

Assignment: College of the Consistory Grand Pontiff  
Submitted for the 19<sup>th</sup> Degree  
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32<sup>nd</sup> Degree K.C.C.H.  
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As the number 3 topical assignment for this essay stipulates, the off hand comments made by other persons during a lifetime, even casual comments, can have a profound, and lasting meaning and effect in our lives, and the lives of all with whom we come in contact thereafter. Often these comments never leave our conscious memory, and thus influence us, and others throughout our lives and beyond. In my case, as a university professor, I interacted with intelligent young people for more than 30 years, and thus was able to influence many of them in a variety of ways. Having retired, it is always a great pleasure to experience contact with them later, particularly when such contact is initiated by them. In fact, as I write this, I was contacted two days ago by a former student of 20 years ago who is now a South Florida attorney. He and his parents were in town for a training event and he wanted me to see his parents who are my age. The meeting was most gratifying as he and his parents thanked me for setting an example for him which has lasted throughout his life. He is the only honest lawyer I can name today, and I encouraged he and his father and brother to become Masons as we departed the visit. It is from this perspective that I develop the following text in response to question number 3 for the 19<sup>th</sup> degree.

To restate the essay subject question as a prelude to this essay: "3. Can you remember moments in your own life when something which was said or done casually by another person made a strong positive or negative influence in you? Most of us will not found nations, make major medical breakthroughs, or write legal opinions which change the course of society. But each of us can do something. This degree asks us to determine what we can do to improve the lives of those yet to come. Write an essay that describes how you have been influenced in a way that has changed your life or your perspective about maturity and responsibility, or, submit your thoughts on how you intend to be an influence to others within the context of the teachings of this degree".

As I muse back over the years, I can think of many men who made statements or exhibited behaviors that have remained with me, and changed my manner of interaction with others in an effort to improve the common good. These persons include my parents, other relatives, associates in and members of the Boy Scouts of America, fellow athletes at the University of Florida during my student days and thereafter, fellow U.S. Air Force officers, fellow martial artists in Judo, several coaches of varsity wrestling, and many others. For this paper I believe that the comments made, and behaviors exhibited, by an uneducated Karate Master on Okinawa during the early 1960's, and words and behaviors by the University of Florida varsity wrestling coach during the late 1950's clearly exhibit the meanings presented in the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> degree ritual. These two men, Tatsuo Shimabuku of Agena, Okinawa, and Richard Reisinger of Gainesville, Florida, (both now deceased) have never left my conscious thought, as I, to this day, still follow their teachings to the letter. In fact, as I consider the past (with both of them) today, I can think of no other influences that are still totally in tact currently as they were originally transmitted to me so easily and simply many years ago.

Shimabuku had a small dojo in which he taught Isshinryu Karate. Most of his students were U.S. Marines stationed on Okinawa at that time, and he often made certain statements in broken English as he taught specific movements. One of his statements was "seven times you fall down, eight times you get up" and another was "if you want to know something in a short period of time you will know nothing good". He did not elaborate on either of these frequently heard statements, but all men training under him there took many meanings away from those statements, depending on the context in which he made the statement. Both statements have profound impact on education, sport, and life itself when carefully considered over many

years. Both statements answer many questions that may arise during a variety of life experiences when considered, and reconsidered over many years. When a problem occurs, the alert mind reverts to them, and solace and answers often appear. I have found myself using these quotes in speaking with all manner of students, professionals, and family members throughout my life in a variety of settings.

Clearly, the "7 times" statement is appropriate for actual physical falls as Shimabuku stated it during those physical actions, and further, for use in all difficult problem areas, trials, or actual failures. During the many academic publication or grant proposal writing endeavors I was constantly involved in as an academic at the university level, failure was routine, yet if one re writes and perseveres, often an article will eventually be accepted for publication, or a grant proposal will ultimately be funded. Thus, the "never quit trying" axiom will ultimately result in some level of success, even in the face of almost catastrophic failure. With age and injury or illness the same axiom is of great benefit, and thus the gerontological link to ultimate personality congruence in advanced age. What a profound and lasting lesson to learn from a small, (5 feet 2 inches tall and 125 pounds body weight) uneducated man for whom the English language (beyond a minimal level) was unknown. This is a remarkable and chance acquisition of knowledge from a source that seems, on the surface to be distant and minimal.

His statement regarding the time it takes to really and substantially learn something related first to karate kata movements and he frequently spoke it. It seems that one must practice these movements until they become instinctual, and thus effective in combat. The time it takes for acquisition of this profound level of behavioral learning is variable, and for some never occurs, never the less, with continued practice one more nearly approaches instinct. The receipt of the black belt sho-dan (first degree) rank from him was given only when instinct was clearly evident in the movements of the practitioner. He never elaborated a definition for the statement, however, if one attempted to strike him in any manner and at any time, the attack was always blocked and effectively counter attacked immediately. I found that in university teaching, especially at the graduate level, this precept was essential to outstanding performance, and to the ultimate receipt of the Ph.D. by the student in question. Often students would complete their course work, select an original research topic, begin their study for the dissertation, and then fail one of their two required language examinations. They would be 3 years into the degree and then hit the stone wall of German, French, or another foreign language examination. Many would exhibit dismay and grief at the thought of failure, and it is then that this axiom, in all of its meanings, would be of great assistance to them. Ultimately, the successful student would learn that through repetition, anything could be learned and successfully demonstrated in the examination context. Thus, from him I learned the value of repetition and patience, and the mandate to never stop trying. It was these two basic virtues that I hope I have transmitted to many students, family, and friends over the years. Even at present, in the Blue Lodge ritual competition team, we are all still using these simple teachings with great positive effect.

