

Down Home with Cotton



Neil Furr/CITIZEN

WELL-KNOWN MOORESVILLE ARTIST COTTON KETCHIE relaxes a moment at his Landmark Galleries in Mooresville. Ketchie is author of *Memories of a Country Boy* for sale at the gallery.



COTTON KETCHIE AS AN INFANT "country boy" with his brother Roger, sister Laura and mother Helen.



KETCHIE'S PAINTING of old Blackwelder's Store in the Amity Hill area, a source of many fond country boy memories.



THE KETCHIE CLAN AT HOME. The Ketchie kids, from left, are Laura, Roger and Cotton, with daddy, Millard Vincent Ketchie; and mom, Helen Ketchie.

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"You can take the boy out of the country but you can't take the"

Well, you know how that old platitude goes.

Cotton Ketchie, well-known Mooresville artist and gallery owner, is proof the country really "can" come out of the boy. Lots of mornings at 4:30 a.m., deep in the recesses of his downtown Mooresville art gallery, he keeps pulling more and more country boy memories out by the roots . . . using a keyboard. His foraging through his past has resulted in a 263-page book, *Memories of a Country Boy*, published in 2006.

Even as Ketchie was pulling out those memories, others filled in and he found 263 pages was not nearly enough.

Ketchie's scratching around through his memory banks started innocently enough. Just over a year ago, he typed out a little story about old Christmas Days back home. Thinking gallery patrons might enjoy picking up the story and reading it over a cup of brew nearby at Pat's Coffee Shop, he put a few copies out by the register.

He was startled by the response. Some readers found the piece evocative and said, "Write a book, why don't'cha?"

So he began writing about growing up so far in the country "you had to go towards town to hunt."

He discovered one memory hooked into another and that every time he pulled one out, it dredged up dozens

more. He also began going through old pictures he hadn't seen in years - like Grandma Ketchie's frame house he loved so much and old Bill the Mule he loved a bit less.

In one photo, he found himself as a one-year-old holding tight to his Daddy, Millard Ketchie, who looked jaunty in his US

Army uniform. In another Kodak moment, he was back home in old bibbed overalls. In another, he took his little three-wheeler for a ride down a dirt path. Other memory snippets took him back to Blackwelder's Store on old Amity

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