INTERVIEWER: Dianne Zieman

DATE: March 10th, 1972
TIME: 1 hour. 20 min.

INTERVIEW:

1. Mr. Victor Walker
2. Vic
3.
4. 225 Grant Street, New Liskeard
5. 647-5237
6. 68 plus - will be 69 this month.
7. England - Co. of Northampton - lived in the Midlands.
8. Mother in London; father somewhere in England.
9. English ancestry.
10. July of 1913.
11. Came by ship from England, then by train from Quebec City. No one seemed to know where on earth New Liskeard was, so they went from Quebec City to Montreal to Sudbury to Toronto until they were finally sent to North Bay and then north to New Liskeard.
12. as above.
13. Seven - one of the family remained in England. There were three brothers and two sisters.
14. Father farmed; Mr. Walker worked on a farm for his first job.
15. His mother worked on their farm; his wife worked for a year or two - mostly at home. However, later she told me that she worked in a lumber camp of her father's as a cook.
16. Mr. Walker Sr. is deceased; Mr. Vic Walker is now retired.
17. as above.
17. (a) During W.W.1 - he was only around 15 years old. His brother Reg was overseas when he was 17 for two years in France, but Vic was too young. Not too sure of any community drives that may have gone on - out in the country they didn't come in contact with that sort of thing. Victory Bonds were sold. No demand from the government at that time on the farms. W.W.11 - was working as an electrician at Hydro. Lot

17. (a) continued

of bond drives then. Not much celebration around here the day that the war ended as he remembers.

18. When he finally got off the train, it was pretty gloomy looking - lots of mud - wooden sidewalks. There were kids walking around in bare feet and he felt very sorry for them because he thought they must be so very poor to not be wearing shoes.

19. Downtown was built up - about 1,500 people at that time. The railraod had gone through and the town had swung to that side of the river; before that, it had all been pretty well on the Grant St. side of the Wabi. Big grocery stores, barber shops. Went up about as far as Mary St.; from then on, just the odd house. Just a few houses on this side of the river and south to the bridge. Streets were the same as they are now - 66 ft. wide with just horse and buggy travelling on them. Three cars in the country - no garages, and so they had to ship the gas up from North Bay by train. Between the mud in spring, summer and fall and the snow in the winter, you couldn't really drive a car. Somethimes, you would see horses stuck up to the wagon axles in the mud on Whitewood Ave. There was always such a lot of mud because this is in the clay belt. They used cutters and sleighs in the winter.

20. His father thought he could better himself by coming to Canada. They lived in a city in the old country. Mostly factories - didn't want the kids to have to work in the factories all their lives. Canada was highly advertised - C.P.R. ran great big lectures and still picture shows in Europe to get the travellers. Apparently, 1913 was the year of the biggest immigration to Canada. Curiosity - at age 8, he remembers going into one of these shows to see what it was all about and being very enthusiastic about coming to this country.

21. Farms; in Cobalt, the mines. The odd jobs as clerks in stores were available. Haileybury was a residential town. Lumbering in the winter time - farmers would cut logs in the winter; they would leave their wives and children alone at home for three to four weeks and would go off to cut logs. His wife worked for two winters, at age 18 and 19, as a cook in the logging camps with her father. Remembers getting up at 4 a.m. to prepare breakfast for the loggers.
22. On the farm, ten hours a day and then the chores after that.
23. At age 14, worked 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. - earned $12.00 a month and his board. He would milk 12 cows twice a day and on Sunday as part of his work.
24. Just an ordinary wooden home - with two or three bedrooms - an ordinary farmhouse.
25. Hardly remembers it; although he does remember a Christmas party at school where he got an orange and a book from Santa Claus. A lot of snow and not much else. They may have visited their neighbours on Christmas Day - the schoolkids would take part in a Christmas concert. All transportation was by horse so people didn't get out and about for great distances in those days.
26. No inside plumbing or water.
27. Lamps.
28. Heated with a wood stove.
29. Wooden stove for cooking - probably would be worth a fortune today as an antique. Had to light a fire every morning to cook breakfast and the wood had to be chopped for fuel.
30. About the same as now - no self-service grocery stores. Grocery stores, general stores and hardware stores. No cash and carry - if your credit was good, you could run up a bill with some of the stores. No road between Haileybnrry and Cobalt - one had to shop in New Liskeard if you lived there. Travelling by horse and buggy for five miles took about an hour each way.

31. Entertainment - not too much. Might be the odd dance at someone's house or at the Orange Hall. Dances in town perhaps on New Year's Eve or similar occasions. Gramophones in the way of canned music. Theatre - there were three theatres in Cobalt when the mines were very active. Grand Opera House in New Liskeard where Canadian Tire Corp. is now located. Silent picture shows. The Opera House:a big balcony and plush seats. Saturday - admission might cost a quarter; any other night would be 15¢.
32. Football; baseball - couldn't play hockey where they were. Racing and running - at school picnics, there would be races.
33. Ball's School. Miss Sutherland was one of the teachers - she taught there for quite a while. Miss Lindhorn, and another one whose name he couldn't remember - her father was a streetcar conductor. Also a Miss Hall.
34. Not very many years of schooling as a child - from age 7 to 13; then went back to school as an adult and studied to get better jobs. Put in a winter in Chicago studying electrical engineering.
35. Horses, cutters, wagons, sleighs, outside of the railroad. A streetcar ran from here to southeast of Cobalt at Kerr Lake. Bit of a trail that you might be able to get through with a horse and buggy between towns.
36. Dr. McNaughton - although he wasn't sick. Dr. McCullough. Dr. Fisher was the dentist - had his tooth pulled, although Dr. Fisher may have been a physician - in those days, they had to do all sorts of jobs.
37. Old Lady Minto Hospital - pretty good. Used to train nurses there. It's now a block of apartment buildings. On a bad hill to get up in the winter - doctors mostly walked in town.
38. Their only child was born in North Bay.

