

TRANSCRIPTION

FL-VC

Interviewer: FRANCESCA LUCIA (FL)

Interviewee: VAL CAREY

Location: VC's House - March 12, 2013 @ 1:30 PM

[1:24:57] Sony Digital Recorder

FL: Where were you born and when?

VC: I was born in Kamloops on September 27th 1940.

FL: And where did you grow up? Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences growing up?

VC: Well I grew up in Walhachin. A great place to grow up in. A historical town. I grew up in a family that had a social conscience. My grandfather was fired from the Southern Pacific Railway for agitating for a day off a week. They could have two hours off on Sunday if they went to church. So he eventually got fired and blacklisted. And so my family was always concerned about peace and justice and general goodness in the world. So it's kind of a natural progression that I made from learning about all these things at home to acting on them.

FL: Where else have you lived other than Walhachin and Kamloops?

VC: I've lived in the Cariboo...Canim Lake behind Hundred Mile House and then my ex-husband and I went...he went pipelining and making lots of money. And we were all across western Canada you know just, stop and he'd work there for a while and we'd move on so we lived in every province. Except Saskatchewan is a little bit of a cheat because we lived in the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster. And then I ended up in Calgary and that's where my son was born and I lived in Calgary for sixteen years I guess and then back to BC because I don't know if everybody feels the same way I do, but you leave BC you gotta come back.

FL: Mhm.

VC: So I came back in 1978 and then lived in Kamloops until I came back home. (smiles)

FL: Can you describe your educational background for me?

VC: Well when I was divorced I realized I had to do something to make a living for my son and myself and so I went to SAIT in Calgary and I took the library technician program. And then I'd always just taken some other courses too and at one point at Cariboo [College], they let us take

courses and we could have the time off and get an hour off for a course and just make up the hour at the end of the day kind of thing. So I took several courses there. And I believe that life is an education.

FL: Oh yes.

VC: And so what I read is not fiction and what I like to watch...um I don't have TV. (Points to a television that is unplugged and covered) I may have one sitting there but it's a cursed machine, but I like to watch documentary videos and so forth. So I have a real fondness for reality.

FL: Ya and history.

VC: And history. Yes indeed, you bet.

FL: So what first influenced you to work towards peace? You were talking a little bit about your own family history. So did that obviously help you a lot towards that?

VC: Well, yes I think my background very much is what took me in that direction. And my father had fought in World War II and he came back a very changed person and my parents' marriage was over because of what he experienced there had a profound effect on him. And so he wasn't...I didn't live with him but when I finally really got to know my father in 1954, um, I saw things in him that just really blew me away. Like he would never even swat a mosquito. He wouldn't kill anything and so that really made an impression on a fourteen year old girl. And so it's just kind of my whole life was working towards that because I always had a sense of looking for where peace and justice and decency were and hoping that there's a better world somewhere. That's been my whole life. And then when this march took place in Kamloops put on by the Yellowhead Ecological Association to protest Uranium Mining in the North Thompson, I participated in that and then myself and some other people including the Campbell's said, "Let's do this right next time." So we organized a proper marching on the streets, full blown peace walk with speakers and music and so forth and we just kept doing it. And it's still being done! It's really wonderful.

FL: Ya. Every May or April I guess!

VC: Ya it was started um, to coincide with the Easter marches in Europe and then it got changed to somewhere around May Day, somewhere around the first of May but by that time I was no longer involved in the organizing, I just would show up every time.

FL: So how old were you when you first participated in peace activism?

VC: Okay...that would have been um...(Pause). So...'78...um...okay so I guess I must have been just about coming onto being fifty I guess because I was born in 19...no! Wait a minute, wait a minute now let's get this straight! (Laughs)

BOTH: (Laugh)

VC: Math is my strong point as you can see! Um, I was born in...so just about forty not fifty. I cheated myself out of ten years there.

BOTH: (Laugh)

FL: And then how old were you when you were involved in the annual peace walk here in Kamloops?

VC: Um, well that would have been...because that would have been '79. I would have been coming up to forty-nine.

FL: Okay.

VC: Ya.

FL: And did you join alone or with family or friends?

VC: Well there was a group of us that we really felt that we needed to have a peace council from Kamloops and so we did indeed start the Kamloops Shuswap Peace Council that was affiliated with the World Peace Congress. And as part of that I went to the United Nations in 1982 for the second special session on disarmament representing the Kamloops Shuswap Peace Council.

FL: And in what year did the annual walk begin?

VC: Uh the first really well-organized one would have been in 1979. In April of '79.

FL: Okay. And what did you first expect when you first became involved in peace activism in general?

VC: You know I have forgotten one very important thing. In Calgary when I was still living there, the World Peace Council had done a petition on a...to stop the arms race and destroy nuclear weapons. We used to take this petition to downtown Calgary and I remember if we got ten signatures in an afternoon we were pretty happy because we'd get told to go back to Russia. We need those weapons to uh...to keep the Russians at bay you know because they're just waiting to come and take us over and destroy our civilization and all this sort of thing. (Laughs) So you know, it wasn't a real happy thing out there with that petition because so many people were just hostile actually but I knew in my heart that that was the right thing to do, to do whatever I could for a nuclear weapons free zone in the whole world and it seems like it's just farther away than ever right now.

FL: Um can you recall some of your first impressions of the peace walk?

VC: Uh ya. Ya we were really pleased at how many people came out. You know, we did a lot of work organizing, work to get people out and we were quite relieved and pleased to see how many people did come out and lots of them were people we didn't know. So that was one of

them. And just the sense of happiness and excitement at seeing people walking in the streets and saying, "No more war" and "End nuclear weapons" and these sorts of things was really quite exciting.

FL: So it was really like a community effort then?

VC: Ya, ya.

FL: That's wonderful.

VC: And there's one fellow...that wasn't the first one, it was further on. His name is Roger Jones and he would sing at our peace walk. And I remember one peace walk, Roger hadn't come and it was his time to be on the stage and he hadn't come. And next time there he was all excited and said, "My son was born on peace walk day."

FL: Wow!

VC: Ya, that was kind of neat.

