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*Max Delsignore:* Northern New York Community Podcast. Stories from the heart of our community.

Thank you for joining us on the Northern New York Community Podcast, I'm your host, Max Delsignore. We are very excited for our conversation with a couple recognized as one of the most active community philanthropists in the North Country. They grew up in Pennsylvania and after spending a brief time in Cleveland, Ohio, Tom and Mabel Walker settled in Watertown more than 60 years ago. It didn't take long before they placed their energy and effort into a number of causes, community organizations and civic groups, and they have been leaders and catalysts for positive change in an always evolving community.

Their legacy in this area will undoubtedly be lasting, and giving is about much more than dollars and cents, and that statement will make even more sense as we listen to Tom and Mabel's story. Thanks again for both of you for coming on the podcast today. We're very excited to also have Rande Richardson, our Executive Director from the Northern New York Community Foundation who will have a few questions as Tom and Mabel share their story. To dive right in, when you look back at 60 years ago, and spending all the time that you have here in the North Country, why did you decide to make Watertown, New York and the North Country, this area, why did you make this your home?

*Tom Walker:* I guess because I poured soup over my interviewer at Case Institute.

*Max Delsignore:* Tell us a little bit about that story.

*Tom Walker:* It was when I was – I was head of the faculty dining room. The head chief, or head waiter. They called me and asked me if I would be, out of courtesy, interview Mister Wilson Watkins, who was with the Air Brake at that time, who was up – who came to Cleveland every year, and there was no one signed up to interview. And I said, 'Sure, I'd be glad to do that.' So hurrying to get up to the one o'clock appointment, I spilled soup all over this fellow's jacket, right down the front, I caught it with my little finger, and boy, I was embarrassed, you know, mopping it all up, getting ready and running up there, and who was there but the fellow I spilled the soup on.

After the interview I told him that, you know, I liked this program and I would be interested to get an invitation. Come to Watertown. Because that was a distance from Pennsylvania, where our parents lived. We were close enough that we could get there, if needed, every so often, or even an emergency. But we were – wanted to start our own family sort of by ourselves, and that worked out well for Watertown and we liked what we saw up here. We liked the people, we liked the climate, believe it or not, and we liked the job that I had hopes of obtaining.

*Max Delsignore:* And that -

*Tom Walker:* And I did.

*Max Delsignore:* And that position was with New York Air Break at the time?

*Tom Walker:* New York Air Break, as an Executive Engineer.

*Max Delsignore:* How did the communities differ? So you're about to move to Watertown, New York, and to the North Country, how did this area differ from where you grew up? And Tom, you're from Pittsburg, and Mabel, you're from [Inaudible: 03:11] which is about, what, 90 minutes away from each other? How were those -

*Mabel Walker:* An hour, yeah.

*Max Delsignore:* About an hour?

*Mabel Walker:* An hour, yes. Now, where I grew up was a small college town. So I was used to small towns, and when I went to nursing school I was down there for three years in Pittsburg. Then we moved to Cleveland, where Tom was going to school and while he was going to school I worked at the Cleveland Clinic, and then at the Fisher Body, which is part of General Motors. And the reason why I did that was because they paid twice as much as what Cleveland Clinic paid.

*Tom Walker:* At the time.

*Mabel Walker:* And being that he was going to school and not working we needed the money. When we came to Watertown it was a small town, I came from a small town, I lived in a city for six years, I did not like city living, because you were just there. That was it, you were just there. So this suited me fine and I guess suited Tom fine too because being a small community you could get involved with anything and everything you wanted to be involved in. And we had

just the one child then but we became very involved with the church, and that's where I did most of whatever I did outside the home, was working with the children in the church and then of course as the children grew up we got more involved with – I got more involved with community things.

*Max Delsignore:* What was the motivation to dive right into working with some of the activities with the church, or even some of the civic groups of the time here? What were some of the motivations, I guess, to get into those right away when you were here?

*Mabel Walker:* Well, because we grew – I grew up and Tom grew up too in a family that was a close knit family. We did everything together, we went to church together, all our – most of our activities were all together. You know, my family was a close knit family and there were six children in that – in my family. And so when we did anything, we did it as a family.

*Tom Walker:* That's the way it worked with us. We were never – knew what a babysitter was, everywhere my family went I tagged along. Or vice versa.

*Max Delsignore:* Do you remember outside of the church what those first few civic groups, community organizations that you said, you know, their mission or their purpose or cause really makes sense, I'd really like to help them in some way?

