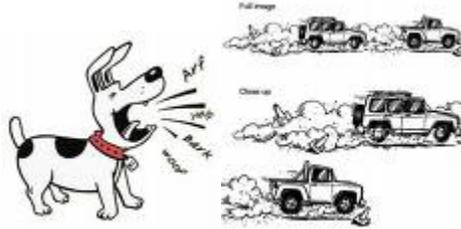


# *Dogs Don't Bark at Parked Cars: Leadership Midst the Din*

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Prepared for presentation at the NEHA Leadership Section, June 24, 2008, Tucson, AZ



Public speaking is the art of enlarging a two minute idea into a two-hour presentation. For you, however, I plan to spend about fifteen minutes touching on several hours of leadership issues.

I have been privileged to practice environmental health in the trenches as well as the managerial, policy and academic levels for almost 60 years. This has afforded me the opportunity to envision things that never were and subsequently achieve some of those dreams. I cannot imagine a more satisfying career than leading in developing agencies, statutes and programs; encouraging a number of outstanding protégés; and through such actions protecting the environment and public health for this and future generations.

An associate remarked that life is composed of three parts. Those are **learning, earning, and yearning** to be young again. For me, the three parts of life are those of **learning, earning, and returning** some of the knowledge gained during a lengthy public service career so that others may **learn, earn, and return**. I am fortunate in being able to do so through opportunities such as this leadership session.

Environmental health practitioners who have achieved become accustomed to the constant din of barking as a result of envisioning and performing outside the box. Other practitioners accept serenity within the silent confines of immobility.

Barking goes with the territory when one creates the future and escapes the confines of tradition and conformism.

Barking emanates from various interests including the private sector, the media, the voluntary sector, the political sector, and peer practitioners. And the barking signals opinions ranging from jeers to cheers; from approval to disapproval.

Environmental health problems, programs, public expectations, agency responsibilities and leadership continuously change. Our leaders have evolved from sanitary engineers through environmental health engineers, sanitarians and other environmental health professionals to the current situation wherein professionals other than environmental health professionals are increasingly filling leadership roles. At the state levels, responsibilities have shifted from public health departments to a variety of other agencies that now administer at least 85% of environmental health programs. To a lesser extent, similar change is occurring at the local level. And environmental health practice has expanded from narrowly oriented sanitation programs to embrace comprehensive environmental health. During all these changes, the vast majority of environmental health practitioners have remained silently

parked, expecting somebody else to lead while remaining in their comfort zones believing that talking to each other is doing something.

There are numerous outstanding leaders and role models in our field of practice, and I wish to select one as an example. Jerrold Michael and I both served as Navy Corpsmen during WW II. Our careers paralleled again while Jerry, still in his mid-twenties, was Manager of the Phoenix Environmental Health Program as a CDC assignee and I was the NM State Food Sanitarian. Jerry earned a graduate degree in public health engineering from Johns Hopkin and a MPH from the University of California. Jerry and I were co-recipients of the Mangold Award in 1963. His achievements in the Public Health Service are legendary and include key environmental health roles at CDC, the Division of Health Mobilization, the Indian Health Service, the Consumer Protection and Environmental Health Service, and subsequently Consultant to EPA while in the Office of the Surgeon General. Working with Admiral John Todd, Jerry played a lead role in establishing the Davis Calvin Wagner Award, the highest honor the American Academy of Sanitarians bestows upon a Diplomat. He retired as an Admiral to become Dean of the School of Public Health at the University of Hawaii for several decades. Jerry currently serves as Emeritus Professor at Hawaii, Adjunct Professor of Global Health at the George Washington School of Public Health, and Visiting Professor in Thailand as well as Beijing University. He has received Doctoral Degrees from Thailand and Tulane University. A Chair was created in his honor in 1985 at

Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 1987 the Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Elephant was conferred upon him by the King of Thailand. In 1989 he was awarded the Sang Kancil Gold Medal by the government of Malaysia. He serves as a consultant to the World Health Organization, the China Medical Board, is past President of the U.S. Association of Schools of Public Health, the founding President of the PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health, a founding member of the National Capital Area Environmental Health Association, and an active participant in the national public health political process. Jerry is a long time Diplomat of the American Academy of Sanitarians and a mentor to legions.

