

# TAPE LOG

Name of person(s) interviewed: Ralph Wilkerson

Fieldworker: Timothy C. Prizer

Date of interview: 22 February 2004

Location of interview: The kitchen table in Mr. Ralph Wilkerson's home at 116 Garlington Circle in Waycross, GA.

Other people present: N/A

Brand of tape recorder: Radio Shack CTR-122

Brand and type of tape: Maxell XLII

Tape Number: 04.3 (Fieldworker's designation)

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

Mr. Wilkerson speaks audibly throughout the recording, and there is very little background noise whatsoever.

## SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF TAPE CONTENTS

Mr. Wilkerson speaks of his life working in the turpentine woods and stills of south Georgia. He worked from childhood to adulthood in the woods and then worked at the turpentine still in Hoboken, GA until 1982, when he left the turpentine industry for good. He now works at the sawmill at Varn Wood Products in Hoboken, GA.

## TAPE INDEX

COUNTER NO.

SUBJECT

001	Opening announcement
005	Ralph Wilkerson was born on March 11, 1949 in Hoboken, GA. He lived in Hoboken until he was 17, when he went to work for the job corps. Then, he started working for a machine shop, then for the railroad, and then moved to Florida. In Florida, he continued working for the railroad before beginning to work for an asphalt plant. Then, he worked construction in Florida. Eventually, he decided he wanted to move back to Georgia. Upon his return, he began working at the Varn Turpentine Still in Hoboken. He remained at the still for five or six years before taking a job in Waycross and then returning back to Hoboken to work for Mr.

Varn again, this time in the wood yard at Varn Wood Products. He has been working for Varn ever since.

016 Mr. Wilkerson began working turpentine in the woods when he was 12 years old. In the early years, he only dipped gum. The money he made from turpentine was used to buy him school clothes. Mr. Wilkerson worked for Frank Dukes, who at the time was leasing timber to George Varn. Dukes' turpentine farms were predominately in Hoboken. Wilkerson was raised on Dukes' turpentine camp. Frank Dukes was killed while deer hunting in the woods when Wilkerson was just 15 or 16 years old. Wilkerson lived on the camp for the first 17 years of his life. After he left for the job corps, he started living with his mother. Mr. Wilkerson again explains his occupational history.

044 Wilkerson began working at the turpentine still when he was 25 years old. He left the still when he was 31, when he went to work a job in Waycross. He then returned to the still only to find it in the final stages of its demise. When the still shut down for good, he and the other still workers were hired on at the sawmill, where Wilkerson and many of the others work to this day. [Fieldworker mentions Willie White, with whom Wilkerson was raised in the turpentine woods and with whom he works at the sawmill today]

054 As a boy, Wilkerson balanced school and work. At times, he stayed out of school to work and make money. Other times, he went into the woods to work in the afternoons when he got out of school. Mr. Wilkerson remembers working with a group of other young boys about his age in what was called "The Little Boys' Squad," the job of which was to ride on the tractor and dip gum in the woods. The tractor hauled a wagon behind it, which the boys would load up with barrels. With all the barrels full, the boys would ride back to their point of origin to drop off the full barrels and reload with empty ones. At this young age, Wilkerson wanted to work turpentine because his father had worked in it for so long.

### **Children and Schooling**

"It come to you by your parents, you know... You wanted to go out there 'cause you knew it was in you to start with by your daddy," Wilkerson says. "So that's how it got in the children." Wilkerson's father, still living, did very little in his life for work other than turpentine. The same is the case, Wilkerson says, for his aunt and uncle who live just a few hundred yards from him in apartment projects called Garlington Heights. Wilkerson's father, Ralph explains, has a drinking problem, so his recollection of his

life in the woods could either be very good or very bad depending on his father's level of sobriety at the time.

### **Children and Schooling**

077 Wilkerson remembers learning to work turpentine as a boy from a man who watched over the "Little Boys' Squad." He explains that those formative years taught him all he needed to know about turpentine. Though it's been a long time since Wilkerson has done any work in the woods, he says he could walk out into the woods right now and work it as well as he ever did.

