

The NEW BERN

MIRROR

PUBLISHED WEEKLY
IN THE HEART OF
EASTERN NORTH
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Glass

VOLUME 10

NEW BERN, N. C., FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1967

NUMBER 23

Few are around now who remember when Russell H. Conwell came to New Bern and delivered his famous "Acres of Diamonds" lecture.

During a span of 60 years, the beloved Baptist minister presented his inspiring address to more than 6,000 audiences. In every town he tailored the speech to fit the neglected opportunities existing there.

Here, along the shores of the Neuse and Trent, he followed his usual pattern of preparation. Arriving in the community well in advance of his appearance on the platform, he fraternized with citizens on the street, and rang door bells to chat with housewives.

By the time he uttered the first words of his dynamic oration, he had more than enough information about New Bern to weave numerous local strands into the fabric of his lecture.

Conwell, founder and first president of Temple University, in Philadelphia, was a lawyer before he turned preacher and entered the Baptist ministry in 1879. Subsequently, he derived sufficient proceeds from "Acres of Diamonds" to educate 10,000 young men.

It has been said by some that people loved Conwell more than his lecture. They point to his last days as pastor of famed Baptist Temple in the City of Brotherly Love.

Each day, promptly at the noon hour, he would stroll up North Broad Street for lunch. Between the Temple and City Hall, beggars and ne'er-do-wells waited for him, aware he would give away every penny he had.

Knowing this habit, the laymen in his church had a standing agreement. As noon approached, one of them was to be in City Hall Plaza to meet the saintly old minister and buy his lunch.

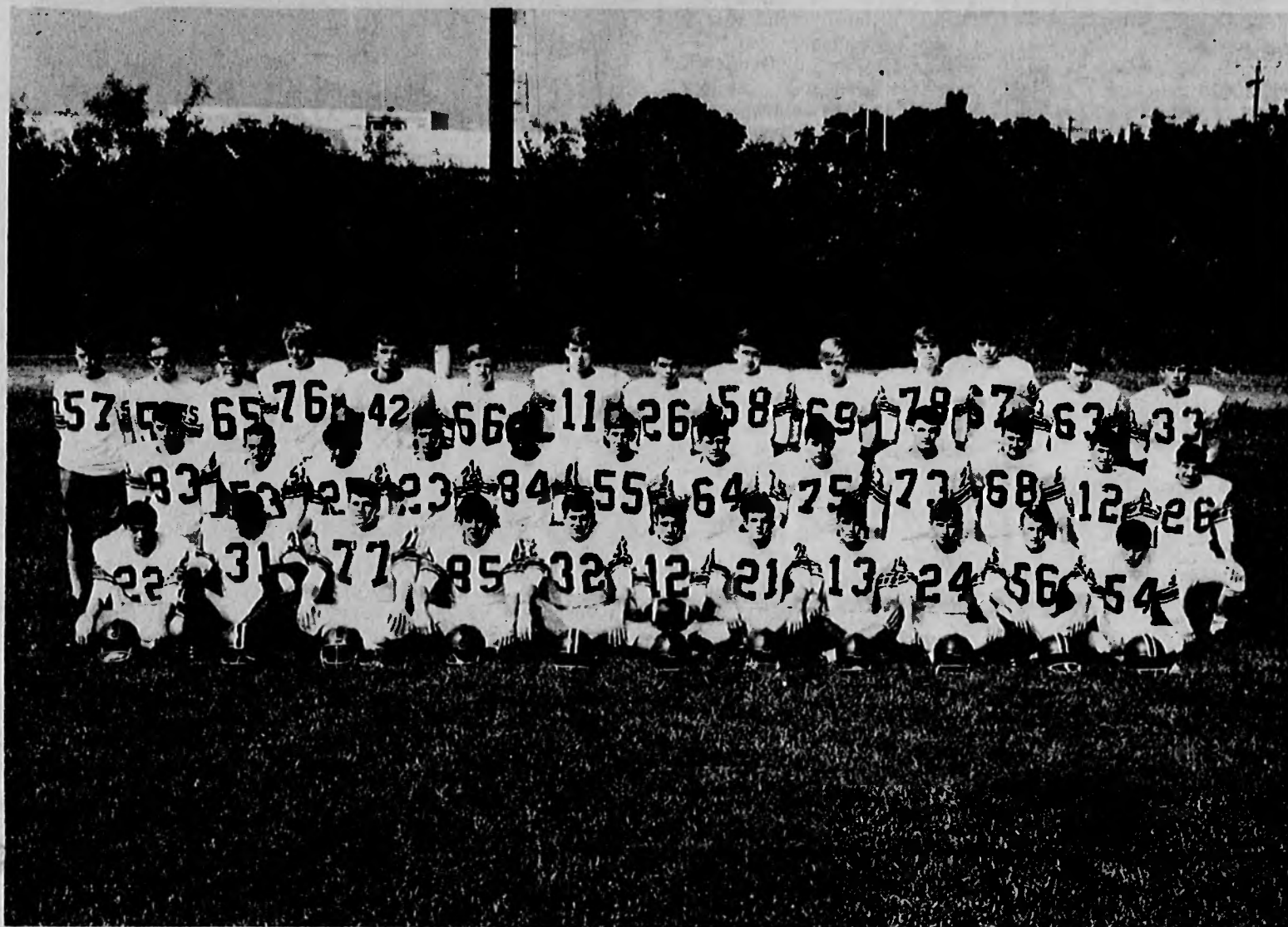
Conwell could have been quite wealthy, by standards of his day, but he gave every cent made on his lecture to the founding of Temple University. When he died, there was an insurance policy for his wife but that was about all.

Once, when he became ill in Rome, a little Italian nurse in a hospital there saved his life. He put up a memorial stone to her in Baptist Temple, near the pulpit.

Every time he would enter the pulpit, from that day on, he would detour a little in order to brush the face of the stone bearing her name with the sleeve of his pulpit gown.

In essence, Conwell preached that mortals don't have to travel far from home to achieve success and reap happiness. In his lecture he cited many illustrations to prove that, like the song later made popular by Al Jolson, you'll find your castles in Spain through your window pane, back in your own backyard.

"Greatness," said Conwell, "consists not in the holding of some future office, but really consists in doing great deeds with little means and the accomplishment of vast purposes from the private ranks of life. To be great at all one must be great here, now, in your own town."



READY FOR ACTION—Fed up with hibernating during the off season, Coach Roger Thrift's New Bern High School Bears, pictured at the top of this page, and the Junior Varsity, below, are anxious to get going on the 1967 gridiron campaign. A week from now they'll amble forth to flex their muscles and pop leather in a manner designed to bring a string of victories to the scrappy, high spirited Bruins. New Bern, 80 years ago, gave the South its first great

star, Tom Daniels, of Trinity. He was picked as an All-American by Casper Whitney for the nationally circulated Outing Magazine. Others like Fred Shipp, John Jennette, Nicky Simpson, Muggins Scales, Edward Brinson, Bud Parker, Robbie Kennel and Norman Swindell, to name only a few, have carried on, as years rolled by. Every kid pictured here dreams of stardom too.—Photos by Chick Natella.