

## **The Importance of a Mentor** by Dennis Wright, CMT, ND

(Adapted from futureLMT.com) (blue italics added)

Mentoring changed my life. I would have never been exposed to massage were it not for a role model who became my massage mentor.

When I was 16 years old, a friend took me to the local YMCA. Being overweight, shy and working after school as a bakery janitor, my life wasn't exactly pleasant. I envisioned a life being obese, alone and stuck in a miserable job. The YMCA and the massage therapist I met there changed my life forever.

Bill Robinson was an 80-year-old massage therapist who worked in the health club, which was male-only then. Massage was free, and Robinson worked for tips. He was the happiest person I ever met and the only person I knew who enjoyed his work.

I was fascinated with his massage and people skills. Lawyers, doctors, local businessmen, etc. all came to Robinson for their weekly free "rubdown," which included hot towels for 25 cents. I was immediately attracted to the environment and the profession.

Robinson answered all of my questions and offered to train me (which included free massage more than once a week). I learned the basic strokes, which he had learned at the Pauline Fuller School in Richmond, Virginia. No certification; just a small diploma and his charisma. I was determined to become a massage therapist like him.

Life had other plans for me, and I ended up working as a machinist instead. I still went to the YMCA and received massage from Robinson, who always asked when I was going to take over, so he could retire. We would laugh and I would head off to work, envious of his job and happiness.

One day I came in and found Robinson was gone. He had succumbed to the ravages of Alzheimer's and had to retire. To this day, when students ask me what attracted me to this profession, I always tell the same story: a chance meeting with the aging massage therapist changed my life forever. I eventually attended massage school and became a massage therapist.

Now I have the perfect job. I mentor people, just like Robinson mentored me. I would never have met the people who inspired and changed my life if not for that tentative trip as a teenager to the YMCA, where I met my mentor, Bill Robinson, the father of massage in my hometown of Lynchburg, Virginia. *Healing Mountain Massage School was founded on the premise of compassionate one-on-one mentoring with seasoned professionals, both in a small classroom environment (8-10 students maximum) and outside the classroom for literal one-on-one time with experienced mentors (italics added).*

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

**Dennis W. Wright**, C.M.T., M.A., N.D., is the director of the massage therapy program at Miller-Motte Technical College in Lynchburg, Virginia.