

An Agricultural Editor's Prayer

CLAY NAPIER

AS I WALK in the valley of knowledge shrouded in terminology, may I bear no malice toward those whose great words lie like heavy stones on your truths.

For their intentions are noble.

Since my lot is to work among men speaking many tongues, help me find the gems among the words so that we, with your permission, may get on with building that tower to heaven. May words imprison not men's finest thoughts; rather, may words melt the walls and free men's minds.

Instill in me patient efforts aimed at drawing clear lines between highflown words designed to impress and those with the worthy goal of scientific accuracy. Allow me to assemble words that cut clean and true like a surgeon's knife.

Fill me with a passion for getting facts right. May I never be too proud to get specialized minds to check my copy.

When I stand corrected, let not my hour be dark. Instead, may I feel fortunate to have at last learned some truth. Make me lowly enough to call for help when I need it, thankful for the help when it arrives, and proud enough to fight when the stakes justify combat.

Boost me over barriers of words. When I stumble, help me turn gracefully from what I cannot do to what I CAN do and do it with all that is in me. And when cruel critics fling my errors in my face, help me to laugh with the world and cry with it, then arise and try again.

Always remind me that I am surrounded by men with important knowledge. Without these men I would serve no useful purpose, for there would be no need for a town crier.

Lift my eyes upward and plant my feet on the ground.

Bless me with the awareness that when men tell me of their

work in another language, they are not necessarily trying to snow me.

May I not forget that we journalists, too, have our special jargon that falls dead on untrained ears, and that a man naturally rides a cloud when in a universe of his own creation. Give me the skill to pluck the substance from those clouds and make it work for people. And when I get hold of the substance, let me not ruin it with over-simplification. Grant me the wisdom to write it plain . . . but accurate.

Endow me with firm self control when administrators ask me to perform tasks in which I see no worthy purpose. Allow me to bend a little, at least, and more if needed. Indulge me the sense to realize that my administrator probably wouldn't be my administrator if he didn't know something I don't know.

Grant me the vision to see that perhaps I hold but a microscopic part of the boss' larger view because he's looking at the show from higher up on the mountain.

Guide my mind and hands when I paint the stuff of which university images are made. May I be as true to the abstract truth as the concrete world will bear, remembering always that one pure white ray of truth would blind us all.

Take not from me my simple belief that although truth bleeds and appears to die it is the only thing with eternal life . . . that the truth in me has lived before and will live again.

Let me forget not where the stuff of life comes from. If I be graced with success, let not my fancy clothes turn my head, for they came from the skins of animals, the cotton fields, and the labors of men with knotty hands.

As I relax in my centrally-heated house, may I not forget how it feels to peel out from under the covers on a frosty morning and build a fire.

Bestow upon me the knowledge of a professor and the wonder-filled eyes of a child through which to see it.

Fill my brain with all of the big words in the books so that I may converse with all men, but let me not forget that a hydrological event can be a mountain stream rushing to the sea. Soak me with all the ecological knowledge my soul can absorb, but let this form no crust that hides the beauty in blades of grass.

And when I reach those Pearly Gates, let me enter or be denied in plain talk.