

C O P Y

ETM
FW
JWH
(April 20, 1891)

Dear :

You ask for some counsel as to conducting the canvass. I will give what I can, with the feeling that it will not be of nearly so much value to you, as you perhaps suppose. The fact is one man can work best in one way, another in another, and each will do best in his own, and the way to find one's own is to pitch in and strike out like learning to swim.

In canvassing I have observed for myself the following rules. To another man they would be needless, but with my natural tendencies they are necessary safeguards for me to keep in mind. This is confidential.

1. Dress well. Have on best clothes and costly ones, immaculate linen polished boots, clean hands, hair brushed etc. all the day. Go into hotels occasionally and brush up, consult boot black. People will size up your importance and dignity by your personal appearance, and their gifts will depend somewhat on their estimate of your importance.

2. Keep absolutely and serenely good humored, though not gay. Never betray the least suspicion of irritation, under any circumstances whatever. This will be fatal. But enter the room in genial good nature and allow no lapse of it for an instant under any provocation.

3. In canvass provide yourself with an elegant stereo-type card with nothing on it but name - neither title or business. But keep your work so advertised through the daily press, interviews, news items, that every man will know you and your business as soon as he sees your card. Many business men receive only through cards sent into private offices.

4. On entering, go straight to your subject without palaver and ask if a few minutes can be spared you now. Do not allow the impression of the first minutes to be that you are going to make a long stay. If he is busy do not press the matter but with real cheer and sympathy say you will call again and ask what hours will find him least hurried - ten to twenty minutes with a business man will do if you have used the newspapers freely in describing your work.

5. Not only keep good natured but by humor and grace keep the victim good natured throughout. Make the interview pleasant for him. If you find him embarrassed, relieve him. He may be embarrassed by the smallness of his gift. The best class of men often are. He should be reassured.

6. If you find him big with gift do not rush him too eagerly to the birth. Let him take his time, with gentle management. Make him feel that he is giving it, not that it is being taken from him with violence.

7. Appeal only to the noblest motives. His own mind will suggest to him the lower and selfish ones. But he will not wish you to suppose that he has thought of them. He wishes you to believe him to be giving only from the highest motives.

8. Keep your enterprise well exploited before the public through the daily press. Never let more than a week pass without some public notice of it. This will be your most distasteful work, but it will be less so after you know the ropes. Your name for reasons appearing in (3) should always appear in connection with it. You must stand before the public as a public man and the distinct representative of the university. This is of the highest importance to your private daily canvass. You need not secure newspaper praise but you must seek such a place in the public eye, that private business men will feel honored by having you call upon them and know from your name who you are.

9. Seek some companion in your canvass, but never allow yourself to be delayed for the lack of one. Your companion must be a discreet man. He must be very nearly silent, unless a rare good talker. His presence not his voice is the thing. Two give dignity to the call. Three is too many.

10. Let the victim talk freely, especially in the earlier part of the interview while you use the opportunity to study his peculiarities. Never argue with him. Never contradict him. Search out the true points in his views or excuses and cordially acknowledge them. Seek in the main to agree with him, and where necessary to combat him, do so only by way of slight modifications of his views. Never combat anything you are not absolutely bound to combat by the very nature of your mission, but on the other hand seek to show that his views reinforce your work. If he is talkative let him talk, talk, talk. Give your fish the reel and listen with deep interest.

11. If he is taciturn do not try to make him talk but keep your own mill agoing while you watch his face. Never have any embarrassing silences.

12. Withdraw with cordiality when beaten, which will be four times out of five. Here is where he will watch you closely. Make him feel that the interview has been a pleasurable one. Make him a friend of the college for all times even if he does not give.

13. Even though he declines, do not regard or let him regard the matter closed. You will be around again soon, and things may look differently. We finally got (or rather I did) about \$20,000 from men whom would not again visit, by keeping good natured, never allowing a final no, and keeping at it. Never allow a man to commit himself against you if you can help it. More often you cannot help it. If you see it coming, withdraw at once with promise of a later call.

14. Watch for signs of weariness or impatience. Cultivate the instinct of knowing when you have done all that can be done this time, and cut off the interview at that point.

15. Never use pressure unless a man invites and clearly yields to it. The screw can be employed on very few men once. Never twice. Seldom try to get the last cent possible.

16. Aim so to conduct the canvass as to raise up a permanent constituency for the college. Try to make every man you canvass a friend of yourself and of the college whether he gives or not. And feel and make him

feel that you will be equally his friend even if he does not give. If you do, he will be sure to give next time. Consider the future interests of the college.

17. Never tell a man how much he ought to give even if he asks you to do so. Instead name the figures that others are giving whom he knows. Never assume to know his duty, either as to giving at all, or the amount.

18. Never exhibit the least disappointment at the smallness of a man's gift.

19. Be grateful and express it cordially for every gift.

20. Before entering on the canvass meditate on the downright merits of the question until satisfied that your cause is of such importance viewed from the highest motives of humanity as fully to justify all the gifts and sacrifices you ask. Allow nothing to induce you to undertake a canvass that does not possess you, through and through.

21. For your treasurer and other officers and trustees have men of distinguished sense and probity that command public confidence. This very important.

The above are some of the results of my own experience. These rules I have learned by the painful process of violating them — for the most part.

22. Another I add of more importance than almost any other or all combined. Work rapidly, continuously, and at a hot pace. If the work flags you are gone. Never allow the least relaxation of the nervous tension in yourself, in your friends, or in the public until the work is done. Canvass every day and all day, going rapidly from man to man; visit men also in their homes in the evening. Read nothing, write of nothing, think of nothing but the canvass. Speak publicly on that subject only. Bring every ounce of vital energy, every moment of waking time to bear. Regard every suggestion involving delay as treason and death.

Whatever success I have achieved or others have achieved under my observation in this work has been due mainly to the fiery energy in which the work of subscription taking has been conducted. I would not consent in the canvass for our work to stop an instant in the stormish days. This rapidity of movement keeps oneself in tension to do his best work. It brings the success that keeps up courage. It keeps the friends and the public encouraged. It gives momentum. It gives you something to report, and so the work gathers movement, force, breadth, momentum until at last it becomes a resistless torrent rushing on to success and carrying everything before it. It is not only the shortest but infinitely the easiest road, and leads straight to the goal. Now I offer these views to you not as rules to guide you but as the rules by which I have been guided in my work. You will hardly need them. But out of the chaff, if you find anything worthy of consideration, you are welcome to it.

May the Lord comfort, strengthen, and encourage you. You will find the work much easier and less unpleasant in the doing than in the contemplation if you work rapidly as I suggest. I have written in the order of my first thought.

Ever yours,

P.S. On reading over this letter I am struck anew with the fact that these rules have grown out of my mistakes and that on reading them you will yourself see how they have grown up as safeguards around a character so eager, impetuous and insistent as mine, and withal so naturally exacting and irritable. I could have done little had I not early learned them, mostly on the pastorate. I am also struck with this valuelessness to you, already far more expert in the arts of address and self-restraint than myself. Other rules on "cheek" urgency, profound earnestness, singleness of purpose, in the work I never have thought of because I have them by nature along with perseverance in a chosen line. One thing I learned with surprise in and a year in . Most men are pleased and complimented secretly to be courteously and respectfully asked to contribute to a great success by the man having that cause in charge. Let this give you "cheek".

Yours,

(The GEB files have, for many years, contained a carbon copy of a letter said to have been written by Mr. Frederick T. Gates. The foregoing mimeograph is copied verbatim.)

ER

See Board Chairman of GEB in 1907