

# The Frances Maitland Memorial Lecture 2003

Presented by Robert Raszowski, MD

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## Some Thoughts on Mentoring

It is now over 15 years since I first met Francis Maitland – grey hair, a trim tailored look, sparkling eyes, and an intense smile. You would have almost instantly liked Francis Maitland – she lit up a room.

The daughter of a physician, she was Canadian by birth and a nurse by training. Many of us in the now “old guard” of CME first met her in her role as the Assistant Secretary of the newly created Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education, the ACCME. Through the 1980’s, she was our authoritative source of information about this new accreditation system. Experienced or a newcomer, she’d answer your questions, and you’d feel you better understood what was expected. She took as much time as you needed. Sometime the answer you got was not what you wanted to hear. But Francis was rarely judgmental, even when some of us needed it. And if she didn’t know the answer, she would help you find someone who could help you. It seemed Francis knew just about everyone in CME.

Later, as the ACCME became more well established, she divided her time between a maturing ACCME and the growing Alliance for CME. For a time both organizations were run from the same office and, at first, that was confusing. But Francis soon taught us to call the ACCME the “Council” and the Alliance for CME the “Alliance”. As the first full-time Executive Director of the Alliance for CME, she continued her mentoring, but now to the broader CME community. With her death, we lost CME’s best-known mentor, a colleague, and especially a friend. The tradition of mentoring certainly was lived on a daily basis by Francis Maitland. And the topic of mentoring this noon is to honor her memory.

The concept of mentoring can be traced back in myth, mythology and literature to at least the time of the Trojan Wars. Mentor was the principal character in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Mentor gave most of his life to the education and guidance of Odysseus’ son while Odysseus was away at war – for over 20 years. And from that story we learn that a significant and sustained personal investment lies at the heart of mentoring.

No single word is a synonym for the concept of mentoring; mentoring is multifactorial. It may be:

- Guiding, counseling, career counseling or moral support
- It involves being a role model.
- An advisor, a tutor, a preceptor
- It’s helping someone realize a dream.

Mentoring may go beyond the workplace to involve an integration of one’s personal life with professional life. If you’re lucky, a mentor can be a combination of a colleague and friend – and a lot more. Often the relationship brings out the best in both the mentor and the mentored.

Mentoring is about caring, about helping someone succeed. And if we’re lucky, mentoring is interspersed throughout our lives. Parenting is mentoring – we learn by their words and deeds – good or bad. Attitudes are usually caught, not taught. Teaching, too, is a form of mentoring. Mentoring is that part of the student-teacher relationship that goes beyond formal fact or concept exchange. A teacher has the potential to change the world. And thus, like good teachers, good mentors affect the future.

It has been said, "If you have a good doctor, thank a teacher". I'd like to suggest that if you have a good colleague in CME, thank a mentor.

L.A. Daloz, in his 1986 book on teaching and mentoring described mentors this way:

"Mentors are guides. They lead us along the journey of our lives. We trust them because they have been there before. They embody our hopes, cast light on the way ahead, interpret arcane signs, warn us of lurking dangers and point out unexpected delights along the way."

But Gayle Mowbray, the Chair of the John Hopkins University Women's Forum, was more direct, more challenging a decade later saying:

*"The most successful mentoring occurs when the mentor guides the mentored in such a way as to become competitive for the mentor's position. . . . It takes courage to train someone to be better" [than you are].*

Francis Maitland consistently tried to do that!

As long as I can remember, mentoring has been a tradition in CME. The mentoring process has been described as either formal or informal.

Formal mentoring is what, I believe, many of us might think of initially. Formal mentoring is a well-recognized part of personal development in business, medicine, law and in higher education. It usually involves some formal arrangement between the mentor and the individual being mentored, the mentee. Sometimes written expectations are established for a defined period of time.

But it is informal mentoring that is the established tradition of CME. It requires no contract, no long-term commitment; the relationship is frequently open-ended. It is the tradition of sharing – of freely sharing ideas and insights. It is the act of giving to someone an insight or giving something you might have worked on for weeks.

Last fall, at the Emmy Awards, Oprah Winfrey was presented the first Bob Hope Humanitarian Award. In her acceptance remarks, she quoted from "Our Grandmothers" by Maya Angelou:

When you learn, teach.

When you get, give.

I'd like to suggest to you that this is the tradition of CME, with perhaps one additional line:

When you learn, teach.

When you get, give.

When you have, share.

I didn't fully realize how pervasive the tradition of informal mentoring is in CME until colleagues congratulated me on being asked to give today's presentation on mentoring. Some even said they considered me to be their mentor. (If I would have realized that, I would have probably been more well behaved.) And then I learned that mentors are typically a half a generation (8-15 years) older than the mentee. (Thank you, I think.)

A good informal mentoring relationship sometimes goes on to become the basis for a good and lasting friendship, if you're lucky. And good friends continue to mentor you over time, even when neither of you recognize it. I have been blessed with several of those good friend-mentors . . . many of you are in the audience today.

Last year's Maitland lecture on mentoring was given by Marcella Hollinger. She had excellent advice for both mentors and mentees. For mentors she said:

- Be approachable
- Be available
- Be patient
- Be a resource
- Be empathetic
- Look for the teachable moment
- Don't always be the expert
- Help people fail forward

And for mentees she suggested:

- Be prepared
- Be inquisitive – be eager to learn
- Take the initiative

Later today, mentors and mentees will meet as the mentoring process in CME begins again. For some, the relationship will be short, polite and social. For others the relationship started today will be ongoing. And in the time that ideas and experiences are exchanged, the tradition of the mentoring process is renewed again. And the CME tradition we honor today in the Francis Maitland lecture continues.

Perhaps the best description of the mentoring process came in a Valentine's card two years ago from our youngest daughter. The message simply said, "At first you held me close, and then you helped me fly." When that describes your relationship as a parent, a teacher, or a mentor . . . you've succeeded.

Be a mentee . . . and soon you may be a mentor. And the fabric of CME continues to be woven.