

TAPE LOG

Name of person(s) interviewed: J. F. Wilcox and Bernice Wilcox

Fieldworker: Timothy C. Prizer

Date of interview: 28 January 2004

Location of interview: The kitchen table in the home of J. F. and Bernice Wilcox on RR1 in Ludowici, GA.

Other people present: N/A

Brand of tape recorder: Radio Shack CTR-122

Brand and type of tape: Maxell XLII

Tape Number: 04.1 (Fieldworker's designation)

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

The sound quality of this recording is average, and there is very little background noise. J. F. and Bernice speak fairly clearly and audibly throughout.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF TAPE CONTENTS

J. F. and Bernice Wilcox, an elderly African American married couple in Ludowici, GA with a long history of involvement in the turpentine industry, speak about their lives living and working in south Georgia. J. F. worked in the woods for a number of years, but never lived on a camp in his adult life, while Bernice was born on a turpentine camp and lived much of her childhood years on the turpentine quarters as well. J. F. and Bernice were married on a turpentine camp as well.

TAPE INDEX

COUNTER NO.

SUBJECT

001	Opening announcement
005	J. F. Wilcox was born on a turpentine camp in Tattnall County, GA on January 4, 1921. When he was just six years old, he moved to Long County, where he resides to this day. At ten years old, he began working turpentine with his father who, until this time, had been a farmer in Long County. In Long County, J. F. and his family never lived on a turpentine camp. They did, however, live very near the woods in which they worked. Mr. Wilcox recalls that

he and his father “chipped virgin boxes.” Oftentimes, J. F. and his father had to ride three or four miles through the cold weather in a mule-drawn wagon. Working for just ten cents an hour in these early years, Mr. Wilcox remembers having to wade through and break ice all day long in order to clear the trees for tacking boxes. With these meager wages, Mr. Wilcox was able to buy a pair of khaki pants for 60 cents and a shirt for about 35 cents. Also, they had a commissary that they visited regularly on the weekends in order to purchase groceries. “We lived alright,” Wilcox maintains, “but we never did have a whole lot like people do now. But we lived. And we didn’t have no heat back then. We had fireplaces. And we didn’t have no glass windows... We had wooden windows.” Proudly, Mr. Wilcox declares, “We had a pretty good life.”

030 Bernice Wilcox was born on November 17, 1925 in Jasper County, South Carolina. Mrs. Wilcox’s family moved to Georgia before she turned two years old. At this young age, she also moved to Long County. J. F. and Bernice both have lived in Long County since they were very small children. J. F. reminds Bernice that she was raised on the turpentine quarters in Long County. Bernice lived on a turpentine camp for the first 14 years of her life. She did not move off of the quarters until she married J. F. at the age of 14 in 1940. Bernice remembers that her mother did all of the outdoors work when she was small. Her mother frequently “weeded boxes” in the woods.

050 As a child Mrs. Wilcox played games with other children in the dusty roads of her turpentine community. J. F. explains that kids on the camps in those days played a game called “Cat Ball.” “Hide-and-Go-Seek” and “Hop Scotch” were also extremely popular games in the camps, as they are virtually everywhere among children at play. Generally, Mrs. Wilcox did housework and watched after her seven brothers and sisters while her mother did work outdoors. She was the oldest of her parents eight children.

059 J. F. Wilcox worked turpentine for the Howard family most of his life. He worked for Hubert Howard’s father, Lawton, and uncle, Tom. The last person Mr. Wilcox worked turpentine for was a man named Marcus Middlebrooks (?). Never did Mr. Wilcox live on the quarters of any of these men, however. At 17 years old, Mr. Wilcox quit working in turpentine and became a truck driver. After Mr. Wilcox married Bernice in 1940, he came back to working turpentine and pulled boxes for about a year. Mr. Wilcox

says that he started chipping boxes with his father when he was about ten or eleven years old.

