

newsletter

TENLEY STUDY CENTER

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 2

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Dear Friends of Tenley,

WE ARE OFF TO WHAT IS —*without a doubt*—the best opening year for our High School Seminars. Just to give you a sense of the numbers: there are close to 50 students signed up for The Big Picture Freshman Seminar—last year there were just 35. The other three grades have an average of 25 participants or more—again all of them higher than last year. To put it simply: we have never experienced this kind of interest in our seminars before.

This academic year also marks the return of *Club Garrison*. This middle school activity was held at Tenley for a number of years during the late 70's and early 80's. This year we brought it back and it's been well received with over 20 seventh and eighth graders participating. *Club Garrison* seeks to instill in the students a solid work ethic through personalized mentoring, proctored study halls, and challenging physical activities. We also hope that many of the middle school students now participating will continue to come to Tenley during their high school years.

Yet, it was the trip to Madrid to participate in the Beatification of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo that has really marked the beginning of the school year. The group from Tenley consisted of 20 participants. Although we were in Spain for only 3 full days, we maximized them not only by participating in the two large, open air masses for the Beatification and Thanksgiving Mass, but also by soaking up the European experience. We took the speed train to the medieval city of Toledo where we had a chance to visit and pray at the stunning gothic cathedral and meander through the narrow, steep streets of the ancient city. Of course, we also bought the traditional replica swords and axes for which Toledo is so well known.

The following two days, we also visited the Prado Museum, the Cathedral of the Almudena, the Royal Palace, and Madrid's charming old town. It truly was an unforgettable experience not only for the boys but for the staff as well.

Thanks again for your continued support of all things Tenley!

Sincerely,

Joe Cardenas, Director
TENLEY STUDY CENTER

CLUB GARRISON

TENLEY STUDY CENTER is dedicated to the academic and character development of men of all ages. Its activities encourage them to see their studies, work and family responsibilities from the perspective of character growth and service to others. The spiritual dimension of Tenley's activities is entrusted to Opus Dei, a personal prelature of the Catholic Church.



Students in Madrid at the Beatification of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo



“WHY DO WE FALL?” Michael Caine asks Christian Bale in director Christopher Nolan’s *The Dark Knight Rises*. Not waiting for a response, he answers his own question, “We fall so that we can learn to pick ourselves back up again.” Though sage he may be, Michael Caine’s resounding statement would not hold true in one place—the Andes Mountains of Peru, during the 2014 YSI summer service trip. Had there been any falling, there certainly would have been no picking up again from those thousand-foot drops!

The 2014 Peru service trip kicked off at Dulles airport the morning of June 30. Early in the morning, our motley crew of adventurers gathered in one of the terminals. Some more awake than others, we were all extremely excited. We were joined by the Bostonian participants who had flown into DC the night before. Led by Tenley’s own Joe Cardenas and Ricky Ybarra, we all managed to check bags, make it through security, and load onto the plane right on time. The service project had officially begun!

After a brief stop in Panama, COPA Airlines brought us into the city of Lima the evening of June 30. A bus brought us through Peru’s capital, at which we were all staring out the windows with eyes wide open, some of us translating the ubiquitous Spanish better than others. We arrived at an Opus Dei school in Lima, Colegio Los Alamos, where we would be staying the night. The Texan participants arrived that night too, and the next morning we were all finally together, as our priest, Father Ed Castillo, arrived from Miami and completed our company. We loaded onto two large vans, pulled out of Los Alamos’ driveway, and commenced the seven hour drive up into the Andes.

That night, the second of the trip, our vans came to the little village of Llapay. And by village, I mean one road cutting through no more than twenty-five dwellings and makeshift stores combined. We were staying in the village at a retreat house built by Valle Grande, which was a kind of outpost of Los Alamos. The retreat house functioned not only as a home for the twenty-one Americans, but also as the home of the caretaker, Yayo, and his family, and as a school for the children of Llapay. Exhausted, but even more excited, we fell asleep anticipating our first day of work the next morning.

In the early hours of July 2, the YSI Texans, Bostonians, Marylanders, Virginians, Floridians, and Washingtonians were all set for Day 1 of our project. After breakfast and meditation courtesy of Father Ed, we all loaded into a van and a six-seater car. In addition to ourselves, the vehicles held the multitudinous materials that we had bought, using money that the participants had raised, and would use in our labor.



As we had stepped outside that first morning in Llapay, we noticed something that the darkness of the previous night had withheld from us. We had failed to notice the mountains. But as we emerged into the morning sunshine, we could see nothing but Andes looming over us. These fearsome monstrosities made America’s “purple mountain majesty” seem like a pile of dirt which I might find my little sister jumping on. No, these Andes were the real deal, the archetype of a something you would see Frodo climbing in *Lord of the Rings*. Then, another jaw-dropping realization hit – we would be driving up into them.

It was a brilliant idea, whosoever it was, to say the rosary every day on the bus. Had we not, we may very well have not come back. It will suffice to say that had Mr. Cardenas’ driving veered ever so slightly to either side of the road in the mountains (and I use “road” in the loosest sense of the term), we would have dropped literally thousands of feet down a mountainside. And I neglect to mention that Mr. Cardenas was driving stick shift while increasingly blasting Coldplay or Christina Perri on the stereo (ok, the Christina Perri might have been us).

