



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

The Best Gift

After I had spoken to a large group which had crowded into the parish hall at Trinity Episcopal Church several weeks ago, a pretty young woman grabbed my arm as I was leaving.

"You know, you have the most wonderful mother in the world."

I paused for a moment and looked into her face. She was smiling, but serious. It didn't seem appropriate, with all the people crowding around, to ask her why she felt that way. All I could do was squeeze her hand and say, "I'm aware of that. Thanks for sharing."

Leaving the parish hall to walk across the lawn to the home of Roger Miller, who is the assistant rector at Trinity, I kept thinking about the woman's remark. I guess all of us think our mothers are the most wonderful women in the world. But when someone else, who has a mother of her own, comes up to you and says that about your mother —

well, that's something special. Real special.

Although my father was the quiet force behind my childhood — instilling values, setting directions, and by example as well as word showing us how to live — it was my mother who was charged with implementing and enforcing. As a result I sometimes thought of my father as the President and my mother as a combination of the Military Police, FBI, and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

That's natural, I guess. Fathers have to spend time in offices and other mysterious places, but mothers are (or at least should be) at home with the children. Sometimes having to handle the discipline causes the children to think of them harshly. But it is the discipline which sets the stage for growth. And when I consider my

own situation, I realize that much of my deep respect and admiration for my father is a result of my mother's training. She taught us to admire and respect the man she admired and respected. She may have fussed at us kids — but I never heard her fuss at him. That left a deep impression.

A lot of things came into focus that night as a result of that young woman's remark. I remembered the story of the young mother, separated from her husband following a disagreement, who asked her 7-year-old son what he would like for his birthday. "The best gift you could give me," he replied, "would be for you to love my daddy."

My mother has given us kids the best gift.

I don't tell her very much, how wonderful she is.

But I am now.