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# CAT AND RABBIT CREEK AREA IS GOING PLACES

eye fell on the intriguing name, Cat Creek. He decided at once to make a trip to Cat Creek. The plane had to be left behind because there are no landing places in these mountains. He had to make altitude by automobile over steep winding roads up the forest-covered Nantahala Range. He visited among the clannish mountain farmers and found in them an inarticulate pride that the world ought to know about.

But the point is that Cat Creek could be Woodchuck Hollow or any other place 40,600 square miles in the valley where the combined guidance of the State Farm Extension Service and Tennessee Valley Authority are lifting the farmers out of a miserable existence.

The men measure progress around here by acre yields; the women by the degree of household drudgery. Before T. V. A. and the Farm Extension Service came in here with their new art and engineering built around lime and phosphate fertilizer, cover crops and strip and rotation plantings, these farmers were scratching thirty bushels of corn from an acre.

Today they are growing 80 to

120 bushels of corn to an acre and up to 2,700 pounds of tobacco. They are eating a balanced diet from food grown on their own places under the new diversified cropping and dairy farming.

A few months ago they got electric lines into the cove, and now every family is installing or planning equipment to lighten the load for the old woman—electric water pumps to save the trip to the well; electric refrigerators to keep cool the butter made in the kitchen by the electric churn; electric irons and washing machines. But that's not all. The farm homes are being underpinned or newly roofed or enlarged or repainted.

Until the T. V. A. and farm extension experts showed the way these farmers never met among themselves in formal session to discuss community matters. Now they can't wait to call a meeting. They held such a meeting at the little White Holly Springs schoolhouse a couple of weeks ago to agree on their next five-year plan, having accomplished the miracle of completing their first one. One problem bothered them most of all.

### Keeping Youth At Home

A visitor to this place of burgeoning fields and green pastures wonders how the bluebirds and robins that are all around it now could want to leave it for the North, let alone the children of the valley. Yet item No. 1 of the five-year plan was: That boys and girls be encouraged to stay at home, this ob-

jective to be accomplished by improved financial agreement between parent and child, that children be encouraged to grow crops and livestock of their own and that the profit belonging to the children and be spent as they desire.

Since 1936, continued the resolution of these taciturn farmers, crop and hay fields have been more than doubled, carrying capacity of the pastures has been doubled and the grazing period extended. This progress will be continued. However, it continued sadly, we see the folly of all this progress if young people have no desire to stay at home. We are in full agreement that from here on more attention be given to the living conditions and opportunities of our young people. We are proud of Rabbit and Cat Creek community and we want our children to carry on and develop it.

### High Proportion In Service

That is why they are so anxious to fix up around the farmhouse now that they have their once-eroded lands and their cropping in good shape.

During the war an unusually high proportion of these healthy mountain boys were called off to the war and the girls went out to near-by towns to fill in on the labor shortage. The older folks carried on as best they could. Some of the boys didn't come back. Their names are painted on small white crosses on a war memorial green in front of the courthouse in near-by Franklin. The others and the girls all got a taste of the outside world and they are beginning to succumb to its lure.

### Meet 'Uncle Harve'

This correspondent stopped off at Uncle Harve Cabe's place on Cat Creek Road. Uncle Harve was out hauling manure and Mrs. Cabe made the visitor sit down in front of a blazing wood fire flanked by built-in bookcases filled with a variety of current books, both fiction and non-fiction. Mrs. Cabe runs the Regional Library Services bookmobile station, and people around Cat Creek come to her house to get their library books. Eighty-year-old Uncle Harve came in and it was hard to get him to talk about farming at first because he had learned by heart and wanted to retell every word and syllable of all the far stories told to him by his three sons—one who served in the infantry in North Africa and Europe and one who was in the Air Forces in Europe and

one who was in the thick of the Pacific island fighting with the marines. The last one is remaining in the Marine Corps.

### Talks Crops

When finally all the battles were recounted, Uncle Harve talked crops. His family has been around these parts almost since the days when Chief Rabbit and Chief Cat of the Cherokees lived beside the creeks, which was some years after DeSoto passed over this very spot. He told a story of thin crops of the wrong kind in eroded land gradually giving way under the new crops and water control methods to fine fields green nearly all year around. He had just finished sacking up his meat supply, he said.

He wouldn't let the reporter leave without showing off a bedroom set he made for his youngest daughter, who works in town and is suspected of feeling the lure of the outside world. It was a beautifully finished job of craftsmanship, bed, dressing table and chest—one farmer's bid against the tinselled baubles of the world.

### Cites Home Improvements

Up the road where an older son, Jack, lives with his wife and four children, Uncle Harve's daughter-in-law showed off the new oaken cabinets which she had her husband make and install in the kitchen in accordance with a home improvement program worked out with Mrs. Florence Sherill, the county home demonstration agent.

Still further up Cat Creek another son, Frank, was building a new concrete-floored chicken brooder. He had filled in erosion gullies big enough to hide a house, and mixed grains and alfalfa were growing on this formerly ruined land. He had so diversified his farming that everything he needed for food except coffee, salt and sugar

was grown right there on the place. He wanted the chicken brooder in order to get a better cash income and he has hopes that the county will put through a better road so he can get milk out and build up a dairy business.

Up and down the settlement the story was the same. Hope and new ambition burst through the native mountain reticence as farmers walked over their fields with the reporter trying to make make it clear for city folks that Cat Creek was going places.

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