

THE STORY OF A BOY, A ROPE, AND A TRUTH

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I am a coach in a junior high school. I work with 500 boys each day. This has been my occupation for over 20 years. I enjoy it.

Today was test day in climbing a rope. We climb from a standing start to a point 15 feet high. The school record is 2.1 seconds. It has stood for three years. Today this record was broken. But this is not my story. How this record was broken is the important thing here, as it is in many an endeavor in life.

For three years Bobby Polacio, a 14½-year-old ninth grade Mexican boy, has trained and pointed, and, I suspect, dreamed of breaking this record. In his first of three attempts Bobby climbed the rope in 2.1 seconds, tying the record. On his second try the watch stopped at 2.0 seconds flat, a record!

But as he descended the rope and the entire class gathered around to check the watch, I knew I must ask Bobby a question. There was a slight doubt in my mind whether or not the board at the 15 foot height had been touched. If he had missed it, it had been very, very close—not more than a fraction of an inch—and only Bobby knew the answer.

As he walked toward me, expressionless, I said, "Bobby did you touch?" If he had said "yes" the record he had dreamed of since he was a skinny seventh grader and had worked for almost daily would be his, and he knew I would trust his word.

With the class already cheering him for his performance, the slim boy shook his head negatively. And in this simple gesture, I witnessed a moment of greatness.

I said, "Bobby I'm proud of you. You've just set a record many athletes never attain. Now, in your last try, I want you to jump a few inches higher on the take-off. You're going to break this record."

As Bobby came up to the rope for his last try, a strange stillness came over the gym. Fifty boys and one coach were breathlessly set to help boost Bobby Polacio to a new record. He climbed the rope in 1.9 seconds! A school record, a city record, and perhaps close to a national record for a junior high school boy!

When the bell rang and I walked away, now misty-eyed, I was thinking: "Bobby, with your clear, bright, dark eyes and your straight trim body—Bobby, at 14 you are a better man than I. Thank you for climbing so very, very high today."

(Digested from the California Teachers Assn. Journal)

Date not known but was found in a file with other articles dated 1972.