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One of our telephone calls on a recent afternoon came from Mrs. Winton Becker — the former Lois Bennett — who lives in Pine City, N. Y. She was down here visiting her mother, Mrs. Manley Bennett, at Sandy Point, along with her husband and two youngsters, and wanted us to settle an argument.

Lois was of the strong opinion that the Spanish moss we have along rivers and creeks in this section is not a parasite plant that kills trees on which it grows, but rather a form of vegetation that gets its sustenance from the air. Her mother, we were told, was just as insistent that the moss does feed on the healthy branches it clings to, and will eventually sap all life from them.

Equally interested in getting the correct answer were 12 year old Susan and nine year old James Becker. The Beckers reside in the Adirondack region, and that's sugar maple country. The two youngsters — intrigued by Spanish moss on previous visits here — didn't want to do any guessing about this unique growth.

Like so many of the questions asked of newspaper editors, we weren't at all sure that our opinion on the matter was correct. This uncertainty was deflating to our ego, especially since Lois seemed confident that we could settle the argument right off the bat.

As a matter of fact, every native of coastal Carolina should know the answer, and ignorance on the part of a newspaperman who was born here is almost disgraceful. We assured Lois that we would call her right back as soon as we checked our set of Compton's Encyclopedia, and this we did as fast as we could thumb through the pages.

High up on the branches of trees in dense tropical forests, said Compton's, certain plants perch like birds and live entirely upon what they can get out of the air. Botanists call them epiphytes. Included among them are certain species of fern, bromelias, and orchids. In temperate regions the commonest epiphytes are certain mosses, liverworts and lichens.

Air plants are not parasites, like fungi or the mistletoe. They draw neither food nor water from the trees to which they cling. They are up there for the sake of light, which they could not get if they were rooted in the shaded soil below.

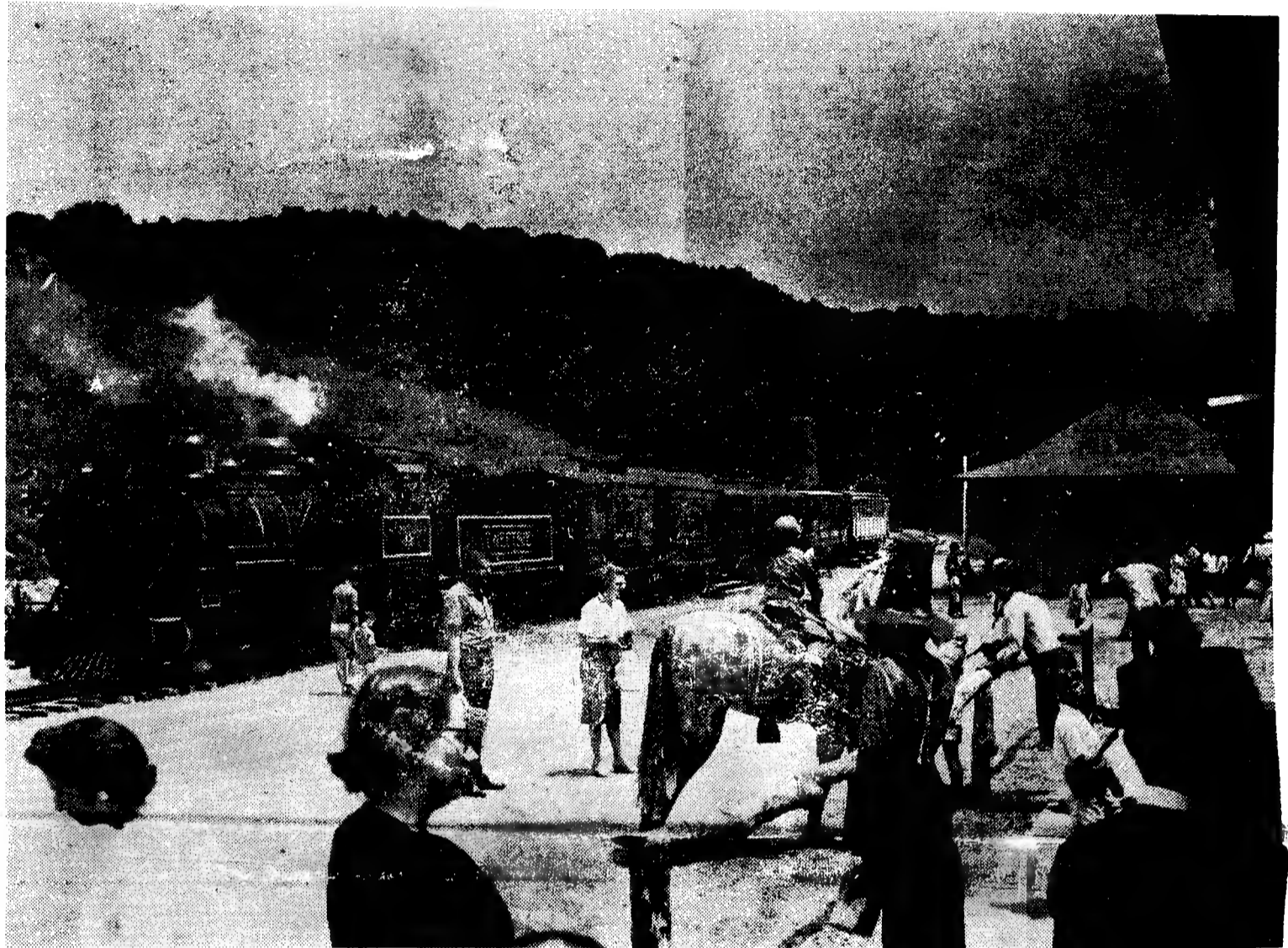
Some air plants have aerial roots containing a spongy tissue, called velamen, which condenses moisture from the air and thus obtains the water and the minerals needed by the plant. Others have no roots and absorb water and minerals through hairs on their shoots.

