

*The following is John Barzizza's address to the 2016 National Honor Society inductees on November 9, 2016.*

Brothers, faculty, parents, guests, fellow alumni, my family and to you the newly inducted members of the National Honor Society:

First of all, it is a sincere honor and privilege to be standing here addressing all of you as the Distinguished Alumnus for 2016. Secondly, I offer sincere congratulations to you new inductees in that you were selected based on your qualities of scholarship, leadership, service and character. Gentlemen, these are the qualities that make you leaders now and in the future.

Being a "Brothers' Boy" is and always has been extremely important part of my entire life, even before attending CBHS and knowing that in the future I would graduate from Christian Brothers where my dad, two uncles and a brother all attended. I often hear from alumni who went to other private or public schools about how they wish they had the very special bond that we all have as "Brothers' Boys". It is a phenomenon that cannot easily be explained, but rather I believe it is a gift from above. Please cherish this bond, gentlemen. Our class of 1966 just had our 50-year reunion in October. 60% of our living classmates were there, and that says a lot about our bond of the Class of 1966 that is still in existence today.

As a very young boy, some of my earliest memories of the Christian Brothers were of several of the brothers who would walk from Parkway and Central Avenue for hours all the way to Germantown to our home across from St. Georges Church and School. That is about 12 miles. My mother would prepare a big Italian Sunday dinner for them. After much conversation, the Brothers would prepare to walk back after dinner, but always Dad or my brother would drive them to the Parkway campus. One of these Brothers in those days was Br. Stephen O'Malley,

who in the late 1950's had just come to Memphis as the new principal of CBC High School Division.

Br. Stephen was an inspiration to me and even more so later in my life. In fact, Br. Stephen many years later upon the preparation of the celebration of his Golden Jubilee as a Christian Brother, called me to assist him in getting the refreshments together for the reception to be held in his honor. As a wine and liquor distributor he called upon me for my help and I was extremely happy to assist him. Over the years, Br. Stephen and I continued a very good relationship and on many occasions, he and I talked about his service to the CBHS community and particularly about the lack of vocations that the order was experiencing. Br. Stephen was extremely passionate about his vocation, teaching and molding boys into men and by this time nearly three generations of young men he had learned to know, serve, and taught. Due to the lack of vocations to the order, Bro Stephen saw that there was a need to develop a new role of the lay teachers to follow through in their teaching the Lasallian mission and tradition. I will truly never forget one discussion concerning the lack of vocations. This really had an emotional impact on him. His eyes teared up and he was truly moved and worried about the future of the Lasallian role in education. I know he prayed deeply to insure a solution would come and it did.

Br. Stephen is part of the reason why I am standing here and I dedicate my selection as the Distinguished Alumnus for 2016 to him, who was without a doubt, a loving and understanding disciplinarian who helped us boys know our boundaries in school and in life. He provided an example of what leadership and hard work meant. The dedicated men like Br. Stephen did this, certainly for no personal gain, but only as God's instrument to serve you, your families and Him. Brother Stephen and all the Brothers and lay teachers past and present are truly builders of young men in the preparation of you and all the young men here at

Christian Brothers High School, not only for the next four years of your lives but for life itself. I thank them all for their dedication.

I just want to be up front, I was not a great student and certainly not even a candidate of the National Honor Society here at Christian Brothers High School, for that matter nor was I in the top 20% of my class. I had to work hard in school due to vision issues that hampered my ability to read in long stretches but as I said, I worked hard...very hard.

Due to transportation in getting home each day to what was then rural Germantown, I really did not become too active in school activities until my Junior year, but I got keenly interested in serving the school my Junior year through the "Chronicle" and as Sports Editor my Senior year. That is when service to others became an important part of my life.

While serving on that staff with a fantastic group of guys, we won many awards for the 1966 "Chronicle". We had to, I had promised School Director Br. Adrian Powers after I was asked by "Chronicle" Editor-in-chief, Val Handwerker, to get additional money to have the first ever yearbook with color pictures. Imagine standing in front of the school's new director and asking for money for printing a few pages of the yearbook in color. I was scared out of my mind but he trusted me and made me promise to win the awards with the additional money he funded for the 1966 "Chronicle". For those who did not know Br. Adrian, he was very frugal, and absolutely a brilliant business man and another devoted religious educator who too I could call my friend.

