

Part Four: The Camp, The Community

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“Georgia can boast the world’s largest collection of one highly specialized type of company town – the turpentine village.”

– “McCrainie’s Turpentine Still” Thomas 1976:H-3

***What will you get for your labor
But a dollar in the company store?
A tumbledown shack to live in
Snow and rain pouring through the top
And you have to pay the company rent
Your payments will never stop***

- *Coalminers*, Uncle Tupelo (Rockville Records 1992)

Living Quarters in the Camp

Turpentine quarters, or company housing for the largely African American workforce, lasted in South Georgia through the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Lloyd Powell camp outside Homerville, one of the last of its kind, is featured in the video documentary *Spirits of the Pines* (1978). The quality of housing varied from camp to camp; throughout much of the twentieth century, however, many homes were little more than ramshackle shanties. [for Depression-era photos of South Georgia camp quarters, see, for example, Dorothea Lange’s Farm Security Administration photos <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/fsaSubjects14.html>]. As workers moved into homes outside the quarters, housing improved as did the socio-economic status of the worker.

Camp house doors were known as “shutters” to the members of the camp community, for there were often no latches on them. Walls often had open cracks between poorly fitted boards. To rid houses of mosquitoes, families filled cans with old rags which were then set ablaze. The smoke from the rags drove the mosquitoes out of

the home. Cold winds whipped through the homes with a force so strong that Junior Taylor remembers his 1930s home on the Mayday, GA turpentine camp nearly coming off the ground. The rickety shack slid from the cinder blocks on which it was raised, causing Taylor's father to believe his family would be safer outdoors. Many homes had fireplaces in them, and these provided families with their only source of heat in the wintertime. On the opposite extreme, there was little protection from the heat and humidity of South Georgia summers.

Company housing provided only the bare necessities. Junior Taylor has lived in camp conditions in which his family was forced to rely on one of Taylor's siblings to furnish the home by hand. Using dead timber from the turpentine woods that surrounded the living quarters, Taylor's brother crafted tables, dressers, picture frames, rocking chairs, swings, stools, desks and bed stands for his family. The family used moss-stuffed mattresses and pillows. As electricity was not available until the 1950s, families relied mainly on natural light. Gas lanterns were used at night on occasion. Camp housing lacked indoor plumbing for most of the twentieth century. Anthrom Green, who lived in camps during the 1930s, recalls,

The conditions were very bad. You might have heard statements that those were the good old days. But see, we lived in these little shacks, and a lot of times they would situate a well, they used to dig big wells, and it wasn't a well at every house. Ah, people had to gather round to get their water, or do their washing from that well. Now if it was a big quarters, there may be two wells but everybody had to get their water from that well.

J. F. Wilcox knows firsthand of life in the turpentine quarters. "We lived alright," he 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." Though he adds proudly that despite the

conditions, turpentiners and their families “had a pretty good life,” he is sure to include that, “Back then, you didn’t have no government helping you... Then, you had to do the best you could.”

“From the Womb to the Tomb”: The Commissary & Camp Life

Turpentiners who resided in a camp rarely left the confines of his or her community except to work, for trips to the doctor, or perhaps weekend trips to town provided by the boss man or woods rider. Turpentine camps often were in isolated locations. Many times, “town” was ten miles or more away. Workers had to be in the woods throughout the day, and very few if any had automobiles of their own. The camp grounds housed most services workers needed for survival. Central among these was the company store, otherwise referred to as the commissary – a general store offering workers various provisions and other household needs.

The commissary system bound the workers to the company both contractually and physically much like sharecropping. Anthrom Green recalls,

Sharecropping was something similar, very similar. You take a sharecrop and you bring it up to where you lay it by. That’s getting close to where you gonna harvest. And many times the owner would find a reason to fall out with you. And many times he would run you off his place, and you would wind up losers, and he would get the spoils. Well, turpentine was that. You was working for just about nothing, because you was always in debt to the man. If you wanted to leave, then another man had a turpentine farm. If you went to see him, then he would pay off what you owe this man, and you would work for him. You go in in debt, and you come out in debt.