39. Past 18.

40. Toronto.

41. One hundred sixty acres was probably the average size - not too big. Mixed farming, cattle and sheep, grains and hay. People barely made a living. No market as there was not the population. Farmers' Market at Cobalt - in New Liskeard the farmers would sell their stuff to the grocery stores. Mrs. Walker went down every week for eight years to the market in Cobalt. She was only about 12 when she started to go - her mother didn't like that kind of work, so she went. Everyone worked hard in those days - she went down by streetcar.

42. Used to be fairs so that they could show their stuff - the kids used to be given seeds at one time in school. They would grow their seeds and show their produce at the fair.

43. & 44.

Mostly - potatoes and some other vegetables - wouldn't have fresh meat until winter as there were no refrigerators. Salt pork. Had to go down to the lake to fish. Deer, moose, partridge - couldn't shoot them out of season, but there was a lot of game.

45. Probably a pair of overalls and a shirt.

46. Dress up - good Sunday clothes.

47. Kids would probably go to church or Sunday School - weren't allowed to do too much - couldn't make to much noise as they usually did in the week.

48. Not particularly - the odd book that he got when he was in school.

49. Home - nothing better. The winters are too long. Things are too familiar - nice, clean country.

50. as above.

51. Town has better stores and facilities - all the changes seem to be for the best.

52. Doesn't think so - can't think of anything off hand. Conditions in Cobalt with the mines closing down are bad. Doesn't know much about the farming end of things any more. Not sure of the advantages or disadvantages of the present schools. When he went to school, he did have to walk three miles to school against the north wind - used to freeze - now the kids have schoolbuses. Also, we have better clothing now than in those days.

53. No.

54. as above.

55. Doesn't like the way they plow the streets, blocking everyone's driveway. He has called the mayor about getting some kind of machine that wouldn't do it. Has seen three feet of snow and packed ice on Armstrong Street - never used to be big banks of snow - as people used to travel on top of the snow, not clear it out of the way of cars, etc.

56. as above.

57. Summertime.

58. Driving around the country, looking at television and going to the odd card parties.

59. Not particularly - a little gardening and does the odd repair job on electrical equipment. Some fishing, although he no longer hunts and has sold all his rifles. Cannot stand the cold so he does little skidooing.

60. Doesn't know. Could probably help a lot more in the present housing situation - houses are too costly. Construction could be carried on in the winter and so expand the season. It's a hard proposition to build in the winter, but it could be done. Could make parks, and rehabilitate Cobalt - raise the price of gold and silver and so open up the mines to put men to work again. If gold were 75¢ an ounce, could put many more men to work.

61. Quite a bit - lakes, rivers, historical sites (i.e. Ville Marie, and the old Mission on the Ontario side. Dawson Point Road is an historical site - even changed the danged name of the road from Dawson Point Road. The men who built that road came up on the Meteor and then travelled on snowshoes. Mrs. Walker mentioned that her mother came up on the Meteor when she was 18 - docked at Haileybury and the first man she saw, she wound up marrying that man within a year!)

There used to be a great big house where I now live - all the lumber for that house was brought up on the Meteor. There was a road from that house to where Gibsons now live that went along the lakeshore. As a boy, Mr. Walker used to watch the Indians camping and cooking their meals on their way to the Hudson Bay Co. post or outlet at Haileybury with their furs, or else on their way to Haileybury (the district town) for their treaty money.

The Dawsons were the first farmers up here - where Gibsons now live. Used to be a big dock at the end of the Point - the Meteor, Silverland and Alexander were some of the steamers.

62. Schools - work for those who are educated. Jobs - not too much to offer, other than Eplett's, Lundia, Hydro, Telephone Company and Wabi for machine and foundry working. Farming, unless you have a milk contract, doesn't pay too much.

Tourist attraction- simply because it is north would attract a lot of people. Americans have come up here with skis on their cars in the summer. Many people here are Anti-American because they feel the Americans have taken over too much of the local land. They take advantage of land opportunities whereas local people don't seem to realize land value. Local marina is not developed enough for tourism.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Most of his stories are included in the answers.

Mentioned a Mr. Cadman who was the twenty-first child in his family! Left England, went to South Africa and from there came to Canada. Where I now live (cottage rented from Mr. Chuck Jemmett of New Liskeard) is often referred by the older residents of Dawson Point Road as the "old Cadman home" - there is a story that Mr. Cadman was related to the English tea family - with that many brothers and sisters, there's a good possibility!

FOLLOW-UP:

Messrs. Ralph and George Jelly - they went to school with Mr. Walker.

Mr. Mort Mason - was once the manager of McDougall Dairy Farm on the Point.

Mr. Frank Pettit - married the daughter of the Crown Land Agent.

Mrs. Overton on Farah Avenue.

Some of the old folks in Northdale Manor.

Mr. Charlie Reid - his father started Reid's Clothing Store.

Mrs. Boadway - Mrs. Walker's mother.

Mr. Tom Gray

Mr. Frank Cook - in his 80's - used to be a construction foreman.