The most conspicuous air plant of the United States is the "Spanish moss" of the South, a plant of the pineapple family, which hangs in long gray masses from live oaks, pines and cypresses. The tiny strands of black, hairlike fiber — "vegetable hair" which form the core of this plant are collected and used instead of horsehair for upholstering furniture and automobiles.

The World Book Encyclopedia adds its own verification to the fact that Spanish moss is not a parasite. In its description of air plants it emphasizes this. Air plants, World Book informed us, won't harm the plants on which they live unless they grow so abundantly as to deprive the host plants of light and air.

Some of them take salts from the decaying bark of the trees upon which they may live. Many types of air plants do not require living plants to live upon. They thrive when attached to stones, buildings or timbers. The largest and most

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THEY LOVE IT—New Bernians who visit North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains on a vacation jaunt get a large charge from their delightful ride on "Tweetsie." It's a narrow

gauge train that takes a trip around Roundhouse Mountain, and there's an old-time country store, a "saloon" and real live Indians. Kids love it most of all.

It Took Folks From Raleigh Open Our Eyes Down Here

One of New Bern's weaknesses — a fault not uncommon to other cities and hamlets across the land — has been its failure to create industry instead of trying to woo already established industry from other communities.

Which gives further support, of course, to the oft repeated saying that most people can't see the forest for the trees. We overlook the natural advantages at our doorstep, while rushing hither and yon in quest of a will-of-the-wisp that has eluded us for generations.

This collective blindness could hardly be more clearly demonstrated than it has been by someone else's vision. A Raleigh couple, Wyatt and Lil Taylor, saw from far off what we didn't see in front of our very nose. Taylor needed no prodding, as director of the Raleigh YMCA, when he viewed the beauty of the lower Neuse on a trip to our section.

He pictured in his mind a camp in Pamlico county near Arapahoe that would attract youngsters from coast to coast, and maybe even from foreign countries. As Wyatt and Lil saw it, the spot was ideal for a sea camp, with frequent trips to the broad Atlantic, and an occasional deep-sea cruise thrown in for good measure.

The Taylors sold others with their boundless enthusiasm and energy. Camp Sea Gull was established for boys, and to a lesser extent for girls. The project expanded into a really big operation al-

most overnight, and another establishment exclusively for girls — Camp Seafarer — came into being nearby under the same expert guidance that had made Camp Sea Gull successful.

Some folks, scanning the horizon

for smokestacks that might possibly be uprooted and transplanted to New Bern or the immediate vicinity, aren't apt to view Camp Sea Gull and Camp Seafarer as industries. Others know better, and realize what the two have done to

give a transfusion to our economy.

Tell the average New Bernian that the two camps have coaxed millions of dollars from the outside into our immediate area, and you may get laughed at. However, the laughter will quickly subside if the doubting Thomas takes a pencil and does some simple figuring.

Excluding foreign countries that are represented, Camp Sea Gull and Camp Seafarer by the end of last year were attracting youngsters from 27 states. For all we know, several other states have joined the fold this summer.

Annually, 1,400 patrons of the two camps shell out several hundred dollars each to send their boy or their girl to the shores of the Neuse. Or, rather than send them, most parents bring them to one of the camps, and drive many miles a second time to fetch them home when the camping session attended is over.

Hotels and motels here are well aware that much of their summer trade is coming from mothers and fathers of children attending Sea Gull or Seafarer. Restaurants have profited greatly from the ventures too. The campers themselves make frequent trips to New Bern by land and water, and likewise patronize various businesses here.

Adding further to New Bern's direct benefit from the two camps is the fact that a number of local young people are employed as

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