"See like today, right now, I could go out there and still do the same thing 'cause I haven't forgot, but look how many years it's been since I did it. But I still got it in me, you know. I know how it go, you know?"

Wilkerson says that those who taught him to work turpentine rarely disciplined him. Rather, they simply made sure he knew how to do the work. Plus, Wilkerson was a good learner and had little trouble picking up on new things. He says that if he screwed something up, he was sure to get the problem solved quickly.

088 When Wilkerson was a little boy in the turpentine camp, he used to make toys and wagons to play with out of the timber that was literally ubiquitous around his home. His father was also very crafty, and Wilkerson feels that this is where he received his talent. He remembers his father making a wheelbarrow to haul firewood from the woods to the quarters. As a child, Wilkerson and his siblings enjoyed pushing their father's wheelbarrow back to the house after he had cut the timber and loaded the wheelbarrow full of it. Wilkerson based the wagons that he made as a child on his father's wheelbarrow. Wilkerson also remembers making a toy called "The Packer." He and his friends would get a bunch of syrup cans, fill them up with dirt to make them heavy, and then run wire through them to attach them all together. Holding onto the wire, they would drag the chain of cans along the ground, which produced a rattling sound as they clanked against the dirt and rocks and each other.

116 Wilkerson went to elementary school in a one-room church house right beside the turpentine camp. Mr. Varn, Wilkerson says, gave "the black folks" the land on which to build the church. Ralph says that elementary school was nice as a boy. He remembers that all the students would sing before lunch time. They returned to their homes in the quarters to eat lunch and then went back to school in the afternoon. Wilkerson laughs remembering that he used to bring a slingshot to school with him on occasion. One time, he shot a boy upside the head with an acorn and his mother

whipped him for it. Wilkerson made the slingshots himself. He found a sturdy Y-shaped stick, cut rubber from the inside of an innertube, tied the rubber on each branch of the stick, cut the tongue out of a shoe, cut holes on either side of the tongue, and ran the rubber through the holes.

### **Children and Schooling**

139 Wilkerson remembers using the slingshot to kill birds with another boy on the turpentine camp. He says that if they killed a quail, they'd "cut 'em up like a chicken. It wasn't nothing." Wilkerson explains that he only killed animals like that when he was a child. Now, he literally wouldn't hurt a fly:

"I wouldn't do that now... I sure wouldn't. I don't even sometimes like to kill an insect, you know. You like a centipede or something, I'll get rid of him because where I work at now, they be in those sticks, you know... He'll get on you and he'll bite. But like a butterfly and things, or other insects that I know won't bite, sometimes I don't like to try to kill them now. You know, I try to knock them out of the way, you know... It's just that spirit in me. You feel stuff for things like that, you know."

Wilkerson's humanity goes further than that:

"That's just like some people at work, on the job out there, and some folks don't have no money, sometimes I have some cents I give it to 'em, you know. I offer people sometimes. Sometimes, you know, they turn it down, you know. But I have the feeling, you know what I mean?"

156 After Wilkerson went to elementary school in the one-room church house near the camp, he had to catch a bus to a school in Nahunta for children in the middle grades. Wilkerson went to school through the tenth grade when he went into the job corps.

166 Wilkerson remembers that, as a boy, his father had him up before daylight so that they could get an early jump on their day's work in the turpentine woods. Wilkerson's mother was up earlier than he was, preparing the breakfast that Wilkerson and his father carried into the woods with them each day. Bacon and bologna sandwiches were common. He explains that they ate breakfast in the woods because if they ate it at home, they'd be hungry again by the time they got through their long trek into the woods. Breakfast doubled as lunch. They simply brought enough of the same food so that it would last them to serve as breakfast and lunch.

181 There were no set times for breaks in the woods. Wilkerson explains that he simply took a break wherever he felt like it.

