Home to honor Lenny Hultquist, '54, the only graduate of their class to die in Vietnam. A memorial stone in his honor was placed at the Alumni Armed Forces Memorial in the Village. Lenny's daughters and grandchildren were in attendance.



Pictured in the back row from L to R are alumni: Stan Stacy, Mike Bosma, Jerry Hammack, Don Minnick, Gary Cissell, Luke Mero, and Gene Heslin. In the front row are Jerry Gosewisch, Bill Herman, John Medlock, Len Koets, and Don Ahlberg.

Alumni Reminisce about Boys Town

Four alumni recalled memories of Boys Town during Chambers Chapel Services at the Boys Town National Alumni Convention held July 26-29, 2001. Two questions were asked of each of them: What is your best memory from your time at Boys Town? What is the one thing that you learned here at Father Flanagan's Village that you took through life to help you be successful? Read through them, you may recall some of the same memories ...

Robert Cross '58



I was listening to the fabulous Chambers Chapel Choir and I thought of the Boys Town Choir when I was a boy here. They stayed away from the Home for about two months, and they would return to Boys Town just around Christmas. And you saw all the enthusiasm that we had, because it was like our brothers were returning home to reconnect the family, coming together at Christmas time. We had a midnight Mass, which was televised all around the United States and across the world. We would see the TV trucks come out here and get us prepared. I used to sneak into the choir at the practice session and listen to the choir practice. I learned appreciation for music. The midnight Mass was something to behold, and I have never forgotten it. It was my fondest time, during Christmas when the choir sang at the beautiful Mass.

I learned compassion for my fellow man. I took that with me in life. I work with the homeless population today. I see the suffering of human beings. I often think about Father Flanagan and how he would take in the downtrodden

men and work with them at this hotel, and the men would tell Father, "I wish I had someone like you when I was a child." Today, I have grown men and women who say the same thing. They wish they had someone to guide them as children. So, my little sisters and brothers, thank Father Flanagan that there is such a place for you, because I thank him every day. I'm praying that he will become a saint one day. Thank you.

Bill Ford '60



The best memory I had of my boyhood here was the day I was wearing a very thin jacket in the winter. Ike Mahoney, our secondary coach under Palrang, said, "Come here." And he went in the back room of the field house and came out with a big, warm jacket. The jacket had a big letter "G" on it and it was red and white. What an act of kindness. I used to run around going to the ball games and everything else wearing this jacket because it kept me warm, both inside and outside. That's one of my finest memories.

After I left here, I did things I wasn't supposed to do. But I have to tell you that if you don't take God with you, and Jesus Christ, you're nothing. So when you leave here, take Jesus with you. That's the one thing I learned, that you've got to have God on your side because there is a hell of a world out there (pardon my expression). Thanks a lot.

Deacon Jones '54



To pick my best memory is difficult because there are a lot of them. Yesterday I had a tremendous flashback. When I first came to Boys Town, the bus driver let me off and I walked up to the old post office. I knocked on the door. Nobody answered. I began to cry. Then a man came by on a motor scooter. His name was Ken Kawami, who delivered the mail throughout the Home. He put me on this bike and took me all the way down to the administrative building. What an act of kindness. It made me feel so good.

I'm a retired director of financial aid in one of the city colleges in Chicago. I've had thousands of students come to my office and I have told so many of them: Without my experience in Boys Town, I would never have been a success. I was able to graduate from Boys Town High School, go to college without a dime in my pocket, make two Olympic teams, set world records and then travel throughout this country and the world. But the core assistance was being able to be coachable, listen-

ing to my counselor, and doing what I thought was best for me.

I remember some of my buddies were going AWOL. I said, "Where are we going?" I didn't know what AWOL meant. And they said, "We're going down to Omaha." The patrol car came by and everybody ran into the cornfield across the street. But when everybody stood up (there were about five or six of us), I stayed down and I went right back to my bunk. I decided then that I wasn't going to run away and leave something that was beneficial to me.