- 072 Mr. Wilcox says that he learned to work turpentine more from observing others who had worked in the woods for a number of years than from anyone sitting down with him and explaining to him how to do the work. There was a little bit of instruction, but for the most part it was a matter of watching and learning. Mr. Wilcox remembers some instruction and some discipline when it came to chipping and dipping in the woods, but nothing specifically.
- 083 Mrs. Wilcox went to school as a small child in the little one-room schoolhouse that stood on the turpentine quarters in which she grew up. The school was made of wood, and all children (approximately 25) went to all the same classes together each day. The teacher at the school was not a resident of the quarters, but she did travel onto the camp five days a week to teach the children whose fathers labored in the nearby turpentine woods. The teacher caught a bus each day to come onto the camp, and at the end of the day, the bus would haul her back into the town limits of Ludowici. Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox get a laugh out of the fieldworker's observation that the situation is much different nowadays; rather than the children taking the bus to school each day as is normally the case now, the teacher was expected to catch a bus each morning in order to make it to school on time.
- 097 Mr. Wilcox went to school through the fifth grade. Back then, school lasted for only six months of every year, and the rest of the time the children were expected to work to help their families make ends meet. Mr. Wilcox recalls that he had to walk three miles everyday to make it to school. He explains also that back then, schools did not allow students to advance to the next grade level if they didn't prove that they were ready for the next grade. Thus, Mr. Wilcox didn't finish fifth grade until he was 16 years old. If one needed off of school to help his family in the woods or on the farm back in those days, Mr. Wilcox explains, there were no restrictions on how many days a student could miss. One simply didn't go to school if his family needed help working. This too is part of the reason that Mr. Wilcox didn't wrap up fifth grade until he was in his teens. When Mr. Wilcox's father got too old to work and Mr. Wilcox's sister had children that lived with them, he was forced to work to support his family. "And see, back then, you didn't have no government helping you... Then, you had to do the best you could."

- 124 In his years working turpentine, Mr. Wilcox would wake up and leave the house for the woods before daybreak. By the time he returned home, it was nearly dark. “See, they didn’t work by the hour. You worked by the sun,” Mr. Wilcox laughs. Some mornings, Mr. Wilcox would be in the woods so early that he had to wait for the sun to rise so that he could see in order to do his work. At sundown, the workers would return home. He says that he can’t recall if he ate breakfast every morning or not. He does remember that he would bring his lunch with him each day on the four-to-five-mile wagon ride into the woods. Because the woods stretched for miles around, the workers simply ate their lunches in the woods with them. “We ate pretty good,” Wilcox says. “We ate like greens, rice, peas, and pork, and something like that. We didn’t have no steak now. And we’d go out in the woods and catch rabbits and like that and coons and we ate off that stuff like that.” The wildlife that J. F. and his coworkers hunted and caught in the woods was cooked only at home and never in the woods.
- 151 Mrs. Wilcox’s days were filled with childcare and housework. She cooked, washed clothes, cleaned the house, and took care of her seven younger siblings day in and day out as her mother and father both worked in the woods. For her siblings, she cooked lima beans, black-eyed peas, pork, and other foods that were readily available on the camp quarters. To wash clothes, Bernice used a tin tub full of soapy water. She’d scrub the clothes clean by hand in the tub before placing them in a pot of boiling water on top of a fire. Then, she’d “take ‘em out and rinse ‘em and wash ‘em real good. Rinse ‘em and hang ‘em up on the line – lust a long ol’ clothesline – and put ‘em out there in the good ol’ sunshine.” J. F. explains that, also, they often took dirty clothes outdoors in a box and beat them clean. They would drape the clothes over a large block and beat the dirt out of them with a club.
- 181 Mr. Wilcox says that there was little in the way of rewards when he was working turpentine as a young boy. Mainly, he just did the work that his family needed done. In fact, rather than “petting” workers with rewards, they pushed them on harder and harder until they were about to give out. Also, when J. F. would go work with or apart from his father, he would always bring the money he earned to his father for his father to use on the family. At times, his father did allow him a quarter or 50 cents, which, Mr. Wilcox explains, was “big money back in them days... Oh man, you could go in there and get you a Baby Ruth for a nickel. Go buy some crackers or cookies or something like that. With 50 cent then, you

could buy most anything then that you can with five dollars now. Baby Ruths. You could get about five of them for a nickel. Sardines, like that. They were about five cents a can.”

