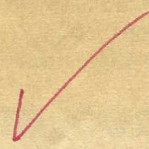




# Perspective



By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

I woke up last Tuesday morning feeling punk. The thermometer showed a low-grade fever so I just stayed in bed. My wife called and cancelled a luncheon engagement and then spent the morning massaging my back, getting me cool things to drink and answering the phone. I haven't been sick in a long time, and by noon I saw where a guy could get to like that kind of life in a hurry. In fact, I began to make plans to get sick at least once a month.

However, by mid-afternoon reason and masculinity took over, and I threw back the sheet, exchanged pajamas for Bermuda shorts, and stumbled into my studio to find something to do. Lying around in bed, even when your wife treats you like a king, just isn't my way of life.

Since I didn't feel creative enough to write anything, I decided to use the time to clean off my desk. Having a studio at the house is both an asset and a liability. It is an asset in that I never have to clean off my desk. I can go to bed at night and leave junk piled up all over the desk and floor and know it will be exactly where I left it when I awake the next morning.

However, it is a liability in that I am never forced to clean off my desk — as a man who worked in a public or professional office would do every day. Therefore, my desk simply grows higher and higher. Letters that are urgent are usually answered within the month. Not-so-urgent letters, especially the ones that take some thinking, usually have to wait longer. I try to keep them stacked in piles so they won't get mixed up with story ideas, invitations to speak, requests for money, newspaper clippings, reminders to clean off my desk and other important documents that grow like a mountain from the surface of my desk.

My desk also contains other things. I have three tape

recorders, (two of which are broken) an antique wine bottle, three rocks that I picked up in some exotic place to remind me I had been there (only I've forgotten where I found them), about a hundred ball point pens that don't write, an almost equal number of tape cassettes all of which are unmarked and some of which contain valuable information for some book I will one day write, and a wire basket which is almost hidden and which serves absolutely no purpose whatsoever.

Anyway, last Tuesday I cleaned off my desk. Most of the stuff, which I once thought to be valuable, held little meaning and I threw it away. I scribbled answers to a bunch of letters and finally worked my way down to the bottom.

I wish I hadn't. For there, between the last stack of newspaper clippings and the wood of my desk top, was a letter, which I had written last December to an Episcopal priest. I had laid it aside to check his address, it had gotten covered up, and there it had remained until the day of resurrection.

Horried, I hastily penned him a note asking his forgiveness for being eight months late in answering his letter. Still foggy from the fever and the shock of this faux pas, I grabbed a copy of my book, "Run Baby Run," to send along as a peace offering. It wasn't until my wife left for the post office that I realized I had mistakenly sent him my Chinese translation which just the day before had arrived from Taiwan. With the exception of the Chinese symbols, the cover is exactly the same. Since it is the only one I had, now I've got to write asking him to return it.

In the meantime, I'll sit around wondering what he thinks about a guy who waits eight months to answer a letter and in return sends him a book he can't read.