



The NEW BERN

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Mrs. Mae Blanchard  
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New Bern NC 28560

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Yesterday was when New Bern's dog owners fed their pets scraps from the table. Some still do it, but they are in the minority.

This year, in the United States, canine lovers will spend approximately \$952 million for packaged dog food. The figure has been increasing annually by 15 percent for quite some time.

Our town is full of pooches. Some of them, even if you have a warm spot in your heart for man's best friend, must be regarded as rather objectionable. You're wrong, however, if you think New Bern is by itself.

There are 32.6 million canines in America, according to official figures. This includes only admittedly owned dogs. Heaven only knows how many strays were missed in the count.

Since, in the past eight years, the percentage of dog owners has increased 27 percent, compared with a U. S. population growth of 17 percent, dog haters are in big trouble.

At the present pace, we'll eventually run out of lawns and trees in this Land of the Free. That has already happened in New York City, where desecrated sidewalks attest to the fact.

There's a legitimate reason for some of the increased canine population. Many Americans, fearful of the crime sweeping our nation, are acquiring watchdogs for homes and places of business.

German shepherds, because they're large enough to successfully attack an intruder, are much in demand, and, to a lesser extent, great Danes, Irish wolfhounds, and St. Bernards.

Dogs, it is believed, were our first domesticated animals, although cats have been in the world's households for thousands of years. Incidentally, in case you are interested there are 22 million cats in America.

The figure is flexible, since it is the nature of felines to become parents early and often. Unfortunately, we have grave doubts that the government can reverse this trend.

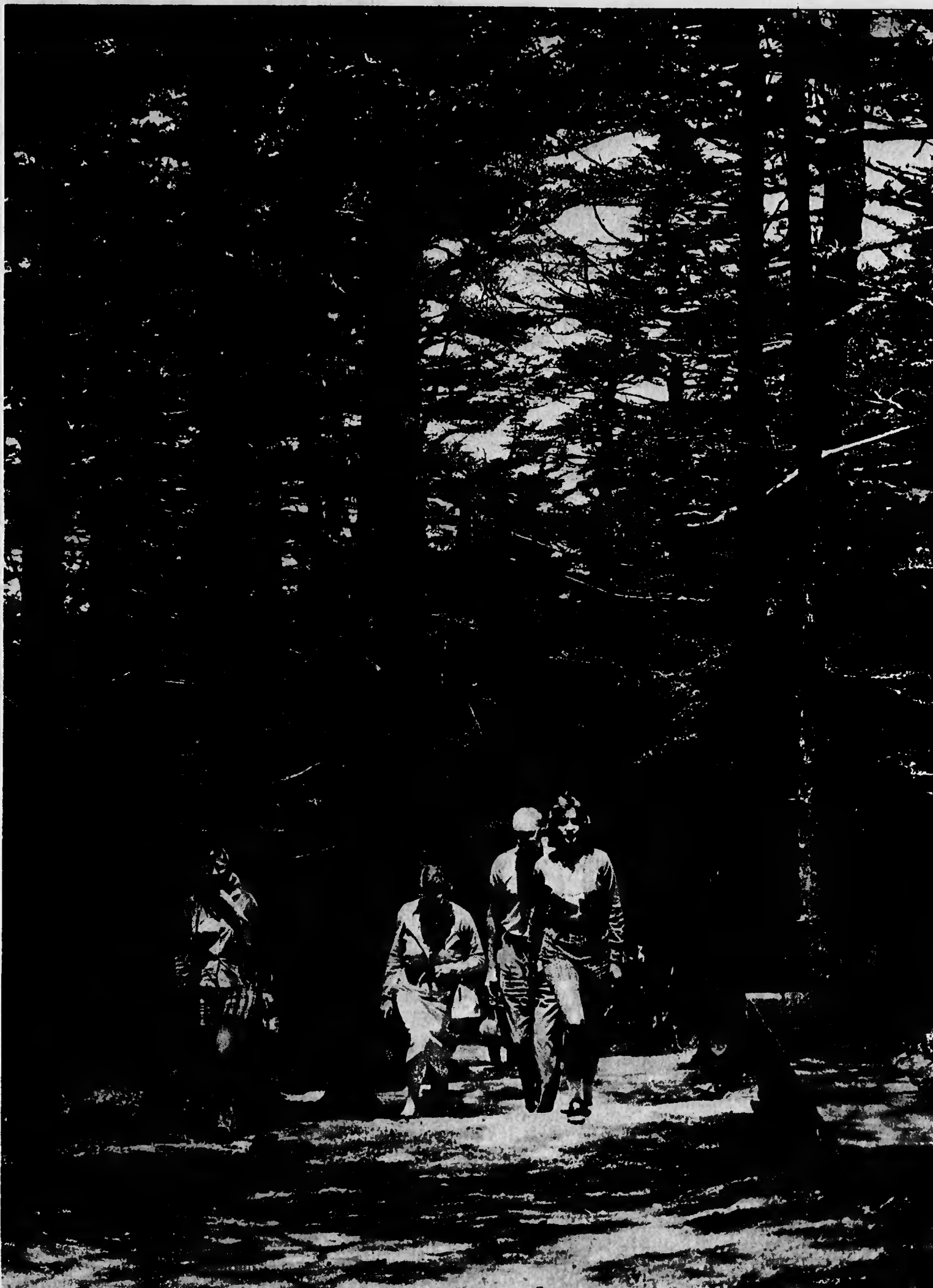
For what it may be worth, the percentage of purebred dogs in the United States had doubled during the past decade. Which doesn't impress us, seeing as how we've always leaned toward mongrels.

Writing on this subject brings to mind a story we often tell when speaking to gatherings out of town. It deals with a telephone call that our local dog catcher got quite some years ago.

The angry woman on the other end of the line screeched, "There are 12 dogs on my lawn right now."

"Do any of them look like they're mad?" the dog catcher inquired. "Yes," the woman replied, "10 of them."

As long as there are children, there will be dogs close by. Although adults who live alone often seek the companionship of a canine, kids seem to feel just as great a need for a pup



Toss your cares away and wander  
Through the woodlands way out yonder,  
When that old song of the trail is calling you.