200 J. F. recalls that some of the turpentine mules were very smart animals. Some of them that were trained, he explains, would respond to commands such as “G!” or “Hyah!” “G!” meant right and “Hyah!” meant left. Some of the mules were so smart that they were able to navigate the woods without even having to dodge the trees. They became so well-acquainted with the woods and the natural paths through them that they hardly needed to look when they maneuvered through the thick of the trees. Some mules responded to their names and came when called. When workers were dipping gum and no one was on the wagon to direct the mules, oftentimes a worker could simply call the mule by name and say, “Come here!” and the mule would walk right over to the worker. The worker would then place his barrel or bucket of gum on the wagon and the mule would go on its way to the next worker who called it. Some mules, Wilcox also recalls, were stubborn and mean. Mules occasionally kicked workers or simply decided that they wanted to run away. Mr. Wilcox remembers one time that he and a bunch of other workers were on a mule-drawn wagon when the mule decided to break into a full gallop, sending him and all the other workers flying off the wagon and onto the ground. Some mules were so misbehaved that Mr. Wilcox recalls workers placing “jaw-bone breakers on them because they’re so unruly you couldn’t stop ‘em unless you had to put something on them to near ‘bout break their jaw. They’d be bleeding around the mouth to keep ‘em under control.”

220 Many of the mules had names, and some did not. Mr. Wilcox is unable to remember any names of the mules. Mostly, he just called them by the command that he wished for them to perform, whether it was “G!” “Hyah!” “Get up!” “Come up here!” or “Whoa!” “Man, some men loved their mules,” Mr. Wilcox recalls. “Some of ‘em was kinda cruel to ‘em, but a lot of ‘em thought of their mules just like they did their children. They loved they mules. Took care of ‘em.”

235 Placing his age in perspective for the young fieldworker, J. F. Wilcox explains that his entire career in the turpentine business was done before the introduction of pickup trucks into the woods. Mules and wagons were permanent fixtures in the woods during Mr. Wilcox’s time among the pines. Even more interesting is the fact that Wilcox is able to recall witnessing workers perform the

traditional boxing method on the trees, in which they cut a cavity into the tree itself rather than tacking a cup to the tree for the collection of rosin. Mr. Wilcox was also done with turpentine when sulfuric acid was introduced into the woods in order to increase the rosin flow. Bernice's father, however, did work in the woods with sulfuric acid, a fact that both she and J. F. remember vividly because he accidentally swallowed some of it one time.

- 245 Mr. Wilcox explains that later in his life when he worked in turpentine, he was paid both by the barrel of gum or by the number of boxes he was able to tack each week. Some workers also worked for a percentage of each barrel of gum that they dipped. The work crew of which Mr. Wilcox was a part in the woods varied in size depending on the time of the year and the type of work that needed to be done. In the winter months, when it was time to tack ten or rake boxes, there were often 10 or 15 workers out in the same patch of woods working side-by-side. In the warmer months, however, workers were usually each designated one crop (10,000 trees) and were expected to work individually. Though squads of workers were rare during such times, they did occasionally form. When working individually, workers were allowed to come and go as they pleased, as long as they had finished their work on the trees in a week's time.
- 269 Mr. Wilcox is unable to recall the nicknames of various places in the woods in which he worked. Rather, most workers simply referred to areas by the specific type of pine tree that grew there. Some areas of the woods were thus known as "Slash," for in those areas slash pines were common. Slash pines, J. F. explains, usually grew on wet, swampy land. Drier land tended to produce hill pines, and workers referred to these areas as "Hill." The slash pines tended also not to accumulate much scrape on the faces. The hill pines gathered much more scrape on the face.
- 277 Workers often carried water jugs into the woods with them for times that they became thirsty. Though it was no ice water, it was wet and it served its purpose. "I have been in the woods and we have drunk water out of car tracks," Mr. Wilcox declares. "You get that thirsty... And it'd rain and you thirsty, we'd take that turpentine cup when it didn't have no turpentine in it and drink that water... It was bitter, but it was something that would kill thirst. 'Cause you had no other choice. I couldn't drink it now. It'd probably make me sick." When asked if any workers liked the turpentine-flavored water that flowed from the tin cups, Wilcox insists, "Nobody liked it. But it would kill thirst!" Aside from the