The commissary credit system forced workers in debt to their bosses from “womb to tomb” (Thomas 1976:34). This lifelong form debt peonage was the harshest reality of a turpentine life. For most of the nineteenth century, camp workers typically made

between only \$1.50 and \$2 per barrel of pine gum. “It’s a long story,” C. J. Taylor says of his life of indebtedness to the commissary. “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.” “...You did a lot of work for nothing,” he continues. “You couldn’t get no money nowhere else. There wasn’t no loan companies. That boss man – he was just like your daddy.”

The debt peonage system, combined with cruel treatment and poor pay, caused many workers to seek a way out. Gathering up their families and fleeing, usually with commissary debts unpaid, workers took the risk of being caught in hopes of starting over fresh in another camp. Workers and their families were nearly always welcomed into the new camp, as there was really no such thing as too many laborers in a turpentine workforce. Producers so desired new hands that they would occasionally assist workers in escaping. Junior Taylor remembers being awoken in the middle of the night one Sunday by his father telling him to pack his few belongings, as they would soon attempt to escape. A Florida turpentine producer had driven to the Taylor’s quarters in Georgia to pick them up and carry them to his camp. The law prohibited owners from crossing the Georgia-Florida line to recapture escaped workers, so the Taylors jumped the border several times in hopes of starting over. This law was rarely enforced, however, and the workers put themselves in serious jeopardy regardless of how or to where they escaped. The Taylor Brothers tell another story of a family escape attempt. On one occasion they left the Langdale turpentine camp in Mayday, GA and headed for another in Aaron, FL. After a short time spent in the new location,

the Taylors were cornered by a lawyer for the Langdale family and returned to Mayday. C. J. – only a small child at the time – remembers seeing his father slapped to the ground by his white bosses upon his capture.

Escapees' greatest fear was the thought of capture and the brutal punishment to follow, as revealed in the following interview excerpt from the WPA Federal Writer's Project: "The onliest way out is to die out. If you tries to leave, they will kill you, and you will have to die, because they got peoples to bury you out in them woods" (Wimster 1939 {2001}). In Stetson Kennedy's article, "Forced Labour in the United States," he exposes the cruel system that combined peonage and racism, escape and capture. Referencing slavery with terms like slaves, the Big House, and plantation, Kennedy compares the turpentine industry up until the 1950s with slavery.

To escape from a forced labour camp it is almost always necessary to slip away in the night, leaving behind one's personal possessions, and oft-times one's family. The overseers travel far and wide, and even from State to State, tracking down and bringing back their runaway slaves. Some industries, notably turpentine, maintain a sort of information service whereby camp overseers co-operate with one another in recapturing runaways. Where co-operation with law officers is close, operators do not hesitate to call upon them to "arrest" the runaways. While sitting in the parlor of the "Big House" of a turpentine camp at Shamrock, Florida, we listened while the operator telephoned the sheriff a description of a runaway, ordering that deputies be posted on all roads leading out of the area. The usual punishment for running away is a severe flogging, but sometimes the penalty is death. As a forced labourer named Robert Graves told us, in describing the Babcock Lindsey plantation, "If you left owing the Bossman even \$5 and he caught you he would kill you, and you would have to die, because they would bury you. He would make other workers dig the graves out in the woods." Symbolic of this form of terrorism is the toe of a lynched Negro which reposes in a jar of alcohol on a commissary counter in North Carolina. Asked whether he would personally lynch a Negro, the proprietor replied, "No, no I wouldn't – not unless he owed me money." [Kennedy 1953:5-6]

Such cruel treatment triggered coping mechanisms among black workers. Trains, cars, and busses were a common symbol of escape and the subject of conversation in the woods. “The Greyhound bus,” Junior Taylor says, “would come by where they’re working at, and they’d be talking, ‘Yeah you’re going my way, but this ain’t my day’.” Perhaps one of the most powerful forms of psychological release was the creation of “Negro mythical places” – a term donated by Zora Neale Hurston in her writings for the Federal Writers’ Project. The most famous of these was “Diddy-Wah-Diddy” (Bordelon 1999:107). This dreamland resembled other imagined destinations such as the “Big Rock Candy Mountain” in that it was a place entirely free from worry or woe.