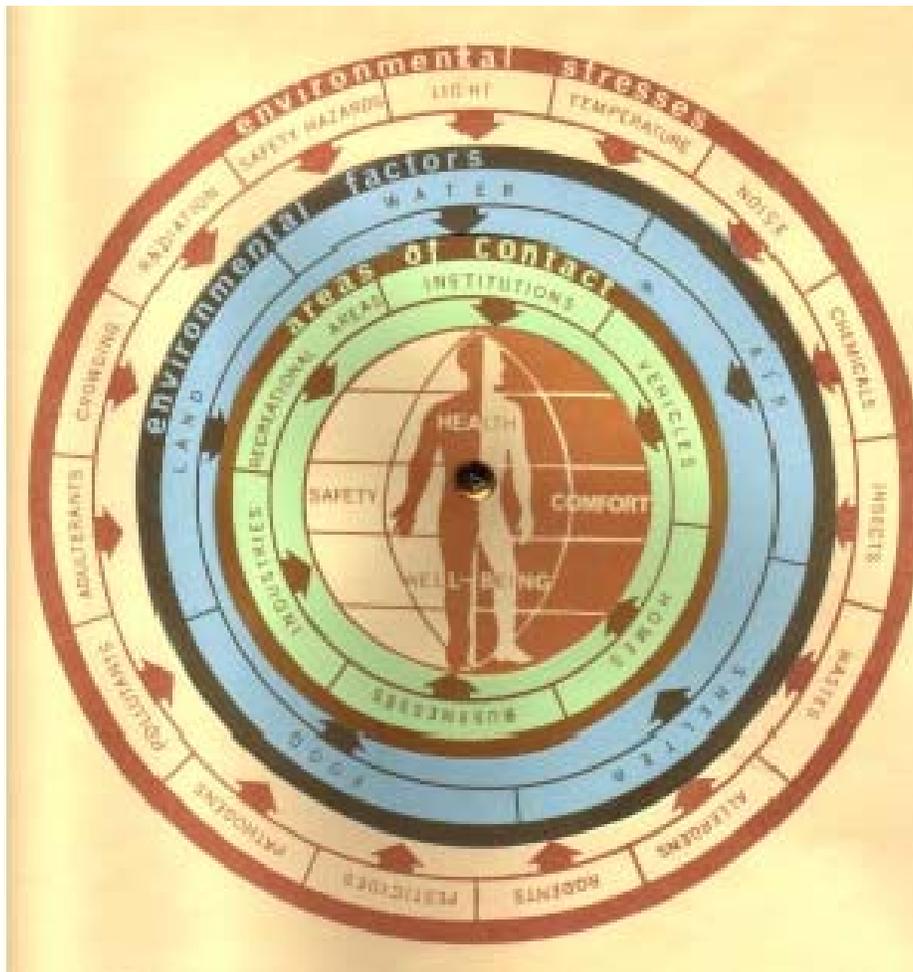
Jerry has sought frequent repotting to prevent becoming root bound and has had an ever evolving vision. Sanitarian, Admiral, Professor, Dean, Doctor, friend and mentor to many, Jerrold Michael has never parked and has created barking during his entire career, some from envy, but mostly from applause.

For such leaders, barking ensues when one creates new agencies, programs, approaches and questions established practice.

Barking occurs when one markets environmental health benefits that reach beyond reduced disease and disability, and include enhanced economic status, enhanced environmental quality, enhanced productivity, and

enhanced educational achievement, as well as reduced social problems and health care costs.

Barking is heard when one stretches his/her imagination and embraces the comprehensive field of practice, rather than a traditional health department sliver of the whole.



**Environmental Health Program Concepts**  
**Larry Gordon, 1968**

Barking occurs when one avows that professionalism is derived from achievement and resultant recognition by associates, the public and public policy leaders, rather than merely being engraved on a certificate.

Barking occurs when one leads in designing, gaining approval, and implementing policy that will improve environmental health, rather than assuming that someone else will lead.

Barking occurs when practitioners compete for leadership roles in the complex spectrum of public and private agencies delivering environmental health services.

Barking occurs when practitioners become effectively involved in environmental health prevention measures such as the planning stages of energy production, land use, transportation methodologies, facility and product design, and resource utilization.

Barking occurs when practitioners maintain communication with policy officials at all levels of the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Barking occurs when practitioners fully cooperate with the complex array of media to keep the public advised of needs, problems and accomplishments essential to ensure support.

Barking occurs when a practitioner corrects misleading media reports, and disavows individuals and organizations that manipulate science to further their political objectives.

Barking occurs when a practitioner questions existing and proposed requirements to ensure their validity.

Barking occurs when a practitioner engages in such controversial environmental health issues as global climate change, food irradiation, genetically engineered foods, the desirable unification of food protection programs, and energy production and utilization.

