

PERSPECTIVE



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Upstairs provides best view of nature

I've always been attracted to two-story houses. Low, rambling ranch styles are fine for ranchers, but I like to be up above the housetops where I can see the world.

My earliest memories are of the view out of my bedroom window in the big house which is now the manager's house at the Baptist Retirement Center. My Dad built the house so the upstairs bedrooms looked out over what was then pasture, grove and hammock. Looking eastward across the pasture I could see the front nine of the golf course and beyond that the salt marshes bordering the Indian River. No other houses were in sight.

I spent long hours with my elbows propped on the window sill, or sitting at my desk gazing through the screen at the tree tops. Less visionary parents would have chided me for wasting time, but it's never a waste of time for a young boy to sit and drink in God's creation from an upstairs window. It establishes a certain perspective which goes with him all his life.

Sounds are accented when heard from the second story. Every night I was lulled to sleep as the soft roar of the ocean rode the east wind across the river. A sulfur well, irrigating the grove, added its lullaby, punctuated by the friendly sounds of hoot owls calling to each other across the hammock. As the house cooled in the night air, strange creeks and pops broke the stillness, and in hurricane season the howl of the wind around the corners and the splashing of rain against the closed shutters gave a feeling of security. Those were sounds that could never be heard with such accents by those who lived next to the ground.

Now, after more than 20 years of being out from under my father's roof, we're finally adding the second floor to our own house. We won't be able to hear the ocean because of the whine of airplanes taking off from the nearby airports. Hoot owls went out with model A Fords and even the hurricanes have changed their course. The sulfur wells are capped, replaced with the hum of electric pumps, and the broad expanse of grove and pasture is now a jumble of rooftops and TV antennas. But still, there's something special with being upstairs and able to see beyond the fences and sidewalks.

My children have a lot more to do than I did when I was a kid . . . TV, 10-speed bicycles, Little League, used cars, church parties, city recreation and a dozen school activities. Yet inside I secretly entertain the desire of coming home some afternoon and finding one of them, elbows propped on the window sill, gazing at the horizon from a two-story window. That will be adequate compensation for the sawdust, sheet rock dust, busted thumbs and depleted bank account that went into building the second story.