

JAKE WELCH, Ryan Branch, Hazel Creek, Swain County, North Carolina, 1939
/ Disc 058a, 058b

I: You might tell who you are at first and everything and then give your name and where you live.

Yeah, and I, I can tell you about me, me and George Wilson a-catching that, that right on the mountains there.

We went over there a-chestnut hunting and took our women with us, he was married one, one fall and me, Will, he, I was married one fall and him the next, and we went over there and that old dog treed, and, and we started back home, the women says "hain't you going to that old dog?" and, and we told them that he had a groundhog treed and had the axe with us, went on down there and, and hit and, and had a had a cub bear treed, and he wanted me to come back home and get my gun and kill it and I wouldn't do it, I told him, I says "George, just cut it down and catch it," "why," he says "he'll eat you up, fool," I says "no, it won't, no, it won't," we cut that tree down, down, it was up a big chestnut oak, and when the tree fell hit broke and run right back, right back to me, and I run it a little piece and caught it, I want you to know when he got there it, hit had all my clothes scratched offen me, then I, he was a-fighting I said and me ahold of it, well we had one more time with that devilish infernal thing, I pulled my shoestrings out and tied it, and so we, we brought it home and kept it, till hit was it got to about two year old, it got so mean we had to sell it, took ten dollars for it right up there.

I: Now tell us some about when you ...

Well, if I'd a knowed you fellows would have been a-coming, till I could have been a-studying about it, why one, one thing or another hit would have been another thing, but then I, I ain't for-, ain't forgot, you know, that I, I, I told you fellows, but then me and, me and Al Walker went to the head of Hazel Creek one time just by ourselves, I, I ain't forgot that never, and the dogs treed two in, in the ground, and we just didn't have nothing but some old hog rifles, I killed one of them as hit come out and he was afraid, he was afraid of shooting, and that old she come out and I want you to know, mister, man, we's, we's left there, I struck out of my gun but missed it xx, now we killed some deer and turkey, coons and everything else, me and old Al Walker did, that was up here on the head of Hazel Creek.

I: What about hunters uh Little John xx or John Jones, did you ever go out with them?

Yeah, lots and lots of times.

I: Can you tell us about hunting with them?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, and we went right up here on, on, on Walkers Creek at one time me and Little John and Doc, Cray Forks, we drove the, the Walker

Creek laurel, sent them on above, we turned the dogs loose then, me and Little John did, we both come back and went on to the mouth we did before we got to them we heard them shooting, went on up there, Little John was pretty bad to curse, "by God," he says "we got him," I says "have you, John?" he says "yeah," he says "by god," he says "we've got him," we, we went on up there to him, he was a big one and, and hit fat, and me and John and Dan, I, I got the best tickled I ever was in life, we all went back up there, and the dogs run off and went to the back of the Smoky Mountain, so next day we come in, me and Dan and a while crowd of us wanted to come in, and Little John, he wouldn't come, him and Doc wouldn't, wouldn't and, and when Little John spoke, say "I'm going to get me a bear hide," he says, "before I, before I go home," that was Dan, who was his brother, he says, "John, that there whiskey," said "it'll make you want to go home," xx God, we had one more time with this fool bear, him a-driving and everything.

Well, when we was a-deer, a-deer driving now, ever once in a while we'd find where a panther would, would kill a deer and, and cover it up, just every once in a while we would, and some of them was plumb, we found one or two was, was warm out, out here one winter, now he'll kill deer, now they ain't no devilishness about that, and a wolf will, will, will follow your dogs right into the camp, and, and if you got any slip in, in, in the gang, a wolf will, will, will follow right into the camp and how-, and howl all around your camp, now they'll do that, yes they will, and we'd watch, we'd kill them devilishing in front of panthers PRON painters, and every one we know where, where our dogs would run them, but now they ain't one dog in a hundred would run a panther, I can tell you that right now they won't, but they'll pretty near any of them run a, run a wolf, though.

I: ... about fifteen years ago ... could you tell us a little bit how in times back you killed a panther?

No, I don't.

I: What did you, what did you hear about that?

No, I don't remember, if it has I, I've forgot it, I forgot half I ever heard and half, half I ever knew, but now if I'd a knowed you fellows been a-coming and had studied up, why I could have give you fellows a whole lot of news, but then I, I wasn't look-, I wasn't thinking about it, don't you see?

I: Uh-huh, what do you think of the national park, Mister Welch?

Why, hit's, hit's all right, yeah, hit, hit's all, all, all, all right, course it was pretty hard on the boys and ever been hard on, on me and, and my boys, we don't bother nothing, we own a whole lot of land around here and want kill us a mess of squirrels, why we get out and kill them here on our own land, and the park business is, is all right.

I: Say anything you want, we're just wondering how the national park affected people around here you know, the hunters can't do as much hunting.

No, no, no, no, no, of course they's a lot of hunting that's done in this country now, but then, as far as that concerned, but we don't, they keep a, they, they got some warders here I want you to know, when they catch a fellow a-, a-hunting, they take him to Bryson, yes they do, I'll bet you they do, they catch him a coon-hunting, but then fishing, hunting or anything, why it don't cost you much, about twelve dollars and a half, why trainman [?], he just comes right back and goes to hunting again, yeah.

Why, the, the, the, the park uh, uh they, they's two fellows that come right here now and surveyed this, this branch out from the mouth to Deep Gap right up, up yonder, and I, and they, they had it wrong, and on, on, on their map, they surveying it out, and they asked me, well they, they say "now hain't this the, the, the, the, the Long Hollow?" I says "no, no," he says, "what, what call," he says "Is this?" I says "It's been called the Ryan Branch ever since I was a, a young one," he says, "where's Pine Mountain?" I says "right back there," I did, that's the Pine Mountain, well, he says, he says "I, we'll just change it then," he says, "you ought to know," he axed me how long I'd lived here and I told him the rise of fifty year, I says "It's been called the Ryan Branch ever since I can remember, I've lived here" I says that, "well," he says "I'll just change it then," yeah.

I: How much land do you have up here?

Hundred and fifty acr-

I: A hundred a fifty.

Yeah.

I: How much of that is wilderness?

I, I don't know if it is, it is, we own this patch of, of land at, at the back of that, that ridge right there, and it runs back and takes in that cove and back in there towards Tipton Settlement, they's a hundred acre on this side.

I: Crops good?

Yeah, yes, it, it's good stuff, make plenty to do us.