



## The Continuing Achievements of Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar Miguel Harerio-Manenima

Miguel Harerio was born in a dugout canoe, the grandson of a Shipibo-Conibo Tribal Shaman, in the rainforest of Peru. His mother nicknamed him Manenima “He Who Travels”, possibly somehow knowing that her son was destined to travel to far off places. Today, instead of a blow gun and darts that he carried as a young boy, he carries a PhD and two master’s degrees in international relations, and is preparing to run for the office of President of Peru in 2011!

Commenting at the Tuesday Morning Rohnert Park – Cotati Rotary Club meeting, he said “much of my success is a direct result of Rotary.” “I would never have been able to have gotten this far without all of the friends and the connections I’ve made because of Rotary”. “I hold Rotary very close to my heart.”

When Miguel was 12 years old, he made a difficult decision. The only boy in a family of 4 girls, he left his village along the Ucayali River in the upper Amazon of Peru and traveled by canoe for three days to the jungle town of Pucallpa. He was an economic asset to his family, the hunter man, the fisherman. But even at that early age, he realized that education was the only way to protect his family from exploitation from the outside world. The rain forest and all of its abundance had been decimated by “The Exploiters” – the ways of his people changed forever.

In a 2000 interview with Jennie Fitzhugh, San Francisco Chronicle Staff Writer, Miguel said “They are an Amazonian people on the brink of extinction, He saw his rain forest disappear and he knew the only way to protect his people from further exploitation was to travel to the land of the exploiters,” to learn their ways and, in doing so, to

learn how to preserve his peoples simple life. Miguel is determined to be a leader who comes from the people.

“It is in this context that I am coming,” he says. “I don’t see myself as a savior of the Indian people, but rather as an asset to help them survive in the 21<sup>st</sup>. century.”

He survived the streets of Pucallpa for 5 years digging for discarded food in back of a Chinese Restaurant and playing his bamboo windpipes on the street corners for tips. Finally having enough money for a bus ticket, Miguel’s quest for knowledge led him on an exhausting two day journey over the Andes Mountains to the streets of Lima. In Lima, he found the missionaries who had worked with his village and they recognized him.

It was there, working as a Janitor for the missionaries, that he met Retired Petaluma Police Chief, and long time Rotarian, Chief Patrick Parks, then a Captain. Parks had heard Miguel play some of his native instruments, and had been impressed. Chief Parks was teaching a class on how the missionaries could protect themselves against militant leftists and Maoist terrorist who where killing foreigners during the early 1990’s. Chief Parks gave Miguel his card and an offer to visit if he ever got to the States.

Soon after Miguel was awarded a missionary scholarship to study theology with “Youth With A Mission, in Tyler, Texas. From Texas it was on to Sonoma State University to improve his English skills.

Chief Parks, helped Miguel procure a Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholarship. With that, he was off to England to study at Oxford University. He studied politics and economics for a year at Oxford and then returned to Sonoma State to graduate in 1999.

Next it was on to Stanford University having been awarded the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans, where he did his Doctorial Dissertation on “The Political Participation of Indigenous Amazonians in Peru – The Case of the Shipibo-Konibos”

Mr. Hilario-Manenima (“He Who Travels”) is the President and founder of the Peruvian Amazon Indian Institute, set up to help the indigenous people of the Peruvian Amazon make the transition from semi-nomadic hunting and gathering groups to healthy twenty-first century societies, while still maintaining their cultural identity.

For the past several years he has been in the banking industry creating micro loans for his people. He is currently visiting Sonoma County revisiting old friends, negotiating a book deal with Penguin Books on his memoirs, working with Retired Chief Parks on security issues that will be important as he puts together a run for President of Peru in 2011.

He is also an accomplished performer on the pan pipes and flute, and has released a musical CD entitled “Hope”

**Rotary is an amazing organization!!!**

Submitted by Tom Patterson – Rotary Club of Rohnert Park - Cotati

Information for this article is a compilation of interviews with Miguel and quotes published on the internet!