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Interview with  
IKE WALKER  
September 16, 1981

Place of Interview: Gainesville, Texas

Interviewer: Floyd Jenkins

Terms of Use: Open

Approved: Ike Walker

(Signature)

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Business Oral History Collection

Ike Walker

Interviewer: Dr. Floyd Jenkins

Place of Interview: Gainesville, Texas          Date: September 16, 1981

Dr. Jenkins: This is Floyd Jenkins recording for the Business Archives Project, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas. Today is September 16, 1981. I am interviewing Mr. Ike Walker, one of the founders of the Bomber Bait Company in Gainesville, Texas, and you are currently . . . how do you classify yourself at the moment?

Mr. Walker: I would say a consultant, but more or less a designer for lures.

Dr. Jenkins: Designer of lures and consultant.

Mr. Walker: That is about all that I do now.

Dr. Jenkins: For the Bomber Bait Company. Let's start by getting you to give us some family background. Tell us what you know of parents and grandparents and what they did and work us on up to when and where Ike Walker was born.

Mr. Walker: My grandparents lived in northeastern Tennessee. I don't remember anything about them.

Dr. Jenkins: Which side of the family is this?

Mr. Walker: That is both sides.

Jenkins: I see. Give us some names, anyway.

Walker: My mother's name was Francis Pearson. My father's name was Albert Walker. They left there shortly after they were married and moved to Texas.

Jenkins: Had they been farmers?

Walker: Yes. And settled in the northwest part of Cooke County. They lived there until 1938.

Jenkins: Is there any kind of community up there that we would recognize?

Walker: It would be the old Bulcher community.

Jenkins: Oh, yes.

Walker: They were farmers there up until 1918. They moved to west Texas to a little town called Olton, Texas.

Jenkins: What is that near that I would recognize?

Walker: It is 25 miles west of Plainview, 50 miles north of Lubbock. I finished high school there.

Jenkins: Let's not get you in high school yet. Let's go back and pick up grandma and grandpa . . . Now your folks farmed, I suppose?

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: What kind of farming?

Walker: Cotton farming and general farming.

Jenkins: We will find out later after we get you born whether you worked on those farms, but where were you born? Out there?

Walker: I was born at Bulcher, Texas, January 3, 1905.

Jenkins: And your folks were cotton farmers.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: Tell us something about growing up out there, the kind of life you lived, the kind of work you did, and the kind of schooling that you went through. Kind of just drift us along as you grew up.

Walker: I went to local schools there, one called Valley Creek, and I went to Bulcher School.

Jenkins: How big were those schools?

Walker: One teacher schools. Bulcher School was probably a two teacher school. I don't remember exactly.

Jenkins: How many grades in those schools?

Walker: Oh, around six, seven or eight. It just depended on how many came to school, you know.

Jenkins: What the ages of the kids were.

Walker: Some of them left early. One teacher would teach five or six grades.

Jenkins: What are some of your recollections of the physical surroundings, the heating and the lighting and the study conditions?

Walker: We were heated by a wood stove. The students carried the wood in. The teacher probably put it in the stove. Didn't have any artificial lighting. Of course you didn't have anything at night anyhow.

Jenkins: All the light came through the windows, then.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: What did you have to write with and write on?

Walker: We had blackboards and we had chalk. Of course we had the erasers that we erased the writing, which was a chore that all of the kids liked to have was go erase the blackboard.

Jenkins: Yes, beat out the erasers.

Walker: Yes. Blow it out, you know. Hold it in your hand and blow it and blow white dust in everybody's face and everything.

Jenkins: How about writing at your desks? What kind of writing equipment did you have?

Walker: Well, of course, we had pencils and we had pens and ink. We had an ink well in one corner of the desk. The desk was usually for two students. You would have a desk mate always. Of course when you got into high school that was all changed to one desk per student.

Jenkins: I suppose you dipped the pen in the ink?

Walker: Yes, dipped the pen in the inkwell. Of course there wasn't any fountain pen or anything like that that I can remember of.

Jenkins: What kind of recess, what kind of playing did you do around the school?

Walker: We had baseball or townball we called it. We played old games called old black man and stink base and all things like that.

Jenkins: This was recess and before and after school.

Walker: That's right. Of course we walked to and from school.

Jenkins: How far?

Walker: I walked about a mile the first six years, and about a mile and a half the second two at Bulcher when I went there.

Jenkins: How old were you when you started?

Walker: Seven years old.

Jenkins: Bulcher was your second school?

Walker: Yes, sir.

Jenkins: Was it different much from your first school?

Walker: No, it was just a little bigger, that was all.

Jenkins: And then you went on into high school where?

Walker: At Olton.

Jenkins: How big a town was Olton?

Walker: At the time we moved out there in 1918 there were 160 folks in the county.

Jenkins: In the county?

Walker: That's right. It was ranch country, and the settlement of Olton probably had 25 or 30 families in a five or six mile radius.

Jenkins: Now you went on to high school.

Walker: Yes, sir.

Jenkins: At Olton. And you finished high school.

Walker: Yes, sir.

Jenkins: What kind of chores and things were you doing as you grew up? And you were still on the farm, I suppose?

Walker: Yes, sir. My chores morning and night would be milking

cows and feeding hogs and the cattle that we had. We owned a section of land out there, and we had beef cattle. We had to feed those a lot of times in the winter-time.

Jenkins: And still raising cotton.

Walker: Oh, yes, we raised cotton and what we called row crops and milo and things like that.

Jenkins: What kind of equipment were you using?

Walker: At that time we had two horses that pulled what we called a lister or planter and take one row at a time. Then we had, of course, your cultivators and your harrows and things like that.

Jenkins: And you did all of that, I suppose?

Walker: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: And picked cotton, chopped cotton.

Walker: I have done it all.

Jenkins: And all of that kind of thing.

Walker: When they could get me to. I didn't like it.

Jenkins: On through high school, did you ever get involved in any other kind of work besides farming, while you were still in school?

Walker: Not in high school, no.

Jenkins: They kept you pretty close to home, I expect.

Walker: Well, there wasn't anything else to do. There weren't any other businesses around. We had a little local

grocery store, and finally we had a little garage.

Jenkins: There weren't even enough houses to throw a newspaper, I suppose?

Walker: No. The only newspaper you could get was through the mail.

Jenkins: Then you finished high school. How many grades? Eleven?

Walker: Eleven grades then. I finished high school in 1924.

Jenkins: Carry us on through then. What did you decide to do after you got out of high school?

Walker: I decided to go to college and be a civil engineer.

Jenkins: Where did you go?

Walker: Texas Tech. The first year it was open. It was 1925 when I went to college. My number was 777, I think, to enroll in the school.

Jenkins: What are some of your recollections of the size and goings on at Texas Tech at that early time.

Walker: It was pretty big as far as I was concerned. My graduating class had 12 students in it in high school. And Texas Tech was rather large compared to that.

Jenkins: Had you done much travelling, going around, seeing any big cities at all?

Walker: Oh, yes. I had been to Fort Worth, Dallas.

Jenkins: You had been to the lights then.

Walker: I went to Dallas on a stock judging team one time. I went down there to a football game or two. Well, not before I went to college.

Jenkins: This reminds me, you must have gotten involved in some things while you were in high school, then, clubs and stock judging.

Walker: I was on the stock judging team in agriculture, of course. I played basketball, took part in track and all of those things.

Jenkins: So you stayed busy.

Walker: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Working before you went to school and after you came home.

Walker: After I got home. My sister taught school there. I would wait until she would go home a little over a mile home. Of course, I would practice basketball while I was waiting for her to get her work done and things like that. I had a lot of fun.

Jenkins: I bet so. How many sisters and brothers did you have?

