



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Happy Days

According to a friend who, like me, lives in the country, the second happiest day in the life of a gentleman farmer is the day he acquires a goat.

The happiest day is when he gets rid of it.

He then went on to explain how his goat — the very first day he had it — climbed the fence and ate every one of his wife's expensive shrubs, including nine hanging baskets (rope and all) and all the imported tulips from Holland. Later she butted his mother-in-law head first into the compost pile and totally destroyed his neighbor's garden. When the neighbor called, two days later, to say the goat had accidentally gotten mixed up with the cows he was sending to market and had been shipped to the slaughter house, it was a time for rejoicing throughout the kingdom.

Well, I'd never heard that about goats, but I sure know it is true with boats — especially the kind with big engines. I know because last week was our happiest day. We finally got rid of the boat. In this case, we gave

it to the church.

There was a lot of thunder and lightning that afternoon. Jackie says it was because God knew what that boat was like. He also knew that despite the fact I tried to pretend it was in good shape, that actually the trailer was rusted out, the canvas leaked, the battery was dead and the motor frozen up.

But now that's God's problem. It's not the boat was jinxed, or anything like that. But we'd had it five years and it had spent more time in the repair shop than it had in the water. There was the time it came loose from the back of a friend's car while he was pulling it through town and it wound up — trailer and all — in the plate glass window of a furniture store. Then there was the time the old fisherman told my son the only way to get through those shallows in the river was to run the boat wide open so it would plane over the rocks. That cost us a new prop and extensive repair work on the keel. Unless you're going to use a boat daily, we discovered, you have no business owning one. Otherwise all they are good for is to buy new

driveshafts, repair rotting canvas and become legal cause for divorce action.

Jackie kept telling me to sell it. "What good is a red and white boat sitting in the backyard if you never have time to use it?" But it's like my 1972 station wagon, which still runs, but not too good. You never can get out of it what it's really worth. So I gave it to the church.

"God is going to take care of you for that," Jackie snapped. "The last thing he needs is a leaky boat that stays in the repair shop all the time."

We have this slight marital disagreement, you see. I believe in a god of miracles; Jackie believes in a god of retribution.

She may be right. Last night our son came home from work with a goat in the back of his truck. "He's been following me around all day," he said. "It's like God just sent him to us."

"Strange," Jackie said as she wiped her hands at the sink, "I thought I just heard someone chuckling."

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see last week