

Saturday Show

Welcome and thanks for coming to our presentation of “Renewed Hope Within Your Chapter”. The Fremont Pathfinders are honored to sing for you and chat a little with you this afternoon. Renewing your chapter is probably on the forefront of over half of the Societies chapters right now. We understand as I am sure you do that “If you ain’t growing, you’re dying.” It’s never been truer than right now, when our Society has had issues with how to grow every chapter and shouldn’t just concentrate on those that are flourishing. We are going to sing for you and also talk a little about what we are doing to grow our chapter in membership, musicality, and determination. Some of it may look a little like how we practice, but hopefully that may help, too.

We’d like to start off our presentation by honoring our craft during the 75th anniversary of the BHS, and the reason why we traveled all the way up north to Toronto!

Songs sung (Harmony, Lazy Day)

Thank you....so to start, I’d like to give you a quick history of the Pathfinders. We weren’t always the top ten international chorus you see standing before you today. Starting over thirty years ago with a few men singing in the bottom of the Pathfinder hotel, we slowly grew to a decent sized chapter, having a growth explosion in the early 1990s not totally undue to some person recruitment by our then director (and now current director) Pete Stibor. The Pathfinders grew to over 100 members back then, but we didn’t always keep a lot of those new members. Our goals back then were different. “Bodies on the risers” was more of motto of ours, and if they could breathe, they could join us.

By 2000, we have had many director changes, board membership changes, and basically everything about us changed except what really should have at that point – a goal to just sing better. In early 2000, a few of us that were concerned about the way we were going met and talked about scrapping the chapter, and starting a new one. At that point we had about 70 registered members, but only 17-18 members coming to weekly rehearsal, we were over \$10,000 in debt, and

for the first time in a long history, we talked about and then decided not to compete in the fall contest. Just quitting it all was an easier move....and back then I had been with the Pathfinders for only a couple of years, so my ties weren't as deep as most of those on the risers and out front. Pete and I talked about what to do at that point and we decided not to throw away the baby with the bathwater. We had to figure out how to build back what we had.

A change was needed. This change started with a new administrative body and director. We just couldn't do things the same way anymore and expect different results. The Pathfinders brought Pete Stibor back as director - Notice I didn't say "Savior of the chapter"- The Director can't do that. Our new design meant we would focus on singing better at every opportunity. We would not be happy with just performing....we wanted to perform and sing better every time. This would also mean delegation at every opportunity. One person could not and should not do everything. The director would direct, the President and board would run the chapter and the Music Team would grow the abilities of the members.

Along with bringing back Pete, we put a Music Team in place that would make the musical decisions for the chorus. A solid membership to that committee and letting go of the "we've always done it this way" attitude changed our direction.

At that time, we told the membership to find singers, but they had to be younger, better looking, and better singers. The Music Team knew that membership buy-in had to happen. If I was going to direct and commit to doing that job, the membership needed to also commit to doing their job and in a better way. But it was easy....singing better is more fun.

We'll talk about some of these in a minute. First, we'll sing you a couple more songs. A big part of what has been instrumental in our growth is every member's dedication to singing better. This means that our music team (and notice I didn't say one single guy) chooses songs that we like to sing, have an emotional tie to the membership, and challenges their abilities. Here is "You Raise Me Up".

Song sung (You Raise Me Up)

We like that one! Now to drive the point home here, to achieve our goal for better singing means delegation and making sure we're getting out of own way. If we don't trust the music team to not only pick good music, but have the members moving in the right way, and working on things like sustaining notes, singing diphthongs, and breathing correctly, then the director has too much to do and am overloaded and everyone suffers. We have to trust our teams to get the job done hold them accountable.

Having teams is crucial if you are going to get things done. Here in Toronto we have most of our team members here that do things. Besides, PD our director and I as president, David Pinkall and Greg Johnson are our Associate Directors. Aaron Smith is our Program VP. Bob Misfeldt is our Operations Manager. Ray Brown is our Chorus manager. Isaac Payden is our Tresurer. Eric Grimes is our Music VP. We have a group of Script writers for our spring show...The Sick Puppies Society (self named). Our board members (raise hand)....Our chorus do everything we need done guy – Rod Denison. In fact, everyone in the chorus up here that does a job, whether it's to set up risers, move equipment, help with an event...anything...raise your hand. It takes a village. Now we have a fun one for you....

Sung song (Sold)

We have many goals....to reach them we do these things:

- Every week, and for every performance, we warm up the same complete way. We don't miss that, because if we did, we wouldn't ever achieve the level we need to reach for that day. Almost always, we have one of our assistant directors run this warmup. We keep the director doing what he does....directs.
- We have issues we are constantly working on. Besides the regular singing in tune we have to work on, we have riser discipline issues we deal with. Everyone deals with this type of hassle with a volunteer organization, and we are no different. We just keep battling as we improve.

- For every contest cycle we have a performance agreement that members sign. It tells the leadership who is going, but also gives each man a written agreement that outlines what is in store for them as we move toward that particular contest, with coaching and any practicing. Since we added this agreement, we have increased membership participation in contests, practices and retaining the music and performance.
- We take advantage of coaching now. Back in 2000, we didn't have any coaching...we thought we could handle everything ourselves. Once we decided how important it was to our "singing better" goal, we spent the money on those coaches. Not every chapter can spend money for that, but there are ways. Find a way to trade services and contact someone for help for free. It is out there.
- Every new member goes through an audition process. There are no "automatic members". Joe Connely, George Gipp, and Teresa Whetherbee all sang an audition to become members.
- We don't just sing to finish a song. If we can fix something or make it better, we stop and fix it. That may bother some, but the end result is proof that it works. Constant fixing and knowing we're not done making it better is our key to growth.

We would now like to do our contest set...you may have watched us perform this yesterday, but in case you missed it because you were getting ready for your own performance, we'd like to focus on our goal of singing as well as we can at each opportunity and perform for you.

Songs sung (Sweetheart of Sigma Chi, This Joint is Jumpin')

We did decide that competing was an important part of this process. To sing better you have to have more than just one of the wives saying we're getting better....we had to compete to get scores so we could gauge our improvement.

How many directors and Presidents are in the audience? Are you a member that has influence? The key point is this.....if you are not growing, you have to change and it starts at the top....

At this point, before our last song, we'll open it up if you have any questions that you would like to ask us.

Finally, the Pathfinders would like to close with a song that we have been singing since before our first International contest performance. It quickly became a rally song for us. You may have seen some of our older International t-shirts that say "We're on Our Way"....our newest shirts say some Canadian things, but more importantly on the top of the back is says "We're not done yet".

Song sung (On My Way)