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MDRT Minute

Power of Mentoring

“Whatever success has been bestowed upon me thus far in my life has been the result of the kindness and dedication of mentors,” MDRT past President **Philip E. Harriman, CLU, ChFC**, told Main Platform attendees.

Revealing how the mentors in his life helped him overcome the family turmoil that marked his early years, Harriman, a 28-year MDRT member from Falmouth, Maine, recalled an idyllic early childhood. However, that gave way to tumultuous teenage years, when the cruelty of his classmates revealed that his parents were different. Harriman said his father was physically disabled as a result of multiple surgeries stemming from childhood health issues, and his mother suffered from mental illness that led to involuntary hospitalizations.

“By the time I was 13, my parents had become more and more abusive to one another,” he recalled. “I still vividly remember having to step in between them to keep the peace.

“A bitter divorce ensued. After the divorce, my younger brother was sent away to a special education school, and I was thrust into caring as best I could for my mentally disabled mother.” The trauma Harriman endured during his formative years took a toll. Adrift at age 15, he fell in with a troubled crowd and lacked positive direction in his life.

Yet, Harriman said, there were special people in his life who chose to look beyond the dysfunction of his family, and instead focused on his potential. Through these mentors, Harriman explained, he was able to move forward despite the disappointments of his upbringing. One of his first mentors, a middle school teacher, challenged Harriman to develop his athletic abilities through discipline, commitment, focus and goal setting.

By his senior year in high school, Harriman was serving as co-captain of the basketball team and earned a partial scholarship to play college basketball.

In college, Harriman said, a professor took the time to introduce him to the field of insurance. “Thanks to him, I discovered the miracle of how insurance works and what it does for families, businesses and communities around the world,” he said.

Once he earned MDRT membership, Harriman said, his fellow members showed him how volunteering would allow him to fully experience the benefits of the Round Table. “That was the best advice,” he said. “It is right here, at MDRT, where I discovered my leadership skills, and serving as your President has been the highest honor of my career.”

Harriman said many other mentors, including his wife, Christie, and one of his longtime clients, have inspired him to want to be better. “Would you agree that you got here — to this place of excellence — because someone cared enough about you to become your mentor?” he asked.

Harriman said mentoring is the heart and soul of MDRT, and he encouraged attendees to carry on the tradition.

“Become a mentor beginning right now,” Harriman urged. “Take time to reach down, reach back and lend a hand to someone trying to make it in this profession. It’s good tonic for your soul, and your advice will bear fruit long after your days are gone.”

Philip E. Harriman, CLU, ChFC served as 2007 MDRT President and is a 28-year member of the Round Table with four Court of the Table and 11 Top of the Table qualifications. His entire 2010 Annual Meeting presentation is available for purchase at www.mdrtpowercenter.org.