



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

HENDERSONVILLE, N.C. — Writing is usually plain hard work. Oh, sometimes there are those flashes of inspiration when the words seem to flow from the Source of all knowledge through an open pipeline directly to the paper. But, by and large, writing consists of a man and a typewriter, a stack of clean white paper, a much smaller stack of typed manuscript, and a hugh wastebasket filled with wadded up sheets. And when you consider that anything written needs to be re-written (even final drafts fall into this category) you begin to see the extent of the never-ending process of writing.

For a week now I've been secluded away in a beautiful mountain retreat far away from blaring televisions, jangling telephones, noisy traffic and neighborly interruptions. I had not intended to do much writing on this particular vacation, just sit on a front porch with my shoes off, wiggling my toes in the cool mountain air. However, on my way out of town I made the mistake of stopping by the post office and picking up an air mail letter from my magazine editor in New York giving me one of those impossible deadlines just days away. Yet, if I'm going to have to write under pressure, a mountain retreat is the finest place in the world to get it done.

I've given strict instructions to my family that nothing short of an emergency is to cause an interruption. I did take a couple of hours off early in the day to take a hike with the family high into a hidden valley where a mountain brook tumbles over logs and stones. But then it was back to the typewriter. And so far the children have left me to my task while they set rabbit traps, rode ponies in the pasture, made their way through the forest behind the cottage in search of unclaimed treasures or busied themselves building dams of stone and stick across the happy brook that dances through the virgin woods.

Our 9-year-old girl has just broken the rule and quietly entered the studio where I am writing. I'm not aware of

her presence until I glance up from my typewriter and see her chin resting on the window sill beside my table. She grins and points to the seat of her pants. I look while she turns around and I see that her jeans are covered with bright red clay. I know what she has been up to. The same thing I did when I was 9 years old and spent my summers in this same spot. She's been down the road to the red clay bank where a 9-year-old can climb to the top and come sliding down on the seat of his (her) britches in a hilarious kind of bumpy ride.

I start to say something, but she puts her finger to her lips and says, "Shh." Then, grinning, she backs out of the door. She has remembered her instructions well. I glance back at the paper and when I raise my eyes she's gone. Outside the window I hear her whispering to her older brother. "Let's go out in the woods to play. Daddy's still busy."

I get up from my chair and stand at the window overlooking the green pasture that blends so beautifully with the rolling mountains of the Blue Ridge. The rhododendron is still in bloom, providing a beautiful undercovering for the wispy white oaks, the stately poplars, the towering white pines and the sturdy hickory. All are just the same as they were 30 years ago when I spent my summers in these same woods. The little creek still flows with silver water over sparkling rocks. The clean fresh mountain air, scented delicately with pine, feels good going into my lungs. In a world where everything is changing, it's good to get back in a far corner of civilization where very little has changed — where the God of yesterday comes alive in my life today.

The Psalmist said something about "lifting up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." But how much better to be on the hilltop and feel His help all around you. I return to my writing. This time it comes much easier.