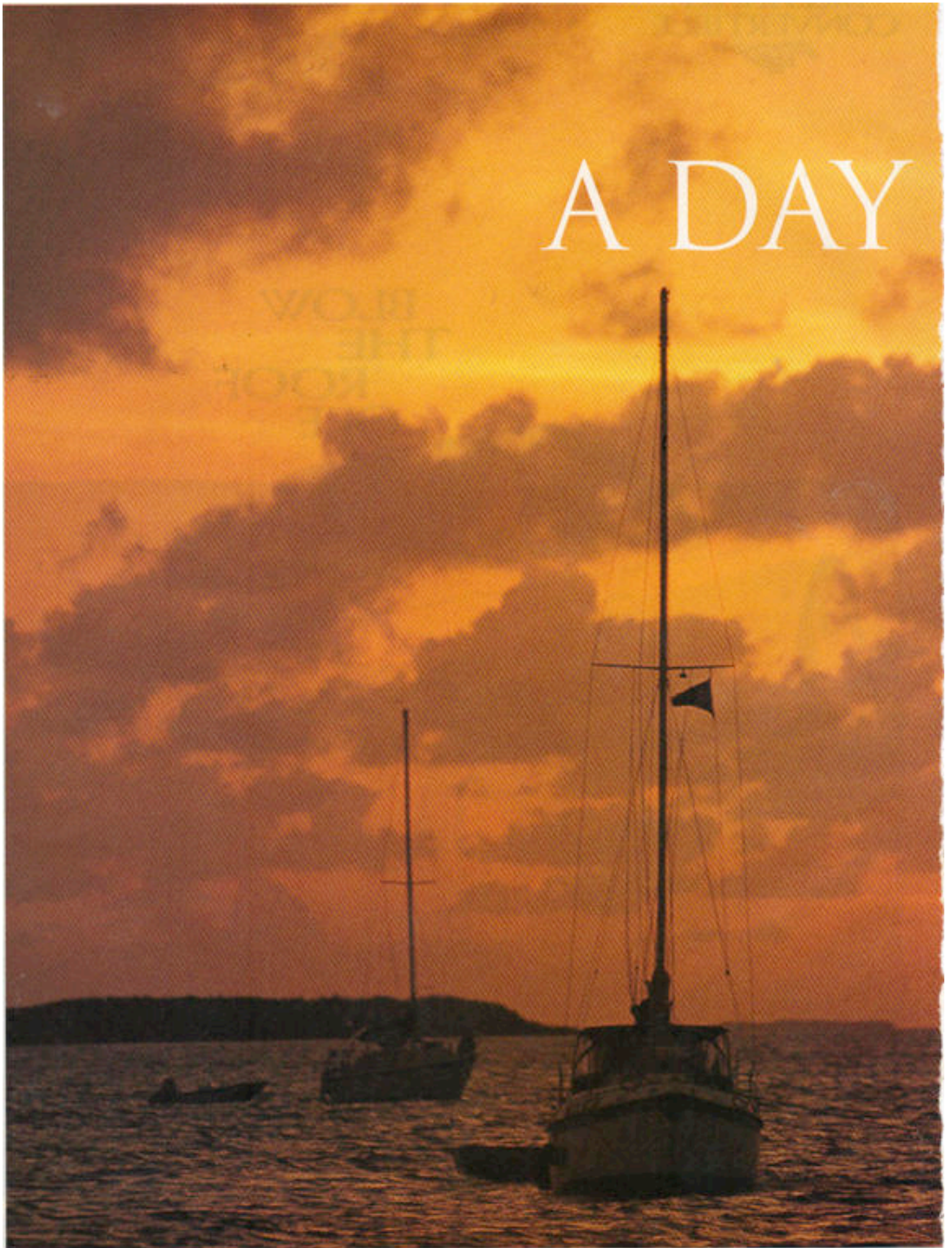


A DAY



Southern Living®
FEATURES

ON THE GULF

*As day dawns on
the Gulf of Mexico,
a small army of
writers and
photographers
invades its edges.
From Key West,
Florida, to
Boca Chica, Texas,
they fan out—
each with a single
assignment: Tell in
words and pictures
how a summer
day passes . . .*