Walker: I had two sisters and three brothers.

Jenkins: Was there much hunting and fishing going on out there at the time?

Walker: No, a little hunting is all. No fishing.

Jenkins: Did you do much of that?

Walker: I hunted quite a bit.

Jenkins: There weren't many water holes out there, I suppose.

Walker: No. We hunted ducks and doves. We also went what we called coyote hunting. We chased the coyotes in a Model T Ford and shot them with a shotgun.

Jenkins: I guess a lot of your hunting was really meat hunting, too, wasn't it?

Walker: Partly. We ate the ducks that we killed. We did a lot of rabbit hunting, we didn't eat those or anything.

Jenkins: There wasn't much squirrel hunting out there.

Walker: No, no squirrel out there. Ground squirrels.

Jenkins: Ground squirrels, were there really?

Walker: Oh, yes. They were everywhere.

Jenkins: Did you ever kill any ground squirrels?

Walker: No, I never did.

Jenkins: Did anybody ever eat ground squirrels as far as you know?

Walker: Not that I know of.

Jenkins: But you don't know any reason not to, except you didn't think about it.

Walker: There is not enough of them, you know. They are not big enough.

Jenkins: Okay, so you hauled it off to Tech. What are some of the things you got involved in out at Tech besides going to school? Did you work?

Walker: Part of the time.

Jenkins: What kind of work did you do?

Walker: In the first place I registered to be a civil engineer. I thought that would be a great profession, which it is. But I went to class two weeks and decided that was not for me, so I had better get back into my style of life and

everything. So I went over to the Agriculture Department and enrolled there. I dropped the engineering right quick.

Jenkins: Did you finish your major in agriculture?

Walker: Oh, yes. I have a degree in horticulture from Texas Tech.

Jenkins: Highlight your college years.

Walker: I graduated in 1930, June of 1930.

Jenkins: So you kind of eased on through it, then.

Walker: I didn't go all of the time. I had to drop out and work a little.

Jenkins: Did you go back to the farm and work, or did you find work in Lubbock?

Walker: I went back to the farm and worked.

Jenkins: So most of your work, even through college, was farming.

Walker: Farm work, except some of the boys and myself formed a little company and did a lot of tree trimming in the city of Lubbock during the winter months and things like that.

Jenkins: You did pretty well, I suppose.

Walker: Oh, we made 25¢ an hour.

Jenkins: That's not bad.

Walker: That's not bad at that time. Highest I ever got at Lubbock was 50¢ an hour.

Jenkins: This is the mid-twenties, then, you are talking about.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: So it took you, what?

Walker: Five years. I missed one or two quarters and went one or

two summers, so it came out actually four years of school.

Jenkins: Did you get involved in anything besides going to school and working, clubs or athletics or anything?

Walker: No. I went out for basketball until the first of the year. We started in the fall, and I went home during Christmas holidays and thought it over and decided that if I wanted any education I had better drop basketball and get with my books.

Jenkins: You graduated from Tech in '30 you said, which was a real good time to get out into the world.

Walker: Right during the depression. It had just hit.

Jenkins: What was happening, what hit you? How did you go about getting work?

Walker: When I graduated I intended to get into the florist business. But the depression was coming, or we were in it. I went home and talked to my dad. He was able to help me if I wanted to go ahead with it. We looked around and couldn't find anything that was suitable. Everything was too high, you know, and it just didn't look right. He said, "Why don't you come here and farm for two or three years, and maybe things will level off. Or whenever the time comes and something shows up, we will buy it."

Jenkins: Where were you wanting to go into the florist business?  
In Lubbock?

Walker: Anywhere.

Jenkins: I see. Just wherever you could . . .

Walker: Wherever you could find a suitable place or find somebody you could buy out, some florist or some nursery or something like that.

Jenkins: I bet there were several of them available, weren't there?

Walker: Well, they were available, but they wanted pre-depression prices for them, see? And I knew I couldn't do that. So I farmed until 1936, I guess, and then I went in business there in town.

Jenkins: Let's go back and highlight those depression years of farming a little bit. What are some of your most vivid recollections of farming during the depression?

Walker: I remember raising cotton and selling it for 5¢ a pound. Raising beef cattle and selling them for 5¢ a pound.

Jenkins: Were you making any money?

Walker: No. All you could do was pay your taxes. You could live if you raised enough chickens and eggs and butter and milk at home and things like that.

Jenkins: You were still a good way from any sizable town.

Walker: Plainview was about 10,000 population, probably.

Jenkins: It was how far from you?

Walker: 25 miles.

Jenkins: So you got into town.

Walker: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Out on the farm you probably weren't terribly conscious

of the depression in terms of what you saw going on around you, except of your own problems of moving your products.

Walker: That's right. You didn't have time to think about much except finding some way to make a living.

Jenkins: In terms of having something to eat, a place to live, paying your bills, how conscious were you of the depression out there on the farm?

Walker: I probably wasn't as conscious as a lot of people were, because my folks never were in debt. They always had a little money in the bank. After I went home out of college I bought what I would call a feed mill, grinding feed for milk cows and things like that, and mounted it on a trailer. And I would pull this trailer and everything to the farm where the man wanted the work done, and I would blow the ground feed right into his barn. I made a good living doing that. It was hard work, but I still made pretty good money.

Jenkins: This was while you were farming.

Walker: This was while I was farming and during the depression.

Jenkins: Did this develop into . . . well, it sure kept you busy anyway.

Walker: Yes, but you had to make a good crop or make a pretty good feed before you had anything to work on. And it turned off dry in '33, and they didn't raise anything. So that put me out of business, practically.

Jenkins: So you lost that part of it.

Walker: Lost a big portion of it.

Jenkins: In '33.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: Now you were living there on the home place.

Walker: Living with my mother and daddy.

Jenkins: How many kids were still at home?

Walker: None. The youngest one was, I guess, eight years older than I.

Jenkins: Okay, so you were supporting three folks.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: So that was really a lot easier than supporting a whole family.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: As you went into town, and as you roamed around doing this, what did you see of the depression? What were some of the signs that you saw?

Walker: I could see how hard people were working. They had plenty to eat, most of them, in that country. No one was suffering. It was just a question of not being able to have any money to buy the nice things of life that you would like to have.

Jenkins: Now you are talking, I suppose, principally of the farming folk.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: What about when you went into town, did you see something different that reminded you of depression? Were there soup lines, bank failures? Did you see any evidence of . . .

Walker: There were bank failures out there, but that was about all. There weren't any lines or anything like that.

Jenkins: Even folks in town then were not doing too badly.

Walker: Those little towns like that, yes.

Jenkins: What was the source of the income of those folks in town? How were they getting by, as far as you remember?

Walker: The merchants were getting by just like always. And a lot of the people that worked, they just went out in the country and worked picking cotton, chopping cotton, any kind of farm work they could get or any other kind of work they could get; as a mechanic or any work that would come along they would do it.

Jenkins: So in a town of, you said, about 10,000. . .

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: This was basically an agricultural community.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: The folks were making their living off of agriculture.

Walker: You had the flour mills there in town, and you had what we called the feed mills, people that supplied feed to people that had cows and chickens and things like that. Everybody was doing something to bring in a few dollars.

Jenkins: The folks of Plainview, in your recollection, weren't hit real hard by it.

Walker: They were hit hard, but they weren't hit like the big towns; you know, where they had their soup lines and your people out of work and not knowing where to go to get work and things like that.

Jenkins: Okay, so you spent how many years back on the farm, six or so, you said?

Walker: I spent until '36 on the farm.

Jenkins: What caused you to leave the farm? Where did you go?

Walker: I went into the oil business there in the little town of Olton and stayed in it about a year and a half. I didn't do very good with it.

