

Just as I started to leave we were called into the kitchen for hot apple pie and coffee. I finally did leave and as I got into the car the dispatcher was sending the crew that had been with me to help on a fire out of control about 20 miles distant.

I drove away feeling pleased to be a part of the private-State-Federal effort that was helping to insure a timber supply for the future, as well as to preserve the other values of the woods such as wildlife and natural beauty.

## Pine Trees and Profits From a Family Forest

ROBERT E. NIPP



THE FIRST TIME I saw youthful Bob Murphy at his 950-acre farm near the town of Washington down in Wilkes County, Ga., he was jabbing a chemical injection gun deep into the trunk of a deformed old tree. The purpose, Bob explained, was to kill the unwanted vines, brush, and hardwood trees with but little commercial value and to make room for his young 3- to 5-foot pines which needed more moisture and sun.

Three years before, Bob, his wife, and some hired help had wound their way through this field of nondescript trees and underbrush and hand planted about 900 loblolly pine seedlings on each acre. Seedlings were spaced every 6 feet in rows 8 feet apart. Most had survived. Now they needed more room to grow.

Bob said the brush and hardwood trees killed by the chemical injection lose their leaves and then gradually rot and fall to the ground. The resulting debris provides a thick moisture mulch for the young pines and protects the soil from erosion.

Crewcut and sporting a healthy tan, Murphy at age 26 typifies today's younger generation of farmers.

The Murphys have found that credit is an important tool in today's agriculture, and like many young families, they had little in the way of property which they could offer as a collateral on loans from conventional lenders. In early 1963, they turned to the Farmers Home Administration of the Agriculture Department

*A forest plantation in Mississippi.*



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and qualified for one of the first forestry-purpose loans by that agency.

With this assistance, the Murphys have been able to work over and improve about two-thirds of their 800 acres of woodland. Around 200 acres of previously unproductive woodland have been planted with loblolly pine seedlings, and the undesirable brush and hardwoods removed from about one-half of this newly planted area.

Besides this, they have carried out conventional timber stand improvement work—mostly killing off the undesirable brush and the poor quality trees—on more than 300 acres of other land. This area had a fairly good stand of pine trees intermixed with other tree growth when the Murphys purchased the farm. By removing the unwanted growth, the remaining pines could grow fast and straight.

By 1970, the Murphys hope to have all 800 acres of woodland producing a maximum growth of pine trees.

Bob and Carole Murphy's records show that timberland they have replanted to loblolly pine seedlings, or otherwise improved, is producing about \$8 an acre a year compared to \$2 an acre before. On

540 acres renovated, that adds up to an income improvement of \$3,300 a year.

An untapped resource on the Murphy farm consists of recreational and hunting rights which they could lease out to city people. Quail, turkey, raccoon, pheasant, and deer abound on the farm which now represents a wildlife paradise. Horseback riding, camping, picnicking, and nature study are among the recreational possibilities on their meadow and timberland.

The Murphys' woodland is one of 4½ million of our Nation's family forests, 75 percent of which are farmer-owned. What has been done on the Murphys' property can be repeated on many others.

As Tom K. Wilson, the Farmers Home Administration's credit technician for Wilkes County, points out, "The Murphy story points up some solutions to a number of national problems:

"Farm people need more income.

"City people need more space to play.

"Our wood-processing industries need more timber to meet ever-increasing demands from an energetic Nation which will see 330 million people living within its shores by the year 2000."

*The Alexander Ewing family walks through a hardwood stand on their Overlook Farm near Millbrook, New York.*