Lunch was a different story though. Lunch took anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour, and sometimes workers went to sleep in the woods. He remembers that it was hard to wake up and start working after a nap. In the summertime, workers would find a shady place to lay down and go to sleep, and when the sun would move, they'd have to wake up and move to another shady spot. He recalls that he and the other workers brought water into the woods with them. However, when they ran out of water, they'd try to find a natural source of water, like a stream, in which to quench their thirsts. Wilkerson says that he remembers seeing old folks drink the water that gathered in turpentine cups in the woods. He tried it a couple of times, but had trouble stomaching the bitterness of it. "But when it comes to needing some water," he says, "you gotta find some kind to get in ya." He remembers being "dry all the way from your stomach to your throat" in the woods.

- 206 Wilkerson recalls the many things he and other children did for entertainment with one another in the camp. One thing was to simply go out in the woods and through limbs and branches at each other. "It was a like a war," he says. He also remembers shooting marbles as a child. Perhaps the most comical form of entertainment was when they would sling each other across the woods using nothing but a pine tree pulled taut. Ralph explains that they would find a newly-planted, slender pine tree that would bend all the way down to the ground without breaking. One child would grab onto the tree while three or four others held it down to the ground. The potential energy built up and became kinetic when those holding the tree let it go on a count of three, sending the child clinging to the tree flying across the woods as if from an arboreal cannon. The children also played baseball in the dirt roads of the camp. Wilkerson's brother played sports on the college level.
- 230 When Wilkerson was paid as a child for his work in the woods, he would bring it to his mother, who would then give him a little bit of change to buy him things that he wanted. She was also responsible for buying school clothes for him with the money he brought in. Wilkerson says that as soon as he got the change that his mother allowed him every payday, he would "go to the store and eat it up." He bought ice cream, candy, and other treats. The little change that he was given went a lot further than it does now.
- 247 Wilkerson remembers working with mules in the woods. Some of the mules, he says, were intelligent, and others were far from it. When Ralph was 16 years old, he worked with a mule that got himself all tied up in the harness. This mule was named Dan and

was clearly not one of the smartest mules in the woods. Wilkerson remembers liking a mule named Pete, for he did much more to exhibit some level of intelligence. “In the evening time,” Wilkerson laughs, “the mules know what time to go home too.” When it came this time, some of the mules tore off through the woods, breaking bridles and trampling the brush. One of these was Pete:

### **The Turpentine Mule and the Pickup Truck**

“See, the mule, some of them animals be gotten sense, you know, ‘cause we had cross the railroad tracks over by Nahunta side. We had to cross the railroad tracks and then we had to cross the highway. And the train be coming all the time, when we be knocking off. So the mule got used to stopping at the railroad tracks. So when he didn’t have nobody on him, when he got to the tracks, he stopped. And then... so he went on across there, and there go the highway..., he got there and he stopped. And then he went on across and went on down that little pathway that go to the lot... He’d been doing it so much there, see he got used to doing it, you know.”

- 280 Wilkerson also remembers that Pete and others of the more intelligent mules readily responded with the pulling of the ropes. Some of the workers treated their mules like pets. The worker that dealt with Dan in the woods took his mule home with him everyday and treated him like a beloved pet. This particular worker built a fence around his home in the quarters in which he kept the mule. Wilkerson said the mules always had names by the time the workers were able to work with them. He doesn’t remember any workers ever naming the mules themselves.
- 297 Wilkerson explains that sulfuric acid was an important part of working turpentine because it helped increase the trees’ production. It was, however, dangerous in some ways. Wilkerson remembers much of his father’s clothing and the holes that the acid had eaten into it. If the acid got on a worker’s skin, it would burn some but would usually not cause too much damage. Wilkerson’s father wore overalls patched with scraps of older clothing to cover the holes left by contact with the acid.
- 321 The work crew with which Wilkerson worked in the woods ranged in size depending on his age. As a part of the “Little Boys’ Squad,” Ralph worked with eight or ten other youngsters. When he got older and used his own wagon in the woods, Wilkerson recalls working mainly with just his brother. Ralph was always

responsible for hitching the mules up because his brother acted frightened by the mules. Though his brother was bigger and stronger than he was, Ralph was more fearless and active in general.

