

## **The Frances Maitland Memorial Lecture 2006**

**Presented by Barbara Schneidman, MD**

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Thank you for selecting me to be the 7th Frances Maitland Memorial Lecturer. Frances was a dear friend, as well as an exceptional mentor, and I am excited to have this opportunity to honor her, along with my distinguished colleagues who have preceded me on this podium. In fact, having had the opportunity to review the previous 6 speeches, I was at first left wondering what else should be said about this remarkable woman. As CME's best-known mentor, Frances embodied the essence of mentoring and passed along that knowledge to others. And she was a collegial and caring person with charisma and a winning can-do attitude in the face of life's toughest challenges. But before I begin in earnest, let me give a brief history of her past for those of you who never had the pleasure of meeting her. She was born in India, but raised in Ontario, Canada. Her father was a physician, which most likely influenced her decision to stay within the profession of medicine, first as a nurse, later as an administrator. She certainly had the ability to become a physician but it was quite uncommon for young women to enter medicine at the time she was starting college. She ultimately came to the United States to attend nursing school, and eventually ended up in Chicago working for the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons. She then went on to work with the Council of Medical Specialty Societies, which then housed the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME). In 1991, she assumed the position of Executive Director for the Alliance for Continuing Medical Education, but continued with her work at the ACCME until 1993.

My initial contact with Frances was in 1985; I was living and practicing psychiatry in Seattle, Washington. At that time I was appointed to the ACCME Review Committee (ARC) as the representative from the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB). The ARC was the committee that reviewed all the CME accreditation surveys and made recommendations to the full ACCME Council. I truly did not have a clue as to what all this CME accreditation was about. My only real CME experience at that time had occurred while either attending or speaking at various CME activities. I knew nothing about accreditation, the essentials, or the standards, plus I was being sent pounds of material to review! I was totally unprepared until this lovely and congenial woman sat down with me and walked and talked me through the first couple of meetings. But she did more than that; she introduced me to the wonderful city of Chicago, with its great restaurants with fancy chocolate bag desserts, fascinating conversations which took place on long drives from O'Hare airport hotels to the downtown restaurants, and dinners where the conversations continued. She also taught me how important it was to be collegial with my other committee members, and to make sure they were included. Having graduated medical school at a time when women role models and mentors were almost nonexistent, I felt fortunate to have met someone who was professional and well respected in the CME community. I knew immediately that this was someone I could truly learn from on both a professional and interpersonal level.

In 1988, the FSMB position on the ACCME Council became available, so I rotated off the Review Committee to sit on the Council. I was then asked to chair the PEPP Committee, though I never really knew what PEPP stood for (Policy on Educational Planning and Procedures). Frances always sat patiently next to me so that I not only understood the work of the committee, but also was able to give a coherent committee report to the full council.

In 1993, I moved from Seattle to the Chicago area, to work at the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS). I was now living about 25 minutes from Frances' home. We tried to get together regularly, not always monthly, but at least quarterly. Sometimes with others, sometimes just the two of us. Again, her ability to choose restaurants and wine opened up a whole new world of fine dining for me, and she also introduced me to the North Shore of Chicago.

One night she stood me up – hard to believe that Frances could forget an appointment, but in spite of calling her home multiple times (no cell phones then), I finally gave up, ate dinner alone and went home. The very next morning, a beautiful flower arrangement appeared with an apologetic note attached. She

actually had forgotten our date and was mortified about it. I was so impressed with how professionally and respectfully she handled this that I could not be upset or angry with her.

So now that you have a picture of this woman, let's talk a bit more about mentoring.

Mentoring can be defined as "off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work, or thinking." Mentoring enables an individual to follow in the path of an older and wiser colleague who can pass on knowledge and experience and open doors to otherwise out-of-reach opportunities. Fran's methods of role modeling and mentoring were unique, in that they did not involve only work-related issues. Her professional behavior was wide reaching and had a profound impact on how I handled myself in similar situations with my own interpersonal and professional skills. Even when she was diagnosed and treated for cancer, her behavior was still a model to emulate. For Frances, this was natural mentoring, through friendship, though she was clearly a gifted teacher, coach and counselor.

