

Mentoring in the Millennium!

I am truly honored you have elected me to be your President for this year. But, exactly how did a kid from New Orleans make it to the Presidency of the American Association of Attorney-Certified Public Accountants? Well, I'll tell you, it's the **mentorship** of a college professor in undergraduate school back at the University of New Orleans. If it weren't for that undergraduate professor, this kid from New Orleans would not have had the opportunity to be your President!



Richard J. Alphonso

Therefore, the theme of my stewardship for the coming year is simple: It's called **Mentoring in the Millennium!** Perhaps, the most important contribution I can make to our Association may have nothing to do with what we as an Executive Committee or Board of Directors accomplish during the next year. It may be the impact we have on the lives of the people we touch through mentoring fellow Attorney-CPAs. If I'm successful at accomplishing this one goal, then I will consider my tenure as Your President an overwhelming success.

In 1980, when I was a sophomore in college, I met Dr. John Ellett, who would enrich and change my life in many more ways than I could ever imagine at the time. Dr. Ellett was my accounting professor who introduced me to the American Association of Attorney-CPAs long before I went to law school.

Over the years, I grew quite close to Dr. Ellett. He would often tell me about the Association; he would **mentor** me; he would eventually even write a letter of recommendation to law school. In return, he just asked that, after graduation from law school and passing the bar, I join the American Association of Attorney-CPAs.

But, as luck would have it, shortly after law school and passing the bar in 1990, John called me up and told me that he needed some help in forming the Louisiana Chapter of the American Association of Attorney-CPAs.

He also wanted to introduce me to another of his former "students" who might be able to help us out!

At that initial meeting back in 1991, we indeed formed the Louisiana Chapter of the Association and that was the night I met Rob Scharar, a past President of the Association! Here was a fellow professional who was both an attorney and a CPA and he didn't practice law or accounting. He managed the financial affairs of wealthy individuals. I figured that's where the action

was. And that's where I wanted to be! We had a common bond as Attorney-CPAs; we both had worked for what was then Coopers & Lybrand; and we both had John Ellett as an early mentor! Rob brought me to Houston.

As a dually qualified professional, Rob opened my eyes to the possibilities of using our professional credentials in a new and innovative way. He gave me professional opportunities that are too numerous to mention. He expanded my network of contacts. When I moved to Texas, he introduced me to the folks in the Texas Chapter of AAA-CPA—which is among of the strongest chapters in the country. In large part because of the American Association of Attorney-CPAs, I became a big winner. And I suspect many of you became big winners as a result of the opportunities afforded by our Association. It is all because of **mentoring!**

If imitation is the highest form of flattery, I'd like nothing better than to hear someone say that I've done for them what the Association has done for me. Therefore, during this coming year, I have asked that Past President, Allen Webster, and Joseph Brotherton, Attorney-CPA Foundation President, work with me in developing a program to fund a mentoring scholarship to reach out to undergraduate accounting students long before they ever go to law school--so that these students can get the mentoring they deserve for summer internships and similar programs. Over the next year, one of my highest priorities is to establish, develop, and maintain this program.

If just one person makes it to the Presidency of this Association in the next 20 years, as I have, or just a few more people become Attorney-CPAs because of this program, I think we will all agree the internal rate of return is so good, it's almost undefined!

As Attorney-CPAs, we are all winners because we are lucky to be in such exciting professions. And we are all blessed because of the unique opportunities afforded us by our dual qualifications. Back in 1990, I felt somewhat lost, as if I didn't fit in! After working so hard to achieve both credentials, I no longer fit in as an attorney or as a CPA. Through the insight provided by the Association, I now see a whole new world—a world filled with **excitement, anticipation** and a whole lot of **fun!** I must thank each and every one of you because, as far as I know, this is the first time Your Association has mentored an individual from undergraduate school to the Presidency of the organization. And for that privilege, I am truly honored!