[In “Diddy-Wah-Diddy,”] ...even the curbstones are good sitting-chairs... If a traveler gets hungry all he needs to do is sit down on the curbstone and wait and soon he will hear something hollering “Eat me!” “Eat me!” “Eat me!” and a big baked chicken will come along with a knife and fork stuck in its sides. He can eat all he wants and let the chicken go and it will go on to the next one that needs something to eat... Even the dogs can stand flat-footed and lick crumbs off heaven’s tables. [Bordelon 1999:107]

Eddie Lee Scipp remembers that workers frequently drifted off into the land they called “Diddy-Wah-Diddy,” where they could simply walk into the woods with a croker sack, open it up, and watch the birds eagerly fly into the sack, knowing the men were hungry. Scipp found the idea of “Diddy-Wah-Diddy” so appealing that he once hunted for it on a map. Wilburt Johnson remembers nothing more about “Diddy-Wah-Diddy” than that it was supposedly unreachable. Johnson’s father used to say, “I’m gonna do such and such a thing if I have to go to Diddy-Wah-Diddy.”

Ralph Wilkerson and Willie White, two relatively young (compared to most former turpentiners) African American woodsmen, had never heard of “Diddy-Wah-Diddy.” According to Wilkerson, this most likely has to do with their age and the point in history

in which they became part of the industry. In the late stages of turpentineing, hands were given the opportunity to work in a system colloquially called “working on half.” Generally speaking, working on half was comparable to self-employment, with the exception that the money earned in the woods was divided equally between the hand and the producer or landowner. Workers that had the privilege to work on half were free of authoritarian supervision, set hours in the woods, and other demands. Under such conditions, which were a far cry from the debt peonage system, the mention of a distant dreamland was far less relevant. As Ralph Wilkerson implies, only those workers who had to cope with boss men, woodsriders, rigid work schedules, and life in the quarters would have dreamt of such a place as “Diddy-Wah-Diddy.”

Although a symbol of debt, the camp commissary was also a gathering place for workers and the site for what Junior Taylor calls telling “lies.” These gatherings occurred most frequently at dusk, just after the workers had left the woods and were making a stop at the commissary to pick up groceries. Gillis Carter laughs at the memory of this commissary joke:

Times was so hard back then that one of the hands had caught a big gopher [tortoise] and carried him to the commissary... He threw him up on the counter and the man says, ‘What do you want for this gopher?’ He says, ‘I’d just like to have a sack of flour.’ The man who owned the commissary just set the gopher behind the counter and threw him a sack of flour up there and gave him two little bitty gophers for change.

Wilburt Johnson recalls a rhyme he used to hear turpentiners tell the smallest of their children. Functioning as a lullaby, the rhyme was most commonly told by turpentiners at the commissary, child bestride father’s bouncing knee:

Onion in the middle and the pickle on top
Make your lip go to flippity flop

Go Stamey go
Hog in the biscuit
Don't come to get it, I'll eat it myself
Who is dat?
Dat I.

Jookin', Drinkin' and No Blue Lights Flashin'

The jook represented a place where could relax and release tensions. Jook activities often bypassed the rules of local authorities, producers or woodsriders, giving workers a level of autonomy. On nearly a nightly basis, workers assembled in jooks to unwind after a demanding day of work. Turpentiners' idea of "cooling out," as some of them referred to it, included drinking homemade moonshine, gambling games like Georgia Skins and Poker, and dancing to either jukebox or live music.

Junior Taylor's fondest memory of the "Jitterbug" dance era is that of his brother's "Jitterbug pants." One of Taylor's brothers could be seen dancing the "Jitterbug" nearly every night in the jooks, and it became customary for him to sport a large top hat and big baggy pants for the occasion. The pants were so loose fitting, Junior Taylor remembers, "You don't even got to take your shoes off to take [the pants] off." Guitar music, "like B. B. King," C. J. Taylor says, accompanied a dance the community called "Slow Drag." This dance, according to Taylor, spurred jealousy when men would dance suggestively with others' wives.

