



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Moth And Rust

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following column was written by Jamie Buckingham on Friday, Aug. 25, and delivered to the Press-Journal office on Saturday, Aug. 26. On Sunday, Walter Buckingham, Jamie's father, died.)

Last week I spent precious hours with my mother and dad in their home facing the Royal Park Golf Course. Mother is 80 and still vibrant. Daddy is 87, and even though his mind is clear and his memory so sharp he still quotes long passages from Tennyson and Kipling, his body is gradually going the way of all flesh. Confined to his bed and wheelchair, his world seems to have narrowed to the press of the immediate.

My younger brother, John, who teaches medicine at the University of Alabama, was present that afternoon as we sat in the lengthening shadows of the living room. Honest, unafraid, we needed to discuss financial matters to be settled after Daddy's death.

I was deeply impressed with my Dad's attitude. An astute businessman and financier, he sat in his wheelchair and listened as his two sons discussed how various financial matters might be handled. Respecting his financial wisdom, we finally turned to him for answers.

He raised one hand, slightly. Even so, it was an effort. There was just a shadow of a smile playing on his face. His eyes twinkled.

"I have but one thing to say of all these material things. After I am gone, it will be up to your mother and you boys to figure things out."

He gently lowered his hand, and, nodding to the nurse nearby, he added, "Now I think I would like to lie down for a while."

I watched, silently, as she wheeled him back to the bedroom. I thought his world has narrowed, much as a tiny child is interested only in food, warmth and a dry diaper. Not so. I realize that afternoon his world has grown ever so much larger than before. Much larger than mine. His cares no longer center on the price of oranges on the Philadelphia

market, government regulations and taxes, rust spots on the car, cobwebs under the eaves and whether the prime interest rate is dropping.

Now, waiting on the edge of eternity, he is transcending the terrestrial for the celestial. More and more his world is expanding, to take in another dimension — the dimension of the eternal.

Jesus said: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Daddy has made that transition. But the sad part is not that his brilliant financial mind is no longer interested in material things, but that I may have to wait until I am 87 to move into the same dimension.

It is only when we are ready to die, that life becomes real — and abundant.

May he live for a long time. There is much I must learn from him.