



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Well, here we are back home after a glorious week of "coming apart" on our vacation. "I really think people who travel 1,500 miles just to sit on the beach when they have one in their back yard must have a screw loose," my wife commented as our car limped into the driveway last Monday night.

If I didn't have one loose when I left, I must have had 300 loose when I got back. Really, though, we had a good time, despite the fact we had to shut the car air conditioner off every time we came to a stop light. (The one time we didn't do it the engine stalled and it took half an hour to get it started.)

"Did you have any spiritual experiences?" one of my more religious neighbors asked as I was unloading the car.

"Yes, I did a lot of praying on the ferry boat when the man made us cut off the car engine when we were first in line to get off and there were 30 cars behind us," I answered. (And would you believe that was the one time it cranked right up?)

I did learn one positive thing. If you want to get rich in a hurry, build a cottage on the outer banks of North Carolina and rent it to flat land tourists, like us. At the rates we were paying (honest, I'm not exaggerating), you could pay off a \$20,000 cabin in a year and just live off the income the rest of your life. Fortunately, our friends, Judge Allen Harrell and his family from Wilson, North Carolina, were sharing the expenses (actually they bore most of them), so we weren't hit too hard. But pity the poor tourist who doesn't have a judge to occupy the other half of the duplex.

The best thing that happened to us was combining the Buckingham family and the Harrell family for a week. Their six kids, the littlest two of whom are adopted (one deaf and the other black), and our five roustabouts thoroughly enjoyed the week of doing nothing but swimming, surfing and picking up shells.

Not being much of a surfer, I received lessons from Judge Harrell on the value of picking up shells and examining them. I had never seen the exquisite beauty of these minute creations of God until he forced me to walk the beach with him and just look.

"Every one of these billions of shells once housed a tiny creature," the judge pointed out with his tarheel drawl. "The Bible teaches us that God knows all His creatures by name. That doesn't mean just us big guys, but these little fellas, too."

What a thought! That the God of the Universe knows and cares about each living organism — even the microscopic creatures of the sea! That thought in itself made the 1,500 miles of highway anxiety worthwhile.

Oh, yes, I learned something else. I've always had a guilty conscience about spending Sunday morning anywhere but in a church house. Since I didn't take any go-to-meeting clothes with me and hated to offend the establishment people by walking into a church in Bermuda shorts and tennis shoes, we had "church" in the cottage on Sunday morning. In the process we rediscovered the old Jewish custom of family worship, when the father sat down with his children and read the Scripture. "Teach them diligently unto thy children and talk of them when thou sittest in thine house. . ."

So we're home. And other than getting out of debt for the vacation (including the place of a new battery and other things that had to be replaced on the car), I'll soon be ready to go again . . . say in 1975.