Jenkins: Tell us what you recall about the oil business that you were in. You went to work for someone?

Walker: No, I started a business.

Jenkins: Okay, tell us about that.

Walker: Well, there is not much to tell. I just didn't succeed, that's about all you can say.

Jenkins: What end of the business were you going into?

Walker: Gasoline business.

Jenkins: I mean, were you drilling or what?

Walker: No, I was retailing gasoline to the farmer.

Jenkins: Did you have a station?

Walker: I had a station and had a delivery truck.

Jenkins: Well, sketch anyway getting into it and the problems and getting out of it. What you were trying to do and why you didn't.

Walker: I thought maybe I could build a pretty good business there. Competition was pretty rough, and I didn't have enough capital to really do it.

Jenkins: But you got a station. Did you buy it?

Walker: No, I just leased it.

Jenkins: Was it independent or . . .

Walker: No, it was a Magnolia station, but I turned it into an independent.

Jenkins: What mostly was your competition, the big ones or the independents?

Walker: The other businesses there. There were too many of us. There wasn't enough business for everybody.

Jenkins: At that time there were just an awful lot of independents, weren't there?

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: You were one of them. What gasoline did you continue to carry? Just whatever you could get?

Walker: I bought through Magnolia most of the time. It was an independent otherwise. I was what they called a jobber.

Jenkins: Did you sell under the brand of Magnolia?

Walker: Oh, yes. It was independent. I had the tank truck and I went to their refineries.

Jenkins: You had a Magnolia sign up.

Walker: Yes. It was Magnolia gasoline, Magnolia products.

Jenkins: Well, some independents will take that sign down and just buy whatever they can.

Walker: Oh, yes, sure. They will do that.

Jenkins: But you were Magnolia.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: But you gave that up.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: And what direction did you turn then?

Walker: Well, I had a brother living here in Gainesville. He and I went into the tire repair business in Gainesville in 1937, I believe.

Jenkins: You left the farm, left the homeplace, and came to the city when?

Walker: It was in June, 1938 that we came to Gainesville.

Jenkins: That's right, you spent a year or so in the gas business.

Walker: Yes, it was '38 when we came here.

Jenkins: Was he already in this business and you joined him?

Walker: No, we went into it from scratch.

Jenkins: Okay, carry us through that business.

Walker: We opened the business here, and I stayed in business there until 1943.

Jenkins: Well, now, this was strictly the tire repair business?

Walker: Tire repair business.

Jenkins: That was it.

Walker: We didn't handle any new tires or anything. It was strictly handling used tires and tire repair business.

Jenkins: And was it just the two of you working?

Walker: That's right, and of course later he got a job as the auditor of the state, and he went to work for them.

Jenkins: What kind of background did he have to get him into that?

Walker: He had a business education in Draughn's Business College somewhere. I don't know whether it was here or Fort Worth. And he had been connected with the bank here for years, then he went into business for himself. He worked for an ice company for years and managed it. During the depression he got out of that.

Jenkins: A horticulturist and an auditor running a repair business.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: Like everybody else, doing whatever you could find.

Walker: You would do whatever you could find to do.

Jenkins: It got you through the depression, anyway.

Walker: I made a living. And, of course, then the war came on.

Jenkins: Were you married by this time?

Walker: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: So you were supporting a family.

Walker: And one child.

Jenkins: Okay, just carry us on and pick us up then. You got out of that business in what year?

Walker: I sold that business in '42.

Jenkins: Was it a profitable sale or you just kind of got out from under it?

Walker: What caused me to sell was the fact that I couldn't get material to work with.

Jenkins: Oh, wartime.

Walker: That's right. You could just get enough to make a living or you couldn't advance any, or you couldn't make any money or anything. Of course I was deferred because I was in the tire repair business. And actually I lacked three months being too old to register when the first registration came around anyhow.

Jenkins: So you missed WWII.

Walker: Yes. I was 3-A all the time.

Jenkins: So you got out of that.

Walker: I sold that business and went to work for another tire company.

Jenkins: Here in Gainesville?

Walker: Yes, sir. I stayed there until the war was over with.

Jenkins: What were you doing? The same thing?

Walker: The same thing.

Jenkins: Okay, but you were working for someone else.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: Who was that?

Walker: It was the fellow that owned Western Auto. He had connections

to where he could get plenty of materials, you see, and he put in a recapping shop and everything. And I managed it until the war was over. In the meantime I had started fishing a little and making plugs at home and what have you.

Jenkins: So you are getting close to the Bomber Bait Company.

Walker: Yes, close to the Bomber Bait Company.

Jenkins: So just develop us into where the idea came from, how you guys got together and how this whole thing developed.

Walker: Well, Mr. Turbeville probably told you all about that.

Jenkins: We want your version, too. It is better to get it twice than not to get it at all. We will probably get some things that he forgot.

Walker: He and I got connected in a way because I started fishing and bought some tackle from him.

Jenkins: That's right, he was in the tackle business.

Walker: That's right. And, plugs, or lures we will call them . . . we used to call them plugs. They were running \$1.10, you know, and maybe you could buy them for 90¢ and things like that. But, you know, it was hard to come by 90¢ so I would make some. I would see others, and I would copy them, etc. He got interested in what I was doing, and he would come visit me every morning. We would have coffee. From that it just kept growing a little bit.

Jenkins: Now first, though, everything you made was strictly for the two of you.

Walker: It was for me. He didn't need any. He had the store.  
He could just go pick one up.

Jenkins: So you were the original Bomber Bait maker.

Walker: In a way.

Jenkins: With a pocketknife, I suppose?

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: What did you make this stuff out of?

Walker: I made it out of wood.

Jenkins: Any particular kind of wood?

Walker: Michigan cedar, we called it, or white cedar or swamp cedar  
or whatever you wanted to call it.

Jenkins: Where were you getting it?

Walker: I was getting it out of old telephone poles. They would  
discard one, you know, and if it was that white cedar or  
swamp cedar as we called it, we would use it. If it was  
western cedar we wouldn't use it.

Jenkins: Why? What is the difference?

Walker: Western cedar was coarser and would absorb more water.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Walker: And wouldn't work out as smooth, and it was a little bit  
heavier.

Jenkins: Now you say you were using old telephone poles. Were they  
treated?

Walker: No. The oldtime telephone poles weren't treated. These

things, some of them would be 60 years old, I imagine, 70. They had been there until they just deteriorated from the part that was in the ground, you know, and maybe broke up, and what have you.

Jenkins: And so you used your pocket knife and these old telephone poles . . .

Walker: No, we used a little hand lathe, little wood lathe, about that long, you know.

Jenkins: Well, originally though, were you just pocket knifing them out when you were still at the hobby store?

Walker: I never did pocket knife very many. No, I didn't pocket knife any because I always had access to some kind of lathe.

Jenkins: Well, the first one that you, the very first one that you made, how did you make it? Do you remember the very first one?

Walker: Yes. I made it on a lathe.

Jenkins: Oh, you started with a lathe.

Walker: I had access to a lathe there in the shop where I ran this tire shop, you see. He had a metal, we called it a metal lathe, and you could turn it on it.

Jenkins: Western Auto.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: Oh, okay. So really the first Bomber Bait was made in the Western Auto Store, probably.

Walker: Really, the first one that you say was made would be a Creek Chub Crawfish and another lure or two that were shaped like that. We took the hardware off of it and put the hardware that we would make on it to make it go deeper, and various things like that.

Jenkins: So you were using telephone poles, and the metal part you were getting from . . .

Walker: You buy your hooks. You could go to a shoe repair shop and buy shoe eyes. That is what we used for what we called grommets. Then, screw eyes you could go to Woolworth's and buy those, you know, any size you wanted. If we needed some wire, we just bent the wire the shape we wanted it, and various things like that.