FL: Ya, that's really special. (Pause) So what perceptions did you have of the peace movement before you joined and did that change at all over time after you were involved?

VC: Well, I could...I could see that peace movement was just...this round of the peace movement because it's been around for a very long time, a really long time and it was wonderful to see it developing and see it building and growing. And we were kind of on the ground floor and having been involved in that petition in Calgary, you know, and seeing the change between when people were telling us to go back to Russia and in Kamloops here, people were coming out on the streets and each peace walk got bigger and bigger. I actually thought we might be really making a big difference and of course we did make a difference but we didn't achieve some of the goals like stopping the production of nuclear weapons. And the military industrial complex today is stronger than ever and it's bleeding especially the people of the United States dry and my heart goes out to those people that their tax money goes to the awful things that go on around the world.

FL: What elements of the peace movement existed in this region?

VC: Um (Pause). Well there was kind of a growing church peace movement. The United Church was very much involved in the peace walk, the United Church in Kamloops. Later on Catholics became involved as well so, so the religious community certainly, not all of them to any stretch of the imagination (laughs)...but many of them were having a concern too because at this point in the early eighties things didn't look good. And also the understanding of what the construction of these horrible weapons and some of the ones possibly coming up was just something totally unacceptable and especially unacceptable to women who had children and women's children very often...(interruption) well usually, all children are women's children!

BOTH: (Laugh)

VC: It's just that that's who suffers the most from war are the young people. They either actually go and participate in the war or very often are the victims of war. Well of course they're both victims of war even the people that are marching or whatever they're doing now...I guess they don't march anymore, I guess we ride around a lot. But it's a ghastly thing to see...to see your...you know to have fear for your children having to participate in the kind of nightmare that war is. So I think that's one reason that women have really led the way in the peace movement right along and always have. You know, when you look back in Ancient Greece, and I can't remember all the details but maybe you and all your history...when the women refused to go to bed with their husbands until they got back from the war... until they stopped making war. So women have always been at the center of the peace movement.

FL: Oh ya. (Pause) Can you walk me through a typical day during your involvement in the peace movement?

VC: Ah well, it just depends what was happening. When we were organizing the peace walk, there was lots of time spent on the telephone. Lots of time producing materials and making posters and...(pause)...contacting the press and you know, making the arrangements. Of course the work was always shared. For instance, the music at the peace walk was organized most of the time by Jeffery Saunders, who still lives in Kamloops. It was great to have him because all I had to do was phone him up and say, "Okay Jeffery, it's time for the peace walk!" And he'd get busy and he'd get the musicians organized. So it'd be a really busy time, but there was always something to do. One year, I think it was an anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki and we participated in the World Wide Shadow Project, which during the night we took stencils we had made and white wash and we drew with the white wash, we made shadows on the sidewalks and various other places in town because of course when the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima, one notable thing was people were vaporized but just before they were vaporized, they left a shadow. And so that Shadow Project was like I say, a global event to remind people of the danger of nuclear weapons.

FL: Ya. (Pause) How long have you been a part of peace activism looking back today?

VC: Hmm. Well you know, it's always been a concern for me but the first thing I did was in '76 I guess it was in Calgary. Was that petition....the Stockholm Appeal...I've forgotten the name of it...the Stockholm Appeal, and it was a World Peace Council Project that people all over the world signed.

FL: Wow! (Pause) What kinds of work did you do other than what you'd do in your typical day, like organizing and calling? What other things would you do part of the movement?

VC: Well, you know, we'd talk to everybody who'd listen! (Laughs)

FL: Ya! (Laughs)

VC: ...(Laughs) And many who wouldn't! And because it's the foremost thing in your mind because of the fear that we all experienced. Now, I was born in 1940 so I grew up during the McCarthy era and the first round of the arms race. I remember we actually had to go under our desks in the little old Walhachin School here. But my grandmother would reassure me and she would say, "Don't worry," she said, "once anyone looks down at Walhachin from a plane, they'll see that it's already bombed! So you're completely safe!" So I thought that was kind of an interesting comfort! (Laughs)

BOTH: (Laugh)

VC: But that always...you carried that around wherever you went and for the years I was married, I kind of dropped out of everything and just kind of focused on being married, but always it was there. Always, this knowledge of what war does and the costs of war to the people, especially the children, the cost of war to society and of course as later came on, the connection with the environmental movement was natural.

FL: Oh ya. Did your involvement change at all over time? In what ways and why?

VC: I just started doing less and then when I moved out to Walhachin, then I just...I didn't do any organizing or anything, I just would go every year. I was kind of burnt out because I was involved in other activism as well so...

FL: Oh of course.

VC: ...because that's what my life was...my son and me. And he went to more meetings and he got to go to all demonstrations and everything and my life was very much wrapped up in change and the women's movement was also really big for me too because my grandmother had been one of those silly women who thought it was a good idea for women to vote and have equal rights with men!

FL: Oh so silly right? (Laughs)

VC: Ya! (Laughs)

FL: What in your view was the purpose of the annual walk in your region?

VC: The annual walk was to help make...to help create awareness of the reality of what was going on in the world like Ronald Reagan was for example, the biggest example...was not just a stupid movie star. He was a puppet of the military industrial complex. I remember fairly early on, I saw a film in which President Eisenhower...well he was no longer president, he was done his term and where he warned his people against military industrial complex. That they would be costing far too much and I forget his exact words but you can find that on the computer I'm sure. You know, "every gun that's built is stealing from children," and that sort of thinking. So the

military industrial complex is so deeply a part of what's going on in the world because the only way they can make money is by having wars. And you know, if you're at peace and all countries are at peace with each other, it's gonna be a heck of a lot harder to convince people to be armed to the teeth and allow the, um for example, the Pentagon to pay three-hundred dollars for a toilet seat because that's the kind of thing they do. It's very inflated money that's tax payers' money in the States and of course Canada has a role in the arms race too. So this is all...you know, this is all takes from the people who pay the taxes and whose labour goes into supporting the system and it's stolen from them to make weapons to kill all over the world.

FL: Ya, it's hard to think about. (Pause) Did you have family members in the movement with you?

