

On How Life Ends Up
Robert S. Griffin
www.robertsgriffin.com

I spent the past week updating an article I wrote ten years ago with the intention of submitting it to an online magazine. When I looked it over when I was done, I decided it was old news and dropped the idea. The one thing that wasn't old news in what I had put together was an introductory note about why I was doing the update. Here is a key portion of it:

A reason for sharing this writing now is gotten at in its [the decade-old article's] last paragraph:

The measure of a man or woman is the level to which he or she lives honorably. Living an honorable life involves living with *integrity*, where your actions are in alignment with your highest understandings and convictions. Even at my late stage of life, I'm working on my honor, and I'm a bit better this month than I was last month, and I'm gratified about that. I invite you to work on your honor. You have the precious gift of something I don't have, and that's time. If you start now and work hard you can go way past me—living honorably and accomplishing what results from that way of being was something I didn't even know was a goal to shoot for until very late in life.

Reading this article after all these years (I hadn't gone back to it until just this week), the last paragraph of another article I wrote around that time, "When They Attack," came into awareness, which ends with this same basic point.

Keep in mind where this ends up. At the end of our life, we make a fundamental judgment about ourselves: that we lived an honorable life or we didn't. An honorable life doesn't mean we did the right thing every time, but basically, we did. Basically, we didn't sell out. Living an honorable life doesn't mean we never lived irresponsibly, but basically, we lived responsibly. Living an honorable life doesn't mean we never shortchanged ourselves and other people, but basically, we lived life on the square.

We have to keep in our minds that there will be a time when there is only the past and what we have done with it [which is now for me], and that what will someday be the past is now and tomorrow and the next day and the next month and the next year. The question today and tomorrow and next month and next year is what is the honorable thing to do? and then doing it. It may take a while to get ourselves to the place where we are doing the honorable thing, but I think if we keep plugging on the best we can, we have a good shot of someday, down the road, smiling peacefully and saying “Yes.”

Sitting here now on this leather couch where I spend most of my time these days in retirement, and it is so gratifying, I have the “Yes” feeling I wrote about a decade ago. At least about the public dimension of my life I do; there are things in my personal life I very much regret. When you take final stock of your life some day with the result being either a pervasive sense of gratification or despair, it won't be just your professional, public, worldly actions that you'll assess; it will also be how you treated people, particularly those who were close to you and, even though you may not have realized it, needed you.