TAPE LOG

Fieldworker's tape #: **02.5 (First and last tape of interview)**

Name of person(s) interviewed: **C.J. Taylor**

Fieldworker: **Timothy C. Prizer**

Date of interview: **July 14, 2002**

Location of interview: **Living room of the Taylor residence at [redacted] Blackshear, GA**

Other people present: **None**

Brand of tape recorder: **Radio Shack, CTR-122**

Brand and type of tape: **Maxell XLII**

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF TAPE QUALITY (background noise, etc.)

Taylor is strong spoken most of the time, which makes for a nice recording. The sounds of Taylor's window air-conditioning unit and oscillating fan make for a constant, but not distractive, hum in the background.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF TAPE CONTENTS

The contents are an occupational folklife analysis on C.J. Taylor's life living and working in numerous turpentine camps. The interview focuses on several aspects of life in the camp, predominately on the sometimes harsh characteristics of woodsriders and bosses. Taylor is a Korean War veteran, and this is a recurrent topic as well. Speech hesitations such as "um", "and", "uh", and "you know" have been removed from all quotations.

TAPE INDEX

COUNTER NO. SUBJECT

(Opening announcement)

007 Taylor was born on a Mayday, Georgia turpentine camp on October 10, 1930. He started working turpentine as a barefooted nine or ten-year-old. His father had to pay the state $1 a day in order to keep him and his brothers out of school and in the woods. Taylor did go to school through the fourth grade, which was the highest level of education anyone in his family had completed at the time. Taylor's father was a woodsrider at certain times in his life. He remembers one instance when his father was not making

enough money for his family to survive, so he took them all to another camp in Aaron, Florida. A lawyer for the Langdale family – the family that owned the Mayday farm from which the Taylor's fled – came and returned the Taylor's to their camp.

040 Working for the Langdale's, the Taylor's had stamps that they had to use to make purchases at the commissary. Taylor remembers being extremely poor most of his childhood on turpentine camps. He has lived on five camps in his life, but the majority of the time was spent with the Langdale's in Mayday. Nearly every town had a turpentine farm when Taylor was growing up.

070 "It's a long story," Taylor says about his life in turpentine. "The main thing is you did a lot of work for nothing. You just had to work. You couldn't get no money nowhere else. There wasn't no loan companies. That bossman, he was just like your daddy." When Taylor's father was returned to the camp in Mayday, C.J. was still a small boy and remembers seeing a group of white men slap his father down to the ground. "It was kind of rough – it wasn't no kind of rough – it was *rough*," he recalls.

At one point, Taylor fled his financial strife in turpentine and moved to Miami, Florida. When that didn't work out, he moved back to the turpentine camp only to find that he now had to chip 6,000 boxes in a week. Then he went back to Miami and then back to the turpentine camp once again. Then, a white woman at the turpentine camp told him, "C.J., a rolling stone don't gather no moss. You going from place to place, you won't never amount to nothing. If you come back home, I'll let you have my timber on half." Working "on half", Taylor made much more money because he was able to keep half of all the profits created from his work. Taylor claims that he is the first black man to ever work turpentine on half.

105 Shortly after moving back and forth and then finally settling for a while, Taylor was called to duty in the Korean War. When he returned from the war, his boss told him to get on a mule and ride it twelve miles to the low woods. The mule threw him off its back, and he had to walk the rest of the way. He told his father that he would rather have been in Korea than working turpentine at that moment. Taylor explains the ways that working turpentine was, in some ways, worse than war. "You was under pressure all the time. You don't tell nobody what you wouldn't do," he says. "Your hands would get all cut up, tacking tin and stuff." If the trees did not meet the woodsrider's concept of satisfactory, the worker would be called back from well across the woods to return to a tree he had worked hours ago. C.J. remembers one instance when he was still a small child and the boss demanded him to return to a tree he had skipped a while back. C.J. told

his father, who was working next to him, that he wasn't going to go all the way back for that one tree. The boss insisted, and C.J.'s father told him he had better go back to the tree. That same boss had killed workers for refusal before, and C.J. wisely returned to the untouched tree. "Things was so bad back then. You was just like a slave," he remembers. "You got from one man, and that's all. Nobody else would let you have nothing."