Hard liquor was common in the jooks and throughout the camp. "Liquor. That's the only thing they [the workers] had to look forward to – and whiskey....Everywhere you'd go, it was like drugs," C. J. Taylor recalls. "So much liquor was in the quarters,

my older brother, he had a jug on every corner.” Moonshine was so common in J. F. Wilcox’s neck of the woods that he was once arrested by a law officer who charged that Wilcox’s bark hack was a ploy to conceal his running of whiskey. Wilcox claims to have never been involved in the moonshine trade, though his boss man was, he says. Elliott West laughs with his recollection that his father used to make moonshine in his mother’s wash bucket, much to her disapproval. Junior Taylor remembers paying only 75 cents for a pint of moonshine, and one could purchase a whole five-gallon jug for a \$16. On one occasion, Junior Taylor and a group of his coworkers were caught selling moonshine, and the boss threatened to take them to jail. Fully aware that such action would result in a loss of workers and decreasing production rates in the turpentine woods, the boss acquitted them with only a reprimand and their pledge not to sell it anymore.

Considering that the jook was practically a center for unlawful activity (i.e. everything from liquor and the prostitution of “jook women” to shootings over women and gambling games gone bad), camp authority figures did a remarkable job in keeping officers from in town off the camp (Bordelon 1999:43). A jail sentence for any worker would mean less labor, so producers and woodsriders tried to prevent law officers from entering the camp. As the Taylors recall, this often included literally chasing them away. Police rarely ventured out to the camp, but when they did, they were certainly not welcome. Even after a frightening incident involving shotgun blasts one night at the jook, police were not called and remained unaware of the situation.

Workers commonly had off the day after paydays, called “Blue Monday.” On “Blue Mondays” woodsriders often hauled a large truckload of the workers into town for

a night of drinking and partying. Eventually, the woodsrider would decide that it was time to head back to the camp, and it was then that his job became the most difficult. As Junior Taylor recalls, the workers were usually scattered about the place, and gathering them for the trip back was nearly impossible. The woodsrider would spot one of the workers and would call them over to the truck to tell them to assemble the rest for the drive home. The worker would agree, and upon returning inside, would either inadvertently or purposefully become sidetracked. "I'd be there [at the truck]," Taylor laughs, "and they'd send me to go hunt the workers and I'd go back, then I might not come back [to the truck]." The woodsrider then had to start over, and this game of cat-and-mouse could go on for close to an hour. It would often be one or two o'clock in the morning before the crew had gathered for the trip back to the camp.

Each weekend full of drinking and gambling provided topics for joking and discussion that would carry on throughout the following week in the woods. Conversation among work crews focused principally upon topics of drinking, fighting, gambling, and sex. Gillis Carter recalls,

They liked to talk about their booze. And they liked to talk about who they whipped last Saturday night in a fight. That was pretty interesting discussion amongst 'em, you know. But they liked to talk about their girlfriends. Which one stayed the longest with their girlfriend the night before, you know. You know, "I've been out all night with so-and-so."

Willie White remembers that workers often pried into the lives of their coworkers. "Hey man," a worker would ask, "where you going tonight?" "I got a date with so-and-so," the other would reply. The questioner would then suggest, "Hey, man! We ought to team up on it! We gonna team it tonight, ain't we?" "Yeah, but if so," the worker with the date would make clear, "I get to go first!" White also recalls several traditional jokes workers

told in the woods about their sexual escapades. On some occasions, a worker would approach another with the question, “You ever been with a woman?” “Yeah” was the response. “Yeah, I tell you what,” the jokester would begin. “Last night, I was with one on the railroad track, and *man*, that stuff was so stank it made the train back back.” A variant of the above concludes with the punch line, “Me and this girl was messing around and I went in between the root. Man, all she could do was wiggle and poot.”