- 337 The “Little Boys’ Squad” formed after Frank Dukes’ suggestion that such a group would be productive in the woods. The boys were nearly always accompanied by an adult, an older black man, who drove the tractor while the boys dipped the gum. The youngest boy in the group was probably about 11 years old, the oldest approximately 14. Once a boy graduated from the Squad, he began working with older men on the wagon.
- 356 Wilkerson doesn’t remember any workers having nicknames outside of Willie White, who went almost solely by “Coon” as he got older. He does, however, remember certain parts of the woods that had nicknames. One was “Caney Bay” and another, “Buffalo.” Both areas were swampy areas in which workers labored on trees growing from the swamp waters. Wilkerson says that these places had their names even before his father was born. Wilkerson’s father was more inclined to work in these swampy areas than he was in drier hill areas. Ralph remembers his father working in swamp waters that rose to his chest. Here, in an area they called a ford, the mules would also trod through the swamps.
- 387 Yellow jackets and mosquitoes were two very prominent pests in the woods. Rattlesnakes were also a threat. Wilkerson remembers killing seven rattlesnakes – a mother and her offspring – one day in a rotten log. Interestingly, there was one man in the woods that used to catch rattlesnakes for entertainment. The perilous hobby caught up to him one day when he was bitten on the hand and died of a heart attack before reaching the hospital. When this man would catch a rattlesnake, he would take it home and place it in a cage. [Wilkerson thinks he hears a knock at the door and goes to answer it. Tape stopped for less than a minute] He also mailed the shed skin to his son in prison who used it to make belts, billfolds, and other items.
- 430 Bears were mentioned in the woods, but they never posed any real threat. In fact, Wilkerson never saw the bear in the woods. Some workers did see it and when they did, everybody in the woods took off running in the other direction. Some bears, specifically “hog” bears, were especially harmless. The most dangerous thing in the woods, Ralph said, was rattlesnakes.

### **Knowledge, Innovation, and Coping With Danger**

- 442 If Wilkerson ever became lost in the woods, he would begin to holler until another worker heard him and began to holler as well. He would then gravitate toward the sound of hollering until he had regained his orientation in the woods. He does remember the woods being thick and rough, but rarely did he ever get lost:  
“You’re not really lost. You just think you’re lost when you’re with somebody. But you’re not really lost, ‘cause you know somebody’s out there all the time. They ain’t gonna leave you out there. You get to hollerin’, they’re gonna hear your voice, you know, and then you gonna try to find where their voice is coming from and then try to go where that voice at. And that’s how you get back together with each other out there in the woods.”  
If a worker simply went from one tree to another in the woods and followed the marked trees if working on land divided between owners, it would be difficult for him to lose his way.
- 479 If a worker were to get stung by a bee or a yellow jacket, tobacco was commonly used to treat it. Wilkerson’s brother was once stung by a swarm of yellow jackets on the edge of a swamp when he was just 13 years old, causing his eye to swell and sending him to the hospital. The woodsrider had to take his brother home on this occasion. Wilkerson said his mother was upset by her son’s incident. Wilkerson also remembers using the gum from the trees on insect stings in order to dull the pain and help them heal. He remembers being stung on the stomach, on the ankle, on the arm, and elsewhere.
- 516 Turpentine from the bottle was also used on cuts and wounds. Wilkerson says that turpentine on a wound wrapped in a spider web also was a common treatment for cuts. Wilkerson remembers people mixing turpentine and sugar and ingesting it in order to supposedly assuage a number of ailments. People used to come and buy turpentine by the barrel, Ralph says, when he worked at the still in Hoboken. They bought it, altered its formula some, and then sold it in the stores as medicine amongst its other uses.
- 536 A long time ago, Wilkerson says, there used to be liquor in the woods. He, however, never ran across any. He has heard about moonshine stills in the woods, but he doesn’t remember any being made on the camp. He does remember something that workers called “Home Brew” being made on the camp.
- 548 Fishing was a popular pastime in the woods when work was not going on. Some men used to swim in the waterholes in the woods, but Wilkerson says he has never been much for jumping in any