124 Taylor recalls the harshest treatment of a worker by a woodsrider that he has ever witnessed. The woodsrider told a black worker that he had missed three trees along the way, and that he needed to go back and work them. The worker did not respond as he was trying to finish chipping the tree that he was currently working. The worker was tired and was having trouble standing up. Before he had the chance to stand up, the woodsrider took a bush knife - about three feet long and normally used for cutting sugar cane - and slashed him across the back with it. "He was bleeding like a hog, and that man just rode right on off with that horse." The bleeding worker somehow made his way out to the nearby highway, and someone saw him and was able to help him into a doctor in Hoboken.

By daylight everyday, workers were in the woods and were not able to leave until the truck came to pick them up at dusk or after. Many times, the workers had no shelter to protect them from rain and lightening, so they were forced to cram underneath the wagon. Taylor reemphasizes that the workers had it hard – no money, no livelihood – while the turpentine bosses are the ancestors of nearly every rich family in the area now.

171 As the production of turpentine became too expensive in the United States, they began producing it in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Stills in both Baxley, GA and Valdosta, GA still exist, but not in the same manner that they once did. Taylor used to haul barrels of gum all the way to Valdosta for more money, but the day finally came when they told him that they would be buying no more gum. It was just three years ago that C.J. hauled his last barrel to the still, and at that time, he was making about $150 per barrel of gum, which Taylor remembers as "good money". The "white man" continues to get rich off of turpentine, while American workers have been forced out.

197 "I was in that Korean War over there," Taylor remembers. "When I first went over there, I didn't understand it. The black people were fighting over here and the white folks were fighting over there. But I won't never forget General Eisenhower. He said, 'You can't fight no war with a segregated army.' So they

consolidated us all together… And all everybody was like brothers and sisters. Nobody wasn't against nobody." Taylor remembers fighting alongside soldiers who had also come from a background working in turpentine, and they would frequently discuss shared experiences in Korea. He recalls the horrors of war in Korea, the constant lightening and thundering. It has been over fifty years since Taylor was in Korea, but he still has to take medication to keep his mind off of the terror he witnessed there. "You could see the shells going over your head all day long, artillery," he says. "And you walk over dead folks everyday. I'm talking about you go dig in the ground, you dig up children's heads, everything, when you build a hole, a bunker to go in."

218 Though he had very little education, what he had learned while working turpentine made him better suited for war than many of the college-aged guys he was fighting alongside. "I knew how to train. I knew how to use a compass. I'd go in places the other ones couldn't go," Taylor recalls. "And every time they wanted someone to go [somewhere others couldn't or were afraid to go], they would call 'Taylor, C.J.' The sergeant said, 'One thing about Taylor, when I tell him to go, he gets mad, but he goes and he comes back.' The [other] guys go to crying, man. They don't want to go." Taylor kept a level head, avoiding alcohol and taking the advice of his father who was also once a soldier.

231 He continues on the ways that work in turpentine helped him in Korea. "I can go through a swamp or anything," he says. "See, the Okefinokee Swamp, that was my home. [Other soldiers] would say, 'Man, how'd you do that?!' And I'd say, 'Well, I was raised like that.' You put me in the woods out there, I guarantee you I can go anywhere in them woods in the night and I'll come back." This sense of direction in the woods was learned strictly in turpentine and helped him in Korea. By looking at the stars and knowing that the Evening Star is in the west and that other patches of stars were in the east, Taylor was able to find his way in and out of the woods. Also, he would listen for trains to orient himself with his positioning in the woods. Knowing where the train tracks were helped him to listen his way in and out of the woods. Sounds like rooster crows and such also helped him sense where he was at any given time in the woods. This knowledge came in handy especially when the workers would hunt all night in the same woods where they worked everyday.

258 Continuing to compare work in turpentine with war in Korea, Taylor says, "You'd be scared now when them bombs go to falling and they're shooting each other, but you had your rights. You had your right to

try to live or your rights to die. And it was up to you to try to survive. It was something like 'Everybody for himself and God's for us all.' Everybody over there, they was buddies with you, but they was looking out for their self and you better look out for yourself." In turpentine, you couldn't look out for yourself. "They had you kind of in bondage like in prison. You break the rank, [the woodsrider] will go upside your head with a puller handle or a hack or anything." He remembers black men, much bigger than the bosses, taking beatings with puller handles from white bosses. "There's a puller on there, the sharp end, he'd hit them with that end. I saw the woodsriders kick black men slap out of the commissary… I've seen them take tomato cans and just throw it and hit them upside the head.

