

MENTOR

By Kent Campbell

During the 38 years I was a teacher of music, 34 of which were at the collegiate level, I was constantly amazed that students and even other professionals in the field had little or no knowledge of just where they came from. I am not referring here to their mother's womb; I am referring to the history of their profession – in this case school bands, orchestras, and choral groups. It's an exciting, eventful, and heart-tugging story, full of heroes and perhaps a villain or two.

I can remember my early lessons in the school furnace room because there was no music room. Now most school music programs have their own wing in the building, if not their own building, budgets in the thousands and thousands of dollar, and possibly their own 18 wheel tractor-trailer to transport thousands of dollars worth of instruments, uniforms, and other paraphernalia.

Many of you in here can remember the small school gyms that were so short they had to have two center lines and padding on the walls at the ends that were only inches from the out-of-bounds lines. Now teams play in arenas that seat more than the football stadiums of our youth.

My point here, and I will get to roses in a moment, is that all this we now enjoy didn't just magically appear. People built it --- slowly --- one small contribution at a time.

This story can be adapted to much in our lives. What is the history of our family, our church, our town, our profession, and so forth? Who were the heroes, the doers, the builders, who with energy and dreams built all these things we too often take for granted and handed them to us?

I was moved at one point in one story in Robert Sutherland's superb winter issue of *Katnips*. In the piece about our friends, Jeff and Cindy Garrett, and their marvelous garden on the banks of the Tennessee River in Soddy Daisy, Tennessee, Jeff made a reference in two different quotes about Lester Smith, whom he called "our mentor." From what he said, Mr. Smith must have been quite a person.

What is a mentor? A mentor is a teacher, yes – but much more – a treasured friend, a memorable advisor, and admirable model of knowledge and ability, and most of all, one who inspires us to follow into a certain undertaking and working and loving and doing more with it than we ever thought possible. We have all had them in our lives – in our extended families, our schools, our churches, our workplaces, our clubs and organizations. They are those special individuals from whom we learned so much and whom we will never forget.

There is one other trait that all mentors seem to have – they are builders. If something has already been pretty much built, they are more than on-lookers and maintainers – they are improvers, enlargers, and excitors who stimulate others to adopt the same mind-set!

For example, let's think for a few moments about our beloved rose society. In the September 2004 issue of **The American Rose**, Vice President Steve Jones wrote a wonderful piece about 26 legendary Rosarians of the past. It included a short individual sketch about the contributions of each of them. Those “old timers” and many others on the national scene are gone now, as are many in our local home societies. And there are others, some seated among us here tonight, who might be getting a little tired, and anxious to see the rest of us come along a bit faster. These builders, our mentors, have handed our national and local organizations to us and in so doing have implied, “Here my friends - you've got it now – take it and go with it! Appreciate what we have given you and are giving you. Work to improve and continue to build this magnificent facility we call our rose society.”

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have been quietly challenged from the past and also here in this meeting. Within this challenge there's no room for complaining, for carping about the work of others, for being envious or disrespectful of those who give and do what they can. Nor can we be as the slothful servant our Lord spoke about in Matthew 25 who was given a responsibility and did nothing with it, unlike his fellow servants who worked and increased greatly what they had been entrusted with, much to the respect of all who read that parable.

So – let's leave here with a resolve, a new excitement, a new desire to inspire others to be doers, not just onlookers and riders-along. Let's become a new generation of **MENTORS!**