

**Keynote address for Barbershop Harmony Society IBOD Meeting  
20 January 2012**

Presented by  
**Jack Fitzpatrick**

Mr. President, Members of the International Board, Staff members and our honored guests this morning.

Good morning everyone.

It is my great honor this morning to acknowledge our new board members Gary and Joe. We are all confident that they will bring a renewed sense of energy and though provoking viewpoints to the table.

As I look out across the room, I see it full of old and new friends---It is like being back home with the family once again.

Since we are all so close, I think I can feel completely comfortable about sharing a personal little secret with you all.

In the past several months, I have experienced some very strange events. I have come to learn that not only have these affected me, but the condition can be terribly infectious. I hope that, in the next few minutes, I can spread this ailment throughout this entire room. I also hope that when you leave here this morning, you will go out to infect our entire society.

You see, I have had a "disorienting dilemma". As I heard in a recent movie---The conditions of my existence have changed.

That is a little scary----isn't it? You see, after even one of these events, your entire brain is a little scrambled----and I have had three of these attacks.

You probably are wondering what it is that I had to face. It is rather simple. A disabling dilemma is an event (or series of them) that causes you to reexamine our beliefs, values and identity---even to the point of deciding to change our mind completely. Winston Churchill once said that most people, when knocked over with the truth, simply get up dust themselves off then hurry away as though nothing ever happened. A disorienting dilemma does not allow that option.

You are probably still a little confused.

Let me describe what happened to me.

I had been engaged in interviewing HQ staff members and writing their biographies for the Harmonizer. One day I received a phone call from Lorin May asking me to start a new project. Lorin wanted me to locate and interview the Joe Barbershoppers of our society. These are the unsung heroes who take care of all those little details that enable us to enjoy our hobby freely and easily. Joe Barbershopper has been doing this for many years now with little or no recognition.

I readily accepted this assignment because I have long been wanting to show the power that one man has to accomplish great change.

Anyway, this was to be my last project. My hair was getting a little grey and it was time to hang up the roller skates, pass the baton and just quietly live out the rest of my golden years.

My first "Joe" was Ron Hayes---anyone know Ron? Well Ron is here at the mid winter. In fact, he lives right here in Tucson. You can't, as you will see, miss him.

One of the many things that Ron does is to haul the risers all over for the Tucson chorus and the local Sweet Adelines. I was looking for a guy built like Paul Wietlisbach. What I found was a little short, bald headed guy who was 75 years old. Also, he has a high pitched voice with a pronounced New England accent.

At the end of every interview, I always ask the subject for one or two lines that describe their philosophy of life. Ron never hesitated a second before saying: "I've only lived ¾'s of my life. I have another ¼ to go and I have a lot of work to do."

RED ALERT! RED ALERT! My brain was under attack! Here I was looking for a nice leather recliner and Ron was out looking for more to do---more ways and opportunities to serve. I had just suffered my first disorienting dilemma.

A few weeks later, I was talking to my son Kerry. After many years as a bakery manager for a large SouthEastern grocery chain, PUBLIX, Kerry had just been promoted to Assistant Store Manager, which involved a transfer to another store.

While saying goodbye to his store manager Tony, the manager offered Kerry this advice---just this one line. "Kerry, if you ever see a problem, be a part of the solution." Unlike his father, Kerry was all over this and immediately resolved to be a part of the solution to every problem he encountered.

Today, a few months later, Kerry is the most popular manager in the store and in his district. Not only is he getting things done but his department managers are happy and seeing the store through new eyes.

For example, when Kerry sees an end cap that is in a mess, he goes to the someone in the grocery department and says: "This end cap needs to be reset. LET ME HELP YOU." and he heads right for the problem and starts solving it.

Now, in my other life, I was a senior Naval Officer. When the Commander speaks, folks start jumping! Having that kind of power over people can be a pretty heady (and very dangerous) thing. I took that attitude home, to church and everywhere I went-----I speak---you jump.

Here we go again, another RED ALERT. More brain trauma.

And did I mention that Kerry is BALD????

The finally damage was inflicted by Pete Carentz---everyone knows Pete.

I had just been assigned to look into the problem of non member participation in society chartered chapters. We were going to accomplish part of this by asking chapter visitors from the districts to take a look around as they visited chapters in their district. Pete Carentz, as moderator of the DP council, was instrumental in getting the request for assistance out to all the DP's.