water. Brims, catfish, and redbreast fish were common catches in the waters around the area workers referred to as “Buffalo.” Workers also fished occasionally near a bridge the workers called “Skeleton Bridge.” Wilkerson claims not to know how the area obtained its name, but he does know that the area had a spooky air to it. Wilkerson says that his father used to work in areas like “Skeleton Bridge” where the woods were the roughest and the densest. One area known as “Old Man Swing” near Racepond has a body of folklore surrounding it. “Old folks told young folks,” Wilkerson says, stories about how the area was haunted. The name came from an old white man who used to live in the area that was referred to only as Old Man Swing.

- 599 Wilkerson says that most of his woodsriders and bosses, black and white, were nice men who treated their workers well.
- 611 Wilkerson never got a chance to tack cups in the woods as that was a task performed in the wintertime when Ralph was in school. Thus, he never had his own call or holler. He does remember hearing workers hollering to the tallyman in the woods though. Wilkerson’s father used to holler “Five.”

[End of Side A]

[Begin Side B]

- 001 One call that Wilkerson recalls in “Down the Road.” He says that the calls were little more than something to holler in order to get credit for working trees. He doesn’t know how workers chose their hollers; they were simply “passed on,” he says. Workers often sung in the woods as well. Sam Cook was an artist of choice for workers to imitate while doing their daily work in the woods. Singing in the woods served a number of purposes for workers. Wilkerson explains:

**The “Boss Men”**

“Sometimes, you know, you get to singin,’ you know, it makes you feel good, you know. Makes you feel like doing something. That means you lift up, your spirit lifts up. It makes you feel like working, you know. See like a person, if a person go to work with a sad attitude, he don’t feel like doing nothing. He don’t need to be working then.”

Wilkerson says that on his current job, he keeps his spirits up by shooting jokes with a coworker. Wilkerson never has liked to work with people who have attitude problems, though he has

unfortunately had to on a number of occasions. “Shooting the bull” with his coworker keeps his spirits up and “makes the day go by good.” Wilkerson says that he did sing in the woods some, but that he does more of it now that he is older. He says that he now jokes a lot with his wife and sings her songs like “Darling, You Send Me” by Sam Cook. Wilkerson was fifteen years old when he began to pick up songs and life lessons from older men in the woods.

- 043 Wilkerson remembers playing jokes and pranks with workers in the woods as well. One common prank was to crouch behind some bushes and act like a bear to frighten unsuspecting workers. Wilkerson recalls Willie White’s brother acting like a bear. White went as far as to make hand prints in the dirt that looked like bear prints. One man got his gun and went to find the bear while White walked behind him laughing. Wilkerson remembers older men in the woods telling a lot of jokes, though he remembers no specific jokes. Common topics of discussion in the woods included girls, gambling, and drinking.
- 068 Turpentiners held frequent contests with one another in the woods. They would place gentleman’s bets on who could chip or dip the most or the fastest. Those that consistently won these contests would become known as “high rollers.” These workers were the fastest and the best of all. Wilkerson remembers that his father was not a fast worker, but he worked very steadily, which allowed him to cover a lot of ground each day in the woods. When these contests with other workers went on, such a competition was normally initiated by a worker who stated confidently that he was going to chip or dip so many trees in an hour or a day. Other workers would willingly join the competition by openly negating such claims and boasting of their own work plans for the day.
- 087 Most new workers required very little initiation in Wilkerson’s experience. Turpentiners generally fit in pretty well with one another, regardless of how long that had been a part of a particular operation. Wilkerson recalls no hot-headed new workers.
- 097 The weather occasionally caused workers to stay out of the woods. Wilkerson remembers a hurricane on one occasion that cancelled work and a wintry storm atypical of south Georgia that brought snow and ice and eliminated all possibilities for work.
- 103 Thanksgiving and Christmas were almost always nice for all families on Wilkerson’s camp. Thanksgiving was characterized by plenty of food, which Wilkerson says was better back then because

