

# FROM THE EDITOR

## The Value of Mentors



**T**wenty-five years ago this month, I started work as a reporter for my hometown newspaper. Nine days after graduation, and with less than 18 months of high school journalism under my belt, I was poised to change the world by the power of my words.

Sure I was.

It didn't take long to realize I could no longer write stories in longhand and then hunt and peck them out. I had to think and react on the spot, and understand that I knew far less than I thought. Within weeks, my bravado disappeared and there I sat, still just "a kid" in the working world.

Fortunately, my boss, John Simsen, took some time to mentor me. Most lessons were on the fly, but he gave me the freedom to learn.

In 1996, after 13 years in newspapers, I switched over to school communications. My superintendent, George Fleetwood, understood that I needed to be in the loop before, during, and after decisions were made. He also realized my knowledge base was limited. Over my first month, he took me on a tour of the district's 25 schools, discussing in detail the system's strengths and weaknesses, the quality of instruction, and the facilities.

When I needed it, he gave me time to learn.

After five years, when I wanted to

return to journalism, *ASBJ* had an opening for a managing editor. It was good timing, made better by a breakfast I had with the magazine's then-publisher, Don Blom.

Don has been *ASBJ*'s constant advocate, believing that quality journalism presented objectively is the long-term key to success. As he said then, we owe readers nothing less. At that breakfast, I realized here was another valuable opportunity to receive big picture training, and I have not been disappointed.

Several years ago, as his job and responsibilities grew, Don ceded his role as publisher to Marilee Rist. Giving opportunities to others—including Marilee, me, and many on this staff—is something he's done countless times in his 37 years at NSBA, and he has supported us in our careers.

As Don contemplates retirement and the next phase of his life, I think about how fortunate I have been to have had strong mentors. As a school leader, you know the value of personal guidance and effective coaching for your administrators and teachers.

Learning from the knowledge and wisdom of others is a debt that can never be paid back. It's our obligation and pleasure to "pay it forward."

Until next month ...

*Glenn Cook, Editor-in-Chief*