Jenkins: Did you ever get caught out fishing and have to make one out while you were fishing?

Walker: No.

Jenkins: You never did do that. So at first you were just making them for your own personal use.

Walker: For my own personal use. I would give friends some.

Jenkins: How did this finally develop into a business?

Walker: When we more or less accidently made the first Bomber it was so successful we copied it, made more like it in other words, and friends wanted some. They knew we were catching fish, and friends wanted them. So we would give them to our friends. Then we had so many friends that we

had to go to selling them a little bit. We couldn't buy the materials, the hooks and stuff, that go on them. So we went to selling them for \$1 apiece, I believe. That was during the war.

Jenkins: Covered the cost.

Walker: Yes, that is about all it amounted to.

Jenkins: Now you said the very first one that you made wasn't a Bomber, then.

Walker: No, it wasn't a Bomber.

Jenkins: You called it . . .

Walker: A Creek Chub Crawfish was the body that we used. Do you know what it looked like?

Jenkins: No.

Walker: Well, I could draw it for you would be about all that I could do. It is shaped a whole lot like the Bomber is shaped.

Jenkins: But it was a crawfish type.

Walker: It had a little diving plate on it that was small. And we took that out and put a big one on it.

Jenkins: But it was a crawfish type?

Walker: Yes, it runs backwards.

Jenkins: Oh, okay.

Walker: That was the body that we used, because it was the one that was available.

Jenkins: You just modified it.

- Walker: That's right. Of course when we put the diving plate in it, we call it, it was just a flat straight piece of metal and they didn't have that, you see. That is what made the lure work. Otherwise it wouldn't be anything different from what they had.
- Jenkins: Then when and why did you decide actually to make this your living? How did you ease out of something else and be able to go into this?
- Walker: Well of course, I had sold the tire business and then worked for this other man, and they eventually sold their part of the tire business. At the end of the war they sold it, and I didn't want to work for the other fellow. We already had the baits going, developed enough, that we thought we could make a living selling them.
- Jenkins: Were you already having a pretty good side income before you quit?
- Walker: Not particularly, because we didn't have time to make enough of them.
- Jenkins: But you just knew that it was there.
- Walker: Yes.
- Jenkins: Okay. Move us into getting started, actually physically, financially, the kind of facilities.
- Walker: At the end of the war, I believe in September of '45, I quit the tire business, and we started making Bombers in my garage. At that time he could sell there at the store

all that we could make.

Jenkins: That's right, you had a nice outlet.

Walker: Then we increased production a little and began to sell a few around Ardmore and Sherman and around like that.

Jenkins: Well now, he still was in his own retail business.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: Was he also down at the garage some helping make baits?

Walker: He would come down at night and help, but he didn't have any other time. He would have to come down there at night.

Jenkins: So your outlet started at his store, and you just kind of gradually grew.

Walker: Of course, I began taking a salary out of it when I quit the tire business.

Jenkins: Other than where he handled them at his store, were you also the principal salesman, were you out . . .

Walker: You didn't have to be a salesman. They just came and got them.

Jenkins: Oh, they came to you.

Walker: They would write you a letter and want so many. We didn't have to get out and sell them.

Jenkins: You weren't on the road, then, at all.

Walker: No.

Jenkins: You were doing a mail order business.

Walker: Actually.

Jenkins: Is that right?

Walker: People would come by, dealers would come by or something like that or would send word to him, various ways like that. We didn't get out and sell any. When we started to really get into the business and buy equipment to start manufacturing, we had orders for 5,000 dozen laying on the table. And a little hand lathe and the only way to make them was for me to run that hand lathe. That's slow.

Jenkins: You were it. Did you have anybody else?

Walker: We hired a man or two. We had a little help. I can make 75 or 80 or 100 a day on a hand lathe.

Jenkins: Right now.

Walker: Yes. That is the kind of production that we had at that time. Of course, you couldn't make them all alike. You had to make them so fast you couldn't measure them or anything. You just had to look at them and as the old saying is, "eyeball" them.

Jenkins: So each one was . . .

Walker: A little bit different. I don't know whether he showed you any of the old ones or not.

Jenkins: I don't think he found one.

Walker: We may not have any of the first ones, but I think we have got some there somewhere that are pretty close to it.

Jenkins: The year that you actually started in your own garage making these things was . . .

Walker: September of '45.

Jenkins: What kind of investment did you make? Money, in terms of money?

Walker: There wasn't any investment but a few dollars for a little bucket of paint, a quart of paint. I made many a trip to Dallas to all the retail stores and 5¢ and 10¢ stores hunting hooks. You couldn't buy any hooks. We had to go around to where we could find a dozen hooks here and a dozen hooks there and things like that. And we would hunt lacquer. I would make a trip to Ardmore and all around and back to Durant and Sherman and go to every store that handled lacquer. Maybe I would come back with a gallon of lacquer.

Jenkins: So your travel was for supplies.

Walker: For supplies.

Jenkins: That is a terrible problem to have.

Walker: You couldn't buy anything, you know, at the end of the war. I remember one time I found a gallon of clear lacquer, and I was so tickled because that would put the finish on a lot of baits.

Jenkins: So you really were just doing all that you had supplies for.

Walker: That is all that we could do that first six or eight or ten months.

Jenkins: Things apparently, supplies, loosened up, and you began to be able to produce more. Carry us through that early

period.

Walker: After about, I don't remember now, six or eight or nine months, then it began to get where you could get hooks and paint came back on the market. That is about all that we had to have. We could manage the other things. We could make them or find something to take their place.

Jenkins: At what point did you quit going out and searching for these supplies?

Walker: Along about that time, about the middle of '46, I guess.

Jenkins: Then you could just order them.

Walker: Yes, you could get small amounts and things like that. Then, of course, Mr. Turbeville's father was pretty well fixed, you know, and Turby, of course, was in the business, too. So when we began to have to buy supplies, and then when we started shipping baits, they would owe us while these baits were in transit and while their checks were coming back to us, you know, would all be in transit. It took a little financing there, and so we used his credit rating actually to finance it. And if I remember right we at one time got up about \$4,000 in debt to him, which was a big sum at that time.

Jenkins: In debt to . . .

Walker: To Mr. Turbeville, or used his credit at least to buy stuff for that much.

Jenkins: You didn't do outside financing.

Walker: No. From there on we financed it ourselves.

Jenkins: Didn't have to go out. Cash flow took care of everything.

Walker: We were fortunate there.

Jenkins: Just kind of move us through the years and show us how your geography expanded in terms of market.

Walker: In '46 after we really organized the company, we began to hunt machinery to make our baits on. We went to Fort Worth and had an old gentleman make us three wood lathes. I don't know whether he showed you those or not.

Jenkins: I went through.

Walker: Did he show you where you would turn any wooden bodies back there?

Jenkins: I don't think so.

Walker: I can take you back there and show you how we turned the wooden bodies. He made these lathes. They were what we would call a semi-automatic. I remodeled the cutting equipment, the shapers, to shape our bodies. So we used that for 25 years, that equipment to make these bodies. But when we found that and got that to going, we could expand and hire people and get into an assembly line. Along about '47 we got several people working for us by then. And we could get material where we ordered material when we wanted it.

Jenkins: You say you organized. What kind of organization? Did you go into a partnership? How did you actually organize?

Walker: We first started out as a corporation.

Jenkins: Oh, you started off as a corporation.

Walker: Yes. We formed a corporation.

Jenkins: The two of you?

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: As stockholders, only the two of you?

Walker: No, there was another man in it at that time for a while.

Jenkins: Was he involved in the company, or just investment?

