

Johnny Mercer's Class Act

One day in 1965, songwriter Johnny Mercer received a letter from Sadie Vimmerstedt, a widowed grandmother who worked behind a cosmetics counter in Youngstown, Ohio.

Vimmerstedt suggested that Mercer write a song called *I Want to Be Around to Pick Up the Pieces When Somebody Breaks Your Heart*. Five years later, Mercer got in touch to say he'd written the song and Tony Bennett would record it.

Today, if you look at the label on any recording of *I Wanna Be Around*, you'll notice that the credits for words and music are shared by Johnny Mercer and Sadie Vimmerstedt. The royalties were split 50-50, too, thanks to which Vimmerstedt and her heirs have earned more than \$100,000.



Mercer's generosity was a class act – meaning any behavior so virtuous that it puts normal behavior to shame. It was a class act when ...

- Alexander Hamilton aimed high and fired over Aaron Burr's head (an effort believed to be intended to stop the duel), although it cost him his life.
- Benjamin Guggenheim on the *Titanic* gave his life jacket to a woman passenger and then put on white tie and tails so he could die "like a gentleman."
- Capt. Lawrence Oates in 1912 became so frostbitten and lame on Robert Scott's ill-fated expedition to the South Pole that he made a very heroic decision. Rather than delay the others in their desperate trek back from the Pole, he went to the opening of the tent one night and said, "I am just going outside and may be some time." He thereupon walked to his death in a blizzard.
- Writer Laurence Housman took off his jacket at a proper English tea party so that a man who had just arrived in shirt sleeves would not feel embarrassed.
- Mats Wilander – in the semifinals of the 1982 French Open, at match point after a shot by Wilander's opponent was ruled out – walked over to the umpire and said, "I can't win like this. The ball was good." The point was played over, and Wilander won fair and square.



(more)

A class act is fueled by integrity, defined as “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles, moral uprightness; he or she is known to be a man or woman of uprightness.

People with integrity are admired, and folks are drawn to them. They elicit trust, and trust is a foundational principle of any relationship – in a marriage, in church work or in business.

Integrity, then, is a building block of success. Let us prove, by our actions, that we are a class act.

The integrity of the upright guides them (Proverbs 11L3 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter