



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Still vivid in my memory are those childhood rides across the old curved wooden bridge that spanned the Indian River. The swinging draw, worked by the one-armed bridgetender, was wide enough for one car only. It was worked by inserting a big wooden key which was slowly turned as the bridgetender rode the draw into the open position.

During a high water hurricane the bridge ends might be under water. But, for that matter, I can remember times when the entire island, from Atlantic to river, was awash following one of those howling storms. Today's builders of houses and apartments know little of the ravaging effect of a hurricane.

Back in the late '30s the country had just come out of the worst depression in history. Hitler was marching across Europe and the threat of another world war had sparked new life into a struggling nation. My father, who had moved to Vero Beach immediately after World War I (at the invitation of his cousin, Waldo Sexton) was a cautious, yet astute, businessman. Raised in Indiana, his economics, like his life style, were

conservative. I seldom saw him without a necktie, even when he was wearing a khaki shirt and leather lace-up boots in the grove.

It was on one of those rides across the bridge in our new 1939 Ford Beach Wagon, with the wooden sides and bars across the back windows, that I remember his comments about speculative buying. At that time a lot of folks were hard pressed for cash. The stock market and banks were just pulling out of the crash. Many people had empty pockets and the term "land poor" was a reality.

"See all that land," Daddy nodded at the scrub palmetto property along Beachland Boulevard and along the oceanfront. "It can be bought for taxes."

I was only about 9 years old and didn't know how much "for taxes" amounted to. But I knew it wasn't much.

"Why don't we buy it?" I asked, knowing that Daddy was one of the few people who had survived "hard times." That was because he never believed in credit financing nor speculative investing. Others

played the stock market and bought property in hopes the value would go up. They were those who "pays their money and takes their chances."

Not my father. "Why buy that land?" he answered. "It won't grow a thing."

Last week I drove down A1A and over Beachland Boulevard, remembering Daddy's statement. That "for taxes" property is now selling by the spoonful — that is, if you can persuade anyone to sell. Most are holding out for even higher prices.

Yet maybe Daddy wasn't so wrong after all. One good hurricane could return the entire island to its natural state. And, even so, how much land does a man need to make him happy? Old John D. Rockefeller once remarked that all a man needed was "a little more." Tolstoy was even more specific as he told of the man who kept trying for more property and wound up with just enough to hold his coffin.

Daddy never became a millionaire. But he learned a secret that most millionaires don't even know exists — the secret of satisfaction. It's a worthy heritage.