

Frank Lloyd Wright gives advice to a young devotee, in an interview at Taliesin, 1954,
in the form of a single sentence poem by Jack Shields Christensen, Honolulu, Hawaii.

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Spring Green

I was invited to meet the master architect Frank Lloyd Wright for a private conversation at his remote farmstead residence on a hillside near Spring Green in southwestern Wisconsin -- this appointment arranged by mailing to him a letter of introduction from a former secretary of his -- and the date granted was Tuesday, June 8th, 1954 that happened to be Wright's eighty-seventh birthday, when I was in my twenty-third year, but during the first minutes of our time together, it seemed to me the six decades that separated our ages miraculously disappeared from the room of local timber and limestone, uniquely designed and harmoniously decorated, where I had been taken to await Mr. Wright who presently entered, immaculately dressed and smiling and cordially asking, "Well, young man, just what is it you need to be talking with me about?" and so we sat and I told him of my upcoming

discharge from military service and my present indecision about pursuing higher education, and then he rested both hands on the knob of his cane and said, "Colleges are in business selling diplomas as endorsements of a student's long preparation for a certain kind of career, and this pigeonholes many individuals who are more imaginative and creative and possess a poetic temperament that naturally resists being laced into an academic straitjacket, but you can skip a cap-and-gown degree and instead just buy the classes you think might offer guidelines for developing your own personal interpretation of life, and then you can proceed as we do in my field of architecture, learning the basics of your chosen work, such as the laborious mixing of earthen slush with straw, and molding this into bricks needed for building some kind of plan, from a mud hut, up to a towering cathedral," and although I later

found out that this brick-making metaphor was the favorite advice Mr. Wright often gave to admirers arriving at his door -- no matter what their line of endeavor -- I decided to follow his suggestion, also keeping a clear recollection of that grand old man pointing the handle of his cane to indicate a solitary painting hung high on a nearby wall -- the portrait of a stately matron -- and saying, "America still needs pioneers, like my mother there, as our nation continues to enter all sorts of newfound frontiers that challenge individuals to rise above the commonplace and become uncommon, which in this democracy is actually our Constitutional Right" and then he stood and extended to me a firm hand of the irrepressible builder-thinker-radical-patriot who showed people the world over how to cultivate the supreme art of living in accord with Nature.