

KK-CD-012-006

Ronald Cobb

Interviewed in the Cobb home with Carrie Kline

May 9, 2008

Born on Gentlemen Ridge near Glencoe in 1931, Cobb says the ridge received its name in the days before psychiatrists when neighbors depended on one another and had to work out differences. Cobb stresses that children in his day respected parents and elders and never had to be told what to do more than once. A paper boy in Glencoe, Cobb attended the Glencoe School until he was needed full-time on the family farm. He provides examples of his father's and his own seat of the pants ingenuity. Cobb states that you can learn anything by watching. He himself began work at the Burlington Mill at age 13 and worked up the chain until he became a weaving instructor. "They were all farmers," he says, of the black and white mill workers who got along well with one another and were raised with a strong work ethic. He asserts that they didn't need a union because they had a good relationship with the superintendent and could discuss workplace issues openly with him.

Cobb describes the changes in the pace of life today and the shift in family and community values. He stresses the value of not just sending children off to activities, but carrying them there oneself and spending time with them. Cobb describes changes in the weather and the overuse of water. "People waste more water than they use. Even I do that," he says. Cobb's father was a very capable farmer, and his son learned well. Cobb explains that the old people, according to his father, had to live in the woods to be close to a creek for water. He details the art of divining for water before digging a well and the virtues of white lightning strictly as medicine. "You're supposed to take it and then go to sleep." Cobb eloquently describes the origins of race car driving and NASCAR, rooted in the running of North Carolina moonshine.