ROBERT YEKOVICH

I first met Robert Mann nearly two decades ago prior to a performance of the Juilliard Quartet. The performance was at the North Carolina School of the Arts where I was serving as the Dean of the School of Music at the time.

A few years later, Robert retired from the Juilliard Quartet. Having been so impressed with Robert when we first met and my being young, somewhat naïve but apparently fearless, I approached him about a vacant teaching position in violin. Much to my amazement, I managed to convince him, along with his son Nicholas, to accept the position, but only on a visiting, interim basis. To make a long story short, this eventually led to a residency of the Mendelssohn String Quartet (of which Nicholas was a founding member) that continued productively for several years.

During that initial, interim year, I personally chauffeured Robert to and from the airport and the School every other Friday. I also made a point of observing each violin lesson he taught during that time (approximately 100 private lessons as I recall).

It was a revelation. I learned more from observing Robert teach (I'm a composer and not a violinist) than in any other single-year period of my professional life. The profound insights into the music, the command and application of historically relevant information, the unbelievably detailed grasp of so much repertoire, the amazing anecdotes and of course the thoroughly amusing but always pertinent stories, altogether were an unsurpassed intellectual and artistic experience for me—a privilege of the rarest kind.

Over the course of that year and the many that have followed, my wife Michele and I have come to know Robert's dear wife Lucy, Nicholas, his wife Nancy and other members of the Mann family. As one of the many benefits of our friendship, Lucy introduced us to the paintings of Benny Carter and the so-called "primitive artists," primarily in North Carolina. Suffice it to say that "primitive" art now occupies a number of important spaces in our home.

My wife and I feel an enormous sense of gratitude for having been blessed with this special friendship. It has become, much to our good fortune, the kind of friendship that endures a lifetime.