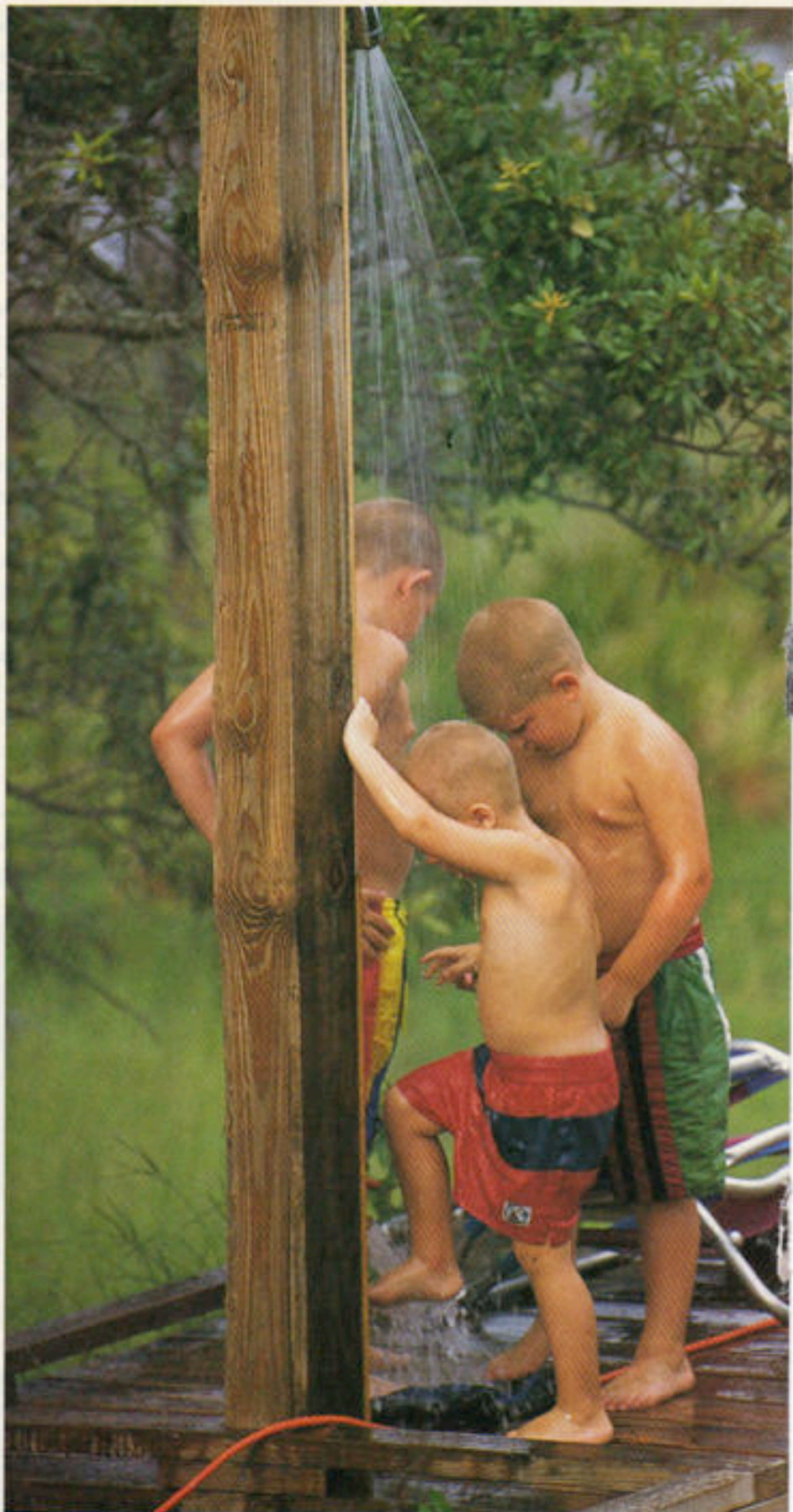
Cape San Blas, Florida

"We like to call it 'making memories,'" says Grace Sanders of her family's annual vacation at Florida's St. Joseph Peninsula State Park. This year, as before, they departed their Eufaula, Alabama, home at high summer in search of the stuff of memories. And each day they spend on this sandy spit of paradise that curves out into the warm Gulf like a slender finger, they revel in the empty miles of dune-contoured beach and the shallow bay behind.

By 7 a.m. the gathered clan begins the trek to the sea, weighted down by crab buckets, fishing poles, coolers, and beach chairs. En route grandparents, sons, daughters-in-law, and grandsons huff their way up a crosswalk over the tallest dunes found along the entire Gulf Coast—"white mountains" 3-year-old Cody has christened them. A cooling breeze and an endless expanse of blue water await them just beyond the shifting dune ridge, and they gleefully fill the deserted shore with sights and sounds that are theirs alone.

Hours later they return to the shade and shelter of Flounder and Scallop, their two of the park's eight rental cabins. There the boys rinse themselves of sand and salt in the outdoor shower, a ritual they celebrate umpteen times a day. And with their swimsuits drying overhead, they lunch al fresco on the porch, sharing pimiento cheese sandwiches and freshly caught crabs.

A nap follows the feast, but





PHOTOGRAPHS BY KIM CLEVELAND



the boys awaken ravenous to go crabbing again. As they descend the embankment that dips to St. Joseph's Bay, the late afternoon sun rims their towheaded tops and lights their eager faces. When a passing park ranger suggests a more promising spot, 8-year-old Brad vows, "It ain't crabbed out yet." He dips his net into the murky bay, bringing another crab up, up, up into the golden glow of twilight—netting another glorious memory for the Sanders from this day on the Gulf.

Nancy Dorman-Hickson