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City May Boast Exciting Spots, But Blackberries Ripe for Picking

By CELESTINE SIBLEY

THE OTHER DAY I went to Six Flags Over Georgia to see 85 little Head Start children from the Bowen Homes nursery launched on a day's outing, provided by readers who sent in contributions of green stamps and some money. I came away from my first glimpse of this vast amusement park totally

charmed with its beauty and variety.

"It's not a bit like Mooney's Lake used to be," I marvelled to photographer Bill Wilson, thinking of the days when I took my children there for a big outing.

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A DAY OR SO before two friends, Carolyn Becknell Mann and Leah Logan, spoke cosily in my presence of new

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places to eat in our town. They asked me how I liked the Lion's Head and The Abbey and I said, "Huh? What's that?"

"You have to get out and see more," Carolyn told me firmly. "We're going to take you in hand."

And I made a resolution to get out more and see more and went straight home, flushed with righteousness born of new resolve, changed to my jeans and straw hat and went blackberrying.

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IN SPITE of what I say, I really enjoy the quiet country pleasures. Blackberries are reaching their peak around Sweet Apple settlement now and it would be terrible to be kiting off to Seven Flags or some enticing new restaurant eating all manner of gorgeous food when the blackberries are hanging there on the vine getting over-ripe.

Some people can pass up blackberries, I realize. There are those who are afraid of snakes and those who hate briars and even more who are turned back by chiggers.

But I know of no pleasanter way to pass the hours of the sun's setting and twilight's settling in than in a certain pasture down on Little River picking berries.

The hay has been freshly cut and the random strands

the mowers left have turned to gold. The summer sun has dried them and in the drying brought out that sweet July fragrance that's like none other. In the oak trees on the hills the July flies saw away and down on the river bank frogs start their late evening symphony, punctuating it with an occasional soft, cooling "plop" into the water.

A mockingbird sings from the beautiful big poplar in the center of the pasture and cardinals make gentle night-coming-on murmurings in the alders by the stream.

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IT'S EASY to reach the little berries and there are plenty of them but the big ones, the long blue black ones that look as fat and tempting as little sausages, hang way back in the briars.

I always pause before reaching for one of them and then, following the example of my neighbor Doc, I stamp on the ground, rustle the bushes and sing lustily.

"You can't see snakes when it's this thick," says Doc, plunking a handful of berries into his bucket with a tuneful sound. "I like to think the snakes can't see me either."

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IT'S THE PROPER attitude for a dedicated black-berryer and it makes for a musical outing. At one end of the pasture Doc heists a tune about faithless lovers. At my end I sing my favorite, "I Don't Want to Walk Without You, Baby," meaning just the opposite if any snakes are listening and in between I hear a mumbled curse from somebody who was briar scratched and random slaps at mosquitos and horse flies.

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IT'S NOT Six Flags, nor yet going out to dinner. But it results in fine cobbler and a few glasses of the prettiest jelly you ever saw.