“people could really cook.” The young generation, he says, acts like they don’t have time to cook food like generations prior did. They simply throw things together and call it a meal. Food in the old days was “raised slow.” Now, food is “raised fast.” Foods are grown faster now, Wilkerson says, likely because of the introduction of various fertilizers and chemicals that – perhaps unnaturally – speed the process of harvesting food. Gifts on Christmas morning in the camp ranged from toys some years, to oranges and apples on others, and nothing at all some years, depending on the family’s financial standing at the time. Boss men and woodsriders sometimes gave the families fruit from the commissary for Christmas. Wilkerson doesn’t recall any celebratory barbecues or picnics on the camp.

124 Weddings on the turpentine camp generally took place on the front porch of someone’s shanty. The preacher would travel onto the camp to perform the ceremony and the man and the woman were generally allowed to move into a home in the quarters with one another to start a family.

128 Though Wilkerson was young when he lived on a camp, he does remember older people going to “jooks,” which were usually in the home of a man who had a jukebox in his house. Drinking, gambling, fighting, and such were all common activities at these functions. The law occasionally required them to turn the music down, and when a fight broke out, the boss man would sometimes take the jukebox out of the house.

141 Wilkerson also worked many years in Hoboken at the turpentine still. His job was to stand at the loading dock and meet the trucks carrying loads of barrels full of gum. He would assist in unloading the barrels from the truck and placing them onto the dock. He then rolled the barrel to the scale to be weighed and then to the vat to be emptied from the barrel and cooked. This used to be an all-day everyday task, but as turpentine was on the way out of this area, it became a task only performed on Fridays. Monday was a day to clean up around the still if it needed it. If it didn’t need cleaning, some Mondays were free days off. The task for Tuesdays was to strain the gum and clear the trash from it. Wednesday, the gum was stilled – or “cooked” – into rosin. After it was stilled, it was emptied into huge drums – also made on Wednesdays – that were then loaded onto trucks or train cars and shipped out for bottling and sale. Wilkerson never worked closely enough with the gum to become well-versed in the different grades of gum and what each entailed. Wilkerson remembers a man named Dan Dukes doing most of this work.

182 Wilkerson says he was neutral to the smell of the cooking gum at the still. He didn't necessarily like it, but he didn't dislike it either. He thinks that it is probably true that the smell of the gum and the smoke that drifts from it is good for one's sinuses and respiratory system.

### **Women and Domestic Life**

199 In addition to Wilkerson's Aunt Reesa, Wilkerson remembers a young woman who dipped gum in the woods. But Aunt Reesa chipped and dipped in the woods. She was one-of-a-kind when it came to females on the camp:

“Reesa used to chip and dip, my auntie out there. She used to be a big ol' Jeff Davis healthy woman. A man couldn't do nothing with her, they tell me. She used to grab 'em in them jook joints by the collar and beat 'em down with the other fist. She is a *big* woman. She's got big ol' hands. You can look at her and tell.”

Wilkerson says that Reesa was treated with respect in the woods because she would have tolerated nothing less. Wilkerson's Aunt Reesa is his father's sister.

211 Growing up in Hoboken as a teenager, Wilkerson said that he main forms of entertainment was looking at girls his age and coming to Waycross. He says that more girls were in Waycross than in Hoboken.

220 When workers sat around at the commissary, they talked mostly about work. On paydays, Wilkerson's family would usually buy groceries and items they needed for the home. Occasionally, they would use the money to buy new clothing. Wilkerson remembers growing up “the hard way.” He says that his mother had to do “field work” in order to provide the family with a little extra income so that they could survive. His mother generally worked in the tobacco fields. He remembers that his mother made dinner frequently, and she had a gift in being able to take almost nothing and make a meal out of it. Rice and gravy were very common foods.