Walker: Just investment. And he worked in the company some.

Jenkins: I see. Actually there were three of you who were in the corporation.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: And also working in the company. When did you move out of the garage?

Walker: I think we moved out in '46. We first leased a place uptown, about a 30x30 room. And started work there for two or three months and then we leased a place upstairs up over a print shop. We had about, I guess, a 30x100. We put our assembly shop up there and paint shop and everything up there, and we turned out bodies down in the other building. We had two places. Then, of course, we had to have a bookkeeper, and in a year or two we had to have two bookkeepers so we went across the hallway upstairs and rented another space.

Jenkins: Three locations.

Walker: Yes. And we stayed there from . . . I don't remember what year. I would have to look it up. Then we bought this building back over here, this old gas company building.

Jenkins: Not the present location.

Walker: It is the other end of this building.

Jenkins: So it is part of the present one.

Walker: It is the old artificial gas company plant.

Jenkins: Tell us something. I have run across that two or three times. Tell us what you know about artificial gas. Fort Worth had that at one time, as I recall.

Walker: Yes, a lot of them did. I don't know what kind of machinery they had in the building, but this side of that building under this assembly room here they had a bunch of tanks. They were 20 or 25 feet across, and they were down in the ground and extended up above. And they put this material they made this gas out of in that tank, and it would form gas, you know. They had a big weight on the top as I understand it, and this weight made the pressure. And as it would go down, of course, they would use that gas up and then they would have to . . . I don't know the principle exactly of just how they would operate it, but that is the gist of it.

Jenkins: That was the Gainesville source of gas?

Walker: Yes. Lights, they used these carbide lights. That is what they were making, carbide gas. I guess that is what you

call it, carbide gas.

Jenkins: That was the Gainesville source of gas?

Walker: Yes. Lights, they used this carbide lights. That is what they were making, carbide gas. I guess that is what you call it, carbide gas.

Jenkins: I have run into this before, but I have never really got into it. So it came to your home as this artificial gas.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: And then you burned the carbide.

Walker: Did you ever see the carbide lights?

Jenkins: Like the old movie picture things?

Walker: Yes. They would hang down just like a light, and they would have two or three jets around on it. And you would light those jets, you know, and that made your light. Carbide gas we called it. I know them, but I can't think of them now. I can remember seeing them used. This was gas. Just like you take a gas light. It is the same thing as you take a natural gas light.

Jenkins: No wick or anything.

Walker: No.

Jenkins: Just burning that gas.

Walker: It comes through a pipe. It was the system here.

Jenkins: Do you remember when Gainesville got out of that?

Walker: No, I wasn't here.

Jenkins: Oh, I see. The system was gone long before you got here.

Walker: Oh yes, it was gone before I can ever remember.

Jenkins: The building just happened to be setting there.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay. So this was your first central location.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: You moved everything down here.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay, just kind of develop us through that then, the growth of it.

Walker: Well, of course, when we, like I say back when we organized the company we hired salesmen, manufacturers reps. We had to go to Michigan to find wood. We bought it in carload lots.

Jenkins: Trying to get about the same thing you had been getting out of the telephone poles?

Walker: Yes. It was exactly the same things. Most of our equipment is stuff that we developed ourselves. Of course, anything that we could use that we could buy we would, but so many of our things that we used is not on the market. In other words, there is no other use for it except what we do with it.

Jenkins: So you made a lot of your own equipment.

Walker: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: Who principally did that, you?

Walker: I did most of it.

Jenkins: So you are the engineer.

Walker: I got ideas anywhere I could find them. Frito Lay, I went down there and visited the guy that made their racks and baskets and various things that they use. I went down there and had him make me one little wire bending tool. And from things like that you get the ideas and develop them. Anywhere you can see anything that you might apply, that is what you do.

Jenkins: Largely you have been the engineer.

Walker: More or less, yes sir.

Jenkins: For equipment and design of baits. Do you ever do any wooden baits now?

Walker: We have got two or three yet, yes sir.

Jenkins: Do you still get your wood . . .

Walker: When we changed into plastic for most of our other baits we had a carload of wood out there in the shed. We have still got a lot of it.

Jenkins: So you are still operating on your old supply of wood?

Walker: Yes. We used to buy a carload about once a year.

Jenkins: Well, now, is there a special market? Are there people that still call for the wood? What keeps you in the wood business?

Walker: Well, this particular bait that doesn't have enough volume to pay for transferring it to plastic.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Walker: Low volume items.

Jenkins: Is that likely just to phase out one of these days?

Walker: It might. Some of it has, yes.

Jenkins: Is it the design, or what is it that requires wood in this particular bait?

Walker: Well, there is not anything.

Jenkins: I mean, why not go to plastic in that?

Walker: It is too expensive to make the transition.

Jenkins: Oh, I see.

Walker: You make a mold to make one of these lures, by the time you get in production you are going to have \$30,000 tied up in it.

Jenkins: I see.

Walker: In the first place it will cost you, to make 4 or 5 baits at the shop, why, it will cost you \$15,000 to do that, and then you are going to have your supplies to stock a little, you see.

Jenkins: If I buy one of those wooden baits, am I likely to know it is wood?

Walker: If you are familiar with lures, you would.

Jenkins: But most people, just to look at it it doesn't look much different, does it?

Walker: No, it wouldn't look any different.

Jenkins: The paint is all covering it up.

Walker: It would look a little more uniform. In the process of making wooden baits you have got these shapers that you cut them with. You have got to keep them sharp, and you have got to make new shapers after you wear one out. Down through a year or two time you will have a little variation, and if you don't watch it real close, that will show up.

Jenkins: Now is that kind of the original Bomber that is in the wood, or what?

Walker: Yes sir, the original bait that we came out with, the original bait, is this Bomber.

Jenkins: And is that still a big item?

Walker: This is still a good item, but it is not like it used to be.

Jenkins: I see. But that is a wooden bait, is it?

Walker: That is the old wooden bait. Of course, it is plastic now.

Jenkins: What I am asking you is, what is the one that is wooden?

Walker: I will show you. It is a spin stick, one called stick and one spin stick. They may not have it in this catalog. I think it is, though. There it is. We still make that out of wood. This is made out of wood.

Jenkins: The percentage of your lures that are still made out of wood, though, is very small, I suppose.

Walker: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: What would you guess?

Walker: I would say 10,000 lures a year.

Jenkins: Which is about what percentage of everything?

Walker: I don't know what we made last year. I suppose we made over 2 million baits.

Jenkins: I see, okay. So percentage-wise it is small. Okay, let's move on then into expansion and growth. You got into the old gas plant. You had gone out into the field, you were hiring salesmen, now, manufacturing reps.

Walker: We started out, really started in production and started to merchandise the product, we hired what we called manufacturers representatives, and they were people that covered say five or six states. And they had other lines. They went out and we gave them 10% commission of sales.

Jenkins: Did you have much trouble attracting anyone?

Walker: No, you didn't have any trouble at all, because it was a popular lure at that time. There were people come by wanting the line. They still do.

Jenkins: How did your market expand?

Walker: I will tell you a funny incident on the first big sale. We called it a big sale. We had a friend that was in the photography business here. He wanted to make a trip to California, and he wanted to pay his expenses out there and back. So he came down and said, "How about me selling your lures out that way?" We said, "Fine." So he fixed him up a little sample case and headed west. He stopped in El Paso at Monsen, Dunnigan, and Ryan, a big wholesale hardware. And he took one of these big old bombers in

there and pitched it down on this fellow's desk. That fellow later became a good friend of ours. And he said, "Here is a bait some old boys over in Texas is amakin' that will really catch fish." And this fellow looked at it and said, "That's a godawful monstrosity." But he bought 180 dozen, and we had never sold over 15 or 20 dozen. And of course it said \$1.20 a dozen x 180. He made enough to pay his expenses out there and he never sold another bait on the trip. He never tried to.

