

Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Unpopular Pastimes



For some odd reason most writers detest the task of answering their mail. Mine collects in a huge pile beside my typewriter. Sometimes it doesn't even get opened. There it lays for days and weeks, moldering and turning yellow around the edges. Finally my conscience begins to scream so loud I can't hear anything else, and gritting my teeth I'll go into my studio, close the door, and by a sheer act of my will bang out letters.

With three children in college I am trying to keep in touch with them on a weekly basis. But even there I find myself falling behind, finding it much easier to pick up the phone late at night and call them. Anything to keep from writing.

A newspaper columnist loves to sit down at his typewriter and bang out opinions on various subjects. Reporters enjoy snooping through

the news and coming up with a written story. Book writers live for the time when they can put pen to paper and let the words flow, describing characters, creating suspense and painting descriptive scenes of places and events. But let these same people come face to face with a huge stack of mail, all of it clamoring for a personal answer, and they go paranoid.

Movie actors are the same way. A man may have the perfect love-making technique (and for you flesh people, that includes much more than sex) on the screen. He is Mister Perfect in his relationship with his screen partner. But after the day at the studio is over, he goes home and shouts at his wife, refuses to communicate and sleeps on the sofa.

One of my best friends is a medical doctor. If I visit him in his office he is careful to prescribe just what I should eat and how I should

treat my body. But when we go out to lunch together, he orders roast pork, french fried potatoes, dessert with gobs of whipped cream, five cups of coffee with white sugar, and smokes half a pack of cigarettes.

Another of my friends is a construction engineer. He spends his days building houses — following blueprints perfectly. But the closet door his wife has been trying to get him to hang still leans against the wall of his bedroom where it has been for two years.

Sadly, the same rule sometimes applies to professional Christians. Pay a man to minister and he does a good job from 9 to 5, but after hours things sometimes get slack.

Some things are meant to be more than jobs. They are life styles. I guess answering my mail ought to fall into that category. And so should my devotion to God — no matter how much I might want to chuck the whole thing sometimes.