

Chronicle Opinions

Ralph...

It is finely appropriate that during the same week everyone is preparing for Father's Day, we're also recalling the memory of a man who was a second father to hundreds of young people in this community.

Ralph Field was an unbelievable man, and the lessons he taught during his 15-year stay in Caney are indelibly etched in the lives of his former students and friends in this community.

Those lessons were demonstrated rather than taught by lecture. They started with his family life, his intense devotion to his wife, Virginia, and their five children, all of whom were born in Caney.

He didn't have to tell us he was a Christian---he simply lived it. He never reminded us to be honest, morally sound, and fair in our comments about others. He exemplified those virtues.

Ralph seldom taught from a text. He took his students to the livestock barns, the fields and pastures, the construction site, the dairy, the mechanics shop. Rather than telling how it was done, he showed the way to do it. And each lesson had a meaningful purpose in life.

My sons are always impressed that I know how to tune up a lawn mower engine, weld a broken gate, re-wire an electrical switch, adjust a carburetor. They can't believe that a journalism school graduate knows how to de-horn cows, give the dog a shot, identify cuts of meat and candle eggs. They are amazed that I can tell the difference between loam and clay, wheat and barley, alfalfa and lespedeza. They can't figure out how I know that cows have teets and goats have tits. My little girl can't understand why I keep my old FFA jacket hanging in the office closet, rather than in the attic.

I do those things, however inadequately, because I am a

product of Ralph Field's teaching. And, there are hundreds more just like me.

The most memorable lessons he taught were those found beyond the FFA contests, the judging meets and the Vo-Ag shop. They were examples in integrity, compassion, cooperation, gentleness, loyalty and love. They were found in his eyes, his kind voice, and his smile. Never shall we forget them.

If there was ever a man with whom local father wouldn't mind sharing their day, it was Ralph Field.

A Caney mother told us today, "When my son put on his FFA jacket and headed out the door to school, I never worried, because I knew Mr. Field would guide him right, once he got to school."

He was a joy to know, and an inspiration to multitudes of young people who looked to him, and found, a truly good man.

-RMT