Jenkins: His heart wasn't in selling, was it?

Walker: And do you know this fellow's name was Lou Hearter. He took those baits and he sold them out in a little while. They caught fish all over California and New Mexico. And I don't know how many dozen we sold him that year.

Jenkins: Where was he located?

Walker: El Paso. And Mr. Turberville's father wanted to take a trip to Tennessee and up in that country. So he went to a store in Memphis, I believe, I am not sure. Memphis or Nashville or somewhere. And he sold a jobber six dozen. And this guy gave them out to some of his friends and everything, and they caught on like a house afire. And that is actually the two things that really started us all over the country, you know, all over the south.

Jenkins: Now you say this guy was located in El Paso, but he must have been selling . . . what was his distribution area?

You said he got into California.

Walker: He was a big hardware jobber, hardware stores.

Jenkins: He scattered them all over the place, then.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: It wasn't just El Paso.

Walker: No, it went all over New Mexico into California, west Texas, all that country.

Jenkins: So people were learning about the Bomber Bait Company.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: I see.

Walker: And of course I was from west Texas, and all those west Texas people, if you know them, they will drive 300 miles at the drop of a hat to go fishing. They all knew me, you know, they knew I was in the business. They of course did a little spreading, telling people about it, spreading the word around a little.

Jenkins: Were you advertising any at all at the time?

Walker: Not then. Of course we shortly did some advertising.

Jenkins: So that was really one case where the product sold itself.

Walker: It did. It really did. Then of course it is fortunate there wasn't any other lures on the market much. They were all coming on just like we were. The lure business was dead at the end of the war.

Jenkins: Because of supplies.

Walker: Yes. The only new lures that were sold during World War II

was stock that was on hand.

Jenkins: So you were really hitting the market . . .

Walker: At the right time.

Jenkins: Prime time.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: Is that right? Do you have any idea how you compared in size and sales to the other lure companies at the time?

Walker: Well, I don't know as much as Mr. Turbeville would about that, but we are major. Some of them that manufacture worms and things like that sell more. I don't believe any of them sell more hard baits than we do.

Jenkins: Now, you are saying. But at that time when I guess everybody was starting from scratch.

Walker: Yes. I think that at one time we were probably tops before the others all got back in it. I am not sure about that.

Jenkins: So even though you started from scratch, you started right along with everybody else, because no one was making them.

Walker: That's right. You take your Heddon people, they had their Heddon River Runt. It was a popular bait before the war. You had to buy a dozen of them to get two or three that ran good, because no one really knew anything about making baits. And Creek Chub, an old bait company, sold lots of baits. They had to get back in it. All of them did. We had an equal break with them.

Jenkins: So you really started with everyone.

Walker: Yes, and we had a lure that caught fish. And I am going to say that 75% of our lures would run right. When we say "run" we mean act right, have the right action and things like that.

Jenkins: Do the way you wanted them to do.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: So really almost from the start you were one of the leading bait companies in the country.

Walker: Well, I am going to say yes. Of course we weren't in the north. There were a lot of spoons and things like that up there that we didn't make. We don't make them yet.

Jenkins: You now cover the whole country plus some international stuff.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: How did you gradually start covering the whole country? Tell us how you moved out into these areas.

Walker: I just suppose it was word of mouth. Other companies would find out about it and want to try them and various things is all that I know.

Jenkins: So really, I guess, they started coming to you.

Walker: They would come to us. We didn't go into foreign countries or anything trying to push them or anything.

Jenkins: Or into the east. They came to you.

Walker: Of course we got manufacturer's reps up that way as far as

we could get them. But it had been awful hard to break into the north. I don't think there is any question about that.

Jenkins: Why was it so hard to break into?

Walker: I don't know.

Jenkins: I see, it just was.

Walker: Up until, I want to say just a few years ago, the north didn't think that anybody in the south could really manufacture things as good as they could. And they still feel that way, and I guess they are right. They have more knowledge up there, more expertise.

Jenkins: Except for lures.

Walker: Well, I would say yes.

Jenkins: Well, you had to push in the north, but were you still having some of them approach you because they had caught this thing . . .

Walker: At times, yes.

Jenkins: So now you have manufacturer's reps all over the fifty.

Walker: Yes sir, all over the United States.

Jenkins: Continental plus Alaska?

Walker: I don't know whether anyone covers Alaska or not. I couldn't tell you. I just don't know. I don't keep up with the office enough to know.

Jenkins: I believe he said someone in Washington or something like that. And Hawaii?

Walker: I don't know. I don't pay much attention along those lines in the office.

Jenkins: You are an engineer.

Walker: I just work parttime, you know. I haven't got time to . . .

Jenkins: Let's kind of work you up then. Let's follow on through whatever your knowledge is of the expansion, etc., and work you on up until someone came in and bought you out, and you moved into a consultant basis. So just kind of follow on through there in growth, in facilities for instance.

Walker: Nearly every year we had a little growth. I don't think there was but one year that we ever fell back any on volume.

Jenkins: What year was that?

Walker: I don't remember, but there seems to be one year back there. I couldn't tell you just exactly what year it would be.

Jenkins: Do you know why it dropped?

Walker: I think it was the year that all the south was covered with floods. That has been about what, ten or twelve or fifteen years ago, I guess. Twenty years ago, maybe. About twenty years ago, I imagine. You know all of the south all spring was high water and muddy water and everything.

Jenkins: '57, when this lake out here filled up?

Walker: Along back then sometime. I couldn't tell you what year. I think that was one year that we dropped off. People just don't buy lures and things like that when they can't

go fishing. You could fly over all of Tennessee and Alabama and all the country and everything was muddy and flooded. That is the only year that I can remember that had any dropoff, unless there has been one in the last two or three years.

Jenkins: It has been steady all along.

Walker: All along. Of course the nature of the business is that you have to carry your jobbers from September, we will say, until April, and that takes a tremendous amount of money. And that is the reason that I got interested in selling out. I was getting too old to have to worry about financing something like that.

Jenkins: So internal financing was no longer adequate.

Walker: That's right. I don't know what it is now, but a few years ago, why, I suppose they would have a million dollars on the books at that time. Unless you have got some good financing somewhere, you can't handle that. And I didn't want the worry of it myself, and I think Mr. Turbeville got to feeling the same way.

Jenkins: Things were getting too far from doing what you wanted to do, I suppose.

Walker: That's right. And I was approaching the time that I would like to think about retiring, too.

Jenkins: Yes, now this was about when?

Walker: That was about 12 years ago when this all started.

Jenkins: Just give us your recollection of the approach and the sale and then what you have been doing since then.

Walker: Turby and I talked it over, and we decided we might offer it for sale. He had two or three people contact him, and he got to talking with Mr. Ellis, you know. He was interested. They carried on a program for about 6 or 8 months and finally resolved it to a sale. That was about all there was to it. The sale was made on, I believe, 9 notes to be paid out in 9 years. Mr. Ellis's father-in-law was Mr. Morton, and he owned the Morton Potato Chip Company and other businesses connected. And they went into partners and bought it.

Jenkins: The two of them.

Walker: Yes. And they had a lot of stock in, I don't know whether it is General Foods or the other big food company, General Mills. I don't know which one it was. But anyhow, they put up some of that stock as security. Of course it was paid off in regulation time.

Jenkins: Was there much change in the way the company was run?

Walker: Not any change whatever.

Jenkins: Did the Bomber Bait Company benefit from this sale? Was it stronger or anything?

Walker: I think it was stronger, of course. They had financial backing. Their finances were so great that the company could go borrow all of the money they wanted to.