food workers brought with them into the woods each day, there were also some natural foods (berries, etc.) that grew in the woods. Workers occasionally enjoyed these as well.

296 The biggest danger in the woods, Mr. Wilcox recalls, were snakes. He remembers stepping over rattlesnakes a number of times and not even realizing he had done it.

Knowledge, Innovation, and Coping With Danger

“But one thing about rattlesnakes back in them days, he’d let you know if you got close to him. If you didn’t ever see him – he didn’t see you see him – he wouldn’t say a word. But the minute he sees you see him, he start to jarring around. And see, rattlesnakes now are different than they were back in them days, because back in them days, a rattlesnake would – if you see him and he acts like he knows you see him – you could hang your hat up on a tree and he’d stay there and watch that tree, and you could go get something and come back and kill him. But not now. Now rattlesnakes, they go. If you take a king snake now, he was a snake – you messed with him and he’d follow you... They was a pest. I’ve never known ‘em to bite nobody, but a moccasin was poison. They be in the water. But see we’d wade in the water knee-deep out there in the woods working.”

Mr. Wilcox recalls that several workers were bitten by the poisonous moccasins, but never was he personally. Unlike king snakes, rattlesnakes never followed anyone. “A rattlesnake ain’t gonna follow you. He’s gonna do his damage right where he’s at or don’t do none.” King snakes, Mr. Wilcox confirms, would coil up and jump from one tree limb to another.

323 Mr. Wilcox recalls that the snakes tended to learn the working patterns in the woods and would thus avoid human contact. If workers stayed on their regular schedule, snakes would generally stay away. Hornets, wasps, and especially yellow jackets were great dangers in the woods. Yellow jackets used to make nests underneath the cups on pine trees. Mr. Wilcox and most other workers were severely stung by yellow jackets at some point or another in their lives in the woods. He recalls several workers having to go to the hospital for stings, although such activity then was rare. Most workers simply applied chewed chewing tobacco to the stings in order to relieve the pain and remove the stingers.

345 Turpentine, so readily available in the woods and in turpentine communities, was also a popular medicine. Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox both recall that turpentine was most commonly mixed with sugar as a remedy for the common cold. A drop or two on a spoonful of sugar, Mrs. Wilcox remembers, was said to cure a great number of ailments. It was used on beestings and to rub on wounds. “That was about the onliest medicine we had,” Mr. Wilcox states. “Accept go out in the woods and dig up roots.” Several roots, J. F. goes on to explain, were used to cure colds. “Catnip Tea” and “Hog Hoof Tea” were used also for colds. Mrs. Wilcox explains that “Hog Hoof Tea” was literally made from hog hoofs and would clear up a cold in a heartbeat. When a hog was slaughtered, J. F. and Bernice explain, the hoof was removed and placed in a pot of boiling water. Though the taste leaves much to be desired, “Hog Hoof Tea” was a reliable cure for colds and similar sicknesses. Bernice Wilcox explains that even with the relatively recent introduction of modern medicine, people in the early and middle twentieth centuries were much less likely to be diagnosed with cancer and other such serious illnesses.

386 When asked about workers’ seemingly superhuman ability to navigate the thick of the turpentine woods, J. F. Wilcox explains that,

Knowledge, Innovation, and Coping With Danger

“That’s just like you go in town. You know that town. You know every street. You can go anywhere you want and you know where you at... It’s just knowledge. Wisdom, knowledge come from the woods, I guess. You grow up in it. Yeah, sometimes we might go in them woods six or seven or eight or ten miles back in them woods, but we’d know our way around in there... It was just instinct. Just like you know the town, you knowed the woods the same way. There were signs and everything you could see.”

