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Yesterday was when Dorothy Dix wrote the same type of nationally syndicated column that Ann Landers now feeds to avid female followers. Life was a bit more prudish then, but like Ann, the aging Dorothy didn't hesitate to call a spade a spade.

Ann (the real name is Mrs. Esther Lederer) hails from Sioux City, Iowa. With no professional experience (she was an undergraduate at Morningside College in her home town) she was hired by the Chicago Sun-Times syndicate in 1955 to turn out a daily love-lorn feature.

As one of many New Bern women and girls who wouldn't think of missing her column, you'll be interested in knowing that a United Press poll as recently as 1968 ranked her among the 10 most important women in the United States. Her advice, appearing in 719 papers, coaxes 30,000 letters a month.

She can't begin to answer all the queries that come to her desk, but they aren't ignored. "I can't straighten out a 30-year problem in a two-inch letter," she admits. Aided by a staff of 11 that is familiar with a great number of social-service agencies, Ann steers many cases to professional counselors for expert advice.

Clever with phrases, she is as entertaining as she is informative. "Some readers are amused by the letters," she says. "I have no objection. I don't write to roll them in the aisles, but I know that laughter can be good medicine."

Although most of us think of the Landers column as a strictly feminine feature, it would probably be astounding if we knew how many New Bern males are among her constant readers. As a matter of fact, in the last year or two a careful check has shown that half of the letters come from men.

Ann insists that every letter from a reader published by her, is, as far as she can determine, for real. Experience has taught her to spot the phony letters, she says, just as a bank teller learns to recognize counterfeits.

Usually when men write to her, they discuss problems involving their wives of long standing or their girls of short standing. Ann, speaking the way any woman would, observes that men who in their courting days thought no date was long enough, now can't think of anything to say to their wives.

Referring to frequent letters from parents of teenagers, she readily admits that youngsters are different from those of 35 years ago. "How can we expect a kid not to change if his world has," she reasons. "If Tarkington had written 'Seventeen' today he would have had to call it 'Twelve.'"

She says that parents must assume some of the responsibility for the difference. As she sees it, many children have grown up with the disadvantage of too many advantages, too much unearned money.

Appearing before the Massachusetts State Federation of Women's Clubs, Ann said, "Some young people get an allowance just for breathing. There are just too many gifts and all they get out of them is

(Continued on Page 8)



NATURE'S TOUCH — Shadows and sunlight blend to give appreciative visitors this lovely view of a medieval street in ancient Bern. Our town is old, in

the American sense, but its age is dwarfed by the antiquity of our mother city. Bern was in existence when Christ was born.