*Tom Walker:* Yeah, I think so. I came from a big city and I liked Watertown because it had the semblance of a city. It's hard to go from the city and live in the country. Just couldn't seem to do that, but I liked the city because it had a lot of the amenities that a big city has, but on a very micro situation.

*Max Delsignore:* Can you share a couple of examples, Tom, that kind of fit that example?

*Tom Walker:* I was working of course at the air break, and as my off time we didn't – we started with the church, who we figured if we were going to get into both of us being outsiders, so to speak, no relatives up here at all, in fact I had to look at the map to find out where it was when I finally decided to come up here, is that we had to find a base, and probably the best base we found was being in the church. We found one, oh, we found one, and we've been a member of our first Presbyterian Church for over – well over fifty years.

*Mabel Walker:* Sixty years.

*Tom Walker:* About 60 years, yeah. So -

*Mabel Walker:* Sixty years. We've been married almost 68 years. So we've been here 65 years.

*Rande Richardson:* Tell us about how you met.

*Mabel Walker:* Oh, how we met?

*Rande Richardson:* Yeah.

*Mabel Walker:* I was in nursing school, and I had a roommate whose boyfriend went to W&J, which is Washington and Jefferson College down in Little Washington. This one night we had a dance at the hospital nursing home. I had to work, I had a three to eleven shift that night. So my roommate, her boyfriend needed somebody to come up with him from Little Washington, so Tom was that guy. And he had a blind date with one of my nursing friends, and when I come off what we call the floor, when we came off the floor duty, I went down to see what was going on at the party and I met him down there and I looked at him and I said, 'That's the guy for me.'

*Rande Richardson:* And what's your version of the story? [Crosstalk: 08:09] So and in that respect, just as we're on that topic, in today's world, you know, things are challenging in this respect. But what would you attribute the success of your long and happy marriage?

*Tom Walker:* I think the fact that we've learned to work together over the years. From what I've seen and hear in other places, that people get married and then they find out that they either don't want to work together or they can't work together. And I think we sort of believe that the old adage is if you're going to be serious about getting married, maybe a year's pre-relationship is a good way to sort of test what you can live with and what you can't live with. And if you – after that period, then you make a decision either to go for it or to get away from it. And we did that a little earlier, but it worked out quite well for us. We've had four children and we have two left that are excellent.

We enjoy them, they give us some support. It's been a good life up in Watertown.

*Rande Richardson:* Mabel?

- Mabel Walker:* Well, everybody has their own personality. Everybody has differences. So you have to learn to live together, to cooperate together. Now, I tend to be bossy, as everybody knows. But you have to learn to give and take, that's basically that in a nutshell, you learn to give and take, everybody doesn't have the same personality, everybody doesn't do the same things the same way all the time. It's just a matter of learning to live together.
- Tom Walker:* The fact that we both shared sort of complementary skills or desires, what is, that if our kids got hurt, they'd run to mommy. You know, she put the band aid on them, and then when they got old enough they'd want to play or go canoeing or hiking or something, then I would take over. So it was a good balance. Marrying a nurse is a great thing.
- Mabel Walker:* At times.
- Max Delsignore:* One of the things you mentioned, and you touched on it a little bit earlier too, was just raising your family here in this area. Probably one of the stronger qualities of the North Country, just given its environment. What are some of the other standout qualities of living in this area and being part of the North Country that are visible or standout in your mind?
- Mabel Walker:* You're able to diversify yourself in many things, and you get to know a good share of the people that live here. So it just makes a better rounded person all around. Both not only for yourself, your husband and especially your children.
- Tom Walker:* Quality of life. When the army moved in here, of course they consulted with the commander and I remember telling him that we'd like to have the army here, I have no problem with that. I said but we want you to respect our quality of life up here. You know, we have our good times, bad areas, so forth, but they're somewhat of at a minimum. He gave me a salute and said, 'Yes, sir.'
- Max Delsignore:* So Tom, when you say quality of life, what are the elements of that phrase?
- Tom Walker:* Well, I think family groups, the development in the community, which some people claim that's a little bit on the slow side. But it's said once it gets done it's done well. I'm not sure why we're hurrying to the end of the earth, that we like to live – we like change but have it come systematically. That's what we enjoyed up here, is the firmness of the quality.