VC: Uh not really because I was the only one from my family living in Kamloops but my family certainly was all...because we all learned the same thing right? They all had a varying degree of activity in the peace movement from just going to peace walks to doing some organizing work in various places in BC.

FL: So everyone did their own thing then?

VC: Ya.

FL: Did you make friends during your involvement and can you recall any particular friendships and how they began?

VC: Oh my goodness! Oh my goodness! Ya!

FL: A trip down memory lane!

VC: Ya! Um, you just can't help but [make friends]. And you know, you meet...you go to these peace conferences, we'd go down to Vancouver to these things and meet people from all over the province who were also of the same mind.

(Interruption - VC's cat jumped on the table and tried to drink my chocolate milk)

VC: Crusier! Cruiser! (She motions for her cat to come down)

FL: Hey! That's not yours! (Laughs)

(Back to interview question)

VC: ...And uh, it's just natural that you know, you're going to make friends because you're working together for a better world and you just can't help but make connections and make friends and especially in the earlier days because it wasn't that popular of a cause at first, and it was these peace walks both ours in Kamloops and huge peace walks in Vancouver and in other places that did this awareness. When I went to New York in 1982 there was between 700,000

and a million people in the streets. It was incredible! There was people from all over the world. There was people that had walked from...there was some Buddhist monks that had walked from Washington State all the way to New York. There was a couple that had walked from New Brunswick to New York. I met people from Japan. I met a man whose left side was all in scars from being exposed to uh, the Hiroshima bomb. So ah! I met amazing people. When we went to New York, we stayed in...there was..."Performing Artists for..."...I can't remember exactly the name of it now...my seventy-two year old brain here. Uh, but we stayed in their apartments and their studios and so we met these amazing people, and just met people from all over the world because this was a worldwide movement. And it still is, it's just on a little different level now but I'm just seeing 2013 as being the year of big change.

FL: Wow!

VC: I just felt that when the year was shifting over, I just said, "This is going to be a remarkable year!"

FL: Ya well hopefully!

VC: Yes! If we give good energy and good vibes and maybe...because the people in the world have had enough of war and corruption and dictatorships, torture, and so forth and so...

FL: Well together a change can be made right?

VC: Absolutely. We are the ones we've been waiting for as we used to say but that's still very valid. We are the ones we've been waiting for.

FL: So did you socialize with other participants outside the movement as well and if so what sorts of things did you do?

VC: Oh ya. Um, well um, I just had a big variety of friends. So we would go over to the pub for some beers or I'd go and hang out at people's houses and just have fun because everybody's got to have fun.

FL: Even when you're fighting for peace. (Laughs)

VC: Oh very much so, ya because it's a very heavy knowledge that you get because once you first start getting involved, then you got to educate yourself and that it a scary education to see just what sort of weapons there are and to see just how brutal those who think it is okay to have war, just how brutal they are. You know, they may be fine with their children and rock them to sleep at night but um...but...(Pause)

FL: Well you can't remain oblivious to all those things.

VC: Ya. People who make war are brutal people because war is the most brutal thing there is and always has been.

FL: Did you feel your involvement was essential to the peace activism?

VC: Well you know, you get...it's not because you think you have all the answers or anything. You just get the feeling that something has to be done and you know you really got to do what you can and...and...because it's absolutely vital. You know especially looking at my son and thinking about his future and you know, is his future to be incinerated under a nuclear holocaust? Is that his future? Or his future a future of a world that's loving and caring and lives cooperatively and like so many cultures and religions as well have this as their goal. It's a much better world however they're planning to get to it might be different but this is really, this is really the goal of so many, so many people on this planet. A world where your children can grow up and be educated and be happy and live productive lives and don't have to live under the shadow of a mushroom cloud.

FL: Did any political or government issues and decisions affect you personally and how did you react to them?

VC: Hm, I got to think about this one. (Pause) Hm...well through my activism, I found out before I ever even came to Kamloops that there are those who work for the government who keep track of people like me. And I know that my phone was tapped.

FL: Wow...

VC: And I'd seen the men with the little cameras and the shiny brown shoes and so forth in the demonstrations taking pictures of people so you knew who those people were. So it certainly...I know there's a file on me in Ottawa but if that's the price that you pay for doing what's right in your heart and your soul and what is absolutely fundamental to do, then that just goes with the territory kind of thing. So it's...I guess the impact on my life really more than anything else was that my life was really focused on that and that I had a great kid who went with his mom and so I wasn't torn between motherhood and activism because my son was right there with me.

FL: Can you describe any changes that happened during your involvement and did these changes in any way affect your experience, job, education?

VC: Well, changes...Of course the most exciting changes was as time went by and then movement grew and grew and grew, it was stunning. It was amazing after that...we had our peace walk generally on the same day as the Vancouver one and the first thing we wanted to do in the evening was turn on the TV...I had TV at the time...turn on the TV and see what had happened in Vancouver because there would be hundreds of thousands of people over there. It was amazing and it was very inspiring. But the people in Kamloops were inspiring too, believe me! And to see more and more people coming and then, you know, seeing these younger people with their little ones and then now seeing those little ones marching in that walk - it's just absolutely lovely, you know the next generation is carrying the torch. And let it be soon, let it be soon. I would like to see big change before it's my turn to go on to the next place.

FL: Well, 2013 maybe!

VC: (Laughs) Well ya, I'm doing everything I can from my end here to see really big change taking place. Earth Day is coming up and I'm hoping that Earth Day will be a day to remember. (Pause) I don't know if I answered your question or not! I'm afraid I get talking and I just go!

BOTH: (Laugh)

FL: No, it followed it quite closely. Um, how the changes affected you, so obviously it did!

VC: And then to see the Gorbachev situation. You know um, I know that there are people for whatever reason, don't recognize what Gorbachev did and I just have great admiration for him and he just seems so different from Ronald Reagan and from the others too. He had a different way from approaching things and he wanted to see a more cooperative world, a more cooperative country in his country and a more cooperative world and to see an end especially to the amount of money that's taken from the people that goes into the military. And actually there was a whole bunch of military factories under his tutelage. A whole bunch of military factories were converted to making sewing goods. One...I remember one in particular was some sort of military production and they started producing baby buggies and I thought, "Hey! Now we're talking! Now we're talking!"