Women and Domestic Life

As is the case in most rural farming communities, turpentine families adhered to rigidly defined gender roles both in camps and in privately owned turpentine operations. The following information comes primarily from men discussing female roles, since few women were interviewed for the project. Though some girls were encouraged by their fathers to work turpentine, the majority kept to domestic chores of cooking, cleaning, and childcare. Additionally, workers’ wives were frequently assigned the tasks of priming and stringing tobacco on the camp farm.

Most mornings both on and off camps, women would rise before men. This often meant waking up at 4:00 a.m. or earlier. Long before the break of day, women were scrambling eggs, frying sausage, baking biscuits, and mixing grits or meal for their families. George Music explains that breakfast needed to be substantial so the men could last until lunchtime rolled around. Music’s mother understood this fact as well as anyone; whatever it happened to be on the family’s breakfast table each morning, it was sure to “stick to your ribs,” Music recalls.

The Taylor's mother, as was the case with many black women in the camps, spent her days ironing and washing clothes for the families of the white woodsriders and producers. As a girl, Bernice Wilcox filled her days cooking, washing clothes, cleaning house, and taking care of her seven younger siblings as her mother and father both worked in the woods. She prepared lima beans, black-eyed peas, pork, and other foods that were readily available on the camp quarters. To wash clothes, Wilcox draped them over a large block and literally beat the dirt out with a club before using a tin tub full of soapy water and scrubbing the clothes by hand. They were then placed in a pot of boiling water atop a fire. The next step, Bernice remembers, was to "rinse 'em and hang 'em up on the line – just a long old clothesline – and put 'em out there in the good old sunshine."

Turpentiners' wives gave their men folk a lot of flack for not being home enough, and perhaps rightfully so. Workers frequently stayed out partying at the jooks or hunting in the woods until the wee hours of morning, leaving the wives alone to attend to the children and other tasks around the house. "I didn't stay home either," Junior Taylor confesses. A large body of jokes surfaced in the camp vernacular regarding this domestic conflict. Pete Gerrell's 1997 collection, *The Illustrated History of the Naval Stores (Turpentine) Industry*, includes the following:

Three boys were bragging about how rich their fathers were. The first boy said, "My daddy owns a hundred acres of turpentine trees." The next boy said, "That's nothing. My daddy owns two hundred acres of turpentine trees." The third boy said, "My daddy owns more than both of yours, when he came in at 3:00 am, mamma gave him hell." [1997:75]

"Papa, what's a monologue?" "A monologue is a conversation between a husband and a wife." "I thought that was a dialog." "Naw, a dialog is where two people are speaking." [1997:50]

Old hand: "What did your wife say when you got in so late last night?"
Young hand: "She never said a word. I was going to have them front teeth pulled out anyhow." [1997:50]

Wife: Dear, tomorrow is our tenth anniversary. Shall I kill a turkey?
Husband: Naw, let him live. He didn't have anything to do with it.
[1997:73]

A few women, like Bernice Wilcox's mother, worked in the woods. She would "weed boxes" in the woods, i.e. clearing boxes and weeding around the trees in order to keep fires – set both intentionally and unintentionally – from catching the forest ablaze. Other women performed tasks traditionally thought to occupy a male-only domain. Wilburt Johnson recalls a woman named Eva who used to dip gum with the men. A well-respected worker, Johnson says, "Ol' Eva would get out there and swing a dip bucket just like a man." Similarly, Ralph Wilkerson's Aunt Reesa chipped and dipped gum alongside men in the woods, and many times, she outperformed them. A very tall and muscular woman, Aunt Reesa was one-of-a-kind when it came to women on the camp. Wilkerson explains:

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.

Beneath the Steeple

Many turpentine camps had small one-room church houses in which the camp community would gather to worship through prayer and song. A highly respected turpentine serving as preacher normally led church services, though at times preachers from outside the camp would come on Sunday mornings to serve the congregation.

