



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Bearing Gifts

My Dad never traveled much — at least not by today's standards. He stuck pretty close to home, occupying his desk in the Buckingham-Wheeler Agency, handling his duties as manager of the packing house in Oslo, checking with the picking crews in the groves, involving himself in church and civic affairs and raising five children. On rare occasions he would make an out-of-town trip: to Washington, Cleveland, Chicago or New York. Once he went to Cuba with the Rotary Club. There would be cross-state trips to Tampa or Tallahassee. On one occasion he took my older brother and some of his friends — Frank Dancey, Ed Singley and Ed MacElhaney — and they were gone for a month, touring the nation and seeing sights before only read about in National Geographic magazine.

Without exception he would return bearing gifts. In fact, the first

question asked by the children when we met him at the train or saw him pull up in the driveway was, "Daddy, what did you bring me?"

He never let us down. Always, buried deep in his suitcase, was something for each of us. I still have one of those small glass globes, the kind filled with water, white flakes and a miniature statue of the Empire State Building. When you turn it upside down it looks like snow. He brought it back from New York just for me.

It wasn't quite like Christmas, having Daddy return from a trip, but it was almost as good.

I've wanted to be like my father in many things. I feel satisfied and fulfilled when I find some of his wisdom, some of his attitudes, at work in my life. But when it comes to bringing gifts to my wife and children, I often fall down on the job. I used to do it, when my trips were infrequent. But now — flying out sometimes once a week and

returning two days later — I just don't keep up on the gifts very well.

Last week I was in Los Angeles. Since it looks like a family vacation is not possible this summer, I took two of the children with me. The day before we were scheduled to return, the kids got concerned. "Daddy, aren't you going to buy Mom a gift? She wanted to come but had to stay home. And what about the other kids? They had to stay behind, also."

So we spent the last day in Los Angeles shopping for gifts. It felt good, when we got back, to open our suitcases and distribute a few trinkets. The Bible says the sins of the fathers are often visited on the third and fourth generation. But the converse is true, also. In this case, my children have inherited something — not from me — but from their grandfather. And I'm glad.