FL: (Laughs)

VC: And meantime, Ronald Reagan is going after the Star Wars and we fought that tooth and nail and we thought we won but looking at things that have happened, I don't think we did win at all. I think the beam weapons are up there in space. There's a lot of military satellites up there.

FL: Lots, ya.

VC: And I would not be the least bit surprised if there's beam weapons like just exactly what he had wanted. And in meantime Gorbachev was saying, you know, let's figure out a way to live together, let's get rid of all this military stuff and let's find some way to live together.

FL: He was a very active leader.

VC: Ya. He was really fabulous. I really admired him. A lot of people in his country didn't like him and a lot of people in this part of the world didn't like him, but he was my hero that's for sure.

FL: Can you describe what it was like to be a peace activist?

VC: It's a lot of work but you can't not do it. Once you know what the world is really like and once you understand the role of the military industrial complex, you cannot help but be an activist. And it's the same with other things, with the environmental movement. Once you understand what danger we're in, you cannot help but be an activist in some way or another and

some people are more driven than others. I was one of the driven ones but some people are more driven than others but that's good because we need everybody to be involved whether they...like now I just go, I don't do anything for it, I just go. And I, because I believe that this really belongs to the young. This is their world and we really need them to be working for peace. When I see all the young folks at the peace walk, it just brings a tear to my eyes. It's beautiful. Especially the ones that were in their little baby buggies when I first started! (Laughs)

FL: (Laughs) Ya, and they're still continuing.

VC: Ya, ya.

FL: Can you recall anything about gender roles in the peace movement?

VC: Well it's usually been pretty reasonable actually. I don't know if it's because of the large number of women that participated but it never seemed to be an issue. Maybe it was in other places. Maybe we just got lucky in Kamloops. I don't know but it seemed to be a place where there was respect for women and recognition of women's roles. And I don't know, I think maybe I'm looking at the world through rose coloured glasses. I've been accused of doing that, but in my experience I never really felt that discrimination in that situation...of course you'd see it in other places but...and it's still there but in the peace movement it seemed to be that everybody just understood that in order to be involved in the peace movement you need to be a peaceful person and if you have to battle gender discrimination then it's kind of hard. So I think, you know...I've never thought about that before but ya that was a big plus in the peace movement was that women were honoured and respected for their major contributions.

FL: Ya. It's a lot easier to work towards peace too when you have that.

VC: Ya, that's for sure.

FL: Were there different ages and nationalities in the movement?

VC: Oh my yes, yes. We'd have little kids doing things and have them making their own little signs and so there'd be every age...every age and right up the way to old folks. It was just great. And I met people from all sorts of cultures in the larger peace movement. As I said, I met people from Japan. I met a woman who had been in the firebombing of Tokyo. And so the peace movement was something that just seems to concern all sort of folks. In Kamloops, we had people come and sing. There was a really wonderful singer from Bonaparte Reserve named Brian Garland and he and his wife Hilda Norton came and they sang several times at our peace walk. So uh...we had a woman survivor of the Hiroshima bombings come and speak to us, come up from Vancouver and speak to us one year...uh, so it is something that touches everybody.

FL: That's wonderful. (Pause) Who were the people who had the strongest impact on you during your time in the movement and why?

VC: Hm...that's an interesting question. Hm. Well certainly the Campbell family played such a large role and really good at focusing things and so they played a really big role in my life. And then I'd meet people at these conferences and also meeting people in New York at the UN Second Special Session on Disarmament and when you're in this movement, you're influenced by everybody else because once...what you do when you get together, you talk about peace. You talk about how you're going to get there. You even talk about how you got here and now so it's an all encompassing thing.

FL: (Pause) What were your relations like with other participants and leaders in the movement?

VC: Well you know there was some of the usual politics...organizational politics that happens, you know that comes with the territory. Although I think that in so many cases, people said, okay we have differences but we've got something in common and so let's focus on this and accept each other's differences and you know, it...I think it was a pretty basic part of the movement although there would be these little struggles and so forth taking place. But as someone once said, nothing is ever won without struggle and so there certainly were struggles taking place. There were some in the peace movement that seemed to see it more as a kind of...oh a bit of a fun thing to do and somehow it didn't get the seriousness out of it. But I'll tell you one thing, being involved in a peace movement gives you like a whole bunch of new things to do. I never thought I would ever be interviewed on the radio right? And do a...be on a...you know on the TV and we had a TV show, the Kamloops Shuswap Peace Council Presents on channel 10 and we had that for several years and so I got to be involved in production of a TV show. So like a big variety of things to do! Helping to make signs and I'm not much of an artist...well I always hope someone would come along and do some pictures...I'll do some letters and you do some pictures! (Laughs)

FL: (Laughs) Ya.

VC: So you'd simply just get exposed to all sorts of things but as far as the human relationships are concerned or like human relationships everywhere else and the thing that brings us together is the focus and that's peace and disarmament and a safe and beautiful world.

FL: Of course, definitely. There'll always be differences but you had that one thing in common.

VC: Right on, ya.

FL: Can you recall, um any conflicts at all?

VC: Um, ya but you know, I prefer not to focus on those because it's all part of the struggle and we were absolutely we were all on the same side. No question about it. And so these things just kind of come when you have a group of people working together so those I don't, I don't really like to focus on those. I like to focus on the positives because overall it was so incredibly positive.

FL: Especially to hear about the turn outs!

VC: Ya. Ya and to see us plugging away in Kamloops and to know that we're part of a whole world wide movement and on this day all over the world, people are getting together to say we want peace, we want an end to the arms race and then I remember we went down to one peace conference in Vancouver and you could see the peace movement was really starting to come together with the environmental movement and there was a group of young people around signing people up to a new party, the Green party. And although I never even joined the Green party but uh these, you know...these young people really brought the awareness of the environmental issue to us and so we started instead of walk for peace we became walk for peace and the environment. And it's really all in one anyway because the effects of the military industrial complex on the environment are even easier to see now than they were then.

FL: Mhm. (Pause) What kind of impact did peace activism have on the Kamloops community and the surrounding regions?

