

# The Front Porch

The front porch has long played an important role in the culture of the South. More than just an appendage on a house, it was a place where lessons were taught to children, bonds with neighbors strengthened and dreams and plans shared with others.

Some of my best memories today have to do with the King, Vickers, Delaney, Jackson, Holloway and Flatt families who lived around us, and who often showed up on our front porch to review the day's activities and talk about tomorrow. In many ways, they had much to do with the rearing of the three boys in the Hunter family.

The front porch, you see, was all about relationships and their value.

In his book, *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putman says the following statistics are indicators of the decline in community life in America over the past 25 years:

- Attending club meetings, down 58 percent.
- Family dinners, down 33 percent.
- Having friends over, down 45 percent.

Is there no time for relationships anymore? Have we hidden ourselves in a closet of television, personal computers, various entertainment pursuits and the demands of careers to the point that we no longer feel the need for enhancing our circle of friends, and even broadening it?

Do we know our neighbors? I will be the first to admit that I don't have the same interaction with them as I did those who were such a vital part of my life growing up in Cookeville, Tennessee.

Maybe as a society, we won't return to the front porch, but finding new ways to learn about and appreciate those with whom we share life on this planet would do us all a world of good.

--Beecher Hunter