In Religion class during the early part of my senior year we were given a Jesuit publication called "America", and upon reading one issue and pondering what I read, I changed my college choice from Ole Miss to Regis College in Denver, Colorado. Regis had and still has a great record

in academics and, in fact, it has a reputation as the “Harvard of the Rocky Mountain West”. As an aside, today Regis University had been a pioneer in adult studies offering a MBA and other Masters programs at five campuses in Colorado and Wyoming since 1980 and on the cutting edge of on line education some years later.

Being one of two from the Memphis area at Regis and a new college freshman I decided to get very active in activities as being part of the school’s student government general assembly plus joining all types of organizations including the yearbook where I served as Sports Editor in my junior year and eventually Co-Editor-in-chief.

My church and community involvement really began with Church of the Holy Spirit when it was forming near our home in the early 1970’s. I worked on the Capital Campaign. In 1971, I also started coaching baseball, then a few years later, GYAA basketball, to further my community involvement in Germantown and then coached basketball for the fifth and sixth grade boys at St. George’s Day School where my daughters, Christy and Jeany, attended school.

Besides my business, serving my family’s special needs became the major focus of my life after my profoundly developmentally disabled sons, John, Jr. born in 1974 and Justin born in 1981. I had to literally argue with the Shelby Co. School System’s Special Educational Department for services early on and through their school years to ensure that there was the proper educational classroom environment and education plan being implemented for both John and Justin.

I got a call in the late 1980’s to assist in reinstating the CBHS Alumni Association which went away about 8 years earlier. After a year as President of the Alumni Association in 1991, I was asked by Br. Chris Englert to serve on the CBHS Board of Directors which was very rewarding being a part of that team.

In 1993 John, Jr. was a resident at Arlington Developmental Center. He was transitioned from Arlington to a group home managed by Shelby Residential and Vocational Services now known as SRVS. For those of you who do not know, SRVS is the largest and most comprehensive program for the developmentally disabled in the state today. After joining their board that year I became very engaged in the management of the organization and served a Board Chairman for two 2 year terms, also lobbying in Nashville for the developmentally disabled population in the state. In 2006 SRVS purchased a much larger building that needed to be outfitted for the day services programs as well as office spaces. To fund the renovations, I chaired the Capital Campaign which ran from January, 2008 through December, 2011. It was difficult to say the least due to the deep recession but we made our \$7,000,000.00 goal through the grace of God.

Service has been a big part of my life, and to you I say that service to one's family, school and community should be an unstated goal in your lives for all the new inductees to the National Honor Society. Today, we are in a society where no person is an island to himself. We are a society that giving of one's self should be paramount in our lives. My challenge to you, gentlemen, as members of the National Honor Society, as you make your way to college; look to how you can make a difference in the lives of your family, your friends, and your community. Reach out in college, get involved, and do so in the name of the Lord.

In 2014 I was elected Alderman in Germantown to serve the citizens of the community where I have lived almost all my life.

Service to the organizations to which I have belonged and to some that I have led over the past years have given me great personal rewards and satisfaction in knowing that I have been able to make some difference in the lives of many, especially during my 25 years at SRVS. I

believe that it is through God's help that I have been able to be of service to my family, my schools, and our community. I ask God for His strength and guidance in all that I do.

"Serving is Leadership," and it is leadership that is, in part, why you have been elected to the National Honor Society. You young men are the leaders of the future.

Again, congratulations. I wish you much success for the balance of this school year and throughout the rest of your lives. I pray that God will bless you and in your service for the rest of your lives.

I would like to introduce my daughter, Christy Yarbrow with her husband Jason and their sons, Michael, and Christopher; my daughter, Jeany Dionne and her husband Anthony who is another Brothers' Boy could not be here tonight. Their 5-year-old son Miller will probably be in the CBHS class of 2030, and is at home this evening. My wife, Wanda, is traveling this week and could not attend either.

In closing, I want to thank the CBHS Alumni Association and their leadership Bobby Daush and John King for selecting me for this most prestigious honor.

Live Jesus in your hearts....forever.