

Steve Saxon top speaker

Steve Saxon, 13, emerged victorious in the zone championships of the Optimists oratorical contest for the second-year in succession last Wednesday. Steve is a student at Acton's McKenzie-Smith school.

He lost out last year in the Central Ontario finals. He gets another try this year Saturday, April 19 when the Central Ontario contest is staged at the Optimist camp

at Heidelberg. If he is successful there, he will proceed to the provincial championships.

This is Steve's third year in public speaking.

The other local competitor last week was Victoria Rodriguez, 10, of M.Z. Bennett school. Last year her sister Adela, 13, went as far as the Central Ontario championships.

Last week's zone championships were held in Waterdown. The principals of both local entrants were among those attending. Gary Dawkins and Doug Magwood. There were five boys and five girls competing representing the Optimists clubs of Georgetown, Orangeville, Waterdown and Milton. Victoria and Steve represented the Georgetown club.



TOP WINNER at the Optimist public speaking zone championship was Steve Saxon, 13, from Acton. Other local competitor Victoria Rodriguez, 13, lost out in this round. Steve goes on to the Central Ontario championships and if he wins there, to the Ontario championships. Pictured with the two local entrants are their principals Gary Dawkins on the left and Doug Magwood on the right, with George Wagner,

Georgetown Optimists oratorical chairman in the centre. Steve's mother Celia Saxon took the picture at Waterdown on Wednesday of last week.

Today's challenge — tomorrow's success

Following is the speech which won Steve Saxon honors in the Optimists oratorical contests this year.

Today's Challenge Tomorrow's Success

Thirteen. That magical age that brings cheers from our peers... and jeers from our elders. Back then, I was only 12... a mere child. But today I am on my way to manhood. I am a teenager. As soon as you hit teenage, it's like the whole world becomes a challenge. Society says you're too old for toys... and too young for dates. You're too old for Disney movies, and everything else is restricted. Dad says, "you're a young man now, and old enough to accept responsibility." But, Mom will try to shield you from life's dangers as long as she can.

You're constantly being juggled between childhood and maturity. In fact, they've got us so confused, we're not sure who we are anymore. And, according to the child psychologists, we are in a constant search for our own identity.

The experts say that becoming a teenager is your licence to be a slob. To create an image a teenager must imitate the cool dude in the grubby jeans and long hair, and sometimes even smokes to impress his friends. Some say the adolescent has an inner radar that detects what irritates parents.

If the parents value neatness, they say, he will dress like a slob, wear his hair long,

and leave his room and surroundings a mess. If the parents insist on good manners, he will interrupt conversations, use slang, and talk dirty.

If Mom and Dan enjoy an evening with the Boston Pope, the kid will drown it out with his acid rock. If the parents enjoy good literature, he reads comic books.

One boy, while buying a suit in a store asked the sales clerk, "If my parents like this suit, can I bring it back?"

Society keeps talking about this generation gap. Adults see us as the enemy. The experts have become so involved in the problems of communications between parents and teenagers, that they have produced scores of books on the subject. They even came out with a course for parents, "How to Stop Fighting With Your Kids".

So just when we finally got them twisted around our little fingers, the adults ganged up and started a psychological conspiracy to regain their control. They call it "Creative Parenting".

I know... because our Mom started sneaking off to the high school on Tuesday nights and came back smiling sweetly and agreeing with everything we said. Normally, our mom would go off like a time bomb if I told her I got into trouble with the teacher. She'd accuse me of all kinds of things. But this time she murmured softly, "that must make you feel badly to have the teacher yell at you."

When my big brother complained about too much salt in

the potatoes, instead of shouting, "Next time, cook your own supper," Mom just nodded her head and agreed, "Yes, dear, there is too much salt in the potatoes."

Mealtimes were a bore. We couldn't get a good argument going no matter how much we taunted her. Mom's teacher had instructed her to practise a new strategy called "Reflective Listening".

And as if that wasn't enough, at the end of the meal, Mom calmly announced that we would all remain at the table for a family meeting. A family meeting, according to the book, is a time for family members to get together and talk over their beefs, plans, questions and suggestions. It is supposed to promote family harmony and equality among the members.

But it didn't take Mom long to discover that we were more equal than she was. Including Dad, there were four of us, and only one of her. After we argued over who was assigned to what jobs, and everybody had made their excuses why they couldn't take part in planned activities, it was time for each member to make his own personal complaints about current family issues.

It seems all the complaints were aimed at Mom. I mean, she's supposed to be the mother and we get stuck with all the work. Everyone made jokes and criticized, we all ganged up on Mom. But the joke was on us! Her strategy had worked anyway. We were so busy picking on Mom that my brothers and I stopped our fights.

So now we still wear grubby jeans, use slang and drown her out with acid rock. But we do it together.

Realizing her defeat, she turned to her mother and asked how she had met the challenge... of coping with the stress and turbulence of teenage years... fourteen times! Revealing the secret of her success, Grandma

said, "I didn't use psychology... I found that the best way to apply that psychology book was squarely to the seat of the pants."

By the time we learn the secret, we will have conquered the challenge of adolescence, and sailed into manhood. Then we will be faced with the challenge of how to apply the book to our own kids.

I think I'll stick to Grandma's method. It works!!!

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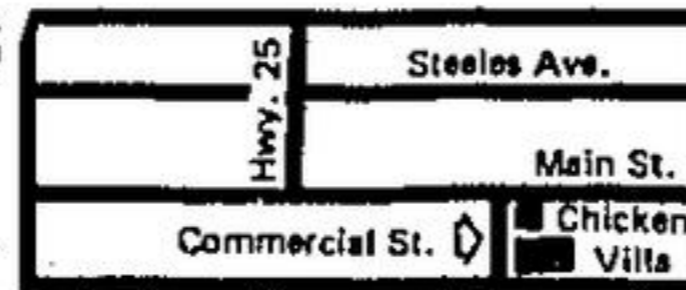
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BILL TAYLOR, teacher at the high school, took part in Friday's hat day at the school. Mr. Taylor and Quenlin Thwaites combine the occasions by adding Cancer Society daffodils to their costume.

M-S operetta

Students at McKenzie-Smith are busy preparing for the Operetta H.M.S. available from students and Pinafore. The two-night show will be held April 19 and 20 at the school. Tickets are available from students and at the door.

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