The churches, which often served as community centers as well, were the sites of camp weddings, funerals, and celebrations. At daybreak on Sunday mornings, sounds of worship drifted through the pines. “Them people, you could hear them singing for miles and miles,” Junior Taylor reminisces. “We used to sing one song about ‘You Fight On:’”

My grandmamma used to sing me that song. Some guy’d be walking by and they’d be about drunk, she’d be singing so in that church until they’d come in that church and give some money to sing that song. That’s the truth. You know it be sounding good if it’s sounding good to a drunk.

Most couples on the Taylors’ camps married between the ages of 18 and 22 years old. The worker either told the woods rider or the person in charge of running the commissary that he wished to marry, after which it was arranged for the couple to reside together in camp housing. The couple was then free to arrange with the preacher a wedding in the church or in the home of either the bride or the groom. Weddings were very small, and by necessity, inexpensive. Junior Taylor was married in front of just four relatives at the Valdosta courthouse, an event that cost him a total of \$60. “Cote-house weddings,” as Pete Gerrell writes of them using African American pronunciation, were especially common between two residents of a turpentine camp (Gerrell 1997:134).

Funerals were also a part of camp life. At the death of a member in the camp, the community gathered outside the church house to pay their respects to the deceased. Bodies were placed in a casket, usually made of a simple wooden box crafted from timber in the woods by fellow turpentiners – and buried in the camp graveyard beside the church. Most turpentine camp graveyards had no tombstones, and the graves were adorned with flowers and two sticks tied in a

cross. Because workers were expected to stay up all night after a death to honor the departed, they were also given the following day off of work.

Children and Schooling

Before male children were old enough to work in the woods with their fathers, and before female children were expected to contribute to the duties of the home, children were at liberty to do as they pleased for the most part. Generally, little boys and little girls had separate spheres of playtime activities. Growing up on the turpentine camps of South Georgia and North Florida, C. J. and Junior Taylor spent most of their early years shooting marbles with their peers in the camps. On Christmas mornings, little boys stood outside their homes for hours, shooting off gifts like fireworks, cap guns and B.B. guns. As the boys in the camp grew more mature and began working turpentine, they were sometimes given .22 rifles, flashlights, and pocketknives for Christmas.

Whereas such activities were strictly for boys, the girls also had their closed domain of pastimes. Female children could often be seen standing in circles, locked at the arm, spinning and twirling while singing rhymes – an activity called “Ring Play” or “ring games.” In the late 1930s, Zora Neale Hurston offered an abbreviated explanation of this activity in her writing for the Florida Writers’ Project.

This is African rhythm with European borrowings. Group in ring... One dancer in center begins to sing and circle ring seeking a partner as the verse is being sung. At the very first beat of the refrain, the partner must join the seeker in the center and they do a duet... The hand-clapping is

marvelous stop-time rhythm and the better the dancers the wilder the enthusiasm. [Bordelon 1999:155]

Interestingly, C. J. Taylor still hears one of the songs among elementary school children in the area today:

'Round and 'round the sunshine
'Round and 'round the moon
'Round and 'round the sunshine
In the afternoon

Both boys and girls played games like “Hop Scotch” and “Hide-n-Go Seek.” Ralph Wilkerson and childhood friends like Willie White invented toys, one of which was known as “The Packer.” Wilkerson explains that he and his friends gathered several syrup cans, filled them with dirt and sand to make them heavy, and attached them in a chain with wire. Holding onto the wire, they dragged the cans along the ground, producing rattling sounds as they clanked along. Like most children in rural areas, those in turpentine camps crafted wagons, slingshots, pop guns, and other toys out of fallen timber in the woods. Wagons were especially common. “We didn’t know what toys was,” Elliott West says of his youth during “Hoover days.” “Makes us own wagon.” J. F. Wilcox remembers children using timber from the dip woods to create marionettes that danced when their strings were manipulated from above.

The award for the most dangerous childhood game goes to Ralph Wilkerson. Gathering in the woods, the boys spent hours slinging each other across the woods using nothing but a pine tree pulled taut. Wilkerson and friends would find a newly-planted slender pine tree that would bend all the way to the ground without breaking. One child hugged the tree while three or four others held it down to the ground. Those

holding the tree released it on a count of three, sending the child clinging to the tree soaring across the woods as if from an arboreal cannon. Other children used safer, more traditional methods of “travel” to find entertainment. The Taylors recall that both boys and girls in the camp loved to catch the Georgia Southern train to Valdosta to see a “picture show” some weekends.

