



Perspective

By Jamie Buckingham

Old Mr. Maxwell, the church custodian, is having troubles again. Not with the bottle—but with bottles.

It all came at once. There was a Saturday picnic on the church grounds. A thunder shower disrupted the clean-up operation and when Mr. Maxwell came in Monday morning he faced an acre of no-return root-beer bottles, cans, soggy paper plates, plastic spoons, aluminum foil wrappings smeared with baked beans and grimy potato salad residue and watermelon rinds. A disagreeable chore, even for church custodians.

However, this wasn't Mr. Maxwell's problem. He really didn't mind picking it all up. The difficulty came in storing all the good things he could salvage, for Mr. Maxwell believes in keeping everything that won't rot or run away. He drives a pickup truck and always keeps his eyes open for valuable objects in rubbish cans. It's not unusual for him to come to work some morning with his truck already loaded with many valuable objects he's picked up along the street—like an old refrigerator door, a wagon with a missing wheel, several pieces of lumber too short for anything (you never can tell when you'll need a chock to prop up a falling piano), an assortment of bent nails and rusty screws—and of course, bottles.

Mr. Maxwell believes in saving paper, string, cardboard boxes, plastic spoons and bottles. In fact, bottles are his favorites and the basement of the church is so full now it won't hold another bottle. He collects all kinds, although he manages to hide the old whiskey bottles in the back of the closet so the Woman's Missionary Society won't find them when looking for a mislaid booklet.

Mr. Maxwell spent the weekend moving. He only moved four blocks but he moved everything. There had been a crisis arise, though, about the bottles. His old maid daughter who lives with him refused to let him move the bottles into their new house. He had no choice but to load them into his truck and take them up to the church to store.

Thus when he arrived at the church Monday morning with his truck already loaded with countless nondescript bottles and discovered an additional 200 scattered over the church grounds, it really presented a problem.

The real climax to the whole thing rose when the young people of the church got in the act and put up some signs over his workshop that reads: "Every litter bit hurts," and "Rubble Trouble."

Well, now this hurt Mr. Maxwell's feelings and when the pastor saw him coming he just knew he was going to resign. But no such good fortune; he was just asking permission to use one of the Sunday school rooms to store some of his bottles.

The pastor finally calmed things down remarking that Jesus' disciples were able to collect 12 basketsful of leftovers after feeding the 5,000, signifying a miracle of abundance, not waste. He had to remind Mr. Maxwell, however, that even in the gospels old bottles are expendable.