



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

One of the assets (or is it a liability?) of living along the east coast of Florida is having all your Yankee snowbird friends come by and see you. Over the holidays this got to be pretty hectic (especially when two families making up a party of 13 stopped by on their way home from Ft. Lauderdale to Philadelphia. That particular morning I got up early and made, would you believe, 96 pancakes to feed the mob).

But it's not the board and room proposition that bothers me. The thing that disturbs me most is trying to give people directions on how to get to our house from wherever they happen to be.

It just so happens that we live in a section of town that's impossible to reach from nearly all other sections. And, of course, I'm the world's worst direction giver. I keep meaning to take the car and measure, to the tenth of a mile, the exact distance from U.S. Highway 1 to the place where you turn off into the confusing maze that makes up our subdivision. But I keep forgetting, and keep on giving directions over the phone that sends people out into the ocean, back into the swamps, or finally packing on their way toward Philadelphia without ever reaching our domicile. (Could there be some Freudian intent behind all this?)

My wife says that the people on the other end of the line simply cannot understand my gestures as I stand in the kitchen talking over the phone. "Turn in this direction," it seems, means absolutely nothing. Just as questions such as, "Are you on this side of the bridge or the other side?"

You can tell, when you call, that I'm still a country boy. Instead of saying "Go 13 blocks and turn right," I say, "go about a mile down the road past where the old school house used to be, then turn back toward the water tower."

I keep thinking people will get the message, and go on down the highway to my mother-in-law's, but it's downright amazing how many of them still find their way to our house.

Last week I got a note from a friend I met up in Lansing, Michigan, last fall. It was one of those hand-shake encounters after I had spoken at a retreat. I had even forgotten I had been to Michigan when this letter arrived in the mail. "We're taking you up on your invitation to 'come on down,'" the man said. "We're bringing our whole family plus the pets. We have some fantastic home movies we know you'd enjoy while we're there. Could you please send us instructions on how to get to your house?"

It's at times like this that my expertise in direction-giving comes in handy. "After you get to Florida come on down the road a piece until you cross several bridges. If you cross four bridges in a row, you know you've come too far and you've got to go back a spell. Look for a road that turns off the highway to the left. Keep driving till you pass a place that says, 'All you can drink for 10 cents.' Drive around in back of that and take the second or third road (I never can remember) until you come to the end. There ought to be a 7-11 store around there some place, and you can stop and ask the man. He'll probably tell you to call us, but I think that's about the time we're all going to be in - Arkansas visiting some friends we met last winter when they stopped through and said if we're ever in Arkansas to look them up. So, if we're not home, just go on down and stay with my mother-in-law. She makes great pancakes."

The above directions apply to any of you readers who'd like to come see us. The old latchstring is always out. You can't miss it.