244 Wilkerson very rarely had any problems with people in town who didn't work in turpentine looking down on him and his family for their form of livelihood. In high school, Wilkerson used to hear people talk about how they wished they worked in turpentine because the money was better than in a lot of other occupations in the area at the time. He says that he used to say to himself, “No you don't,” because they didn't understand how difficult the work

was. The work was so difficult at times, Wilkerson says, that he used to go into the woods, find that he wasn't going to be able to get enough gum in his bucket, and have to fill the barrel part of the way up with leaves and trash in the woods in order to make it look like a full barrel.

258 Wilkerson stopped working at the turpentine still in Hoboken in 1982. Since then, he has been working at the sawmill, literally right across the street from what remains of the Varn Turpentine Still. He stopped working in the woods when he was 17 years old. Since leaving the still, he has had no involvement in the turpentine industry at all.

269 Wilkerson says that working turpentine has taught him lessons about life. He takes pride in telling people about his life as a laborer regardless of the trade in which he is involved. He tells people that he started working in the turpentine woods when he was just a boy. He will be 55 years old this year and has already been working for over 40 years of his life. He says he feels good about telling folks that he "came up the hard way." When he tells people this, he says that some people look up to him while other act like they couldn't care less. Though the work was hard, he enjoyed it. He so eloquently remarks on this seeming paradox that "You know something you got to do it, you might as well put it in your heart and go one and do it and enjoy it. 'Cause you know, you got to do it."

293 The main reason that turpentine is gone from his and so many other workers' lives, Wilkerson feels, is that the young generation is simply opposed to such hard work. No 12-year-old boy would work in the woods today, he says. Wilkerson says that he sees some 12-year-old boys in Hoboken today that one would be hard pressed to get to work at all, let alone in work as hot and as hard as turpentine. Young people today, Wilkerson says, "ain't got it in 'em" and "some of 'em want something for nothing."

311 Wilkerson says he doesn't mourn for turpentine's disappearance, however. He says that he probably wouldn't go back to working it now if it suddenly did return to the region. The work was too hard, which keeps him from missing the work. Wilkerson comments on those who do miss the work:

**The "Spirits" of Turpentine: A Conclusion**

"Some that miss it, that say they miss it, is because it grew into their lives. That's like my daddy, that's all he ever did. It grew into his life. So, he probably misses it

as old as he is, you know, but he couldn't go back to it... Take me, I was doing it off and on, you know, like getting out of school and doing it, you know... But I never did it all my life you know. Now, if I did it all my life, like my daddy put forty or fifty years or something in there or something like that, he probably be missing it."

Ralph says that his father never talks about turpentine anymore, but sometimes he will go out to his father's house and joke with him about how turpentine is coming back. Ralph jokes with him about how the men his father used to work for are coming back and want him to start all over again. Ralph's father doesn't talk about missing turpentine at all. The main reason for this, Ralph believes, is that his father makes more now from Social Security than he ever did in the turpentine woods.

- 344 Wilkerson says that he has never heard of the comic utopia known as "Diddy-Wah-Diddy." Interestingly, though, he says that workers who worked by themselves on half had no problems like most turpentiners do, implying that it was only those workers who had to cope with boss men, woodsriders, and life in the quarters that would have dreamt of such a place. Working on a half, Wilkerson explains, workers were free of bosses, of woodsriders, of set hours in the woods, and other such demands. Wilkerson explains how working on half was conducted.
- 368 Wilkerson hasn't ever been able to attend any festivals or reunions for former turpentiners in the area, but if he ever heard of any, he would more than likely go.
- 379 When Wilkerson was working in Miami, FL, far removed from turpentine, he began playing a gambling game that folks called the "Skins Game." An old black man in Miami of all places informed Ralph that the game had originated on an old turpentine camp in Georgia. At the time, Wilkerson was working for an asphalt company and living in Pompano Beach, FL. Ralph briefly explains the rules of the "Skins Game," which he says was also known as "Georgia Skins" for the place in which the game was first played.

[End of interview]