279 Debt to the commissary was one of the biggest problems workers had to face in camp life. "That was the main thing. They'll charge you so much for your groceries, and then you borrow so much. From anytime of the month, you wouldn't have nothing coming in. Then you wanted to borrow four or five dollars and they wouldn't let you have it. And it brought up a conflict all the time." Taylor continues with the harshness of bosses, including the Langdale's. Langdale is a big name in south Georgia and they are known to have a lot of money, but most people don't know that the root of all that money was in turpentine. Other than hunting, the only recollection of entertainment and recreation in the camp that Taylor recalls is playing ball on Sunday afternoons. Different camps and different towns would form teams and play against one another.

301 Taylor claims that people got along better and were much more honest in the days when they were working turpentine. He rarely locked his door or shut his windows. People rarely committed murder and burglaries were even rarer. "But now," Taylor says, "these jokers will come into *your* house and kill you." He says that technology has ruined the lives of the uneducated middle class citizens. With no jobs on farms available nowadays, there are very few places to work. Taylor knows people who lost their farms when Reagan was elected into office, so they had to start selling used cars and working various other jobs. He says that suicides and heart attacks have increased for both farmers and those that used to work in farming.

333 Taylor was about nine years old when he chipped his first tree, smaller than Taylor's nephew's son who was present at his house the day of the interview. Supposedly, there were a large number of small children working full time in the woods. Taylor's nephew's son has dreams of being a turpentiner one day. "He's got that in his blood," Taylor says. "He wanted to go in the woods when he heard about turpentine. I say,

'No more turpentine'… Now, there ain't no turpentine. There ain't no farming. The Mexicans took over… [The little boy] saw all that stuff [the Taylor's left over turpentining tools] out there and uncle, 'What y'all do with this? What y'all do with that?' He said, 'Uncle, I want to go out there and dip some gum'. I said, 'There ain't no more gum, son'… That's a working little joker… He loves to work. Anything we tell him to do, he's going to try..."

356 "A black man, I'm going to tell you," Taylor begins. "He wasn't no educated man back then. There was mighty few, but them jokers could work, that's right. They work on those railroads the same way." Taylor and the other workers used to watch men working on the railroad while they themselves were working turpentine. C.J. says that he and his brother Junior alone used to dip about ten barrels of gum everyday, an amount to be proud of. They made more money than most railroad workers.

380 C.J. is not afraid to brag about the hard worker that once was his brother Junior. "Everybody around this place here, they'll know Junior. He was a lead man in work. That joker's a natural worker. He'll work now." C.J. says that he would like to work now, but he has lost control of his nerves from Korea and from natural occurrences associated with old age. "I thank God that I'm living… I saw a many one gone, but I'm still here. I'm 71; I'll be 72 on my birthday. And my doctor tells me, say, 'You don't look like you're that old.' I say, 'Man, I've been through hell and back – through work, through the war, and all kinds of stuff. I say, 'It ain't what you do, it's how you do it. I didn't drink, I didn't play no nightclubs, I just was a straight up guy." Taylor's uprightness is why he was called on so often in his eighteen months (thirteen in actual combat) in Korea.

416 Taylor recalls many times that he and the workers wanted nothing more than to harm the woodsriders and bosses in some way. The certainty of prison kept them from doing so, however. The workers would often talk about how cruel the woodsriders were when they were working out of earshot of the woodsrider. Many of the woodsriders were tough World War II veterans, and the workers were careful to keep an eye on the woodsriders in order to avoid beatings or whippings.

In Korea, there were very few women whatsoever. The black women that were over there were all courted by sergeants and lieutenants.

441 Taylor recalls that women on turpentine camps did little to no work in the woods. They tended chiefly to domestic tasks. Many of the black women in the camps would work ironing and washing clothes for white

people. Some black women were school teachers on the camps. Black women had it equally as hard as all black people in the early to mid 20th century. Taylor's wife walked three miles to and from school everyday, and she made it all the way through school. Taylor's father was a smart man and completed school through the eighth grade.

Taylor tells a story about a time in Korea when he disobeyed an order and was scolded adequately by a Korean soldier.

