



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

November

There's only one more day of November. Yet while most of the nation is rummaging through cedar closets and attic hideaways for blankets and sweaters, Florida is just approaching its most beautiful season. The song birds have arrived. The citrus is decorating the trees with the splendor of orange and yellow. The brilliant foliage of the crotons and coppers splash the streets and driveways with rainbow colors. It is a glorious time of year.

Just a few miles to the north the promise of early winter that brings winds to blow leaves crisp and sere, browned by the early morning frosts, is warning our old friends it is time to travel south. Soon they will be arriving by car, train, and plane — new faces, old faces. We call them snowbirds. But they are friends, brothers and sisters, who make their annual pilgrimage to our state. The chamber of commerce may see them as tourists, economic commodities. But many of us see them as fellow wayfarers who love our

state as much as those of us who live here. We welcome them.

Now begins the time for strolls on lonely beaches. Gone, mostly, are the raucous crowds who run. Winter is the time for those who walk — who stroll at dawn, who breathe the fresh, cool air off the ocean. For those who slip into a light jacket and walk the beaches at dusk, hand-in-hand, the old and the not-so-old, letting the yellow sand curl between toes or scrunch under shoes, feeling the light stickiness of the salt air on faces and hands, and breathing quiet prayers of thanksgiving to a God who has given it all.

The waters catch the reflection of the sun, iridescent and sparkling. The sea oats, the mangrove, the dune grass, the hardy sea grape all respond to the persuasive whispering of the surf. Walk the beaches, not just you snow birds, but you who live here year-in-and-out and never take time to give thanks for all that is ours. Remember the

winter wind howling in across Lake Erie, the snow-clogged streets of Buffalo, the slush and grime in Philadelphia or New York. Lay aside, each day for a while, the things which choke the life out of you — business, the telephone, demands on your time — and walk the beaches. They are God's gift to all who come our way — to all who live here.

Seek the solitude of a lonely stretch where the blue crabs scamper, the fiddlers dart close to the water, the terns and gulls sweep close to the surf and the sailing pelicans drift leisurely in the coming winter sun. Stop and sit. Breathe. Turn your face upward to catch the warmth of heaven. Listen to the surf. Reach out and take the hand of a loved one, dearer than life itself, and thank God for his goodness.

There's nothing better than Florida in November. And there is but one day left. Live it to its fullest.