



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

WEST PLAINS, MISSOURI — Well, actually, we're not in West Plains. We're 11 miles outside of town on a 1,000 acre farm owned by Gib Reed.

Reed's son, Allen, is a space technician who lives near us in Melbourne. Since his vacation coincided with our family trip to the midwest where I am on a speaking tour, we spent the first several days on the farm.

Even though the majority of us have migrated to the urban areas of our nation — there is still something of the farm left in all of us. Maybe it has to do with our heritage. Adam was a farmer and those who have inherited his nature seem to have a natural affinity for the soil.

The Russian writer, Tolstoy, said he used to take his shoes off and walk through the fields, just to get close to the soil. Even in the ghettos and slums of the big cities, the little children are drawn to the scrubby trees and weed patches that inhabit the vacant lots.

There is something inside all of us that draws us back to the farm...even if we've been removed by generations of concrete and exhaust smoke.

The Reed farmhouse has four rooms. In the last several years the sons have helped their father "modernize." Two years ago they added running water. Last year they built a bathroom on the house (which eliminated the well worn trail down the hill) and recently they put in a telephone.

Early the next morning Mr. and Mrs. Reed awoke our children to ask them to come help milk the cows. Even though they are in their late 60's, both are still active people. The cow herd had dwindled to four and hand milking has given way to an electric machine, but the process is still the same. I followed my children out to the barn and watched while Reed showed them how to kneel beside a black Angus and squirt the milk from her udder into a metal bucket.

I began to realize something of our lost heritage. None of my children have ever had the experience of seeing a cow milked — much less squatting down and actually pulling on the tits to make the stream of milk splash into the bucket.

Later in the day they had a chance to ride a tractor, round up horses in a field, and finally escape the summer heat by swimming in a willow-draped swimming hole.

Civilization and all its conveniences has separated us from most of the wonders of God's natural creation. The night before, standing in a hay field, miles away from the nearest neighbor, we looked heavenward at the canopy of a billion twinkling stars. My teenage son, Bruce, commented, "I guess the stars shine like this everywhere, but back home we can't see them because of the street lights."

As we left the next afternoon to drive toward Joplin where we would spend the next night in a neon lighted, concrete enshrouded Holiday Inn, my 11 year old Bonnie said from the back seat, "Daddy, I want to come back someday and live on a farm like this."

I know the feeling. It sounds a nostalgic note in my heart too.