



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Septic Tanks

Also LW

Like most folks, I've always taken a septic tank for granted. All I knew was it was out there, buried beneath the green expanse of my side yard, faithfully performing its lowly duty.

Then last Friday the whole thing went into rebellion. Perhaps it got fed up with doing whatever septic tanks are supposed to do and never getting credit, or maybe it just got fed up. Whatever, instead of receiving it began returning.

First signs appeared in the downstairs bathroom next to the laundry room when the washing machine water began bubbling up through the shower stall. Jackie started screaming. Like Moses at the burning bush, I turned aside from my duties at the typewriter to see this magnificent phenomenon. It called for a removing of my shoes. Immediately. The water was ankle deep and getting deeper.

I suggested to Jackie, calmly, of course, that she cut off the washing machine. It took more than an hour to mop up the water which fortunately had only overflowed into the three rooms surrounding the bathroom.

Jackie suggested I call a plumber. I said it was probably a sock stuck in the drain pipe. That was reasonable since scarcely a washing goes by

that at least one of my socks disappears. Occasionally they stick to the inside leg of my trousers, held there by static electricity until I am rushing through the Atlanta Airport or am standing in line at the post office to mail a package. At which time it drops to the floor out of my trousers. This time, however, the sock had obviously gone down the drain.

A friend, who was visiting, said instead of calling an expensive plumber I could dislodge the sock by crawling up on the roof and stuffing a garden hose down the air vent pipe which sticks up through the shingles. Aside from losing my balance and almost falling off the roof, all I did was get 45 feet of garden hose stuck in the vent pipe. Descending in an awful mood I re-entered the house just as someone flushed the toilet next to the shower stall.

All pandemonium broke loose. The entire east end of the house was under water. I commanded everyone available and we went to work with towels, the wet vacuum from the garage, and mops to clean up the damage. Rugs had to be dragged outside, closets emptied, book cases moved. Then, just as we got it all cleaned up, someone, seeing my big sign on the door

daring anyone to use the downstairs bathroom, ran upstairs and flushed a toilet. It took the rest of the afternoon and far into the night to get dried out.

"Anyone who has to go before the plumber arrives tomorrow, will have to find a palmetto bush," I shouted through the midnight darkness as I came to bed.

The plumber, who arrived two days later, said the septic tank was clogged. The septic tank man, who arrived a week later and charged me \$450, said I needed a new drain field. And have you ever seen what a backhoe can do to a beautiful lawn which is always greener over the septic tank?

All Moses had to put up with was grumpy people, scorpions, and wandering bands of Amalaketes. And he seemed to have pretty good control over the water situation, with that staff and all. But to be dependent upon a septic tank is something I wish on no man — even a Moses.

So we're feeding it plenty of yeast to keep it happy, washing the socks by hand, and saying a little prayer with each flush.

Now, if someone can only tell me how to get my garden hose out of the air vent on my roof.