



The Words We Live By

Brian Burrell

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At one time, this nation held a profound and simple faith in the power of words. Today we have become so engulfed in public cynicism that the whole notion of "words to live by" seems to us impossibly naive.

Brian Burrell's splendid collection shows that many of the phrases we once lived by can still have resonance today. A comprehensive, fascinating treasure trove of American common sense and whimsy, *The Words We Live By* presents a sentimental rediscovery of a lost era in American history. From fraternal loyalty oaths to marriage vows, corporate mottoes to monument inscriptions, Ben Franklin to Henry Ford, Americans for generations have committed their most cherished ideals to print, often in charming and plain-spoken language that perfectly represents our provincial, pragmatic, and romantic national character.

Burrell's work was inspired by his father, an obsessive collector of words and a chronic nostalgia buff who traveled widely with his family, introducing them to the landmarks, monuments, and other symbols of America's past. Throughout his life, he clipped or wrote down memorable phrases, quotes, mottoes, and quips, both the silly and the profound, the playful and the maudlin. Burrell has lovingly compiled his father's collection of scrapbooks, complementing them with extraordinary research into the origins of America's civic ethics, to produce a truly memorable and inspirational work of historical reference. More than just a compendium of classic American wit and wisdom, *The Words We Live By* brings this material to life with poignantly told stories, forgotten anecdotes, and deeply considered meditations on the meaning of the words that have shaped the American nation.

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