496 When the workers were in the woods hanging cups, they would call out to the woodsriders to let them know that a tree had been completed. These hollers were unique to each worker, so that the woodsrider could tell how an individual worker's labor was progressing. C.J.'s call, he remembers, was "Thirty-eight". Taylor says that he chose this call because a lot of the other men had numbers. "It just sounded like a song, all day long," he says. "[Junior] would holler 'One'. That joker could put some tin on the tree." Taylor remembers a man named Bubba White teaching him how to tack the cups onto the trees, and he boasts that he only had to hit the nail once for it to be placed perfectly in the tree. He never missed a nail, and those who did often wound up with a busted finger. "I can naturally drive a nail, you can believe that," he says. Taylor would call "Thirty-eight" at the top of his lungs two or three times per tree, and other workers would do the same with their distinctive calls, making for a constant, yet pleasant clatter. Occasionally, however, workers would become frustrated with one another for hollering persistently. "Someone would say, 'Hey man, stop hollering at the same time I do. You know that man can't get all them trees'." Taylor draws a grid on a piece of paper to explain what the woodsrider's tally sheet looked like. Each block on the grid was fifty trees. The tallyman would keep a running count, and after a worker had completed fifty trees, a block on the grid would be checked off.

527 Work in turpentine sheltered Taylor from much of the outside world as a young man, including the world of girls and dating. Most boys at eighteen and nineteen years old knew nothing about girls, and Taylor did not until he went to Korea. Ironically, Taylor felt that he had more freedom at war in Korea than he did at home on the turpentine camps of the United States.

541 The Taylor's, well known gospel singers for several generations now, first started singing in the turpentine woods of Georgia and Florida. Taylor's father bought a pickup truck and carried his boys from church to church throughout the area for them to sing to numerous congregations. People who heard them sing

prescribed the name “The Rocking Chair Gospel Singers” to the boys, even though their actual name was simply the Taylor Brothers. Over the years, they eventually changed their name again to the New Taylor Singers. Most of the songs in the woods were spirituals and gospel hymns. Songs like “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” and “Never Heard a Man Speak like This Man” were favorites while working in the woods. Taylor’s brother Jack, who died while wrestling an alligator in the Okefinokee Swamp many years ago, used to sing on the truck in and out of the woods everyday. All 35 workers on the truck would be in tears everyday listening to his brother sing. Jack Taylor, though unable to read and write, was also able to do extremely complicated mathematical problems in his head, baffling the bosses and the woodsriders.

599 Taylor now plays a song by his brother Clarence Taylor onto the tape recording. Though the discussion between the fieldworker and Taylor underneath the music is unintelligible, Taylor explains that this song is one Jack used to sing on the truck to cause the other workers to “go to crying”. Clarence Taylor sings:

O, when He calls, He calls me

I will answer

When God calls, calls me

Yes, I will answer

I will be somewhere when He calls my name

O yes, I want to be somewhere

O Lord, When you call my name

...song continues

-- END OF SIDE A --

--SIDE B --

001 The few white folks who worked in turpentine with the black men were just as poor and desperate as the black families. One white man that Taylor remembers working with was once rolling a barrel of gum up the platform at the still when he slipped and the barrel rolled over him, breaking his back. This same man

now has walls full of antique turpentine equipment and is in a bluegrass band, which Taylor enjoys going to hear play occasionally.

The camps only had well water most of Taylor's life, as indoor plumbing remained absent from the camps until much later. Most of his camps had two wells, and the water these produced was used for bathing, washing dishes and washing clothes. Restrooms were small outdoor water closets.

018 Taylor remembers when he was a small boy in Mayday and it would storm on the turpentine camps. On one occasion in the 1930s, the wind was so strong that it felt as though the shack was coming off the ground. The house slid off of the blocks on which it was raised. The windows shook and his father wanted to get out, but could not get the door open because the gusts were blowing so powerfully.

Before boys were old enough to work in the woods, they spent most of their time sweeping yards and doing other forms of outdoor work. They were typically barefooted and bare-chested. Taylor compares the sights to the videos of small children in Third World nations seen so commonly on television today. He makes clear that at least the children on turpentine camps did have food to eat most of the time. Some families were close to starvation at times and others were able to avoid this type of poverty.

037 The most common game that children would play in the camps was hopscotch. Ring games were also very common. Children would form a circle (sometimes very large), twirling and singing:

'Round and 'round the sunshine

'Round and 'round the moon

'Round and 'round the sunshine

In the afternoon

Taylor says that he is not sure where this children's song originated, but that he will occasionally still hear school children singing it in the area. He thinks times were good for children then, whereas now there are too many things to lead children astray.