Jenkins: Was there an increase in the rate of expansion after this?

Walker: After two or three years, why, they began to increase quite a bit faster, but we had expanded into other lures and things like that, which we would have probably done if we had kept it, except we may have trouble financing.

Jenkins: Who ran the company after it was sold?

Walker: Mr. Turbeville.

Jenkins: Just like it has always been.

Walker: Just like it has always been. Of course we were owners together, and we talked things over and decided things to do and things like that more than we do now. It wasn't long until I began to retire, and I wasn't available. And I didn't care anything about participating in the management or anything anyway.

Jenkins: You were ready to do more fishing.

Walker: I wanted to do more fishing, and all I wanted to do was to more or less design lures and things like that.

Jenkins: Tell us what your role was or continued to be after the sale. What have you been doing since the sale?

Walker: I worked fulltime for four or five years. I don't remember how long.

Jenkins: Now let's go back and let me pick up. Your principal role always had been engineering and design, I suppose.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: Of equipment and lures.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: Principally. Did you ever get involved in sales?

Walker: No. Oh, if Turby wasn't here and someone called on the telephone and wanted to know something, I would make a decision if necessary.

Jenkins: But your main interest was design and engineering.

Walker: That's right. Anything, any kind of business like that would come up with me I would turn it to him if I could. That was his job.

Jenkins: You were doing what you liked and he . . .

Walker: I might could make a decision that went counter to his judgement, and that wouldn't be good.

Jenkins: So ya'll didn't have much conflict in terms of . . .

Walker: Oh, we would argue like everything over things, but we never did get mad at each other or anything like that. I would argue with him to make him think, and he would do the same thing to me to make me think.

Jenkins: He knew where your decisions lay and you knew where . . .

Walker: Yes, that's right. We depended on each other, I think.

Jenkins: What about the relationship with the new ownership? That ownership is not directly involved in running the company, apparently. There is no one here all of the time.

Walker: No, they are in Dallas, of course.

Jenkins: And apparently they furnish lots of financing. But in terms of what the company needs to do, it must still be

left pretty much the way it was.

Walker: It was. And of course Turby, I never did have to, he consulted with them. They have meetings every so often. They know what is going on.

Jenkins: It is still run pretty much the way it was.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: The same folks.

Walker: That's right. I will tell you something.

Jenkins: All right.

Walker: There has never been a major lure company that has sold and continued to be a success. You can't find one.

Jenkins: Is that right? This one has been at it now 12 years.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: How do you account for that?

Walker: Because of the management. It is the same management.

Jenkins: Same management.

Walker: I can name you the companies.

Jenkins: All right.

Walker: Clark's Water Scout was very successful before the war. And the old man retired and turned it over to his son. It just went out right quick. Wood's Baits Company, he became rather successful just before the war, and right after the war. They sold out. They went kaboom. There just haven't been any of them that . . .

Jenkins: Is Heddon still around?

Walker: They have revived a little, but they got to where they didn't have anything.

Jenkins: Is that what happened to them, did they sell?

Walker: No. They are still the same company. The management of it I am sure changed. But the thing about Heddon, they were top dogs for awhile, but they didn't really know how to make lures, to tell you the truth. Then they got an engineer in there who knew how to remodel some of them and make them better, and they made some better lures and they are doing a little business now.

Jenkins: What were they running on, advertising?

Walker: I don't know. They weren't doing much.

Jenkins: You said that they were big, but they didn't really know how to make lures.

Walker: Well, Creek Chub was the same way. They didn't know how to develop new stuff, or didn't. Well, you take Heddon's main bait, their top bait. You buy a dozen of them to get three or four that would run right. And when somebody else comes out with one and when 75% of them will do what they want them to do or 80%, it is going to knock them for a row of stumps. That is exactly what happened.

Jenkins: So right now Bomber is perhaps the biggest in the country.

Walker: No, it is not the biggest.

Jenkins: Where would you think it is?

Walker: I am going to say it is probably close to the top in

artificial lures, hard baits.

Jenkins: In what you do.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: In what you do you are . . .

Walker: Now if you add spoons, if you add worms and all that kind of stuff, then that is a different proposition.

Jenkins: So you limit yourself to what you call hard lures.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: And that is all.

Walker: That's all. We have got into jigs and worms a little bit. You can see them right there. But we don't sell many of those.

Jenkins: So for what you do in hard lures, where do you think you stand?

Walker: I think we are about as successful as anybody that I know of.

Jenkins: You are right at the top.

Walker: I don't know what we would be in volume. You would just have to find out. I don't know where you would find out.

Jenkins: But in terms of strength, you think you are probably one of, if not the, strongest.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: Survivors.

Walker: I would say that would be right.

Jenkins: So since they took over, you are pretty much doing what you

always did.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: But now you are semi-retired, you say.

Walker: I live in the Valley during the winter.

Jenkins: So now we call you kind of a consultant.

Walker: I guess so.

Jenkins: How much time do you spend now compared to what you did before you semi-retired?

Walker: I come up here about the first of June. And I will work a while, and I will maybe go up north for a month, come back and work a while until the middle of November.

Jenkins: What kind of day will you put in while you are here?

Walker: I come in at 9 o'clock, and I will go home at 3:30, 4:30, 5:30 or 5 o'clock whenever I take a notion.

Jenkins: You are not working by the hour.

Walker: No.

Jenkins: I see. But you love what you are doing.

Walker: It is a lot of fun. It is a lot of fun to make a lure, and go out and test it out, and sell it to people and let them come back and buy some more.

Jenkins: You do a lot of research, then.

Walker: Yes. You have got to.

Jenkins: But your research is fun, I suppose.

Walker: Well, it is not tiresome, I will say that.

Jenkins: Do you eat lots of fish?

Walker: I could eat fish once a week.

Jenkins: But you don't try to eat all that you catch.

Walker: No.

Jenkins: What are you mostly, a bass fisherman or what?

Walker: I mostly fish for black bass, stripers. I go up north salmon fishing.

Jenkins: How far north?

Walker: Wisconsin to Lake Michigan. I just got back from a month up there.

Jenkins: What kind of equipment do you go out with?

Walker: The same thing that is used here. We caught, I guess, forty salmon that would go up to 24 pounds last month.

Jenkins: What do you do with them?

Walker: We can them and put them in pint jars. We take a pressure cooker along. We catch them and that night we can them.

Jenkins: Where, in a cabin?

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: And carry them home then.

Walker: Bring them home. We just had a big salmon feed last week.

Jenkins: Oh, really? How do you cook salmon for a big group?

Walker: Well, we just pulled them out of the can and let them eat them like . . .

Jenkins: I see. Like it comes out of the grocery store..

Walker: Yes. The same thing.

Jenkins: Do you ever get up to Alaska or Canada?

Walker: No, I have never been up there. I have been up in Washington and Oregon.

Jenkins: And Turby, I think, right now is down in . . .

Walker: Florida.

Jenkins: Doing a little research.

Walker: I used to go down there, but I quit going. It is too long and hot and everything.

Jenkins: Are you as retired now as you expected to be?

Walker: I don't know.

Jenkins: As you want to be. Let's put it that way.

Walker: I told him the other day something about taking out, and he wouldn't let me. I work just when I want to.

Jenkins: Well, that is part of my question.

Walker: If they want me to do something, I try to do it.

Jenkins: Do you want to continue to be only semi-retired?

Walker: Oh, yes.

Jenkins: You want to be able to come down here and do something.

Walker: I would like to. I need something to do, something to keep you thinking.

Jenkins: And you are how old now?

Walker: I will be 77 the third day of January.

Jenkins: You are still getting in plenty of fishing.