Barking occurs when leaders are out of step with their peers, and understand that every accepted opinion begins as a minority of one.

Barking occurs when leaders convert into reality that coherent vision that provides a platform on which to base and market their mission, their goals, their objectives, their programs and their policy actions.

Barking occurs when a practitioner leads in addressing environmental health issues even in the absence of statutory authority.

Barking results when a leader addresses problems on a multiple goal basis considering not only the health impact, but also the effects on agriculture, recreation, wildlife, ecology, environmental quality and the economy.

Leaders continue to be those dedicated practitioners who achieve eminence not because they wear the right labels or belong to the right organization, but because they have the right ideas, the right information and the right

abilities at the right time. Effective environmental health leadership is profoundly complex, frequently controversial, and invariably the result of individual capacity and initiatives.

Those who are constantly striving, leading, making waves, and defying tradition as appropriate, know that the constant din of barking goes with the territory.

Experience, knowledge, initiative, vision and the courage to question the status quo as well as practice outside the establishment box bring novel perspectives that generate constructive ideas as well as barking.

Leaders have the capacity and confidence to apply their knowledge, skills, and abilities. They stand up for their beliefs, they practice persistence and resilience, and they accept the fact that if you want a place in the sun you have to expect a few blisters along with the barking.

Leaders realize that trying to please everyone is a key to failure, and that the best way to avoid the din of barking is do nothing, say nothing, be nothing, and follow the path blazed by others.

Leadership on the road to improved environmental health is not an easy route. Only dead fish move with the current. But there are no glass ceilings for qualified practitioners who lead and seek responsibility.

With tongue in cheek, I know that most of you are aware that the principals and practices of leadership are learned by children as they participate in games and are programmed to respond to bells and whistles before

concepts and ideas. Almost any concept of leadership that is reduced to plain English elicits the response, "Oh yeah, I know that." Everyone knows these things because they have already been led. But as practitioners, they also learn that:

**Real leaders must be lovable.** Staff will perform satisfactorily for money, but they only knock themselves out for love.

**Real leaders must be ruthless.** Leaders must be prepared to sell their grandmothers if this will further the mission of the organization. Because practitioners who are both lovable and ruthless are extremely rare, real leaders are not common.

**And, real leaders must be independently wealthy.** The leader who is unduly concerned about a mortgage or educating children is usually in no position to hang tough when the situation becomes intolerable. In the private sector, the stock option helps. In the public sector, protection afforded by a personnel system is preferable to no system. And in academia, tenure is questionably preferable to no tenure.

And finally, I offer a few relevant quotes from Kent M. Keith's "Paradoxical Commandments" that are appropriate for leaders.

*If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies.*

***Succeed anyway.***

*Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.*

***Be honest and frank anyway.***

*The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds.*

***Think big anyway.***

*People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs.*

***Fight for a few underdogs anyway.***

*What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.*

***Build anyway.***

*People really need help but may attack you if you do help them.*

***Help people anyway.***

*Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth.*

***Give the world the best you have anyway.***

For leaders, the din of barking is akin to the sound of

music 

accompanying a job well done, indicating that leaders are not satisfied with the status quo, and are taking positive steps to fully embrace and effectively practice environmental health.



***Environmental Health Is In Your Hands***

Larry Gordon, M.S., M.P.H., D.A.A.S., D.H.L., has devoted almost 60 years to environmental health including roles as a county sanitarian, district sanitarian, state sanitarian, chief sanitarian in a municipal health department, founding director of a city-county environmental health department, PHS consultant, PHS Commissioned Officer, frequent lecturer for CDC training courses, founding director of a state environmental agency, founding director of a state scientific laboratory system, president of the American Public Health Association, state cabinet secretary for health and environment, visiting professor of public administration, senior fellow of a university institute for public policy, and adjunct professor of political science.

He was one of the 12 Founders and is one of 4 Diplomate Laureates of the American Academy of Sanitarians, and is a recipient of numerous state and national professional awards, as well as an Honorary Doctorate in 2007.

He was a founder of the Council on Education for Public Health, as well as a long time member of the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council.

He developed and gained enactment of numerous state and local environmental health measures, testified before the Presidential Committee on Executive Reorganization regarding the creation and scope of EPA, and testified before Congressional Committees regarding key environmental health issues.

He has over 240 publications and policy papers, many of which may be accessed at:

<http://hsc.unm.edu/library/development/endowment/Gordon/index.shtml>

and

<http://www.ncleha.org/larrygordon/default.asp>