While working on my remarks for this presentation, I seriously thought about changing the name of this talk, using a play on the word "mentor" and changing it to "menschor." (There really is no such word). But Francis epitomized the Yiddish word "Mensch," which means a person to admire and to emulate, someone of noble character, integrity and honor. The key to being a real mensch is to be a person with rectitude, dignity and a sense of what is right and responsible. Now many people think that "mensch" refers only to males, and, indeed, it is rare to apply it to females. But it is also considered very high praise to describe a person as "a mensch," which clearly describes Frances.

Let me list her other qualities that made her an exceptional mentor. She was a gifted listener—she did not interrupt people, she reflected back on what you had said, and she was able to put into words what you really wanted to communicate. You had her undivided attention as if no one else was in the room.

She also had a gift for succession planning. She knew how to develop protégés and how to pass along what she knew to these future leaders. These are keys to being a good mentor. Passing along your knowledge is critical because it allows the organization to develop and grow. These are the kinds of common sense approaches and leadership nuances that could never be captured by a policy manual or database. She would identify future leaders, give them additional responsibility, and monitor their on-the-job performance, without being intrusive or obvious. Also, she didn't need to take credit—the success of the organization was more important than her personal success, and she was not afraid to admit her own mistakes. She had strong personal values and was committed to her work no matter how challenging. She had a "can-do" attitude, curiosity, and enjoyed continuous learning and working with people and teams. Now as a psychiatrist, I can assure you that Frances never professed to be a "therapist," but she probably helped many of her mentees get through personal and professional crises. At the time of her untimely death in 1999, a group of friends and colleagues planned a memorial service in her memory. We called it Frances Maitland: Renaissance woman because she embodied many qualities that made her such a very special, well rounded individual.

Now, let me summarize the key points and qualities that I feel contributed to her successful mentoring:

- Collegiality
- Congeniality
- Knowledge
- Professionalism
- Respect
- Natural Mentoring Style
- "A Mensch"
- Gifted Listener
- Succession Planning Expertise
- Not Worried About who Gets the Credit
- Strong Personal Values
- "Can-do Attitude"
- Curiosity
- Desire for Continuous Learning

I have discovered that this month is National Mentoring Month. This nationwide drive to recruit volunteer mentors for young people will target America's 77 million baby boomers with the message "Share what you know. Mentor a child."

This reminds me of a beautiful French movie that was nominated for an academy award in 2005, called *The Chorus* (*Les Choristes* in French). This movie took place in a correctional house for wayward boys (called the “Bottom of the Pond”) who were either socially awkward and/or bullies. They were extremely disrespectful of authority. A new teacher came in, who was actually a failed composer, and attempted to use the music to get the children to warm to him. He also identified one child with exceptional talent. With time, and with the growing success of the choir, the children lost their tough exteriors and became respectable young men, especially the one with talent that had been identified earlier, who went on to become a world-famous conductor. The movie looks back on his special mentoring relationship with that teacher.

Now I realize that what takes place in the movies is certainly not the real world of CME, but many of us believe that Frances did have some magical quality that turned us into pretty good conductors, maybe not world-famous but at least better than average.

As a centerpiece of National Mentoring Month 2006, the third annual Thank Your Mentor Day was celebrated on January 25, which was yesterday. That is the day to reach out to thank or honor those individuals who encouraged and guided us, and who had a lasting impact on our lives. They ask that we:

- Contact your mentor directly to express your appreciation;

- “Pass it on” by becoming a mentor to a younger person in your community;

- Write a tribute to your mentor.

So Frances, I may be a day late, but what better tribute than to remember you today in the presence of colleagues, close friends, previous awardees, and hopefully a large group of mentors and mentees. Because of your earlier vision that was communicated to us in such a strong, professional, and loving way, they will make the CME community stronger.

In closing, I would like to share a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson, which I believe is a reflection of how Fran viewed her life. “Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we will not find it.” Thank you so much for your attention, in tribute to this remarkable person that we called a Renaissance woman.