

Ramon Doromal

Professor Hays

Rhetoric 105

21 September 2015

### Immortalized in Wood

Throughout life, one can expect to form many different and unique relationships. However, some of the closest, and most genuine relationships will be developed during one's years at college. The signing of a class cane, which was an old tradition at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, along with many other universities, represented the formation of these close knit relationships. The old tradition involved the current year's graduating class. The classmates would carve their names into a wooden walking cane to commemorate their achievement. The idea of the signing of the cane represents the bonds the class formed because it allows them to immortalize a life-changing moment which they achieved together. This tradition did well to show the relationships developed in college due to its symbolic representation of bonds, unity, and lasting friendship.

Upon first glance, the 1947 class cane seems fairly primitive. The type of wood the cane is made of is unknown. However, cane's age is easily visible, as it sports several stray scratches, chips, and cracks. Looking past its simplistic facade, the cane represents much more than just an old strip of signed wood. The cane represents the unity and bonds formed by the 1947 graduating class. After close analysis of the 1947 cane, it was found that it bears the names of 74 different UIUC alumni (UIUC Class). This is significant because it shows that only a portion of the 1947 graduating class signed the object. In total, during the mid 20th century, UIUC had just over

twelve-thousand students (UIUC). The fact that only a small portion of the graduating class signed the cane shows that these alumni had a particularly special bond with one another. Although, the reason for the limited signatures is unknown. However, it is likely that the alumni who bothered to sign the cane were part of the same college, such as the college of business or engineering, which would explain why the signers of the cane shared such a close bond. Furthermore, each of the signatures found on the class cane each has its own uniqueness. This leads people to believe that each individual alumni hand carved their name into the cane rather than just having one person sign for everyone. This idea alone shows the closeness and brotherhood these alumni shared, because it shows that the alumni of 1947 took their time to gather in one place and share one of their last experiences together before graduation. However, even though the cane represents the bonds and the unity the class created, it also represents the lasting friendships that the class preserved through the cane.

The 1947 class cane immortalizes the friendships that the graduating class formed during their time at UIUC. With a quick glance at the cane, it is easy to identify that it was created using some type of wood. This is significant because wood, by nature, is a relatively durable and sturdy material. This durability and sturdiness portrays the strength and stability of the relationships the graduating class formed at their time at the university. The class of who signed the cane could have just as easily signed their names on a piece of paper. However, the fact that they took the effort to carve it into wood shows the passion and adamancy the class had for their friendships. Furthermore, wood itself represents the pure and natural essence of the alumni's friendship. This implies that the friendships formed by the graduating class occurred naturally as the class went through their years at the university. As addressed earlier, the 1947 class cane

possesses an aged appearance. This old wear and tear is significant because it is symbolic for how the friendships the alumni developed has lasted throughout the years. The class of 1947 has been graduated for almost 70 years, and the fact that the cane has managed to survive those 70 years is representative of the long lasting comradery the class shares with one another. The long lasting nature of the class cane also signifies the friendship's ability withstand the test of time. In addition, the cane as a whole is symbolic for the lasting friendship that the class shared.

Removed from context, the walking cane can be typically associated with old age. Namely it is a tool used by the elderly when their bodies aren't as strong as they used to be. This is significant because it implies that the signers of the 1947 class cane believed that their friendship would continue past their years at the university, and even when they themselves have grown old, the friendships which they formed when they were young would live on.

After analyzing the aspects of the 1947 class cane, it was found that the cane contains the three essentials parts described in the Toulmin Analysis. The cane contains theme, support, and warrant. The class of 1947, the creators of the cane, assumed that the people in the future who saw the cane would also share the same ideals of friendship and unity that they did. Furthermore, it is apparent the signers of the cane believed in the relationships one develops in college, along with the ability for friendships to continue past ones time at college. However, the class cane also utilizes a rebuttal of sorts. The fact that the class of 1947 had over twelve-thousand people, but only 74 people implies that the friendship shared by these people did not extend throughout their entire class. This shows that although many lifelong relationships are formed at college, some people develop these relationships and friendships at different points in their life.

The 1947 UIUC class cane embodies the bonds, friendships, and unions formed during one's experience at college. The old age and damage on the cane perfectly symbolize the strength and stability of the relationships that the 1947 graduating class shared. Furthermore, the fact that the names were carved onto a walking cane symbolizes the classes' long lasting friendship into old age. The ideals and values represented by the cane show precisely how close a group of friends can become throughout their experience at the university. The values of friendship and unity can be felt by anyone who takes time to analyze and admire the artifact. It is through this cane that the class of 1947 has immortalized the bonds they formed as a graduating class.

Works Cited

UIUC Archives. "Student Life at Illinois 1940-1949." *UIUC Archives Library*. University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, n.d. Web. 20 Sept. 2015.

UIUC Class of 1947. *1947 Class Cane*. Champaign-Urbana: UIUC Class of 1947, 1947.

For the class cane, I decided that a fitting author would be UIUC's class of 1947, due to the fact that they created the object. As for the title, "1947 Class Cane" seemed fitting because it accurately describes what the object is. For the date of creation, I simply used the standard year the class graduated. This is because a date of creation was not specified with the cane, nor was there any separate document to address the cane's exact creation date.