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Like a lot of other newspaper men, we're called upon at various times to speak at this or that function. So far no oratory for the ages has resulted. Quantity rather than quality has characterized our speech-making, up to the present.

Tuesday we had our toughest assignment—tougher even than being in a pulpit as a lay speaker when you know you've got no business assuming so sacred and solemn an undertaking.

Until you try to deliver a commencement address for an alert and highly critical group of eighth graders—graduating from Junior High—you have no idea of what a torture chamber is.

This is an important occasion, and you know it. You can read it on the faces of this horde of youngsters. They're going to remember the event for the balance of their days, and the printed program is going into their scrapbooks.

They're expecting to hear something that is worthwhile, yet entertaining. They don't want to be preached to, fussed at, or flattered. To tell the truth, they aren't exactly sure what they want, and the commencement speaker isn't sure either.

As you face them, waiting to be introduced, you are at least smart enough to realize that you've got two strikes against you before you even start. To these boys and girls, every adult is a square.

Since commencement speakers at a Junior High graduation are adults, they're a square just like the proud parents, relatives and friends who take a back seat in the audience and watch as you attempt to speak the language and reach the hearts of kids who are wise and think they're wiser.

It doesn't help any, when you stand there and remember that you've never cared much for commencement speakers yourself. You recall your own youth, when the orators forced upon you were tremendously dull and talked entirely too long.

Already unnerved because your son (among the graduates) didn't laugh when you tried out your best joke on him ahead of time, you brace yourself and meet your assembled executioners.

Trying to impress an eighth grade class is futile. Certainly you've got no chance to impress them when they have known you since their infancy, and are quite aware of your shortcomings.

So you decide to just be yourself, and pour your heart out. You remind them of the great blessings bestowed upon them by God, when He gave them healthy bodies and sound minds.

And, in all sincerity, you call attention to their countless other blessings. Having taken your own blessings for granted, time and time again, you ask them to be grateful—every moment of every busy day.

You urged them to judge others fairly—not by what they have but what they are. In using the yardstick, they are advised to consider how far a fellow human has come from, not how far he or she has gone.

And, in that vein of thought, you point out the injustice and the lack of intelligence we mortals display when we classify the worth of others by the houses they live in, the cars they ride in, and the clothes they wear.

You try to sell them on the idea that all of God's children are important, and deserve to be treated with tolerance, compassion and dignity. You remind them that the great foundation of the American way of life is respect for the dignity of man. You invite them to be



CREATIVE EXCELLENCE — Sue Joe Lowery, Albert Thomas III, and Sidney Keeter pose happily with the New Bern Mirror awards presented to them Tuesday when Junior High graduation exercises were held at the Masonic

Theatre. Sue Jo's engraved loving cup was for art, Tommy's for poetry and Sidney's for an original story entered in prose competition. Seventh and eighth graders were eligible to compete.—Photo by Billy Benners.

Trying to Keep Up with New Is Making New Bernians Old

You don't have to rummage through Grandpa's keepsakes—crammed in a corner of the attic—to discover that compared with him the New Bernian of today is a restless and decidedly uncertain soul.

When next you visit a grocery store, just take stock of the items in your basket, and those in the basket of the shopper who waits in line ahead of you.

Maybe it's part and parcel of our troubled world, and an outgrowth of our mutual frustration. Anyhow, we no longer purchase products that have admirably stood the test of time.

a part of that greatness.

As you speak, you have a gnawing feeling that what you are saying may sound pretty corny. But, because you believe it, you keep on saying it. If you can't make a good speech, at least you'll voice what is in your heart.

Sooner than you expected, your commencement address is over. You take your seat—breathing a little prayer that somehow something you've said has taken root in the youth of your own home town.

You feel good inside, when you hear the applause. You hope desperately that it isn't just politeness, and you feel humble and underserving. Maybe the speech didn't do anyone else any good, but for you it has been an unforgettable moment that you'll treasure as long as you live.

Gone are the days when a family used the same brand of soap or baking powder for generations. Instead, we avoid the old standby like it was poison, and invariably clutch the new.

Whether it be coffee, washing powder, toothpaste, or cigarettes, we're all easy prey for the shrewd manufacturer who comes up with a sales pitch that assures us "something new has been added."

Any and everything that we use in the household, including headache remedies, is apt to be on our shelves because it is claimed to have something included that no other competing product has.

Everybody who has a ware to peddle has long since gotten into the act. Naturally, you would expect the manufacturer who is trying to introduce an item that is unknown to resort to such tactics, but he has been joined by the old established merchandiser, either through absolute necessity or apprehensive fear.

If nothing else, the established trend proves that advertising pays. But for advertising, all of us would no doubt still be clinging to the things that our parents and grandparents remained intensely loyal to, through the years.

Of course, it is only fair to admit that there actually has been vast improvement in many fields. In frozen foods, particularly, progress has brought about a higher standard of living. By and large, the product of today really is better than what Grandma thought

was wonderful. Whether we're getting better meals with better products is debatable.

What should disturb New Bernians—and all other Americans—is the strong indication that much of the ballyhoo about "new" miracles that are added to our necessities and luxuries is strictly false, and if not false, rather misleading.

That it disturbs us enough, or any at all, is doubtful, considering the eagerness with which we accept even the most idiotic statement phrased in a commercial for absolute fact.

Obviously, all of the cigarettes on the market today can't be the best. Yet, if you believe the sales pitch that each has to offer, you are supposed to reach the conclusion that no other smoke can do for you what this particular brand can.

As for headache powders, the three leading brands on the market now are engaging in a ridiculous fight to belittle competing products. It's enough to give you a second headache, just figuring out which pain reliever to use without upsetting your stomach or suffering other harmful results.

It's the same way with toothpaste. This despite the fact that a reputable New Bern dentist tells us that all toothpastes among the leading brands are equally good for doing the one thing that they are capable of—cleansing your teeth.

The same, we've been told, goes for any quality shampoo. And, regardless of what some glib spiel

tells you when he rattles off his commercial, there is more than one deodorant available to keep your closest friend from shunning you.

How much simpler it was for Grandpa. He didn't even know what a deodorant was. What he did know was that enough soap and water properly applied could get you in good shape for church, a square dance or a husking bee.

As for this or that shaving cream, Grandpa didn't have to worry about that either. Somehow, with still more soap, he got his whiskers off. And despite all the wonderful hair tonic available today, it is easy to see that bald heads haven't vanished from the scene.

Once there was nothing new under the sun. Now everything is new, and more newness hits the market just as fast as packages can be turned out by the printers, and commercials can be written.

No doubt about it, we're a troubled bunch of humans—here in New Bern and throughout the length and breadth of these United States.

Now, if you'll pardon us, we'd like to head for the nearest store. We can't wait to find out what we should buy next.

RULING THE ROOST

Marysville, Ohio — The pigeons have competition for the space atop the statue of justice on the local courthouse. Attached to the statue is an antenna for the sheriff's radio.