VC: Well hopefully we raised awareness and I do believe we did because so many people are kind of soothed by the, what I call the "brainwashing machine in the living room," and there isn't even today...well it's probably worse than ever today but when you know...the news media gave us good coverage in Kamloops, always did and then we had the cable company come and shoot it and then we'd run the whole thing on Channel 10 and so ya, the awareness. If we hadn't done that - oh I can't imagine not having done that - but if we hadn't done that, I think that things would have been different in Kamloops and there wouldn't have been the awareness that there is now so that...I hope that's the answer to your question! Is it answering your question?

FL: Ya no, it does! Yes!

VC: Okay good.

FL: Yes. It definitely explains how it has impacted, I mean considering that you have an annual movement that's still going on.

VC: That's still going on ya.

FL: So it definitely has a lasting impact.

VC: Ya.

FL: Do you have any sense on how the community viewed the movement?

VC: Well it's really interesting because there were two attitudes. You know, there was the one side that saw us as a bunch of kind of kooky people who didn't realize how important it was to have a good army and all this sort of stuff. I forget what we were demonstrating one day, picketing something and this guy came along and he said, (changes her voice) "Well, I fought the Russians in World War II." And he was quite annoyed with us and then we he left right and we

started thinking, "Wait a minute. Who fought the Russians in World War II?! It was the Russians who were on our side so who is this guy?!" (Laughs)

FL: (Laughs) Ya!

VC: But uh, ya that always was there, this idea that we needed to protect ourselves...*protect ourselves* (really emphasizes this). That was always there. But, there were so many more people who would just say on the street, "Thank you for doing this." And I'm sure I'm not the only one at all who experienced that. We just didn't know what to do and that's one of the things that happen if you have something that people can see and participate in. They can then help overcome their fears and feel empowered by participating. So I think that's one of the real major contributions of the peace movement all over the world, is the empowering of people to not be afraid that that plane will...(Pause) because when I was a little kid, you'd see a plane going over and was that plane carrying nuclear weapons? Because they were! There were planes that flew right over here that were armed with nuclear weapons.

FL: And as a child you shouldn't be worried about that. I mean as a person, as a human being, you shouldn't be worrying about that.

VC: But you couldn't help it because it was everywhere. Even in school, like I was saying, having us go under the desk in a little one room school out in the middle of nowhere. (Laughs) So the awareness was everywhere.

FL: Ya.

VC: And so empowerment was really quite vital.

FL: What about no, what do you think um...do you have any sense what the community now thinks of the movement?

VC: Well from...of course I don't live in Kamloops anymore and haven't for a while but when I go there for the peace walk, a lot of people come! And they're all ages and there kind of a variety of sort of socioeconomic backgrounds and what have you so I think its uh, you know, it's a unifying thing with something that awareness is right through the community. All levels, all social levels, so.

FL: What perception do you have of the annual peace walk today?

VC: Well I just go and I just sit there and being (Laughs)...hey it's still happening, right on! Although my walking isn't as good as it used to be because of arthritis so I don't walk. I go to the rally and cheer on the folks as they're heading out on the walk and...

FL: But you're a participant nonetheless!

VC: Oh ya. Ya, I'm there! And it's always so exciting to see them coming up the street and hearing the people chanting and all those great old slogans..."Hell No! We Won't Go!" and all those great things.

FL: Thinking back now, how significant was your involvement in the movement in your life?

VC: Oh well it absolutely defined my life there's just no question whatsoever. My career partially had a big influence on my life because being someone who loves knowledge and learning and books and so on, that was certainly part of my life, but the peace movement had a very large impact on my life and I learned so much from it and I got to meet so many amazing people and to see, to see some pretty shocking things, but to get a really good perspective on what the world was really about and who was doing what to us because war is about profit and it's about not caring who lives or dies and especially children and especially women and young men, you know standing young men. And now in Canada, young women...I suppose it's true everywhere, but I remember when the first woman soldier died in Afghanistan, I was just horrified, I was just weeping, I was just shocked. This wasn't what we were talking about. We were talking about equality, because I was involved in women's movement too. We were talking about equality we weren't talking about women going to war and I was so shocked when she was, when she was killed. Just really hit me hard.

FL: Ya...(Pause) Have your feelings about peace activism changed in any way over the years and if so how?

VC: You know, I don't think so. I think the same basic things are still there. The important stuff of activism, the important stuff of getting people to see the reality of life because on that thing there, (points to her covered and unplugged television) on the TV and in the newspapers and most of the daily media, you don't see the reality and so the peace movement just opened doors all over the place to be able to see the reality of war and the reality of the world and looking back at history as well and seeing how war apparently came with the patriarchy and the oppression of women. So uh, ya it's something that's so much part of every part of a person's life.

FL: When did your involvement in peace activism end...if it did? (Laughs)

VC: Well...it cranked down let's say! (Laughs) It rolled back. I mean my heart's still there but I don't organize anything anymore and I'm very glad that someone else does. I'm very thankful for those that do. I admire them and I'm so grateful to them. So it was just kind of slow sort of backing off and you know, hoping other people were going to be doing it. So I can't remember what year...the last year I was involved in organizing the peace walk but you know, it was a nice transition to other people taking it and making it happen and I'm just really, really happy with Kamloops and the fact that good people there have kept that going.

FL: Ya, well hopefully it continues!

VC: Sure. God I mean, we've been going this long we might as well just keep right on...

FL: just keep going!

VC:...going until we get what we want! And that may be very soon. I'm hoping, I'm hoping.

FL: What is your most prominent memory of your time as a peace activist?

VC: Oh wow, so many things!

FL: I was going to say, take your time!

VC: Holy cow! Um, well it was pretty cool going to New York because we were in a group and I couldn't join them right away but they came to Kamloops and so I realized that I really had to go and so I was able to get some time off work and I met them in Toronto but they had meanwhile they'd been going right across the country. And we uh, we then I remember we went to Ottawa and it was great. We went to parliament buildings and singing peace songs (pause - gets a little emotional)...ah...oh I'm getting a little choked up about this because it was so wonderful!

FL: Oh!