Yes, it was follicly challenged Pete.

I happened to reach Pete on the road to Buffalo----(or somewhere up there in Seneca Land). Pete was on his way to meet with a group of men who were singing barbershop but not members of the society. Pete had been working with them and was about to offer them a licensing kit. This was old hat with Pete because he had already done it with two similar groups in his very small district.

While we were out to find out how big the problem was, Pete was finding opportunities and turning them into successes.

RED ALERT number three! It was really questionable as to my survival at this point.

My choices were few and simple----change or die.

Changing offered the most pain but it was the pathway to life.

Walk down that new path with me and allow me to show you all some things that you may not have noticed before. With a new perspective on the issues and the future, join me as we take another look at things---as they really are today. Change is in the air, it is a wonderful, exhilarating, life inducing change.

First, let's address "THE PROBLEM" (quotation marks as gestures). ( Holding up a large sign with the current membership number (approximately 23,900)).

Yes, that is the problem. Now let us look at that problem in different terms.

Charles Dickens in his Tale of Two Cities said that "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times."

OK Best (hold up sign)

And Worst (hold up sign)

OK "Worst of times"---- so we have a few problems-----membership is down and declining, more than half of our members are over 65 years old and about 42% of our members don't even bother to show up. Pete, Kerry and Ron would say that we have the opportunity of our lives.

"Best of times" Wouldn't you ALL agree that what we have is an army of almost 24,000 dedicated members----bonded together in a fraternity of the heart and held together by God's great gift of music?

Wouldn't you ALL agree that if Ron Hayes, one Joe Barbershopper, short, bald and 75 years old, can schlepp the risers for two choruses, then 24,000 of his fellow barbershoppers could accomplish greater things than we have ever considered sitting here at these tables?

The United States has a brand new aircraft carrier named the USS George H. W. Bush. It is so large that they recently brought a wooden floor aboard and played a basketball game on the flight deck. The Bush operates with about 90 aircraft. Now imagine, three other big carriers of the same Nimitz class, all fully loaded with aircraft and every aircraft loaded with a one megaton nuclear weapon. That is just about enough to split the world in half. Want to know how many men it would take to operate those 4 carriers and all of the aircraft? (HOLD UP SIGN)

If the Navy's 24,000 men could split the world in half, if asked, what can our army of 24,000 do, (pause) if asked.

If Pete Carentz can see opportunity where others see problems---why can't we?

If Kerry can be a part of the solution when he sees a problem---why can't we?

Gentlemen, it is long past time that we had a corporate disorienting dilemma.

There is an Army of 24,000, stationed at 800 outposts---out there where we need them to be. They used to be on alert but they are slowly drifting away from their posts.

An army without leadership starts to lose their edge. They march smartly up and down, have mock battles, complain and gripe about everything and eventually lose all unit cohesiveness. That describes our army today.

Sadly, our Army is a disjointed, shapeless mass----undisciplined and without a mission. They have no mission, my friends, because they have no visible leadership----- no Generals.

You gentlemen, seated at this table, are the Generals, the leaders they so desperately need. It falls on your shoulders to conceive a vision for the future and for success, to communicate that vision so ardently, so well and so personally that the Army will coalesce around you and follow you onward to victory.

We need a new vision for leadership and I had planned to offer a few thoughts on leadership that would apply to our society.

However, as I compiled that list, I quickly realized that you have already demonstrated that you all are keenly aware of these concepts and that is why you are sitting here today.

The truth is that we need something greater than some highly trained and knowledgeable leaders.

What we desperately need is: WINNERS

During the second World War, when General George Patton learned that his son had been captured by the Germans and held in the same prison camp as our own beloved Jim Miller, he did not appoint a committee to study the matter, he didn't hold a staff meeting. What Gen. Patton did was to climb into lead tank and charge through miles of enemy territory until he found the prison camp, freed his son and liberated all of the prisoners in the camps. General Patton was a winner.

The list of attributes that hallmark winners is much briefer and has only three items.

**First, a winner has BOLD IDEAS.** Never satisfied with the same old solutions and endless failures, the winner lives "outside the box", in a visionary world that always sees beyond the problems and never loses sight of the goal of complete success. Over the years, we have stayed inside of our conceptual box with a stream of cosmetic changes that have done nothing to impede our relentless decline. We have changed our name, changed our logo, changed our music---all to no avail.

