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Jump at the chance if you're ever asked to make a speech before 300 of North Carolina's senior citizens. You'll find them the warmest, most appreciative audience imaginable.

A week has passed since they held their convention here at the Ramada Inn, but the radiance they brought with them to New Bern lingers. To use a phrase popular in show business, they are beautiful people.

Most folks are courteous and kind, when you're called upon to toss words in their direction. If you click, they're attentive. If you bore them, no amount of pretense on their part will conceal their reaction.

This applies anywhere you speak, in town or out of town. Whether you're standing before a group of Brownies, a ladies night gathering, a Jaycee banquet, or a bunch of athletes, you know how you're faring.

Last Friday morning, the strangers seated before us didn't look and act like strangers. They weren't sophisticated, and they weren't skeptical. Who needed a prepared speech, when you knew they were on your side?

The words came easily, and they fell into place. Granting that we've never delivered a great oration, this talk really was better than a hundred or so others we've dished out around eastern North Carolina.

Those senior citizens on the other side of the speakers table had to be responsible. Don't let anyone tell you that a speaker, an actor, a singer, or a ball player doesn't need sideline support. You can't make it without it.

Trying to fool a senior citizen would be a hopeless undertaking. To that extent, we probably wasted words in telling them right off that, as people go, we lack class. This they were obviously ready and willing to overlook.

You're way off base, if you've got the notion that men and women in the sunset years aren't alert. These guys and gals fielded wisecracks faster than any group we've ever seen or heard tell of.

They had a sense of humor that just wouldn't quit, and it carried over to the luncheon. In that happy crowd the total ages added up to thousands of years, but we didn't see the first old person.

Perhaps our paths will never cross again, but on a bright May morning they put to shame those who use birthdays as a yardstick for determining when mortals should be considered obsolete.

The thought isn't original with us, but it's worth repeating that age is a matter of attitude. The folks we saw at Ramada Inn a week ago just ain't never going to get old. They won't last forever, but they'll make their exit still young in heart.

Did your legs get tired when you toured Tryon Palace: These senior citizens took it in stride, just as they did everything else on the convention's busy schedule. If they had aches and pains, like the ones you com-



IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO
You should swear by name brands,
That's what commercials say;
Be sure to look close at labels,
This is the smart shopper's way.
"What you see is what you get"
Is a line made famous by Flip
But at Craven County whiskey stills
You can't put faith in this quip.
The jugs have familiar inscriptions
From which you can pick and choose,
But it really makes little difference,
For you always end up with booze.
No, it ain't Dr. Pepper or Seven Up,
And we clue you, there ain't no Coke,
The ingredients add up to white lightning,
And they'll make your innards smoke.
-JGMCD.