

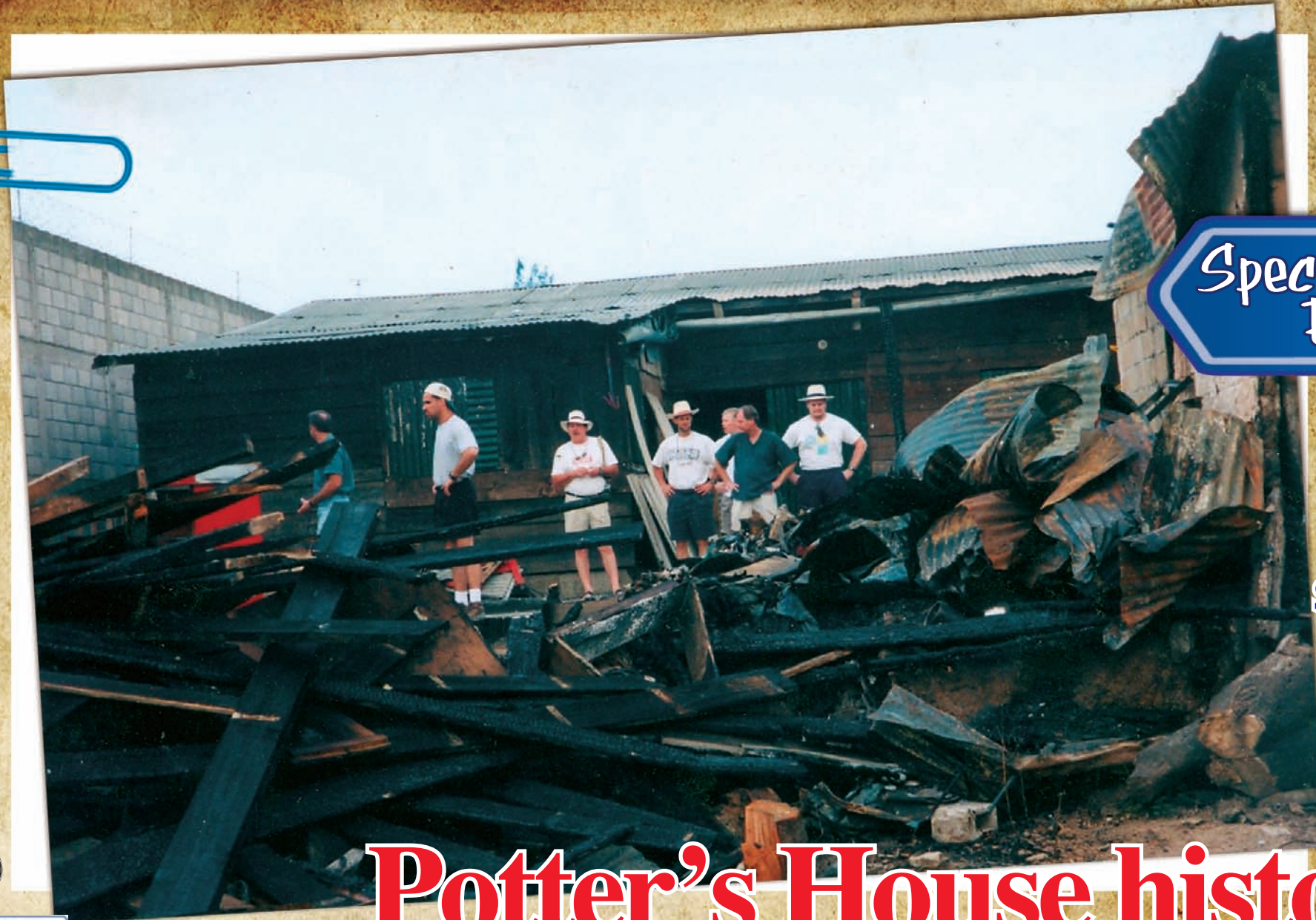


Potter's House
Association International
"Valuing the Scavengers as Treasures"

Year, 1993 - Purchase of the Land

Year, 1995 - Volunteers with a legacy

Year 1997 - The fire
A blessing in disguise



Special Edition

The remains of Potter's House after the fire.



Potter's House history



The Fire: A blessing disguise

After ten years of hard work among the Treasures, we realized that it was time for Potter's House to expand it's existing facilities. At that time, we decided to remain centrally located in the area of the garbage dump communities. Constructing there allowed us to be closer to the beneficiaries of our out-reach programs. It also allowed us to expand our activities among the poor, to maintain a secure storage area for our many donated goods (food, clothing, etc.), to build administrative offices, and especially to give a visual presence of being among our beloved Treasures. The ministry was growing and the staff was encouraged by the future.

Surrounded by neighbors who stored recycled materials and flammable substances in their little shacks, the fire risk was always present, but it was a risk that we at Potter's House were willing to take. One night in May 1997, fear became a reality. In just 30 minutes, a devastating fire destroyed more than 10 years of hard work.

Edgar Guitz, executive director of Potter's House, has vivid memories of the tragedy. The ministry already faced many challenges: limited resources, understaffing, and the Treasures' overwhelming needs. When the fire occurred, Edgar recalls: "In May 1997, we were awakened by a phone call at 3:00 a.m. It was the person guarding the facilities, who told me, 'Edgar calm down. I have some news to share with you. Potter's House is on fire, so please come as soon as possible. When we arrived at Potter's House, we saw firefighters battling the flames that had engulfed our facilities.'"

Edgar continues, "In times like that we always tend to think the worst. During those moments of chaos we were afraid that, besides losing our building to the fire, we had to face the possibility of people trying to steal the few remaining possessions. Yet, the Lord was faithful, and in the midst of that chaos, we saw the people of the community were not trying to steal from us. Instead, they were helping us by fighting the fire and also by forming a human chain to salvage our belongings."

Sometimes, an incident like this can be interpreted as a sign of the end of a ministry. Indeed, many staff members, including Edgar, believed that "when the sun rose and the fire was extinguished we could see the extent of the damage. In just 30 minutes, we lost ten years of hard work. Even though we were grateful that there had been no loss of life, it was a tremendous blow to the ministry. I thought that was the end."

However, God always has greater plans. When you trust the Lord, everything works for good, and since the beginning, Potter's House has been God's idea. "People were trying to encourage us, saying things like, 'Edgar, everything works for good.' But, at that time, I couldn't see any good," says Edgar.

Now, 14 years later, it is clearer than ever that God is in control of the Potter's House ministry, and he can bless us in ways that are sometimes difficult to understand. Because of that fire, Potter's House undertook the construction of new, bigger, and more substantial facilities. We now see that God tested the faith of many of us as leaders of the ministry and staff. Now, we can say that the fire was a blessing in disguise. Because we remained obedient and stayed committed to service the Treasures, the Lord has answered our prayers sending many people to support the construction of new facilities.

Edgar Guitz
Associated Director & Co-founder

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 (KJV)



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