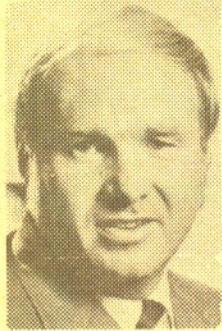


# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM



## Cherry Blossom Time

Ever since I was a child I've wanted to visit Washington, D.C., at cherry blossom time. Vivid in my memory is the calendar hanging on my bedroom wall with a picture of the nation's capital at Springtime. The beautiful pink and white blossoms which covered the ornamental cherry trees were reflected in the mirror-like water of the tidal basin. In the background the white spire of the Washington Monument contrasted against the azure sky.

One day, I dreamed, I'll be there at cherry blossom time.

The years have passed and have included scores of trips to Washington. I've seen the giant Christmas tree lighted on the White House lawn. I've been there when snow blanketed the mall, when the summer sun baked the capitol steps, when color splashed the parks with soft hues of autumn. But never at cherry blossom time.

There are more than 4,000 Yoshino

cherry trees in Washington. I've seen them in summer with their foliage green, with leaves colored by the magic wand of October, with their boughs heaped with soft snow. But never at cherry blossom time.

I have walked the grounds of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo and seen the same kind of trees blooming along the moat. I have seen apple trees bloom in North Carolina, peach trees bloom in Georgia, and our orange trees at home. But I've never been in Washington at cherry blossom time.

Last Thursday I flew to Washington for an editorial meeting. I had arranged it to coincide with the 67th annual Cherry Blossom Festival on Saturday. A phone call early in the week indicated my dream was about to come true. For the first time in three years the trees had bloomed on schedule.

I flew into Dulles International on the outskirts of the city. We were to

meet in nearby Lincoln, Va., then I was to drive into the city Saturday to see the blossoms before returning to Florida from Washington National airport.

Friday night the temperature dropped to 32 degrees and near-hurricane force winds of 60 mph whipped the city. Saturday all the blossoms were gone, brown petals floating on the frothy, muddy waters of the tidal basin and the filthy Potomac River.

Frustrated, I bought a calendar at the airport to hang in my son's bedroom. I then caught the evening plane home. Arriving in Melbourne late that night I stood on the ramp and inhaled the heavenly perfume of the orange blossoms which saturated the balmy night air. Walking through the airport on the way to the car I dropped my son's calendar in a trash can.

Why tantalize him with dreams of distant cherry blossoms when we already live in paradise.