



*Dry Bones
1-81*

Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Jackie And The Weed

Nobody smokes around my wife. At least, not for long. Either she moves, or they do.

Jackie's the kind of person who, if someone asks, "Do you mind if I smoke?" answers, "I certainly do!" (with an emphasis on "certainly"). Then she stares them straight in the face until they slink away.

Seldom does anyone get the best of her in these stare-downs. One of the few fellows who did was Red Pinson. Red ran a dry cleaning establishment in the little South Carolina town where we lived. He was also on the finance committee at the church. One evening we had a committee meeting in our living room and right after the opening prayer Red pulled out his cigarets.

"Don't you people have any ashtrays?" he asked, his cigaret already burning.

Jackie, who had come running from the back of the house the moment she smelled the burning tobacco, was standing in the door to the kitchen. "Sorry," she said with a smirk on her face. "We don't have

ashtrays. They only encourage people to smoke. You'll either have to go outside or use my expensive china vase for an ashtray."

Red never blinked an eye. He just reached for the china vase.

After that we had lots of little signs around the house. "Smokers don't go to hell, they just smell that way," and "If you won't blow smoke on me I won't vomit on you."

In her behalf, I need to say Jackie has mellowed over the years. She no longer throws open the window and begins to cough when visiting in someone's home and he lights up; although she may do a little discreet fanning if the smoke comes in her direction. The one thing she hasn't softened on is people smoking in her house.

Then last week, after having kept our new house in a virgin state for a year, that which she feared came upon her. Our house guests, two Presbyterian pastors who had driven down from Georgia for ministry, were both pipe smokers.

We didn't discover it until early the next morning after they arrived the evening before. Jackie woke up sniffing. Sure enough, the two men were out in the back yard for an early morning stroll. Both were wreathed in pipe smoke, some of which was drifting in the direction of the house. Jackie was up — faster than I've ever seen her get out of bed before — closing windows. It was too late. When we got downstairs it was obvious they had lit up before they left the house.

Before they left, two days later, they had smoked in almost every room of the house — except our bedroom which Jackie kept locked with a rolled towel under the door. But I was proud of her. Despite the agonized look on her face every time pipe smoke drifted through the kitchen, she realized our ministry to them was more important than her obsession.

We're making progress. But it's limited to pipes. If you come with a cigar you'll have to deal with me also.