

## From Dairy Queen to Starbucks!

By Jim Bob Solsbery  
Speaker and Humorist

[www.laughyourwayout.com](http://www.laughyourwayout.com)

“Change” is one of those things in life that we can depend on. We all have to deal with it, and the best way I know how to deal with it is through “humor!”

Before I go any further, let me clarify one of my core beliefs – humor is more than making people laugh, it’s an attitude! The use of humor should be a conscious decision that we make, and we should make it part of our daily routine. Always look for the humor in any situation – and you can trust me on this one – it just makes life easier.

A little over a year ago, my wife, Jan, and I decided to move from Big Lake, Texas to Houston. The move was mainly to enable her to further her career in public education. We knew it would also be a great opportunity for me to grow my professional speaking career.

Big Lake is a far, West Texas town of 2,500, with the closest Wal-mart over 70 miles away – a rural “gauge” of “living in the fast lane!”

Another rural gauge of “civilization” is whether the town has a Dairy Queen. Big Lake had one, and you guessed it, it was the town’s main restaurant and gathering place. Anytime you stopped by the Dairy Queen, you would see your neighbors and visit for a spell.

The Dairy Queen was also the “coffee shop” for several of the men to gather, drink coffee, and solve the world’s problems. The government should be run out of a small-town Dairy Queen. We always had the answers!

One of the first things I noticed about the Houston area was an obvious lack of the neighborhood Dairy Queen – a place where I could go and continue to exercise the right of every American - the inalienable right of free speech.

I did notice a plethora of Starbucks. They were everywhere – in malls, in Target stores, in hotels, in strip centers – not to mention the free standing ones on every other street corner. You couldn’t throw a rock without hitting a Starbucks. When we moved into our new house, I was afraid there was going to be one in the spare bedroom!

Having never been in one, I wasn’t a Starbucks kind of guy. The closest one to Big Lake was 75 miles away, and even though I had driven by it, I dadgummed sure was not going to go into it. I didn’t understand it, and I wasn’t willing to try it!

After a few mornings of drinking coffee by myself at the house, I knew I needed to find a coffee “watering hole.” A place where I could develop friendships and get the day started off right – just like I did in Big Lake. Since I had to endure an hour of rush-hour traffic to get to the closest Dairy Queen, I decided to go to the Starbucks around the corner. After all, I knew Starbucks was all about coffee, and coffee drinkers should be the same everywhere, right?

As I look back now, I realize I had not quite grasped other subtle differences between Big Lake and Houston. Like maybe rural vs. urban, redneck vs. white collar, or town (2,500 population) vs. city (3,000,000 population).

When in Rome, do as the Romans do! I gutted up, and into Starbucks I went. There were about 30 people in line, so I assumed my rightful position of last in line. All the other patrons were consumed in their Blueberries, or Blackberries, or whatever other types of berries there are. I noticed a distinct lack of small-talk and neighborly visiting. Oh well, that would be up to me to initiate.

It didn’t take long to find out that no one wanted to talk to me, so I just decided to listen. I realized quickly that I was in over my head. I didn’t know how to order! I was hearing things being ordered that were not on the Dairy Queen menu. By the time I had worked my way about half way to the counter, I was petrified. I didn’t want to appear “more ignorant –er” than I already am.

Finally, I reached the counter and the lady said, “Sir, can I help you?” I just blurted out “COFFEE!!” – I didn’t even know whether it was a viable order or not. She said, “Fine, what size?” I remember thinking “I’ve got it made – they think I’m one of the locals.” I didn’t realize my troubles were just starting.

I said, “Small.” She said, “Sir, we don’t have a small coffee.” I said, “You DON’T have a small coffee?” She said, “No Sir – Tall is our small.” I said, “Great, then give me your small coffee.” She said, “SIR, WE don’t have a SMALL COFFEE – TALL is our small coffee!” I said, “Fine, then GIVE me your TALL, SMALL coffee!!”

She said, “Whatever” and looked at me as if I had just gotten off of the train from Hooterville – at least she got that part right. She brought me my coffee. I gave her my \$9.00 and left! They stopped me in the parking lot and took their chair back. You see, for \$9.00 I thought I got the coffee and a choice of one of their chairs! Well, maybe the chair thing actually didn’t happen – but it could have!

Even though our moving to Houston was a “change” of our own choosing, we still had to deal with everything that came with it. We had to make the conscious decision to embrace it. And to embrace “change,” one must not only adapt to it but must also be willing to see it through the eyes of others. If we stay within our own perspective, we will never experience the great things that “change” can bring.

We love living in Houston, and it is because we chose to do so. Maya Angelou says, "Change the things you can and change your attitude about the things you can't!" Not only did we practice this, but we also made the conscious decision to use "humor."

When I told my wife about my Starbucks experience, we had a big laugh. We laugh about it nearly every day. When we run across other things that are "new" to us and are a little hesitant to give it a try, we just look at each other and say, "From Dairy Queen to Starbucks!" This just reinforces that we are in for another great experience - only if we are willing to "change!"

(Jim Bob is a professional speaker. His program, Laugh Your Way Out, helps stamp out negativity, raise morale, build trust, improve teamwork, and increase productivity by creating a HUMOR ATTITUDE. He can be reached at [www.laughyourwayout.com](http://www.laughyourwayout.com) .)