I'm in Chicago and I see poverty all over the place. This Village is really an opportunity for you to take advantage, no matter what your background is. Forget about your background. Go forward and take advantage of this fabulous opportunity. And this is a fabulous, fabulous church (Chambers Chapel). It wasn't here when I was here. This is the first time I've been in it and I'm highly impressed. Thank you.

Dr. Max Rittgers '56



As a boy I had been on the road for about a year. In the midst of one of the great snowstorms of Nebraska, I walked out of Omaha, came up on top of this hill and saw the light on the pylon and walked into Boys Town. I came as a liar and a thief. I was coming from a dysfunctional home and I was dysfunctional. All of my ways of acting were physical and violent. Here were people who guided me toward the spiritual dimension of life.

I got out of here by playing sports. I went to college and played football. Someone taught me about music. One day a fellow took me to church assembly where there was a man of God and a visitor whose name was Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of the former President of the United States. And this woman stood up there and she looked right at me and she said, "Nobody can make you feel inferior without your permission. If you don't take anything else from this day, remember that. Nobody can put you down, men and women, nobody can make you feel inferior, men and women, without you allowing it."

My whole life changed. I graduated from college, got married and had a family. I remember one of the happiest days of my life was when my son

was born. I learned somewhere between coming in here at Boys Town as a liar, a thief and a bed-wetter that there is a triumphant answer to our problems in our lives in Jesus Christ. The good that I know came from people who shared with me. If I had not listened to good, decent, humble teachers and pastors, I would be in prison or dead.

If you don't think that you can make it someday, you men and women, remember Max Rittgers who came here a half century ago, who was a loser, who was stupid and dumb and brutal and physical. If he can make it, I want to tell you, you can too!

Alumni Celebrate Silver and Golden Anniversaries

SILVER ANNIVERSARY CELEBRANTS



The classes of '75 and '76 celebrated their 25th graduation anniversary from Boys Town High School. Gerald Charlton (above in the white sport coat) is a full-time disc jockey. He spun CD's for alumni at the dance following Saturday night's banquet.

Eleven members of the Classes of '75-'76 returned for their Silver Anniversary celebration including James Jessop, Tom Kirpatrick, Matt Reny, Quintin Webb, Mike Bolster, Jack Cuyar, David Maier, Gerald Charlton and Frank Valdivia. Marty Critchley, '78, stood in for his brother Delmer who unfortunately could not attend at the last minute.

The graduates of '75-'76 were in residence during the changeover to the present day family style program of youth care that was initiated under former director Msgr. Hupp. Unfortunately, fewer graduates from these years have stayed in contact with the Home. In the future, the alumni association hopes to locate many more of the brothers from the "transition" years and welcome them back.

Just like last convention's '73-'74 graduates, many of them had very long hair while in residence, unlike the standard whitewalls-over-the-ears of those who came before them. In 1975, Boys Town marked its first year in Class B athletics. With a much-reduced student population and the chaos of reorganization, the Cowboys still managed a respectable 4-4 year in football and a 12-9 season in basketball. Thanks for coming home guys!

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRANTS



Pictured above are some of the alumni who returned to celebrate their Golden Anniversary graduation from Boys Town High School, the Classes of '50 and '51.

Those who registered to attend the Boys Town High School Classes of '50-'51 Golden Anniversary reunion were John Agee, Donald Burk, Tom Burnes, Lorenzo Delgado, Melvin Faust, Dean Ward, Art Baisley, Fred Estevane, John James, Al Lalonde, Elmer Marshall, Edward May, Virgil Mulligan, Ernie Nicholas, Burwell Porter, Charles Robinson, Leslie Thompson, twins Dan and Dave Villegas, Richard Watson and Joseph Wilson.

Smiles and tears were much in evidence around campus as were expressions of reflection and prayer in the chapels. Our jubilarians shared memories and told stories of Father Flanagan that improved at each retelling.