Coach Richard Reisinger coached combative sports varsity teams at the University of Florida during the 1950's and 60's. Today there is a memorial "Silver Sixty's Judo Club" named in his honor by his former athletes at the University. The club embodies many of his teachings today and into the future. My first meaningful exposure to him came in the observation of his physique when he was in his early 30's in age as my varsity coach when I was a freshmen scholarship varsity wrestler at the university. He was, after practice, seen on an outdoor dipping bar apparatus doing high repetition dips. I went over to him and asked what he was doing. He told me that on his birthday each year he did a single set of dips with repetitions equal to his age and that he planned to do this until his death. I immediately asked how he planned to keep doing that until he was very old and he said "that is why I do it, to ensure that I will never be out of shape as long as I live. God gave me this body and it is my obligation to maintain it for His service". I was stunned because his task seemed impossible, yet he cheerfully accepted it, and his physique showed that he practiced what he preached.

His example still lives with me and many others today, and even though he never completed the assignment before his death, at beyond 80 years of age (his death occurred last year), he was still exemplary at death. In my own case, I, and several friends from that era, still meet at the university faculty exercise room seven days per week for workouts. These are concentrations of physical, and consequent mental exercise when compared to other retired faculty of similar age who use the facility. All of this is due to his example set for us in 1958 on the outdoor dipping bars. Each year when the "Silver Sixty's" meets at the university, all present remember him and his most influential teaching of us all.

In both of these past events, the men involved still live in the minds and behavior of their contacts so many years ago, and through them, to the many, many geometric contacts of each of the original recipients of their examples and comments. The 19<sup>th</sup> degree enables us to better understand these meanings and the magnitude of their profusion to, and thought of others, to the world at large for its ultimate betterment.

Having discussed the above two very personal events, they have become very meaningful interactions that I feel compelled to discuss in some detail in terms of the content of the 19<sup>th</sup> degree. In the 19<sup>th</sup> degree the relevant basis of the future as described by the repetition or expansion of such interactions in history is a major conceptual tenet. The fact is, as the degree portrays, that no event in history can be considered meaningless no matter how trivial it may seem at the time it occurs; this we learn in the 19<sup>th</sup> degree. Thus, we may never know in this life which of our events or behaviors may be of positive use in assisting those who arrive after our deaths. We are mandated in this degree and as Masons and men to act and behave in an exemplary manner as we have learned during our lifetimes. Today and the future is certainly governed by the statements and behaviors of the past as stipulated in the 19<sup>th</sup> degree ritual.

Those two men in my life, as previously described, did not assume that their effects on me (and many others) would be extrapolated to many others in many different fields of endeavor, yet they still live in literally 100's, if not thousands of people who live today and who will live in the future. By helping others during their lives on earth, they have impacted all future generations. Their names may be forgotten in time, but their ideas will technically live forever in many varied environments. The Masonic tradition, as espoused by the College of the Consistory, is thus a carrier of history and truth to future generations for as long as the fraternity itself exists, and beyond. I often consider in this context, the effects of the Masonic funeral ritual on all of those who experience it for the first time. In my case, the reason I initially became a Mason was because of my having listened to (and viewed) the Masonic funeral of one of my boyhood friend's fathers many years ago. I thought of this for years and my curiosity led me to petition a Lodge, and ultimately to become a Mason to learn about the meanings included in the funeral ritual. I suspect that many others have had this exact experience, or the experience of curiosity regarding the historic role of the fraternity in the formation of the United States.

An apparent weakness in our Scottish Rite today is that most men experience the degrees but never actually learn the detail of the content of each degree. I know this is the case in our current valley program, as when I ask even mundane questions during the education phase of each valley meeting, no one in the assembled member crowd at the meal, or meeting, has any response. Most, in fact, have no idea of the very names of the Scottish Rite bodies or what they represent, and here I include those men currently seated in the East in each body in the valley. Often they are there only to attain a title or an insignia or pin, rather than to give consideration to the meaning and content of each of the degrees in their particular body of the order. Thus, the transfer of knowledge to future generations appears to be stopped cold at that point. I have always liked Pike's commentary that, "It is the Dead that govern. The Living only obey". Can this be true for the Scottish Rite Mason if the ritual is not attended and studied carefully throughout life? Without the answer to this question, Scottish Rite membership means little or nothing to its members. Perhaps that is why with more than 1000 dues paid members only 30 or 40 attend the monthly meeting in the valley of which I am a member.

The synopsis of this consideration in the 19<sup>th</sup> degree is that we should attempt with our best lifelong effort to be Grand Pontiff in terms described clearly in the degree. We should universally evidence truth, equity, tolerance, and faith in God, so that others will continue to do so after we cease earthly life. We must demand fair treatment and religious tolerance for all as exemplified in the teachings of the 19<sup>th</sup> degree. It will be most interesting to observe the progression of this ancient teaching in the future, as the Muslim terrorists continue to slaughter their own and other innocent people world-wide. To close out this essay, I postulate the question, were the Knights Templar correct in their behavior during the crusades, or is it more salient for us to embrace those whose beliefs are juxtaposed to those of our country, government, and way of life? A question which I will attempt to address as we proceed in our study and work through the remaining degrees of the Scottish Rite. Finally, is there a point at which we, like the Templars of old, cease to tolerate Muslim teachings?