

**By GEORGE ROBERTSON, M.D.**

After hiking into the Cumberland Plateau and seeing Virgin falls, I wanted to know more about the area. The cover of trees, stone cliffs and natural setting beckoned me to return.

Realistically though, the hike back in was too strenuous to repeat so I thought of a different route. I studied the topographical map of the Virgin Falls area and decided to see if I could find it by air.

The flight from Lebanon to the region lasted less than 30 minutes and passed over the Cumberland Mountain airport which was in line with the Scots Gulf valley. Beneath me I saw a sea of trees with almost no roads visible which was to be expected since it was a remote area and there were few roads there and the ones that were there were immersed in trees.

I saw wide valleys with low areas lined with light green grass fields, but I couldn't pick out either the Caney Fork River or its tributaries. One of them would have produced water flow coming from a spring and then plunging back underground. It would've been difficult to see even if I had been at low altitude and immediately above it.

I wanted to see more of the deep forest but was still recovering from a long hike out of the gulf a few weeks ago, so instead decided to bike on the lower edge of the property of Virgin Falls nature reserve.

The bike trip started at the highest point on Lost Creek Road just south of Sparta. Since most of the downhill ride was on loose gravel, we didn't dare pick up any speed even with gravity almost demanding it. By going slowly, many bird calls could be appreciated. The Lost Creek Cave emerges from beneath the roadbed and contains a spring-fed creek with tumbling waters that seem to attract many of the deep woods birds.

After 3 miles of mostly downhill biking we came to the Caney Fork River and a very primitive

road going upstream into Scots Gulf. Biking the rough roadway was almost too uncomfortable so we abandoned the path after about half a mile and returned to the pavement and the highway bridge over the river. From there the road started sloping upward again so we loaded the bikes in the car to tour the rest of the area in air-conditioned comfort.

The deep woods offers an almost indescribable serenity and my trip seemed to get me back to the primal state of my being.

***Editor's Note: George Robertson is a physician with Family Medical Associates, PC, in Lebanon.***