



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

I'm determined, for these next three weeks, to be leisurely. Safely ensconced in an isolated cabin in the quiet mountains of North Carolina, I have three weeks to complete my book. I've left behind my family, telephone, television and mail delivery. All I brought with me was an armful of reference books, a big cardboard box which is filled with two years of research, my typewriter and two reams of white paper. My wife has instructions that I am not to be disturbed for anything, save a death. My nearest neighbors are out of shouting distance. In short, I am in isolation.

This does not mean I am not going to schedule myself. I am. I intend to rise with the sun and go to bed at dark. Like the English officers during the colonization period of India, I also intend to act civilized even though I am isolated from civilization. Once a week they donned their formal whites and had their servants spread the sterling and china for a formal dinner by candlelight. I do not have servants, nor formal dinnerware, but I am determined, during this period of solitary confinement, to maintain my dignity.

That means a daily bath. I rose early this morning and drew a tub of hot water. I am not particularly fond of tub baths, for they are leisurely. I am accustomed to jumping in a shower and jumping out so I can get on with the business of working up another sweat. But these three weeks are to be different.

I slipped into the water. Ahhh! Washcloth, soap and a slow bath. That feels pretty good. I gave serious consideration to raising one leg like the pretty girls do

in the magazine ads, but the thought of a hairy leg extended toward the cabin ceiling was a bit more than I could take early in the morning. I settled for sitting, splashing, rubbing and rinsing.

Next came the big debate. Should I shave or should I let it grow. It seems every time I am away from "civilization" I am tempted to grow a beard — or at least a mustache. I am invariably disappointed for it never comes out the way I think it should. Not just the color, which is always a dirty tan, the shade of a piece of rawhide dipped in a mud puddle, but the consistency. I really don't know what a beard should feel like, but mine bristles. And as it grows I am constantly stroking it, unable to keep my hands away from my face. I am told that some women enjoy rubbing up against one of those prickly things, but I cannot imagine any woman with class getting pleasure out of cheeking it with a grizzly bear. I don't imagine I'll have an opportunity to cheek it with anyone these three weeks before my wife and children join me, but nevertheless, I think I'll remain shaved. Besides, I'll probably have enough trouble with chiggers without growing something that itches under my chin.

My avowed purpose for being here is to finish my book. Some things are impossible at home, and writing a final draft is one of them. But in the process of being alone, I also hope to accomplish another major goal — to slow down. Who knows, by the time I return to Florida I might have learned to enjoy taking a tub bath. Ahhhh! Leisure!