

ALMOST, NOT QUITE

An Oration

by
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The author, with this oration, won the following high school contests: Tennessee N.F.L.; State Meet at Oklahoma Baptist University; Houston Tri-State Invitational Meet; Tri-State Meet at Southern Methodist University, Dallas; and the National Contest of the N.F.L., 1957. Copyright 1957 by the WETMORE DECLAMATION BUREAU, Sioux City, Iowa. ISBN 1-60045-087-3

There is a fad which is current in school that consists of the boys wearing their hair combed forward, meeting at a peak on the forehead; much as the Romans did more than two thousand years ago. Last year the girls all wore toreador pants; five years ago the boys blue jeans slipped to the hip-line; and fifteen years ago sloppy-jo sweaters were in style. During the 1930's the page boy was the latest thing, and the 1920's saw long strings of beads wrapped in gay profusion about the neck of the flapper. The history of adolescents might be summed up in the fads through which they pass. Yet many adults have judged from this purely exterior view of youth that, "This is to be the worst group of all time," and, "They will surely wreak havoc upon the whole of civilization." And many times, through these thoughts and sometimes careless actions, they become the causes rather than the solution for many of our problems.

The teenage girl of today presents quite a paradox to her bewildered father. As she loses her pigtails and puts away her dolls, she becomes a conglomeration of society, mixed with slang expressions and sloppy clothes. On one hand a young lady—but on the other, the pigtails haven't completely disappeared. A mother suddenly discovers that the boy she once knew has been transformed overnight. She can't understand what has happened—until she sees the telltale traces of an inexperienced hand coupled with Dad's razor. In that instant her son became a man—yet we know he remains a boy.

I do not speak of vandalism or juvenile delinquency. I make no effort to justify gangs or mobs which lead to violence. I cannot explain a sick mind or a heritage of hate, but I do know the majority. And today I wish to represent this majority.

Much has been written about the growing problem of our teenagers. For example we might take this statement, "Our world is full of corruption, children no longer obey their parents." Sounds familiar doesn't it? Perhaps it came from an editorial in this morning's paper, or maybe it was said over a cup of coffee at the local diner. However, this statement came, not from the tabloids of today, but from a stone tablet of the past; from Constantinople over four thousand, eight hundred years ago. Again, "Young women of today live in one perpetual round of amusement. They go about by day and by night in perfect freedom, their sole occupation is to walk and drive and amuse themselves dancing." As you might have suspected, this also is not a current quotation, though its content is quite contemporary. It came from "Lady's Magazine" dated 1800.

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