

Lucy Damiani March 24, 1972

7:15 - 8:45

1. Gilbert L. Lonsdale
2. Blanche Aistrop (wife)
3. 38 Earl St.
4. 679-5934
5. Retired, but would work part time if work available
6. Buckingham, Quebec
7. Buckingham, Quebec
8. Married 4 boys, Bob, Fred, Bruce, Jim
9. 76 years old

10. I think if we don't do something about the situation in Cobalt we are in serious trouble. The Smelter has closed there are only 2 mines operating. The foundry is petering out and all the business places are suffering from the lack of money. A secondary industry would help. We certainly need something else besides mining. I am not in favour of regional schools and bussing children out of town when we have schools right here in Cobalt which they may be closing up. I don't think Queen's Park realizes the distance some of these students are going. The Temagami grade 13 are going to New Liskeard which is an all round trip of about 80 miles. Couldn't they attend the Cobalt school. Lets face it we don't have the population up north for these regional schools.

Also these students stand a better chance to learn in a smaller school, rather than larger schools where teachers don't even know some of their students. Our local high school has produced a higher percentage of "high caliber" students than most schools around us. I think the mines in Cobalt are worked out or as the saying goes "raped" Too many small companies and leasers have been allowed to take out the best of ore or clean out the metal and leave the property in a shambles, They closed our smelter and it could be utilized for a factory or even a smelter as it was - here again we have this industry right in town. They let them, companies ship ore out of town and now its closed, This has at its best employed over 100 men. Our municipality should definitely approach government for a feasible solution to our needs if we are to survive. There are no job opportunities for the young so they leave town and look for work elsewhere, Here again we should develop a program for summer course for the young and adults. We have the facilities, schools, large public community centre. If we could encourage the government to give more people coming into Cobalt, living here, spending money here, would boost our economy.

I came to Cobalt in 1902 with my mother, brother Cal and sisters Millie and Daisy. My father had come to New Liskeard in 1898 with two of my older brothers Sam & John. My father was working as a lumberjack in the bush around New Liskeard and my two brothers worked with him.

When I arrived with the family we all went to live with my brother Sam, who

had a home. Six months later we all moved to a house Dad had bought at Hudson's Bay Road. It was flooded out soon after, when the Coniagas Mine and Hudson Bay Mine were working near the homes on their property , They had a large pile of sand earth piled up and when the mines were being watered out the sand caved in and the water of flooded out 20 homes in the area. We lost everything so my father bought the house we are now living in from Bob Thompson, who owned quite a bit of property here. There is a small street running from Esso Station up to the first corner that was named Thompson Street. My father passed away in 1925 he worked for the town of Cobalt when we moved here for about 8 years driving a team of horses  
In the meantime I had gone out west to farm in Alberta for 9 years, when my father passed away I came home for the funeral and stayed here with my mother My first job was night watchman at the Bilsky Block before it burned down in 1926 then I took odd jobs as a cook, pipefitter, carpentry work and any job I could get. Jobs were getting scarce as it was coming close to the depression. I was able to get work on the town crew as maintenance man and this I held until 1938. There were politics involved and I lost my job. I was unemployed for six months and hired at the Cobalt. Foundry as a core maker and was there until my retirement in 1969.

I saw 3 big fires on Lang Street area since I came to Cobalt. Also the Bilsky Block there was a large Hotel burned down where the Dominion store and T.T.L. are. In August 1962 the Scullino block burnt and took with it Lowery's wholesale, Perini's Bakery Shop and the Hawken residence and wall paper shop. In those days 1906 the area known as Argentite street was just a muddy hole and swamp , later it was all built up hotels, rooming houses, opera house and dance hall. The first bank in here was Bank of Commerce and it was a tent where the ONR station is today. Before Lang street burnt it was a narrow dirt road and if two teams of horses were going by one had to always stop to let the other by. On payday downtown was so crowded you could hardly get by and everybody jus pushed and elbowed. Fire protection wasn't very good due to the lack of waterworks. A team of horses drew a large water tank that was pumped by an engine through hoses that was our fire protection.

There was at one time some 200 to 300 Provincial Police and on Miller ,street there was a two storey large frame building used for jail and police office. Everybody in those days sold booze for extra money. There were stores of all kinds up and down both sides of Lang Street from the bridge coming in on the North to the other end of town. we had wooden sidewalks and dirt roads. There was a wooden bridge from the Old Public School on the Rock cut corner, that used to take us across to engine was where Buffams is today. My oldest brother Cal went to a little school on Lang St. where the Shell Station is now that was before the big Public School was built on the corner.

I have a family heirloom that came from England., - a "petrified!! hone for sharpening razors.

For entertainment we had lots of dance halls, baseball teams, hockey team that was NHL and won many cups. Lots of theatres that brought in live performers minstrel shows, opera houses - at the site of the burned down Dominion store was

a large theatre the Lyric and the two others down on Swamp Street. I remember Mr. Fred Assetine was an operator for the Giachino line of theatres.

Today in Cobalt I would like to see more business places, a drug store above all, we could use a doctor or a dentist. I'm sure it would be a good living for one and if people on all areas in town modernize their homes it would certainly make the town look better. Some of the changes I don't like. I'm retired and I would still rather work but there are no jobs.

Mayor and Council are to be credited for doing such a good job of snow removal, remodelling the buildings in the downtown area, having put up the two parks, there are still a few eyesore spots in town that could be cleaned up and made into parks, or encourage business enterprise to take over the lots and build a small business. We need a low rental complex as rents are out of working man's range. A five room apartment costs \$145 per month. This sometimes does not include heating, electricity etc.

The tourist dollar is always some money in our town, but not for an all year project. Our season is too short so lets not go all out on the tourist bit. I think it would be a good idea to encourage art colonies. This is a haven for artists and rock hounds could be induced to start a group and invite other Clubs in. Also as for the educational part why I don't vve have summer classes here we have the facilities. Its too late now but for example the Mining School could have been located in Cobalt , the students have to ceome to Cobalt to study rock formations and go underground for their mining theory.

We should keep organized sports going and we do need a recreation program and director to keep it up. The last program made it possible for young and all to participate. There were pottery classes, art classes, and the little majorettes are a credit to our community. They have been in parades in Haileybury, New Liskeard , Kirkland and North Bay. Everywhere they were acclaimed as very good and smart looking in their uniforms. Cobalt colour are silver and blue.

I might say in brief I am proud to have been and still be a part of this community and I'm glad to have my family be part of it as the sons goes, "You're the Best old Town I know" Lets not lose all this history.