

ChicagoHistoryMuseum

Remarks of Gary T. Johnson,
President of the Chicago History Museum,
At the celebration of the Chicago's 171th birthday as a City

Welcome all of you to the Chicago History Museum.

Your Honor: every year, I have the pleasure of giving you the present of an image from our collection in honor of Chicago's birthday as a City. We like to think of it as a present from Chicago's past to Chicago's future.

Chicago hosted the third Pan American Games in 1959. Next year would be the right year to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary, but international sports are on all of our minds right now, so we aren't going to wait!

Back in 1959, peaceful competition among nations was an important motivation for international sports, as it is today. The biggest difference, I believe, is today's commitment to paralympic sports, which has added a very significant new dimension.

There were many great images to choose from, including posters of athletes vaulting downtown skyscrapers, but this photograph of Soldier Field is one of the best in our collection from the Pan American Games.

As befitted a sports event that engaged all of the Americas, the Pan American Games had a bilingual slogan. In English, "Chicago, city of hospitality." That was fine, but I like the Spanish version better: "Chicago, ciudad de agasjos." This has more of the flavor of "Chicago, warm and welcoming city," or even, "Chicago, lavishly welcoming city." That's the Chicago *we* know.

As I present this gift, Your Honor, "Happy Birthday to You" runs through my head, but so does another song, one that the GIs sang at the beginning of World War II. The song looked back to the victory of World War I. Do you remember the title? "We Did It Before, and We Can Do It Again."

And so, the Board and the Staff of the Chicago History Museum present you with this image of Chicago as a host city for international sports – a gift from Chicago's past to what every one of our communities believes can be Chicago's future.

Thank you.