



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

## The Fireplace

When Daddy had the big house built back in 1938, on the 48 acres of what was then the wilderness territory west of the old number three green of the Royal Palm Golf Course, one of the special things he added was a fireplace.

Daddy and mother had both grown up in states where fireplaces were necessities. Although most of my contact with Daddy's Indiana was relegated to songs about newmown hay and moonlight on the Wabash, I also knew there were terrible winters when the snow drifted high against the old house in Morristown. Had it not been for a fireplace, everyone would have frozen.

In similar fashion, we often heard stories of Mother's big old home place in Kentucky, with a fireplace in every room. Grandpa Thompson may have been in the coal business, but he also relied on wood burning fireplaces in the winter to help heat

the big house in Winchester.

So, it was natural, when my folks decided to build in Vero Beach, that a fireplace would occupy a central place in the big house. It was a special fireplace, with an ashtrap in the bottom so the ashes could fall through a secret passage way and be shoveled out from the outside. And next to it, in a special little alcove, was a large woodbox.

Wood was plentiful. That was long before the days of chain saws, so Tom Hatten, Ed Bratcher or someone else who happened to be living on the place would go into the hammock, cut up a fallen tree with a cross-cut saw, and then leave it so one of us boys could split it with an axe for the fireplace.

Ever since then I've wanted one for myself. But most Florida houses just aren't designed for fireplaces. After years of hauling wood, what snowbird wants to come to our

sunny clime and have to spend his time poking at a fire with a poker. How much easier to have electric heat or an oil furnace.

Two years ago we gave our andirons away, sadly admitting we'd probably never need them. Then last spring we bought a new house — with a fireplace.

I realize it sounds like heresy, but inwardly I've really enjoyed this cold winter in Florida. Sure, it's bad on the tourist business. The beaches are empty and even the shuffleboard courts are deserted as the chill wind whistles down from the north. But while the majority of people have been shivering in front of their thermostats, I've been in seventh heaven, snuggled down in a big bean bag in front of a roaring fire in our new fireplace — and thanking God that even in sunny Florida, there are occasions when I can return to my childhood — and those scenes in front of a fireplace.