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They Didn't Pray for the Reporter

BY C. P. GEHMAN*

These are days when prayer is in the air—and in the papers and magazines. There are endless stories about the efficacy of prayer, especially among the armed forces of our nation. Our boys in uniform have courage not only to face enemy fiendishness and guns, but to tell of their prayers—they are really brave men. Not so many civilians have the nerve to tell of their prayers. But whether they mention it or not, *all* really *do* pray. The swearing of those who want to think they are unbelievers is only an admission of their desire to pray. Certainly it is quite inconsistent to call upon God to condemn something when there is no belief in God.

So I say that everybody prays—but they don't pray for the shorthand reporter. I have had a recent experience in reporting an unfortunate church controversy. A number of weeks were spent in taking testimony and other talk. The members of the commissions hearing the matter and the people involved were all church people. The meetings were opened with prayer and closed with prayer. They prayed for Divine guidance in all their acts. They prayed for the witnesses. They prayed for the members of the commissions. They prayed for counsel on both sides, and for those directly involved. They prayed for our country. They prayed for the armed forces on land and sea and in the air. They even prayed for the Germans and the Japs. But they never uttered a word of prayer for the reporter—and he really needed it at times!

There must be a reason for this attitude of ignoring the shorthand reporter. But I am not sure what the reason is. I am confident in the illustration I give that there was no deliberate slight of the reporter. These were educated, intelligent men. Even if they did feel like looking down on the reporter, that would have been the more reason why they should have prayed for him.

The failure to pray for the reporter in these hearings is no new experience to shorthand reporters. It is the most common thing in the world for the shorthand reporter to be utterly ignored as he works. I have wondered whether it was because he was considered a sort of superman who could always take care of himself; or whether it was because

*Member of the Denver bar; reporter in the Denver district court; president Colorado state board of shorthand reporters. Reprinted by permission from the March, 1944, NATIONAL SHORTHAND REPORTER.

he was deemed unworthy of notice. Maybe a little of each. Maybe they think, "We pay him, what more does he want?"

Of course, to tell the truth, there are times when we are glad to be let alone. A little like the man who complained to his wife that she never expressed her love for him except when she wanted money; and her answer was the query as to whether that wasn't often enough!

So while I mention this apathetic attitude toward the reporter, it may be that it is just as well that it be so. Reporters themselves aren't always prayerful people. I suspect that there may be more curses than prayers in their hearts. By the way, it couldn't be, could it, that if we prayed for the mumblers and the verbal speeders and the shouters instead of hurling imprecations at them that they would mend their ways?

Many of us have noted in newspaper accounts of notable or notorious trials that they show pictures of the parties, the judge and the jury, the clerk, the bailiff, the newsboys and others, but rarely a picture of the shorthand reporter; and if the reporter happens to have gotten within the range of the camera, he is just ignored as unimportant. This is another evidence of the lack of thought of the shorthand reporter.

I am not really complaining. We are supposed to do our own praying anyhow. But there are few people who have any idea what a shorthand reporter does or how he manages to accomplish it. He is just someone about whom they know nothing and care less. It takes a shorthand reporter to really appreciate the achievements of a shorthand reporter. I often watch other reporters work, and I marvel at their skill, and wonder if they "have it all," until somebody calls for a question, and it is repeated back from the notes with ease and accuracy—generally!

Maybe if they knew us too well they would not think any the better of us. I can no more tell why they don't pray for us than I can tell why they pay their money to hear these crooners make their noises. Most people are really like sheep. I guess some fellow just started ignoring the shorthand reporter and the others are just following along the same lines. Just as somebody started the absurd spelling of the English language, and people have followed it slavishly ever since. Once in a while one of us starts a one-man (or one-word) crusade against the orthodox spelling, but even for that we are given no special credit!