Walker: All that I want.

Jenkins: Now you live up near . . .

Walker: I live up on Lake Texoma.

Jenkins: Can you fish from your backyard?

Walker: Well, I could. Not from my backyard, but I walk 30 yards down.

Jenkins: Great. Do you have a boat?

Walker: I have a boat and boat shed. I just walk down to my boat and take off.

Jenkins: Over all of these years that you have been making baits, you have lived in Gainesville. You have been a citizen of Gainesville now for a long, long time.

Walker: Since '38.

Jenkins: Have you got involved much in local organizations?

Walker: Not very heavy. I was on the Chamber of Commerce one time, and that is about it.

Jenkins: Never got involved in clubs, civic clubs.

Walker: I didn't have the time to do that.

Jenkins: Did you ever get involved in politics?

Walker: No. I could have been, but I didn't want to.

Jenkins: So the Bomber Bait Company for most of your life has been taking up all of your time.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: And interest and love, really.

Walker: That's right.

Jenkins: Is there anything particular, had you just as soon be in some other kind of business, or is there something peculiar about this one that you really like? What is it that you

get out of it?

Walker: To begin with I like to fish. And it is a lot of enjoyment to make a lure and use it and not have to buy one. Not necessarily to save the money, but the fact that you did it yourself. A lot of people like to do that. There are a lot of people, as a hobby that make them, you know. I think the only other business that would have suited me would have been the florist business.

Jenkins: Have you ever felt that the training that you got for that has been of any use in this business?

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: Like?

Walker: Biology, zoology.

Jenkins: How so?

Walker: When you are dealing with a fish you are talking about zoology, and if you are dealing with plant life in the lake you are talking about biology. If you put them together you can figure out maybe where the fish are and everything.

Jenkins: How about colors or anything like that?

Walker: I don't know.

Jenkins: Not necessarily.

Walker: I don't fool with that.

Jenkins: Oh, you don't do colors.

Walker: Oh, you are talking about . . .

Jenkins: I am talking about the colors of your lures.

Walker: I use to, but not any more. They do all of that. I thought you were talking about fish colorblind and things like that.

Jenkins: No. Are they?

Walker: I don't know.

Jenkins: But this is part of it, I suppose. Now you used to do colors. You used to choose colors for lures. Most of that design was for the fishermen and not for fish, I suppose, most of the color.

Walker: We thought it was for the fish.

Jenkins: Did you ever try to keep track of the same bait in different colors and how many fish you caught or anything?

Walker: You didn't have to keep track. You just automatically knew.

Jenkins: As you fished. Was it, and I know that this is just a fisherman's experience, but was it type of fish for color or different days or how did you decide which color to use today?

Walker: I think in various lakes maybe fish will like certain colors better. And then of course days, cloudy days and bright days maybe would make a little difference. But I go by more what the fish in that particular lake would like, colors they would like. Texoma, light colors use to be the very thing. Lake Murray, where we developed the Bomber, you wanted a dark color. You wanted black, orange,

that kind of color.

Jenkins: Why was that?

Walker: I don't know.

Jenkins: It just happened to work that way.

Walker: Lake Murray is a heavy populated crawfish lake. And this lake over here, Texoma, is a heavily populated shad lake. There is the difference in color. Crawfish would be dark.

Jenkins: You try to pick a bait similar to what they are eating, then.

Walker: I think that is right, but I don't know for sure. I don't know whether that would be right line or not, but that is what we think.

Jenkins: That is what you go by.

Walker: That is what I think.

Jenkins: You don't keep track except in your own mind.

Walker: Yes. Of course, you take these writers that write in these magazines they have got an answer to all of that.

Jenkins: Do you read much of that stuff?

Walker: No, not any more.

Jenkins: You used to, though.

Walker: Yes, I used to read some of it.

Jenkins: For enjoyment or to compare what you thought with them or what?

Walker: Both. Some of them are so far off that I would get disgusted and don't read any further.

Jenkins: You have been in this business for a long time, and the

business has been around since about . . .

Walker: '46.

Jenkins: Going on 40 years, 35 or so. How do you account for the success of the company? It obviously has been very successful because, one, it has survived, it has expanded, and it is very strong..

Walker: We made lures that would do certain things, and would do them right and the quality was good. And another thing when we started out, any jobber that bought lures from us, if he didn't sell them all or he wanted to return them, we would take some of them, we would take them back. And if he had any faulty lures we would replace those.

Jenkins: So one, you had a good product. People knew about it and largely they came to you over the years.

Walker: It was successful. It would catch fish.

Jenkins: But a lot of people sometimes make a good product, but they don't know how to do other things to . . .

Walker: Maybe they don't treat the public right. Our position on it was that if we treated the public right, they would treat us right. And we had our pricing policy. We didn't sell Tom's place one price, and we didn't sell Dick's place another price, etc., down the line. In other words we held the line pretty well the same. Nowadays you can't do that. It has got to where big dealers, big business, just forces you to change it a little. How much I don't

know because in the last fifteen years I haven't paid a lot of attention to that. But for a long time, for years and years, we didn't vary much.

Jenkins: As you look down the road, what hopes or visions do you have for the direction of Bomber Bait? Any?

Walker: To just continue like it is is all that I can see and taking advantage of new ideas and new procedures and everything.

Jenkins: Do you have people coming along who can do what you have been doing all these years? Are you developing folks?

Walker: To a certain extent. I don't know how thorough it is.

Jenkins: Are you still the principal designer?

Walker: We are cutting about a year and a half ahead, I guess, before we get all that we have got on the board into production.

Jenkins: Do you have other designers?

Walker: There is one boy working back there who can do some.

Jenkins: So you are developing him.

Walker: He is making all of the equipment, tools and things like that. He is pretty good.

Jenkins: He is coming along.

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: In terms of location, here is one of the strongest lure companies. I guess you are a lure company, not a bait company.

Walker: Yes. Either one.

Jenkins: In the country and possibly the world. I don't know enough about the world market. Are you one of the strongest in the world?

Walker: I don't think there are any of them out of the United States, except one or two in Denmark and Sweden, that has any volume. And they depend on the United States for their volume.

Jenkins: So you are one of the strongest in the world.

Walker: Well, I am going to say that we are in the top ten, top five maybe. I don't know.

Jenkins: And here you are setting in Gainesville, Texas, a town of what now?

Walker: 15,000.

Jenkins: Have you ever had any desire, any reason to want to go to a bigger place?

Walker: No, with the exception that, if you say you were closer to Dallas you would have available people that handle all kinds of equipment, all kinds of tools and engineering firms and things like that that you might call on a little quicker and easier. But all you have to do is pick up a telephone.

Jenkins: You never really considered moving then?

Walker: No.

Jenkins: You are satisfied with what Bomber Bait has done.

Walker: We are close enough to Dallas and Fort Worth that we can get what we want pretty quick.

Jenkins: What about any desire to have corporate offices up in the towers with the big boys. Have you ever wanted that?

Walker: I have never had an office. I don't know.

Jenkins: I see. Have you had any aspirations for Bomber Bait Company to be downtown New York in a skyscraper?

Walker: No.

Jenkins: Have you been involved much with labor, in getting labor and training labor, and turnover and things like that?

Walker: Not in the last twenty years.

Jenkins: You have strictly been in design and engineering?

Walker: Yes.

Jenkins: Okay. We are just about to that spot, and I have asked the questions that I wanted to. But this is your interview and I want to be sure that you get into it everything that you want to. Is there anything that I should have asked you and didn't, anything that you would like to add before we finish it up?

Walker: Not that I know of.

Jenkins: If there isn't anything else then, we will close it at this point, and I thank you for a very interesting interview.

Walker: Well, thank you. I enjoyed it.