Even in the dark, Mr. Wilcox explains, he and other workers were able to find their way around. In fact, Mr. Wilcox and his coworkers used to hunt in the woods at night. They would hunt rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, and possums most commonly. “I don’t want no possums,” Mrs. Wilcox interjects. Though there were certainly deer in the woods, Mr. Wilcox says, they were rarely visible.

413 Mr. Wilcox speaks of his encounters with moonshine on turpentine camps and in the turpentine woods. (In this portion of the interview, Mr. Wilcox accidentally substitutes the words *turpentine*

and *moonshine* repeatedly. At one point, Mrs. Wilcox corrects him.) On one occasion in the late 1930s when he was just 17 years old, J. F. explains, he was arrested and hauled to jail for one officer's suspicion of his involvement with moonshine in the turpentine woods. Mr. Wilcox explains that the moonshine still was literally in the middle of the woods, right around where he worked turpentine nearly every day. When he came to work one day, he and several other workers were arrested for allegedly "running whiskey," even though they all had a bark hack in preparation for chipping. According to the officer, the hack was merely a ploy to conceal their illegal activities. But Mr. Wilcox and his fellow workers were not involved in the running of liquor. "We wasn't, but our boss man was," Mr. Wilcox laughs.

440 Calls and hollers were a central part of Mr. Wilcox's life in the turpentine woods. He explains that they were most common when raking boxes. Most workers called a number, such as "99" or "69." A man, generally a woods rider, stood or sat on horseback in the woods with a tally sheet and kept track of the workers' calls, which signaled that they had finished tacking a box on a tree. Occasionally, there were so many workers hollering in the woods that it took more than one tallyman to accurately track them. Mr. Wilcox says that's it's been too long for him to remember his own call, but he does remember that his brother called "99." Like most former turpentiners, Wilcox insists that workers chose their calls randomly and that the calls held no personal significance for most workers.

465 Mr. Wilcox also remembers workers singing in the woods. He does not, however, remember exactly what they sung. Singing, Wilcox says, was a "consolation thing." (This comment is very brief and muttered, but it suggests that Wilcox understands the role that song played in the lives of his fellow turpentiners). Men would sing all over the woods as they did their daily work. Rarely was the music sacred. More generally, the workers sang blues tunes. Mrs. Wilcox does not remember hearing, as a child on the camp, coopers keeping rhythms as they hammered rods and staves together in the production of turpentine barrels. Mr. Wilcox describes the process of hammering the barrels together.

495 When asked if workers told jokes often in the woods, Mr. Wilcox responds with an emphatic, "Yeah." Mrs. Wilcox interrupts, "They'd probably tell *lies*." Mr. Wilcox continues, "Nah, that many years back, I couldn't recall it [any specific jokes]. But yeah, they're always telling jokes. What they doing is cussing one

another a lot too,” he laughs. Discussions in the woods, according to Mr. Wilcox, usually centered on drinking and gambling. “They’d mostly talk about drinking moonshine – getting drunk – and playing cards. Gambling, something like that.”

513 Sometimes, new workers would enter the woods amongst the veterans and would undergo certain rites of initiation. When a new worker that was “high-strung” came into the woods, Mr. Wilcox says, initiation rites consisted mostly of competitions – or “working against one another.” Each worker had a different way of doing the same job, and oftentimes, one way was much harder than another. If a new worker didn’t know the easier, more efficient method, the other workers would allow the initiate to continue working much harder and longer than may have been necessary. Competitions, too, were common events. “It’s always going to be someone saying they’re better the other one,” Mr. Wilcox explains. He continues to say that “people were more civilized” when he worked turpentine than people are today. By this he means that even when workers used competitive language with one another and tooted their own horn at the expense of others, one was very unlikely to hold grudges. “It wasn’t like it is now. It’s just a different world now,” he declares.