Most boys were anxious to join their fathers in the woods; they were eager to become turpentiners. “It come to you by your parents, you know,” Ralph Wilkerson says. “You wanted to go out there ‘cause you knew it was in you to start with by your daddy. That’s how it got in the children.” George Music, for instance, was working turpentine by the time he was seven years old and had already endured five years of his father’s refusing to let him work. When Music was much too young to work turpentine with his father, he displayed his impatience to begin chipping by lugging around a hatchet – almost as big as he was – in the woods to make believe he was “just like daddy.” As long as he hacked only at bushes during these early years, his father was fine with him tagging along. If he ever slashed into one of his father’s cherished pine trees, however, he was severely scolded. Music says that he also must have rolled some sort of old barrel lid “three million miles” across his entire property when he was little.

Wilburt Johnson and Willie White share similar stories of their first experience with work in the woods and their decisions to join their fathers. Wilburt Johnson practiced swinging the hack on small black gum trees when he was too small to follow his father into the dip woods. Eventually, he had had enough. One day, after pretending to work turpentine on the small trees near his home, he abruptly stopped

with the make-believe. "I'm going to the woods where Papa at," he told himself with conviction.

I got my hack, and I went out there. He was down there in a little old round pond chipping. And he was *bad* to talk to hisself, you know. But he was down there talking to hisself and I said, "Well, I wonder who he's talking with." So I was standing up out there on a log... where he could see me. He said, "Boy what you doing over here?" I said, "I come to help you chip some." "Well, chip one out there and let me see how it is." I chipped one and waited 'til he got there. He looked at it. "Let me see your hack." Got my hack and cut it out you know and sharpened it up. And I chipped on with it all that evening. And the old hack wasn't very much. So, he told me, he said, "Well, son, bring your old hack in and I'll get a good 'un and fix it up and let you come back and help me."

The following Saturday, his father went to town and bought his young son a better hack. From that point forward, Wilburt was a turpentine. "From then on, on up to right now – chipping, dipping, pulling, pulpwooding, long logging, and all that ever since, right on up to now," he says.

Willie White's memory of his first step into the world of turpentine is similar:

I'd get out there with him and I'd see my daddy just going out there just whistling and chipping them boxes, whistling and chipping. So I got into it and I said, "I wanna do that. Boy, I sure wanna do that." And so I kept on at my daddy, and my daddy said, "I'm gonna show ya. I'm gonna teach you how to do it." And he kept on, he went to showing me how to doing it. And I got to where I got to loving it. And I used to come home and my mamma used to tell me say, at my daddy, "What wrong with his clothes?" Have holes all in it where I'd be standing... too close to the tree, spraying the acid on it. You spray acid on the tree and you hold it too close, it'll bounce back on your clothes and eat it up. Daddy would say, "He been chipping." And mamma would say, "You ain't got - your boy's out there supposed to be picking berries and you got him out there chipping." So I told mamma, I said, "No, it wasn't nothing about daddy." I *told* my daddy to teach me how to do it. And, you know, I fell in love with chipping. And then I came on from chipping and went to dipping. And so I just loved it all.

As boys, Junior and C. J. Taylor also showed their desire to enter the woods with their father and the rest of the men in the camp. Both brothers started working around

the ages of seven or eight, and both were turned down for several years when they begged to start working like the adults. The Taylors' nephew's son, a boy presently of about ten or eleven years old, wants more than anything else to be a turpentine when he grows up. Sadly, C. J. tells him, "No more turpentine... Now, there ain't no turpentine." The boy saw all the leftover turpentine tools the Taylors have in their backyard and asked, "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."

