

Pigeon Route

(Continued from page 1)

River gorge the hundreds of proponents for the road went into a lengthy round of applause.

Engineer Rogers said that the right-of-way from Pigeon River route was free, whereas right-of-ways for French Broad, through Asheville and Marshall would run into millions.

Jonathan Woody, president of the First National Bank, hit a broadside 5-point program as he cited the advantages of the Pigeon River Road.

He began his remarks by saying, "Being a banker, I figure what anything is worth, and who does it benefit. Now as to the Pigeon River Road, it will benefit everyone, because it will open up new country, and especially will it open up the Eastern end of the Great Smokies and that portion of beautiful Pisgah National Forest.

"I would be a traitor to my country if I did not mention it would make it easy to get to Cataloochee, and goodness knows, every American should visit Cataloochee — the garden spot of the world — I'd say that even if I had not been born there."

Woody pointed to the advantages the road would have from the standpoint of agriculture, in that it would enable farmers of Western North Carolina to reach other markets in the midwest

quicker, and more economically. "I feel it will be the means of stimulating the production of more truck crops in this area, thus providing additional cash income for our farmers. In fact, the road would make farming this section of our state more profitable."

As a member of an industrial committee, Woody told the Commission that the road would shorten haul distances to the mid-west, and that the all-weather road, and water-level route would cut down substantially on transportation costs. He also cited the savings in time for both the operation of trucks, and the expediting of shipments to market.

"Our tourist business would grow by leaps and bounds," he said enthusiastically, as he pointed to the increased north and south traffic, which is now being routed even away from the state because of the motorists having to cross mountains in early spring and late fall, when weather conditions are not always favorable for mountain driving, especially at high elevations.

"The road will mean a longer season — starting earlier in the spring and continuing later in the fall," he continued.

"The appeal of the all-weather, water-level route will be of special interest to our motorist friends who are accustomed to driving in flat country," he continued.

The banker, mindful of the dollar-and-cent value, told the commission that the road would be of

material benefit in increasing property values; stimulate new construction along the route, adding to the tax assessments of the county.

"The increased travel will be reflected in increase in gasoline taxes, and also the sales tax. As the business people prosper from this appealing road into the mountains without having to cross a mountain, there will be an increase in income taxes for the state, as well as privilege taxes," he cited.

"And what might be of interest to you sportsmen, is the fact that the alluring trout in Big Creek and Cataloochee Creek will attract hundreds more fishermen, which will mean more in fishing licenses. And who is there who has not heard of the good hunting in the bear country around Hurricane?"

"Gentlemen, I can think of every economic and practical reason for the early completion of this inter-regional highway, and not a single point on the negative side."

D. Reeves Noland was present, but did not feel like presenting his statement to the commission and it was read by Dave Felmet.

D. Reeves Noland, former member of the N. C. Highway and Public Works Commission and the State Board of Agriculture said:

"An act of the Legislature of 1832 first put the Pigeon River Route on record as the logical road into Tennessee. Ever since then — 123 years — the people of Haywood County have been fighting for a decent highway connection into Tennessee, and the western country beyond.

"About 1912, the American Road Association selected the Pigeon River Route for the east to west highway now known as U. S. 70.

Due to the Tennessee and N. C. Railroad right-of-way down the Pigeon River, this route had to be abandoned, and it was transferred to the present French Broad Route.

"A few years ago the Tennessee and N. C. Railroad was discontinued. The right-of-way from the Tennessee Line to Newport was sold to the Tennessee Highway Commission (Department). The twelve miles of right-of-way in North Carolina was sold to the Carr Lumber Company and they gave it to the N. C. Highway Commission.

"Right-of-way forms have been signed for right-of-way for the Pigeon River Road from the N. C. State Line up to Jonathans Creek, a distance of twenty miles, at no cost except for two small, cheap buildings. This is certainly the cheapest right-of-way that has been acquired by the Commission in recent years.

"The balance of the distance passes through a section where there are only a few inexpensive houses.

"This route is ideal for a limited access road as it crosses only one road during the first 22 miles, and three roads the balance of the distance to Clyde. Because of this fact, and the fact that there will not be any traffic to inter-



TOP SPELLERS at the third annual Haywood County Spelling Bee at Bethel Friday night were (first row, left to right) Georgie Ann Henson of East Waynesville, first in the elementary division; James Gaddis of Lake Junaluska, second, and Billie Sue Galloway of Waynesville Central Elementary, third; (second row) Janice Frady of Bethel, first in the junior high division; Margaret Timmons of Canton, second, and Howard Gillett

of Crabtree-Iron Duff, third; (third row) Robert Deas of Canton, first in the high school division; Mary Sue McCracken of Crabtree-Iron Duff, second, and Violet Lindsey of Clyde, third. Behind the contestants are W. N. Freel of the Free-Robinson Furniture Store of Canton, sponsor of the spelling bee, and C. C. Poindexter, principal of Bethel District schools, who was in charge of the event. (Mountaineer Photo).

ferre with construction, the costs involved will be an absolute minimum for this type of construction.