Knowledge, Innovation, and Coping With Danger

556 Workers had to look out for one another in case of dangers like insects, animals, and storms. Occasionally in the woods there would be a shelter under which workers could congregate to get out of the rain and lightening. Most the time however, as Mr. Wilcox explains, he and his fellow workers settled for shelter in the form of the most robust pine in the woods. A common trend in the words of Mr. Wilcox is that vast changes of an innate – even divine – nature have occurred since his time in the turpentine woods. He states, “Lightning didn’t strike as bad back then as it do now.” When asked why he thinks this is the case, he responds, “Well, that would be up to the Ol’ Master. He’s the one that controls that. We wouldn’t know that one. That’d be out of our control. Things just different and people are just different.”

575 The only signs Mr. Wilcox remembers that signaled that any form of danger was on the way are those of popular folklore – things like a black cat crossing one’s path or walking beneath a ladder in use. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Wilcox have been able to attend any festivals in the state for former turpentiners.

597 Mrs. Wilcox doesn't recall anyone on the camp making any crafts (furniture, toys, etc.) out of the fallen or dead timber. J. F., however, does remember some workers making a toy doll in the shape of a man. The toy had strings attached to it and, much like a puppet, when the strings were pulled the wooden man was made to look like he was dancing. Mr. Wilcox says that the man danced when he was hit on the head as well.

[End of Side A]

[Begin Side B]

002 When Bernice Wilcox grew up on the turpentine camp, there was no indoor plumbing. The beds were fairly comfortable, she says, even though the entire family had to sleep in one or two rooms. She says that it was okay then because it was all they knew. Her house was not waterproof like houses are now. Her mother used newspaper and plastic to seal the cracks in the walls. Mr. Wilcox remembers that in many of the houses, the ground was visible through the cracks in the floor and that the wind and rain came in the house whenever there was a storm.

026 Some women did work in the turpentine woods with the men. Mrs. Wilcox's mother frequently worked in the woods, clearing boxes and weeding around the trees in order to keep fires – set both intentionally and unintentionally – from catching the trees ablaze. J. F. remembers several women chipping boxes and dipping gum. Most of the women who were active in the woods, Mr. Wilcox says, worked alongside their husbands. Supposedly, J. F. insists, women were paid more respect then than they are today. Men tended to “look out for” women more then than they do now, Mr. Wilcox claims.

039 Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox were married in the turpentine quarters on the front porch of Mrs. Wilcox's home. Mr. Wilcox says that church houses were rarely a part of the turpentine quarters. Rather, most people attended church and held church weddings at churches “in town” (i.e. not on the camp). Many turpentiners were married by the Justice of the Peace at the courthouse. Many men, Mr. Wilcox says, were married at their own homes. When Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox married, they decided that Bernice would discontinue her life on the turpentine quarters in favor of living with J. F.'s family. For the first years of their marriage, as Bernice was still in her mid-to-late teens, they opted to live with J. F.'s parents. It was very

rare for a newly married couple to move immediately into a place of their own, Mr. Wilcox says.

060 Mr. Wilcox says that some of the woodsriders where he worked were “nasty” to the turpentine hands. Mrs. Wilcox recalls her brother being beaten by a woodsrider at one point. Mrs. Wilcox’s father had to pull his son out of that specific turpentine operation. J. F. remembers some woodsriders beating their workers in the commissary. “Some of ‘em was real cruel and some of ‘em wasn’t,” Mr. Wilcox says. Never were any woodsriders cruel to Mr. Wilcox, a fact that he attributes to his never having lived on the turpentine quarters.