The work of children was considered a necessity. Gillis Carter's father, Era Carter, understood the importance of his son's labor. As a boy, Gillis prepared land to be worked before laborers came in to begin chipping boxes. He made the woods fire-safe, a process he calls "burning it of a night," and he cut ditches throughout the woods. He learned how to handle the sharp tools and how to locate the trees that promised the highest productivity. He discovered that many of the best trees were in swampy areas in which people had to walk "foot logs" and then wade in water to perform the task at hand. Carter reflects upon his parents' recognition of the contribution he and his siblings made to the family turpentine operation:

I've got some written letters that my mother wrote back in the 50s. She was writing some relatives out in Arizona... Mother wrote my aunt and says, "Era's bought another farm and paid X number of dollars for it." And she says, "He's dependent on these boys helping him work it out, helping him pay the debt."

As boys and young men, Ralph Wilkerson and Willie White belonged to a summer work crew of their peers known as the "Little Boys' Squad." Receiving its name

from producer Frank Dukes, who suggested that the formation of such a group would benefit the operation financially and quench the boys' thirst to become turpentiners like their elders. It was the boys' charge to dip gum as a group under the supervision of a veteran of the dip woods. Ranging from 11 to 14 years old, they rode along with their dip barrels on a wagon pulled behind a tractor. "Some of us were too small to lift the dip bucket," Willie White smiles. "Some of us, they say that the dip bucket was bigger than some of us. But we still tried it right on." After graduating from the "Little Boys' Squad," the boys, considered young men now, joined the adults as full-fledged turpentiners.

As turpentine families often subsisted from paycheck to paycheck (or from barrel to barrel of turpentine gum in this case), many kept their children working rather than in school. This attitude was widespread in rural South Georgia at least through the mid-1900s. George Music was just one of a number of turpentiners' sons who were permitted to leave school early or not attend at all to help their fathers in the woods. Music's father felt that education was only important in the early years of a child's life, a belief he related frequently by joking that "the only thing you could learn in adult life past sixth grade is adultery." But George Music's father held a grudge against education for personal reasons as well. The school that Music's father attended added a twelfth grade to its requirements for graduation just before he had finished the eleventh grade. The local government forced to him to return to school for the twelfth grade, a demand that Music, Sr. swore throughout his life cost him about one hundred and twenty-five acres of turpentine trees adjoining the family's current property. In this one year, Music's father felt, he could have worked turpentine and paid for the additional land.

In the turpentine camps, churches doubled as one-room schoolhouses during the weekdays. Junior Taylor remembers that many of the camp children went to school three or four days a week and worked turpentine the rest of the days. Taylor himself went to school off and on through the fourth grade, when he quit to work turpentine fulltime. Taylor's father found it so necessary to keep his children out of school and in the woods that he willingly paid the state \$1 a day to do so.

In the recollections of surviving turpentiners, this emphasis on work provided children with a respect for authority and a strict moral discipline absent from American culture today. "The children wasn't bad like they is now," Junior Taylor says. "We didn't know nothing about no dope." Liquor and moonshine were the two most dangerous substances known to him as a child. Also, "the girls wasn't having no babies like these little girls now do," C. J. Taylor recalls. In explaining his childhood innocence, George Music says that the highlight of every week for him as a child was the one trip they made into town to buy groceries. The Coca-Cola and Moon Pie he would get on these outings were the most exciting things he knew for a long time. Music also kept himself out of trouble by playing the guitar. In his pre-teens, Music had already begun playing the fiddle, which has remained his musical passion ever since.

A major social influence on children in turpentine camps was the delegation of disciplinary privileges to adults throughout the camp. C. J. Taylor explains: "All mothers was just alike. She could beat your child and another mother could beat your child if you wronged. It was natural training... Everybody trained each other's children." Members of the community were expected to provide necessary assistance to any family in the community when such a situation arose. With families close by, the

turpentine camp operated as a community of reciprocity whereby women were expected to assist other ill or injured women on the camp with cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and taking care of children. Likewise, former turpentine hand Eddie Lee Scipp remembers, healthy men chopped firewood for other sick or injured turpentiners' families. Such a system made it possible for adults to rely on one other for childrearing and survival.