VC: But uh, we had two young Doukhobor women with us and they sang like angels and we had a young man who played the guitar and we had it on leaflets and we had little kids come. There was a group of school kids, must have been eight or nine and they came and we sang for them and we gave them all leaflets and it was just really amazing. And then we went to Montreal for six days, we stayed at McGill and participated in a peace walk there and then we went to New York and every day there was something going on. It was just amazing. We went to an evening honoring Helen Caldicott, the Australian peace activist and Meryl Streep was the host for the evening and there was people singing, there was a film and it was really, really amazing. And um, it was not...it wasn't that long after John Lennon was shot I guess as I think about it now because the taxi driver... (Pause) Gee is that timing all right? It must be, but I remember the taxi driver saying, "That's the Dakota Apartments where John Lennon was shot."

FL: Wow.

VC: And the day of the peace march was amazing. We were to be at this certain place near the UN Building at ten o'clock in the morning and we were in the international section and so there were lots and lots of people. It was quite amazing. We took the subway over and then we went to our place and we were in the front, the international section was in the front so we started out and we walked through New York to Central Park and the police were awesome. There were Japanese people survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and they had made leis made out of the cranes, the origami cranes and they were putting them on the police, around their necks and the police were wearing them. It was just beautiful. There was a small group of people who said uh, something...they were very anti-peace and they were warning us against the godless communists

and so forth but the police kept them away and just kept them moving back. It was quite an experience. Then we got to Central Park about three thirty, four in the afternoon. So we walked, you know much of the day and then watching the people coming in was just...we had no idea how big this thing was until we saw the people kept coming, and coming, and coming. And at one point I needed some more film for my camera and I had to go to several shops - camera shops in order to get film because all the film had been bought. We shut down New York City the whole day. It was AMAZING! (says in a low whisper) Absolutely amazing.

FL: It must've been amazing to be a part of.

VC: Oh, oh...I get... (Begins to tear up and laughs)

FL: (Laughs) You're making me get emotional with just picturing everything! It's wonderful!

VC: Oh it was. It was just incredible and just you know the whole thing of instead of feeling scared and being alienated from your neighbours, you get involved and then you become empowered and it makes a huge difference in how you look at life. But ya I would say New York was probably the high point. Although it was always pretty exciting you know in Kamloops to see how many people were coming out and we would get a thousand people. I think we even had more than a thousand a couple of times so that was...the peace walk was always the highlight of the year but I think New York was probably the best. It was pretty neat. We got to, we a got a little bit of shock in the general assembly because we were all...anyone who was representing a non-governmental organization which the World Peace Council was um got to sit in the general assembly in the visitors' gallery. And we met all these amazing people from Japan and like the man who had his left side all scarred from the bombing was a poet, he was oh...he was amazing. Then the Japanese Ambassador to the UN gets up and a does a real militaristic speech and we were just felt like deflated balloons. We were so disappointed because the Japanese that were there were so wonderful and beautiful and wanted peace so desperately and they were pretty disappointed in their ambassador too that he was making this militaristic speech.

FL: Oh ya.

VC: So that was a shocker (Laughs).

FL: Doesn't seem like that place to do that (Laughs).

VC: Ya, ya.

FL: What is your most positive memory of your work?

VC: Oh my goodness.

FL: There's obviously lots of positives in the prominent memories.

VC: Ya you know, there's certainly...it's a positive thing to do and of course you run into the usual organizational politics and but overall...my goodness I think the most positive thing was just seeing how people started saying, "Ya, we gotta do something here. Ya this is serious. This is something that could wipe life out on our planet." And to see those people responding was just really exciting.

FL: Wow. Well those are all the questions that I have. So is there anything else that you'd like to add?

VC: Hmm, well I can talk for hours of course! (Laughs)

FL: Go on! I like to procrastinate from my homework!

BOTH: (Laugh)

VC: Um, just really to say that the people do want peace and they always have and even you know, even when people find themselves conscripted or feel some sort of obligation to go to war, um...just people would as soon not have that happen and except for some kind of militaristic kind of people I think that most people would rather see the huge amount of money that's poured into military spending go into education and childcare and looking after old folks and whatever needs to be done in this society rather than all that money going into production of something that really has no function.

FL: Ya.

VC: Even military people. You know, we had a film that we used to show people showing prominent military people saying nuclear weapons are not war fighting weapons. Nuclear weapons are just all about annihilation and these people spoke for....these military people admirals and people like that spoke really, really strongly against these kinds of weapons of mass destruction. Absolutely.

FL: And this is in the film?

VC: Ya there was...I just was trying to remember the names of some of these people. Well-known military people um...and they would pop up in a lot of the films that we had actually because we would show films on the TV show and or you know sometimes we'd interview people and what have you but often we did show a film and it would just really blow you away to see the people that you would think would be all in favour of nuclear weapons being very opposed to them. Of course they thought that you know we should have aircraft carriers and bombers and all that sort of thing but that there shouldn't be nuclear weapons and we saw that as kind of the nuclear weapons as the place to start in disarming the world.

FL: Ya.

VC: But the world's not very disarmed right now!

FL: No definitely not.

VC: And it's up to the people to just say put down your guns and let's just convert all this stuff because with the factories like that one they did in Russia. Converted it from making weapons to making baby buggies. You know it makes a lot more sense to make baby buggies than it does to make weapons.

FL: Ya. I can only imagine that feeling of finding something like that out and wow.

VC: Ya. Ya so if the world doesn't get changed pretty quick I don't feel all that optimistic about its future because things are warming up pretty badly. We just had a winter where I burnt my stove over night only two nights.

FL: Wow.

VC: Only two nights and you know, in a normal winter I'd have the fire going all night. At a certain time of year you wouldn't even need to worry about having kindling because you're going to have your fire going all the time and this year I had it going only two nights and Australia's on fire and remember last year Russia was burning and the ice is melting and yet they continue to build weapons of mass destruction and who knows what's up there (points upward at sky). And the drones, now that the President of the United States has okayed drones for use in the United States so and there's another example of military industrial complex. It's my belief that he is, the president of the United States is probably a pretty good guy but he has no choice whatsoever, none. He has no choice but to do what the military industrial complex wants him to.

FL: Ya.