Some weekends, children from the turpentine camps would catch the Georgia Southern train to Valdosta to go see a movie for about five cents a head. Children would occasionally go to other children's houses in the camp to play, but they still had to remain on their best behavior. "All mothers was just alike," Taylor claims. "She could beat your child and another mother could beat your child if you wronged. It was

natural training, but now you better not do that because she'll come back with a shotgun at you. Everybody trained each other's children."

060 Taylor's father was a friend of the man that boiled the rosin at the turpentine still. The dip buckets back then were made of wood like old wine drums. The barrels were called "Gauge" and "Blue Whistlers", names that carried over to the metal barrels after their introduction. "Blue Whistlers" are the largest and hold about 600 pounds of gum. Taylor remembers the "steady song" that rang out from the work of coopers as they hammered while assembling the wooden barrels. Taylor says that one of his older brothers could play a tune on turpentine barrels while putting them together. When the coopers would hammer away at the barrels, they would sing songs to the rhythm of the work, much like railroad workers did while they slogged, driving spikes throughout the day. The songs coopers sang, Taylor believes, came from back in the days of slavery. They were much like slave spirituals, he says. Taylor and other workers used to watch and listen to the railroad gang sing songs that echoed throughout the turpentine woods. A road used to cut through the woods for the workers to transport barrels of gum more easily, and railroad workers used to walk through with chains on their legs, hauling picks and shovels. "They was like a slave out there in that hot sun," Taylor recalls. "They called that hard labor, and they meant *hard* labor back then."

099 Most weddings in the camp took place in the houses, though some did take place in the church. People would crowd into one of the newlywed's houses to dance and party. These dances were typically slow dances, which the workers called "Slow Drag" dancing. Supposedly a good deal of jealousy was present at these social events, especially when men would dance up close to other men's wives. "Every now and then you'd see a fight, but very seldom," Taylor says. Guitar music, "like B.B. King", was usually featured at post-wedding dances.

124 Socials in the jooks were much different than post-wedding socials. Workers from the camp would play the guitar until the early hours of the morning. Occasionally, someone would be stabbed or shot at the jooks over gambling, jealousy over women, or mere drunkenness. One man who was toting a .38 handgun one night shot and killed a man in what he thought was self-defense. It turned out that the victim meant no harm. After this happened, everything got out of hand and everybody ran. Some guys came across the tobacco pasture with shotguns and started shooting into the crowd of people fleeing the jook. One of Taylor's brothers was hit with the grapeshot spray. Even in a situation this serious, the police did not come

out to the camp. Everything was handled by the bosses and the woodsriders. Taylor remembers one time that one of his turpentine bosses, a man named Blankenship, kicked the police out of the camp and told them never to return. Another time, an insurance man came out and hassled one of the turpentine hands about paying him some money. Blankenship chased the insurance man out of the camp, kicking him and telling him to never come back around there.

174 Workers who would flee one camp for another were accepted well into the new camp. When the worker decided or was forced to return to the original camp, they were punished harshly. Taylor recounts several of the problems with the living facilities he faced on turpentine camps. In one place, Taylor had to keep his hogs underneath his house, making it nearly impossible to sleep at night. On top of that, they did not have cotton mattresses or pillows, but ones made out of moss. His mother wore a croaker sack apron when she washed clothes. Coming from these hardships is a source of pride for Taylor. "We've come a long way. We got to thank God we've come as far as we is," Taylor says. "You'd be surprised what my brothers and all of us went through with to get where were at. We ain't never stolen nothing from nobody. We always worked for what we got. Our daddy raised us to say, 'yes sir', 'no sir', and 'please'. And that 'yes sir, no sir' carried us a long ways. I say, 'Just because we say 'yes sir, no sir' to you, don't you think I ain't got good sense now." This proneness to be polite was an adjustment C.J. did not have to face in the military. One time, a drug dealer barged into Taylor's house in Blackshear demanding money that was supposedly owed to him. Taylor got his gun and threatened to shoot him, telling him that he needed to work, not steal, for what he wanted. The dealer left with no harm done.

