



## Ronald H. Small

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### *Find Your Passion and Pursue It with a Sense of Urgency*

In getting to know Ron, you will find him very principled and willing to be candid about his opinions. Ron epitomizes being his own person. He is one of the first people to justify and achieve being a Chief Pharmacy Officer and thus positioned himself at the senior administrative table. Since retiring, he has become a Certified Executive Coach (CEC) to pursue his passion for leadership development by creating and utilizing centers of knowledge and excellence in health care processes.

He serves as a primary faculty for the Pharmacy Leadership Academy Leading for System Reliability in Safety and Quality Module as well as co-faculty for the leadersINNOVATION Masters Series Strategy and Tactics: Creating Transformational Change course. Although for most of his career he did not venture far from his North Carolina roots, now that he is retired he is traveling the world in his new role. Ron is currently a consultant with Joint Commission International and Joint Commission Resources.

Ron's bachelor of science in pharmacy and master of science in business administration degrees are from the University of North Carolina. He advises that *an achiever has to assume the burdens and rewards as well as be bold and courageous.*



Dear Young Pharmacist,

**I** was born and raised in rural North Carolina. The values instilled by my parents throughout my upbringing were the best “advice” I have ever received. I learned from them to be reluctant to use the “T”

word, so in sharing some of my life experiences I am very mindful that my stories are not necessarily a recommendation to follow my model.

My Momma was the most important person in the world to me and the primary source of my values, beliefs, and my life's passion. I say "was" because her life was taken in a health care facility at the hands of well-meaning health care workers, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, and others. Mistakes caused her preventable death. That tragedy provided some important learning experiences for the facility, for me, and for those health care workers who cared for her. So, even in her death, Momma was still teaching valuable lessons.

Let me share some learning experiences that helped shape me and I trust will be of some value to you. Recognize that this advice is based entirely on my own meandering experiences.

When I was about 15 or 16 years old, Momma asked me what I wanted to do with my life. To fully understand my response, you should know that no one in our family had ever been to college. I told Momma that I would go into the Navy because I thought the uniforms were cool. She said, "Is that what you really want to do?" I told her, "No, not really. I want to help people." I really wanted to be a doctor, which many of you in pharmacy can relate to. She suggested that I find my passion and pursue it with great urgency. The family could not support my dream financially, but she believed in me. She suggested that I look in the mirror and believe in myself.

While bagging groceries at the local food store, I had the good fortune to meet Homer Andrews, a community pharmacist, who asked if I was interested in changing jobs. He needed a person to make deliveries and do other odd jobs for his drugstore. At the time, I did not comprehend the role his mentoring would play in my life. I certainly never forgot his professionalism, his truly caring spirit for others, and his accepted responsibility to be a good community citizen. When I expressed my gratitude for his mentoring, he said that we should always serve and mentor each other. After that experience, it became obvious to me that I had to find a way to go to pharmacy school at the University of North Carolina (UNC) so I, too, could help people and fulfill my passion.

Having confidence to achieve a goal can also come from underestimating the goal's challenges and barriers. I assumed that all I had to do was apply to school. I really was naïve. Well, I made a