Let me illustrate just how far outside the box we must think if we are to become winners.

Here are two programs for your immediate consideration:

**First,** in the several committees I have been a part of and in several years of personal research, I have come to realize that any program for recruiting and retention is absolutely doomed to failure.

There is a distinct possibility that, in the next twenty years, financial conditions will decimate high school music programs all over this country. We must seize this opportunity to connect with young men in high schools and show them who we are and what joy we can bring to their lives through music.

Therefore, let's get the chapters involved---starting today---by declaring that March 2013 is National High School Quartet contest month. You can do it today. It takes one single quick action by this board of Generals to bring your army to its feet

President Lamson can appoint the committee on Monday and they will handle all the details. Those who need to lead the program already have complete instructions in their hands. They await your orders'

Did I mention that this program should be revenue neutral?

**Number two,** (it gets a little harder from here on). I like singing with guys---I've been doing it for nearly 45 years. But I LOVE singing with the ladies. They hit all those high notes so cleanly and delicately. Also they dance very well (which most of us cannot do). I might add that I found many others who feel the same way. In fact, I found three mixed harmony chapters who were the mike testers at society contests last year.

About a year ago, our own General Cerutti, directing chapters of both genders, ended a joint annual show by having both choruses gathered together on the risers and singing some heavenly 8 part music. It was reported that both choruses wanted to sing more mixed harmony.

Once again you can make this idea a reality---today---by authorizing the birth of a new Mixed Harmony sub division of the Barbershop Harmony Society. Why not get that done today?

**Secondly, winners have effective and verifiable communications.**

It is hard to lead an army that you if you cannot or will not communicate with them. We have not yet even begun to find ways to reach every single outpost in our Army. During the chapter visitation program, one chapter reported that they had not seen a district officer in 10 years.

You can begin to correct that situation today. If you will approve those programs I just mentioned, President Alan can announce one program tonight and the other tomorrow night to over 2000 barbershoppers.

With some creative planning, the board can arrange the agenda for Portland to include one entire morning or afternoon session with Chapter Presidents. This is effective, verifiable and direct communication.

We have just begun to roll out Operation Harold Hill. This program is entirely chapter based started with one man having an idea and another having the vision to make it happen. The Harold Hill parade is forming right now at 800 different outposts all over America.

The Harold Hill division of our Army deserves to personally experience your open, ostentatious and unwavering support. Even though you are already involved with this program, why not pick up the telephone and call one of our small outposts in North Dakota and let them know you care---offer your support and assistance.

**Finally, winners have plans to include every member.**

Some lingering questions need your answers and will involve every member of this society.

- Some years ago we stopped supporting Logopedics/Heartsprings. One of the core beliefs of our founders was that of community service. What can and should you do to breathe new life into that underlying

principle? Pete Carentz has one answer. He expects it to be incorporated by 50% of SLD chapters by the end of this year. Not only does it fulfill our honorable duty but it will help to increase membership.

- Only 57 percent of our members attend any chapter activities. The other 43 sit at home or have found something else to do. We lose over one half of all new members in their first three years. Is there a common problem here? Solve that problem and we will be gaining members tomorrow.
- More than half of our youth members, in some age groups, drop out in their first year. Our youth membership, up to and including age 26, remains steadfast at 1250 members. There is an answer. Will you invest yourselves in solving this problem.
- There is an increasingly loud outcry coming from too many of our members----more than you might realize. They say that barbershopping isn't fun any more. And, quite frankly, for many that is the reality. What do you have to tell this disenfranchised members. More importantly, what is your solution to this problem?

If you fail to answer these questions and to do so very soon---there will be no more army. Slowly they will or like the old soldier simply fade away. So, here is the opportunity to act---boldly and decisively----right now, right here.

Representing your volunteer army here I am---just another old soldier--- Private Montana Jack, serial number 126037 reporting for duty. I have only lived  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's of my life, I still have  $\frac{1}{4}$  left to go and I have a lot of work to do. Where others see problems, I only see opportunity--- and I want to be part of the solution.

Is there a winner at this table who is willing to stand up, step out and lead our army? We await your orders.