234 Liquor and moonshine was a common sight on the camps, though Taylor never touched any of it. "Everywhere you'd go, it was like drugs," he says. "Liquor – that's the only thing they [the workers] had to look forward to, and whisky. They could make all the moonshine they wanted and sell it right there in the quarters." The making of moonshine whisky was considered much worse of a penalty on the camp than was the drinking of it. "So much liquor was in the quarters, my older brother, he had a jug on every corner," Taylor laughs. The liquor the workers drank came from "the white man". All night on Saturday nights, workers would enjoy drinking large amounts of moonshine and liquor.

264 Despite few instances of actual danger, the most feared critter in the woods were rattlesnakes. The grass would get so high at times that the workers were clueless as to whether or not snakes were nearby or not.

Bears were also considered extremely dangerous. Taylor remembers seeing bears and feeling the hair stand up on the back of his head from fear. In truth, bears were normally not dangerous, according to Taylor, unless they had cubs around. The most unusual fear the workers faced was from the hobo prisoners who would live in the woods. Taylor remembers seeing these bandit convicts, known commonly as "wild men" by the workers, in the woods roaming around and trying to hide from anyone who could discover them. Workers would run as fast as they could in the opposite direction as soon as they saw one of these men. These runaway prisoners were thought to be rough, wild and hairy. One time, they saw a "wild man" standing up against the train depot, trying to hide. C.J. whispered to his brother Junior, "Hey man, there's a man out there. He's got hair all over him, Junior." Junior whispered in response, "I bet that's the same man that was running in them woods this morning." C.J. and Junior started to walk towards him, and the man took off down the road. This "wild man" was first discovered while the workers were hunting gophers one night, as they frequently would do. The workers would go down to the railroad track near the commissary at night and look down the railroad track toward the train depot. They would occasionally see the prisoner hanging out in the trestle at the depot. "That's when he'd make his moves was at night. But that man was dangerous, I believe. He sure would run [when workers approached]", Taylor says. Every now and then, the tramps would come by the house and ask for some water and piece of bread, but that is all they would see of them.

305 Taylor was able to avoid trouble and danger in the woods by simply knowing them so well. He would go the same way every time, and knew that his route was safe. A trail was normally cut in the woods through the swampy areas, and the workers were normally safe as long as they stayed on the trail. The animals knew the workers cycle and could easily be avoided. Only when the workers would backtrack would danger arise. Taylor was bit by a rattlesnake once on the middle finger of his left hand. Taylor says the bite just feels like a yellow jacket sting at first.

336 Taylor went to see his doctor and friend, Dr. Waters, because he had promised the doctor that he would be a patient of his once the doctor graduated from college. The doctor's office was in Baxley, GA, and the doctor told him that he knew nothing about rattlesnake bites. Dr. Waters recommended another doctor in Waycross, GA, who Taylor went to see immediately. The doctor in Waycross told Taylor, "C.J., if you can handle these shots and things and them pills, if you vomit tonight, you'll be alright. If you don't vomit,

you'll be a dead man." Taylor said, "That's all you're going to tell me?" and the doctor responded, "That's all it is." "About 12 o'clock," Taylor laughs, "I went to vomiting. I have to thank the Lord."

361 There was very little available in the form of medicine in the camps to put on a typical wound associated with working turpentine, but they found ways to help the healing process. The closest doctor was a few miles away in Hoboken, GA. For headaches, things like Aspirin were sold at the commissary, but as for ointments of cuts and scrapes, the workers had to find other ways to treat them. Turpentine and gum were used for bites, fevers, soreness and many other ailments. Three drops of turpentine on a spoonful of sugar normally helped break a fever. Taylor also used three or four drops of kerosene mixed with turpentine to kill worms in his dogs.

389 Taylor retrieves a bottle of turpentine from a back room in his house and shows it to the fieldworker. He explains that the turpentine in the bottle he has came from a tree on which sulfuric acid was used to speed the bleeding of the tree. This type of turpentine is dangerous to digest. But raw gum without acid can be safely taken in.

407 Workers held few contests or competitions in the woods to determine who the best worker was. This type of knowledge was shared already by workers by just observing each other work, and it was sure to show up on the worker's record that he was an especially assiduous hand. C.J. says that his brother Junior was the hardest worker on every turpentine farm he worked. Junior tacked more tin, chipped more boxes, and rosined more trees than any man C.J. has ever seen. "Everything he started to doing, he would beat you doing it," C.J. says. "He wouldn't let no man beat him in the woods. They called him the little 'Iron Man'. I ain't joking. You ask anybody where you go about Junior Taylor… ask any white guy, I don't care who you ask. And he still ain't stopped working."