Most of these alumni still recall Father Flanagan as Director of the Home before his ill-fated trip to Europe in 1948. Almost all had attended his funeral. The much coveted photographs of Father Flanagan, available free at the Hall of History, were some of the first pictures to disappear. The BTNAA's unveiling of a bronze Father Flanagan Statue to be placed at Boys Town made their coming home even more special.

Special Guests Visit the Home from Ballymoe, Ireland

A delegation from the Ballymoe Boys Town Association in Ballymoe, Ireland - Father Flanagan's birthplace - was in attendance at the alumni convention for the unveiling of the Father Flanagan statue. John Griffin, Chairman of the Ballymoe Boys Town Association said, "We are here to celebrate and spread the word in our community and nationally about the alumni's positive gesture to honor Father Flanagan."

During their stay, the delegation had the opportunity to tour the Home and eat an evening meal with the children.

The welcome continued as U.S. Senator Ben Nelson, Congressman

Lee Terry, Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey, Girls and Boys Town Mayor Amanda Martinez and hundreds of alumni honored the guests from Ballymoe. They were pre-

sented with plaques, gifts, certificates, paintings and a U.S. flag flown over the Nebraska state capitol in honor of Father Flanagan. "It is my hope that when this flag is flown again or put on display, it will kindle the spirit of friendship between the people of Nebraska, Boys Town and the

hospitality and warmth they received while at the Home. John Griffin said, "I'm baffled really. They have asked us to be their friends for life and they just met us."

Steve Wolf, BTNAA president, presented gifts on behalf of the Association. "In celebration of the historic visit to Boys Town by the Ballymoe Boys Town Association, we honor the beginning of an eternal link between our great communities and the joining of our families. Our relationship is brought together by the loving spirit of the Lord's servant, Father Edward Flanagan, from Ballymoe - founder of Boys Town."

The monumental unveiling of the statue in Ireland is expected October 6, with a tour of sites Oct. 3-11 for alumni and friends. Father Peter is scheduled to unveil the identical statue in Ballymoe.

Father Peter McVery, a well-respected caregiver and lobbyist in Ireland for

children's rights, will celebrate the Mass and bless the statue. "Hopefully these statues will ignite a light that will never go out," Griffin said.



Ballymoe delegation from left to right: Fidelma Croghan; Assumpta Ward; Bernadette Griffin; Michael Gaffey; John Griffin; and Peggy Kennedy.

people of Ballymoe," Senator Nelson said.

Mayor Fahey recognized the delegation as honorary citizens of the city of Omaha. The delegation marveled in the

BTNAA Elects New Officers to Lead and Unite Alumni

- Steve Wolf '80 - President - At Large
- Jim Congrove '64 - Vice President - Region VI
- Russel Fabre '73 - Treasurer - Region VIII
- Ed Flanagan '81 - Board Member - Region I
- Ronald Fisher '57 - Secretary - Region II
- Alfred LaLonde '51 - Board Member - Region III
- Julius Brinkley '70 - Board Member - Region IV
- Robert G. Nelson '53 - Board Member - Region VII
- Raul Parra '64 - Board Member - At Large

The Winter issue will include biographies and contact information for each officer.



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2001 Convention Alumni Awards



Monsignor Peter Dunne

Alumni Appreciation Award
Boys Town counselor and priest
1944-1958

"I am so grateful, so terribly grateful. Having lived with Father Flanagan for four years, I saw the vision of that man...the genius of that man...the beauty of that man and the love that he had for the boys."



Ken Kawami

Alumni Service Award
38 years of service at Boys Town
1945-1983

"I think there are many more people who deserve this honor more than I, but I humbly accept this honor. Thank you."



Dr. Max Rittgers

Father Flanagan Outstanding Alumni Award
Class of 1956

"Give some good of your heart to people...don't ask what's right for you, do something in the name of Jesus and your gratitude for Boys Town and for others. I thank you."