VC: Oh there's my neighbour!

(Pause - VC's neighbour came by to chat with her quickly, so there was about a five minute pause in the interview)

VC: It's you know, when you look at it without knowing the depth of the control of the corporate side of the United States and especially, ESPECIALLY the military industrial complex then you think the guy must be totally out to lunch but he's not. And I heard someone saying on CBC Radio who had interviewed Michelle Obama and she had said that...this was before he was elected...that there wouldn't be much change made with him as president but what was really, really vital was to have a Black person as the President of the United States and she's absolutely right because he has not been able to and he was a community activist and the things he's doing are not the things that community activists do but he just doesn't get to do anything else and that's really disturbing that our governments are so controlled by the corporations and especially the military production corporations. That it's an abomination! That's a pretty strong word I know but it is.

FL: (Laughs)

VC: But it is. It's an abomination. And most religions really do believe in loving your neighbour and there's always these factions that don't look at it that way but mostly um most of the great teachers of all time were teaching about peace and love, is what it comes down to so...ya. It's very satisfying looking back and seeing you know that all this work that so many people did and we not only did lots of work and spent lots of time we also dug into our pockets. We all did.

FL: Of course ya.

VC: Dug into our pockets so that you know we would have money for buying things and renting things and so forth and it's a complete commitment. So the peace movement is continuing and is blossoming and when you look at the Arab Spring and when you see the people rising up all over the world and the wonderful One Billion Rising that happened on February 14th with all women all over the world dancing for an end to violence against women. Because that's part of the whole thing, it's that kind of violence is part of the patriarchy and war is extremely patriarchal. There's a case when there's a woman who likes making war, Maggie Thatcher. In my involvement in the women's liberation movement, there were women who said that, "Well all we have to do is elect women and everything's going to be fine!" And I'd say, "No! Not at all." That's not what it is about. What it is about is eliminating the patriarchal relations and having real equality and so people don't need to be afraid and step back and let war happen. My mother told me, an interesting thing. She lived with me the last five years of her life in Kamloops and I asked her once about the...because often students would come for materials on the treatment on the Japanese especially in British Columbia and she said uh...I said well, "How did people let that happen?" And she said, "We were scared. We were afraid." And you know, helping the students find their materials and look at the old microfilm newspapers and there you see the propaganda in the papers and the genuine hatred that was represented there. And that's you know that's how you can get people to go to war is by giving the impression that there's these others...there's these other weird people and that's all they want to do is come take everything away from us.

FL: The others being the key word.

VC: Yes you betcha. And so people were rejoicing when bombs were dropped on civilian populations and not all people but a lot of people. And it was not necessary at all because Japan was on the edge of surrender but they had to test them. They tested two bombs, two different kinds of bombs on two different kinds of environments and that was the most incredible war crime, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that no one has ever been brought to account for.

FL: Ya.

VC: But they generally get away. The war mongers generally get away with it. You know, when you look at Nazi Germany sure they put a few people on trial but there was a lot more people that should have been on trial but they were over here helping working on the space project and

they were in various other countries with scientists and so forth who were convinced Nazis and so what so many countries did was they went and said, "come to us" and just speared them out and they never had to answer. I have a personal thing in that because I was interested in space travel when I was a kid.

FL: I think we all are when we were kids!

BOTH: (Laugh)

VC: Ya oh ya and one of my heroes was Wernher von Braun and we were given the impression that this pure scientist he only joined the Nazi party because if he wanted to work in the space program he had to be a Nazi and the guy was a convinced Nazi as you find out later. You know, it's really unfortunate that the spin doctors are always so busy on our news that the news is anything but because you only see part of it. You never see it all and you have to go digging around to get the rest and I just wish people would say, "alright, hey I'm not going to watch the news on TV anymore I'm going to find somewhere else to get my news." And there's lots of places on the internet as much as I'm kind of a novice at it but there's lots of other information there and small publications and there's a Canadian magazine that I support and subscribe to, *Canadian Dimension* and it looks at change in the world and of course peace has always been a part of their publication. They're published in Winnipeg and uh a really excellent publication but you will not see it on a newsstand anywhere because most newsstands especially those that distribute these things aren't interested in distributing that sort of information. They rather give you *Maclean's* and *Time* and that kind of thing. So as people get their eyes opened and hopefully when Obama is no longer president, he'll do what Eisenhower did. He'll speak up because Eisenhower spoke up on the military industrial complex in a very passionate speech. Very much worth listening to and he was the head of European Operations during World War II. He was a general. He was a military man and yet he could see what was coming and now of course it is here and there's war everywhere and I suppose it's only a matter of time until it's here too I don't know but hopefully 2013 can be the change. Hopefully that'll tip us into saving ourselves instead of being sacrificed to the altar of profits and militarism.

FL: Well, is there anything else that you'd like to add about the peace walk in Kamloops?

VC: Well I'm just grateful for the people that keep it going and it's one of the highlights of my year to be able to see that still happening and especially to see the younger people there and really involved and that's where the real hope is, is in the youth. And youth have a good tendency to say, "Hm, I think maybe the old folks have been screwing things up. You know, maybe we can do something different." Not all of them because some of them just want to go and rock 'n' roll and well I've done my share of rock 'n' roll too but rock 'n' roll without the soul as it were but there are those young people who really know what is happening. They really see and...another thing that I'd like to say about the peace movement...

FL: Yes of course.

VC: ...in relation to the Vietnam War and there are people in Kamloops right now who left the United States because of the Vietnam War. We got some great folks in Canada because of that war! (Lots of enthusiasm in voice) People with good soul, good heart, just absolutely wonderful, wonderful people and I'm very grateful that Canada welcomed them in and I'm very angry that they're not welcoming the people who are trying to get out of the States because they joined the army...of course there's no longer conscription...then it was conscription. People didn't have any choice. But they joined the army because they were told that they'd be able to learn a trade and so forth and they wouldn't have to go overseas and then they were lied to and had a horrendous experience in Iraq and it's really...you know, it must be really horrible to know that in World War I, 10 percent of the casualties were civilian. In Iraq 95 percent of the casualties were civilian. And you know they're told, these young men and women now are told that they're going over to make the world a safer place and what do they see but slaughter and just total destruction of the infrastructure of Iraq. I remember seeing on the TV news one night, there was a woman walking through the streets with open sewage running which of course hadn't been running there before the bombings and asking, "Why did you do this to us?" Because now who are the major sufferers now are the civilians and the damage to the soldiers is just horrendous. Seeing what they're doing and seeing what they're participating in and it's dreadful.

