

Peter De Vries with one of his reasons for enjoying life out of the city—in winter he finds others.



Suburbia's contented champion enjoys an "urban sprawl" on a quiet beach with a cold Vichyssoise, and Jerome Weidman's "The Enemy Camp" propped up in front of him.



Suburbs by Peter De Vries

Author of "Tunnel of Love"; "Comfort Me with Apples"; and "The Tents of Wickedness," a recent selection of the Book-Of-The-Month Club



The author with his six-year-old son who provides him with some of his best arguments for making his case for the suburbs. "In the city," as he observes, "it would have to be stickball in the street. Out here it can be on a lawn or in a pasture. That is one of the reasons why I like living here."

of this proves is that Mr. Weidman would be as big a fool to stay in the country as I would be to leave it. Just now at any rate. I cannot speak for my emotions five or ten years hence.

As of now, I like the trees and grass, as part of a context of living that I will simply call elbow room. I can just *idle* out of my front or back door, to smell the viburnum or to torment the dog by throwing his ball into the brush. For one used to this indoor-outdoor flexibility, a city apartment would be sheer prison. What a production it is to step outside in the city, on your own behalf or a dog's!

FOR all these advantages I pay the price—commuting. There is no use belittling that. There is no use glossing over the regimented morning: get up, dress, downstairs, gulp and away. And the equally regimented late afternoon: watch the clock, crouch to spring, and away. That is the price and it has to be paid in a kind of small-change tension that is always with you, Monday in and Friday out.

Enough. Between us, Mr. Weidman and I have offered enough data to join the issue, if not settle it. There have honestly been times when I felt as he does, and thought of moving back. One was an afternoon last spring when, on one of those impromptu impulses every married couple should be occasionally permitted, my wife and I decided we'd like to run in to the city and see a certain Off-Broadway opera. We couldn't get in. Or, rather, we couldn't get out—out of the country, I mean. It wasn't expense that balked us this time. It was a traffic jam of cars full of people wearing the same harried "Is it worth it?" expression of innumerable city-bound Weidmans and De Vrieses. It took me a minute to figure out who they were. They were a steady stream of urbanites, grinding along bumper to bumper, inch by inch, to see the dogwood in bloom along the Merritt Parkway, Greenfield Hill, and the road on which I live.