"The route from Clyde to Asheville is already constructed three lanes from Canton to Asheville with four lanes from Clyde to Canton, and the right-of-way for the fourth lane is already owned by the Commission (Canton to Asheville).

"Approximately seven miles of Cold Springs has been completed this route from Tennessee Line to except for surfacing.

"When 14 miles more is completed we will have an excellent, fully usable, highway from Asheville to the N. C.-Tennessee State Line where it will be joined by Tennessee construction.

"The Pigeon River Route can be constructed in less than half the time . . . and with far less cost than any competing route . . . due to the shorter construction distances involved, and the fact that no railroads, towns, or other obstacles are involved.

"In addition it will serve a higher percentage of population, will help present industries, will make it easier to attract new industries, and will do more to develop the Great Smoky Mountains National Park than any state highway that can be built.

"Other representatives of Haywood County will discuss the general value of the Pigeon River to North Carolina generally.

"I give you my firm opinion, however, that no road in this area is needed as badly as the Pigeon River Road . . . that none can be built as cheaply . . . that no other will be as worthy . . . and that no other route is so well adapted for location of the Inter-Regional

Route — Knoxville to Asheville. "As for distances, specifications, I leave that to the Engineers for expert advice."

Charles Ray, former chairman of the N. C. Park Commission told the highway commission that:

In the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, The Pisgah National Forest, and the Foothills Parkway of Tennessee, we have the greatest combination of tourist attractions in the Americas, and in fact, in the world.

Their drawing power, however, is not being utilized in any great degree, nor can they be without much better access, and extensive development.

Insofar as the eastern end of the Park is concerned, and the National Forest in that area, the Pigeon River Road is of vital importance.

For a good portion of its length after it leaves the Tennessee Line, it is wholly within the Pisgah National Forest. It is at the same time within the Pigeon River Gorge which provides some of the most

magnificent scenery in Eastern America. Within this area, the motorist will be able to see bear, deer, and other game. Also remarkably beautiful trees, shrubs, and flowers. As the area is a National Forest, it will be free from billboards and cheap types of roadside stands.

In this same area, the Pigeon River Road skirts the Great Smoky National Park, and will make possible the building of access roads into Big Creek and Cataloochee Valleys, which together comprise some 60,000 acres of Haywood County lands.

These two valleys with their encircling mountains face eastward to North Carolina and is the area which logically should serve visitors approaching through Asheville and Hendersonville. With these two areas developed, the Park would be some two hours closer to Asheville.

Because of geographic considerations and the absence of other highways, this section of the Park cannot be developed until the Pigeon River Road is built.

Considering the Smokies Park

from the standpoint of the visitor from afar, who really wants to see and enjoy the Park, an encircling highway, definitely is essential. This would enable a tourist, approaching from the North, South, East, or West, to travel around the edge of the Park, and to visit any of its numerous valleys where access roads have been provided.

The Foothills Parkway in Tennessee has been designed and is being built for that specific purpose. This will, in effect, connect with the Tennessee portion of the Pigeon River Road, which, when it is completed, will make possible travel around the Park.

In relation to the Blue Ridge Parkway, it would be only some 20 miles from the Pigeon River Road near Cove Creek to a connection with the Parkway at Soco Gap where it would also connect with the Cherokee Indian Reservation. This connection would be by way of the beautiful Jonathan Creek and Maggie Valleys which are in themselves as beautiful as Parkways.

A feature of the present lack of highways into, across, and around the Smokies Park, is that travel into and visitor use, are too concentrated. At the present time the trans-park highway by Cherokee has been pounded to pieces, a condition which must be relieved.

A factor in this situation is the fact that under present conditions, much heavy truck traffic must use the highway in question, U. S. 441, a situation which is unsatisfactory to the trucker, to other motorists, and to the Park Service. During the summer months, these heavy trucks are only allowed to cross at night. With the Pigeon River Road built, many of these trucks would prefer to avoid the long, heavy grade of the Park Road, and would use the water level route of the Pigeon River.

It has been my good fortune to know all of the Directors of the National Park Service, and all of the Superintendents of the Smokies Park since it was established. During part of these years, I had official contact with the National Park Service as Chairman of the North Carolina National Park, Parkway, and National Forests Development Commission. In that connection I worked for several years with Chairman Graham, and with Commissioners Buchanan, and Winkler.

With that background, I can tell you that the National Park Service has been and is, most anxious that a modern highway should be built through the lower Pigeon Valley. Within recent weeks, I have heard Superintendent Ed Hummel express such sentiments to Governor Hodges while on a trip to Raleigh.

From a letter in my files from a recent Director, I quote the statement that "A highway through this area, will directly influence traffic

in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Foothills Parkway."

Gentlemen of the Commission can say to you:—

That the Pigeon River Road is the missing link with relation to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the Parkway Forest.

That the Pigeon River Road is the missing link in our local highway system which results in a lower, practically speaking, grade and which will be returned to North Carolina, when the Pigeon River Road is built.

That the Pigeon River Road is the missing link in the interstate system of highways as a road which annually hundreds of thousands of cars are avoided in North Carolina.

That the Pigeon River Road provides our only opportunity (See Pigeon Route—Page 1)

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