FL: It's interesting how people can put the words "war" and "safe" in the same sentence. Like you were just saying, some were sent there to keep them safe. By war?

VC: Yup. I guess so. War to protect us from war! This sort of 1984 thinking you know? The thinking that war is going to protect us from war and I remember my grandson...well it kind of broke my heart but I was telling my grandson how I didn't agree with the war in Afghanistan and he was quite shocked. He said, "Grandma! You know, the Canadian army are over there to help those women! I'm really surprised at you!" And so I just had to say, "Gregory, that's not why they're there at all. They're there for the oil companies. They're not there to do anything for the women." And he kind of shook his head because his side of the family like my daughter-in-law's side of the family has been a military family and my grandchildren went to a military high school in Edmonton. My granddaughter will be graduating this year. Although she wears t-shirts that say "peace" on them and so forth so she hasn't bought into that but my grandson has bought into it. It's kind of hard you know when you see if accepting something like the Canadian army is there to liberate the women (takes a deep breath). Very, very, very heartbreaking to see that happen with someone that you love but that's the reality of the world is there's still a lot of people that think that war is quite fine that's because they've never had to experience it.

FL: Ya.

VC: And it's not very fine at all. I think about my father. He was in North Africa and the Invasion of Sicily and then the Invasion of Italy and he would not talk about it but I went to the military museum in Kamloops just to see what they had there on him because he's been dead for a long time now. And to find out that some of the experiences he had being under artillery

bombardment and aerial bombardment and there you are on the ground with your rifle. And it must've just been absolute nightmare and uh so there is nothing very positive about war no matter how you look at it. And then there's interesting things about war. I gotta throw this one in! This house was built in 1910 and the Bennie family lived here although Mr. Bennie never did come but Ms. Bennie brought her two children and her daughter's name was Isa. It was Isabelle but it was Isa. And there was a man who lived here. He wasn't of the upper classes but he was of the middle class and he was a butcher and a merchant and he had a store. He had the best name. His name was Gordon Muriel Flowerdew. How's that for a beautiful name hey? He was very handsome and the men here were all in the British army so when the war broke out they all went to war. Out of a 107 men in the community, 97 men went to war as did Gordon Flowerdew and he led one of the last cavalry charges in modern warfare at the Battle of Moreuil Wood in France and they...I mean the cavalry doesn't have guns right? And they attacked a machine gun position. A German machine gun position and they actually won the battle and Gordon Flowerdew was mortally wounded and he died the next day and he received the Victoria Cross. And the young woman he corresponded with from France lived in my house.

FL: Wow!

VC: And I sometimes on a summer day, I'll sit out there and I'll imagine Gordon Flowerdew come striding up the walk to take Isabelle Bennie across the way to the ball at the hall and she's buried in Ashcroft. After he died, she married into one of the ranching families here and became sort of the matriarch of the Parks family and I found her grave there last summer. So history is so COOL! (Laughs)

FL: Yes so fascinating!

VC: It is! And when you live in a place like this you know which is...although there's only ten old houses left. When I was a kid everybody lived in an old house. It was really neat. There were people living here that had been part of the British settlement. And we had Paderewski's piano over there in the hall and this woman who was a musician...she wasn't British but she was welcomed into their midst because she was a classically trained musician and she was still here when I was a kid and she would play that piano. It was just really...you can't help but fall in love with history when you live in a place like this.

FL: Oh definitely.

VC: Ya and I hope that at some point we can have some interest from the government in doing something to save what's left of Walhachin. Do you have an interest in this kind of history or is it...

FL: Always! Any history!

VC: Look up on your computer for Cannington Manor.

FL: Okay.

VC: And that's in Saskatchewan and it was a similar idea but it was in the late eighteenth hundreds. And the way I found out about Cannington Manor was I was taking people through the museum there [Walhachin] and this one guy said, "Well that sounds just like Cannington Manor." And he said, "this floor makes me..." because we have a beautiful floor over there..."it makes me think of the floor in this old building that we used to find way out we'd go through the wheat fields and we'd see these old buildings and this one building had a floor just like this." And he said that roof was caving in and that's been made a historic park and they saved a lot of the buildings and once we get world peace then let's get this town...because there's this house here has been really terribly changed too (points out the window to a house nearby). It's got stucco on the outside and it was clapboard but underneath there is still the clapboard and that house should be saved. And we need to restore our hall over here that we've turned into a museum. And the school that I went to from grade 1 to grade 8 was part of the British Settlement. You know it's so cool. Like we knew all this when we were kids hey? So it was really quite great. And then people who had relatives here and so forth they'd come and drive through and I have a photograph of my brother chatting with somebody because he was a real car freak hey? Chatting with somebody in a...it was a Rolls Royce. So it was someone from the upper classes had come to see this community that...it's fascinating. The Walhachin story is so fascinating because it was an American that started it, if you can imagine that, but he had a great fondness for the British upper classes and he knew that there were these people trying to find places to put their second subsequent sons because they would get nothing naturally. The first son is the one that gets the estate and so he went to the British Columbia Development Association in London proposing this as a settlement for what is known as a remittance man and we had a beautiful hotel here. Just beautiful. Big beams and you had to be dressed in the proper upper class. Like you and I wouldn't have been able to go into that hotel. (Laughs) Like no way! And then I don't know exactly how it happened...Nelson Riis' master's thesis on Walhachin said that someone went to court and anyways however it happened, there was one room a beverage room that the whole employees could go in but that didn't get them into anywhere else. And they built the hotel in 1910 and they tore it down in 1920 and people ask me at the museum, "Why did they tear it down?" And the only thing I can think of is that was theirs. That was theirs. They didn't want anyone else in there. That was theirs and they tore it down. But it's a great story.

END [1:24:57]