But we did safely reach the village of Piños, our project location, high in the mountains without fail each and every day. Upon arrival in Piños each morning, we would split into our groups and begin work. My group was in charge of cosmetically repairing the inside of the church of Piños. We repainted the



altar and reredos, i.e., altar piece, the statues of saints, and the six other altar pieces called Retablos lining the side of the church. Heights student Ethan Welsh created a gorgeous lime paint which brilliantly lit up his retablo like fireworks. Another group repaired and repainted the pews of the church and the Andas, which are wooden platforms carried in religious processions. Yet another group cleaned and repainted the outside walls of the church, an especially grueling job since they worked outside in the beating sun. The fourth group replastered and repainted the inside walls of the church.

Ricky Ybarra supervised the inside of the church. Alex Hoff each day brought a few of us to the Piños schoolhouse where we would teach the children basic English like colors and our names. Notre Dame freshman Alex Hadley was in charge of selecting one or two of us to visit the elderly folks of the village, and Father Ed was always available for confession or spiritual direction. We worked each day from morning arrival until about 1 p.m., took a lunch break, and then resumed work until 4, at which time we would drive back to “home base” down in Llapay. Then we would have some free time, a time of prayer, Mass, dinner, a get-together, and finally bed.

Our work accomplished the fixing of the church. When we began, it was dusty old decrepit building, paint dulled and peeling walls everywhere, and so unfriendly that the villagers did not use it often. When we left, it was a bright, clean, beautiful house of God. It instilled in all of us a sense of pride for our labor, and we knew that having a beautiful church it would strengthen the villagers’ faith.

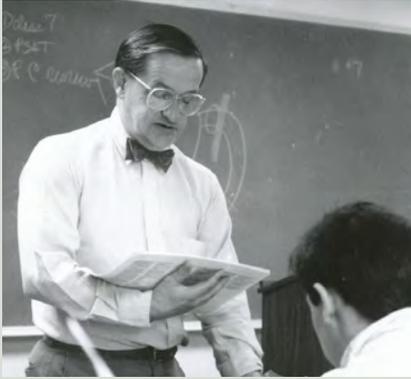
On the weekends, we also had some eye-opening excursions. One consisted of a two-hour hike up a mountain to a crystal-clear, sparkling, azure lake where we played soccer on a mini island. On a different occasion, we hiked to some abandoned, pre-Inca era ruins, where we had a huge bonfire. We slept out in the open that night, and were all amazed at the grandeur of the mountainside and the night sky (as well as some midnight soccer since the moon was so bright).

After three weeks, we packed up and headed back to Lima. We spent a day touring Lima, seeing the presidential palace and eating from good old American chains (Papa John’s and McDonald’s). Most of us were quite ravenous, having overcome some nasty stomach bugs during our stay. And at long last, the final morning came — we drove to the airport, and spent all day flying to DC, landing well past midnight.

This service trip made me rethink my life — our lives — in America. Frequent confession, daily Mass and rosary, and working in a church was certainly a fantastic way to live three weeks, but what made the biggest impression on me were the lives of the Peruvian people with whom we interacted. The villagers of Piños were dirt-poor; many houses didn’t even have running water. They lived in shacks with sheet metal roofs and dirt floors. Yet these people were welcoming, generous, and simply joyful. Not once did I hear them bemoan their condition in life. The mothers of Piños insisted upon bringing us food out of their meager supply each day, and they would make sure we had seconds too. The whole village prepared a feast for us on the last day, though undoubtedly they did not have much of their own. I have heard countless times how lucky we are to live in America, to have plenty to eat, to go to school, to sleep on a bed. But nothing has come close to the wake up call we all received while working in the isolated Andes with poor Peruvians. It truly made an impression upon me — upon all of us — that is as deep as the rolling valleys of Peru, and hopefully as long lasting as the beautiful church we rebuilt. ★



IN MEMORIAM



DENNIS HELMING 1938-2014

WE HAVE RECENTLY LOST two stalwart members of the Tenley Study Center family, whose combined support was close to 75 years. They will both be greatly missed.

Dennis Helming will be remembered for his many innovative programs aimed toward the professional and cultural development of our community's high school students, including Program Advance and the Guided Research Program. His SAT prep program prepared many young men for decades, reaching a peak of 300 students a year in the mid-1990s. Dennis was a prolific writer perhaps best known for his biography of St. Josemaria Escriva—*Footprints in the Snow*. He also wrote a book based on his educational experience: *The Examined Life*.



LOU D'ADDIO 1915-2014

Lou D'Addio supported the Tenley Study Center since its very beginning. He loved to recall how he “walked the planks” as the site was built in the spring of 1966. He was a faithful financial supporter ever since those early days. Lou was among the earliest members of Tenley's “Godfathers” a group of supporters who come together a couple times a month for camaraderie, doctrine classes and a monthly morning of recollection. For the last years of his life, Lou lived in St. Bartholomew House on River Road where he received regular visits from the high school students who participate in the Tenley activities. It was a small way of saying thank you for his many years of dedication and support. ★

FROM THE TENLEY STUDY CENTER ARCHIVES

THE HEIGHTS STUDY CENTER rises out of the ground in the Spring of 1966. Started originally as a small center in Cathedral Heights, DC, it soon burst its seams with new, innovative youth development programs, which overflowed to several sites scattered through the DC area. These programs would be consolidated at the new Heights at its current Garrison St. location. A few years later a high school would take form, along with the many evening and weekend programs. When the high school moved to Montgomery County, it took the name with it, and the center became the Tenley Study Center. The flagship programs currently are the High School Seminar series and *Club Garrison*. ★