423 People from in town who did not work in turpentine thought turpentiners were working for nothing. Turpentine, as the lowest wage work around, was thought to be inferior to most other occupations. Taylor remembers during World War II when German prisoners of war were used to chip trees on American turpentine farms. The American turpentine workers would only dip the gum during this period, and men would stand around with Tommie guns to make sure the German prisoners did not attempt to escape.

Agricultural farmers, not turpentine farmers, thought they were better than turpentiners. Farmers referred to turpentiners, in a derogatory manner, as the "tar heels". Farmers saw themselves as superior to turpentiners because they were independent, having their own hogs, crops and livelihood. Whereas the turpentiner worked in the woods all day for low wages and was bound by the debt and peonage to the commissary, farmers grew enough food to feed themselves and had enough of a surplus to create additional income. Taylor explains, "We mostly made our living out of the woods – hunting and fishing. Then our daddy would buy us some flashlight batteries, and bullets, and kept us a good dog at all times. And that's all we were looking forward to on the weekends. Stay in the woods all night Saturday night. And sometimes they'd go Sunday night. And Monday morning we had to go to work. Didn't want to get up, but we had to go anyhow… We'd walk about six miles to hunt and then work the next day."

478 Taylor remembers that the Langdale's were the only bosses ever to take the Taylor family to any type of festival or barbecue. The Langdale's took the Taylor's to a barbecue/fish fry at a park in Valdosta one time, and C.J. remembers this as a big event. People dressed up for it, and the female children all wore flower dresses. Barbecue, fish, chicken, beans and iced tea were served. The Langdale's also bought three of the Taylor boys bicycles for Christmas one year. It was the only bicycle any of them ever had, and ever would, own.

510 Most Christmases were nice for Taylor as a child, as most years his father had a little extra money come December. Everyone received a present or two, and there were always lots of oranges, tangerines, and zeal nuts – called "nigger toes" by the children in the camp – to go around. Taylor is not sure how the term "nigger toes" came about, but he remembers going to the store as a child and asking for zeal nuts by that name.

529 Working in turpentine has taught C.J. Taylor many valuable life lessons. "I learned one thing – you got to work if you're going to make it," he says. "If you don't work, you're going to steal. Everybody's supposed to work, but you don't enjoy working for nothing."

Just when working in turpentine became profitable for all workers, the industry collapsed in America. Taylor is a bit sentimental about his life in turpentine. "I loved it, I still love it. But when things got good, everything moved out from under us."

577 The end of the turpentine industry has caused an increase in crime in south Georgia, according to Taylor. "It makes for a lot of stealing and robbing and harming one another. Because the middle class people, they depended on turpentining," Taylor says. "They didn't think that would never go out… Ain't no work for the black man in the farming, ain't no work in the turpentine. Then they let the Mexicans come over here, and they're working for nothing just like we used to work."

612 Depending on the generation, Taylor says, some turpentiners would have stayed in the work if they had suddenly become a millionaire, while others would have quit immediately. "If the older man could've lived, he would have continued," he says. "But see the older man died out. They're what come through made all the money. Then the younger race comes in and then they spread it out in other different things… Ain't no old guy going to sell no timber off his land. You know who sells it? When they die them young boys build a big, big house and everything, and after a while, they'll be going bankrupt or killing themselves or something." Taylor says that he would have stayed in turpentine no matter what, but he had no choice but to quit. With overseas production nowadays, there is no way for an American to survive off of turpentine labor.

-- END OF INTERVIEW --

-- END OF TAPE 1 (02.5) –

CJ TAYLOR

Liquor and moonshine was a common sight on the camps, though Taylor never touched any of it. "Everywhere you'd go, it was like drugs," he says. "Liquor – that's the only thing they [the workers] had to look forward to, and whisky. They could make all the moonshine they wanted and sell it right there in the quarters." The making of moonshine whisky was considered much worse of a penalty on the camp than was the drinking of it. "So much liquor was in the quarters, my older brother, he had a jug on every corner," Taylor laughs. The liquor the workers drank came from "the white man". All night on Saturday nights, workers would enjoy drinking large amounts of moonshine and liquor.