072 Though many turpentine camps did have “jook” joints, Mr. Wilcox says that that was mostly after his time. He remembers that certain public establishments in town served as juke joints for many turpentine hands. Also, workers who lived on camps that didn’t offer a juke joint often gathered at one of the worker’s houses for parties and such on the weekends. Music, guitars, moonshine whiskey, gambling, and fighting were all commonplace at juke joints and parties. “And fighting, when they fought back then, I mean, they really fought,” Mr. Wilcox says. “But, you know, they didn’t get into fights like they do now.” Police were rarely a problem on turpentine camps for the simple reason that most producers and woodsriders forbade them from entering. In an effort to keep their hands out of prison and in the woods, woodsriders and producers often chose to discipline their workers on their own, without the assistance of the law. Only for a severe crime like murder were authorities expected to play a role. Many turpentine camps were so far away from the nearest town and thus the nearest sheriff’s office that mere distance kept the authorities away. The “boss man” often had to give the police permission to enter the camps.

095 In the Wilcoxes’ experience, townspeople tended not to look down upon those who worked turpentine like they did in other parts of south Georgia. J. F. Wilcox explains:

Outsiders’ Perception of Turpentiners

“Just a little small town we had ‘round where we stayed, it didn’t make no difference. We’d meet up and we were all one. They didn’t look down on you because you were a turpentine worker or something. But if you go to a big city, it might be different. But just like say Glenville, Ludowici, Jesup... everybody got along. ‘Cause most all them places,

that was all there was. People who stayed in town was working in turpentine. Turpentine farmers back in them days, that's it."

The "Spirits" of Turpentine: A Conclusion

102

Mr. Wilcox says he doesn't miss the turpentine industry because it has been so long since he worked in it, and even then, he only worked in it for about six or seven years. "No, I don't miss it, huh uh," Mr. Wilcox confirms. "I wouldn't want to go back through that anyway if I had a chance." Why wouldn't he want to go back through it?

"It's nasty. That ol' gum get all in your hands, your clothes be gummy... See, now, you can't get people to work turpentine now. It was just a lot of hard work for no money. To make a long story short, that's what it was."

Mr. Wilcox explains his belief that pulp mills now produce turpentine, as the mills have remained productive while turpentine has vanished from the region. He explains that though process is a bit different, they still make turpentine and ship it off like they always have done. "You can't get nobody to work no turpentine now," Mr. Wilcox says.

The "Spirits" of Turpentine: A Conclusion

122

Mr. Wilcox was not one of those turpentiners who would have kept working turpentine even had he stumbled upon a million dollars. He never found pleasure in the work either. Mr. Wilcox explains:

"Not really enjoyed it. It was something I had to do. It wasn't enjoyment. See, you do what you have to do. What you got to do for a living, you do it. Make yourself content at it. Not to say you *enjoy* it. Nobody ever enjoyed going out there and working in grass knee-deep and water and mud and things. There wasn't enjoyment in it."

The only lesson Mr. Wilcox can say that he learned from working turpentine is that there was nothing easy or enjoyable about it:

"I learned it was a hard way to make a living. And that's what you had to do to make a living. It was just something that had to be done. And back in those days, that's all we knew... Anybody who come up back in them days, they learned you had to work for a living, wasn't no way out. Wasn't no scheme to pull like they do now... Work, there wasn't nothing else. I was glad to get out of it [the turpentine industry]. I didn't miss it... I didn't miss it at all. I got out of it quick as possible."

- 140 Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox wed in Long County, right in Ludowici where they continue to live today. Mr. Wilcox repeats that they married on the turpentine quarters where Mrs. Wilcox lived with her family at the time. They were married on July 28, 1940.
- 145 Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Wilcox have ever heard about the comic utopia common in the turpentiner's folklore known as "Diddy-Wah-Diddy." The fieldworker's mention of it seems to be the first they have heard of it. (Fieldworker explains some of the dream- or heaven-like qualities of the place) When the fact that it was a place where work was nonexistent is mentioned, Mrs. Wilcox declares, "We ain't been to that one." Supposedly, they have heard nothing of it except for the fact that it was an old song. The fieldworker explains that it is also the name of an old blues song by Blind Blake.
- 156 In closing, Mr. Wilcox reiterates that turpentine was hard work and that it was something that people just had to do to get by. Turpentine was about the only thing anyone could do for a living then, Mr. Wilcox explains, other than perhaps cutting crossties for the railroad.

[End of Interview]