- Max Delsignore:* Now, you had mentioned at one time that you kind of envisioned only being in this area for maybe ten years.
- Tom Walker:* Yeah.
- Max Delsignore:* But obviously you changed your mind.
- Tom Walker:* Well, after about ten years my father passed away and I had to do some work for his estate, and we were thinking that of maybe moving to a new position. And we got to looking at it and said, ‘Well, if you go to a new position then you’ve got to start making arrange – relationships with people in your area, find out where the men’s room is, so to speak, and we like it here, we know where the men’s room is now. And we ought to just continue that. So I think that’s where we finally got to the idea that we liked to do something for the community.
- Mabel Walker:* Plus the fact is with our children, they made friends, and to disrupt four children’s lives and moving them and trying to get them settled into something, we decided that that’s not a good idea. The kids need, which they don’t have today, stability.
- Rande Richardson:* Stability.
- Mabel Walker:* They need a stability which kids do not have today, and this is one of the reasons too that we decided to stay here, because we wanted this stability for the children.
- Tom Walker:* Now when we get together with our kids, the two, then they’ll bring up instances where they had experiences as young people, what they did, vis-à-vis the community and with the family. You know, I forgot a lot of that, but it always impresses me was what they did was certainly above board. They weren’t trying to do somebody in, or do some hazardous things, but just fun things that kids like to do. Nowadays you’ve got problems with not only alcohol, which is a standard, but with drugs and disruptions in the family. It seems to be a big problem up here, it probably is most everywhere.
- Rande Richardson:* On the topic of kids, while we’re on that, one of the things that I’d like to hear from you is one, because this part of why we’re doing this is we’re going to be playing this for years and we’re going to be putting this in front of school children and young people and we want them to hear about people who have made a difference. One, I guess I would ask how do you see your role in positioning the next generation to do some of the things you’ve done, and talk to

me a little bit about the importance to you of having your children be involved in some of the things that you have.

*Tom Walker:* Well, our daughter, who lives in the area, and looks like she's going to stay here because I think all kids sort of have the idea that they, as we did, you get to a certain period, you've got to move. And I think she feels now we build a home here, they have a lot of friends, they have a lot of relatives on Pete's side. So there's a good interplay there, and we try to teach them that knowing how the free enterprise system works, how the capitalistic system works, it's not perfect. Some people have the ability to make more money than others, one reason or another, and I have no problem with that. The thing is that some of that money should be shared, and I like to see it shared on a private basis, instead of a government basis.

So I would fight for less regulations in this area, is to try to get people to see that they can sustain their area by helping out areas that need some help here and there. And I think Watertown doesn't do too bad a job at that.

*Mabel Walker:* Two, you try and teach the kids the old adage do unto others what you would have them do unto you. Which does not just mean to you personally but to everybody as a group.

*Rande Richardson:* And you know, if you could envision a middle school student listening to you and wanting to hear something from you that would inspire them to do this, what would you say it has meant to you in your life to be able to do that?

*Tom Walker:* Well, we've had the advantage of having funds that would allow us to do things that a lot of people might not be able to do, and because of that we think we need to share some of that with a community. And I know that the foundation is trying to develop that idea, and I think that – I think that's a normal consequence of a system that I think works reasonably well, but it needs to be that we'd like to see the private sector supply some help in that area.

*Mabel Walker:* The school kids, school children need to work to their potential so that as they grow up they'll be able to do what we do, instead of always on the iPad or whatever they call those things, which we're not involved in, they need to work to their potential and not let anybody stand in their way. Because if they don't do it, nobody's going to do it for them.

*Max Delsignore:* To go back to something you said about the ability to give unto others, with the next generation too, whether to you or through young professionals, sometimes getting over that first hurdle of making your first gift, or making your first effort, whether it's volunteering or making a gift to an organization, it can be difficult. What would you say or what would you – what would the message be to encourage the younger generation, who's thinking about giving for the first time but they just can't get over that hump, what would you say to encourage them to make sure that they follow through with giving back?

*Mabel Walker:* Well, my – one thing they might do with the organization that they want to give to is to get involved with that organization in volunteering. And then they can see what the organization is about, where their money would go, and then give. Now I know you can't get involved with all organizations, but basically in a sense I think most every organization here in Watertown you can. I personally believe in we need to give to our local communities, and not to give to the national organizations.

*Max Delsignore:* Why is giving locally so important to you and Tom?

*Mabel Walker:* Because that is our community.

*Tom Walker:* We live here.

*Mabel Walker:* Everybody that lives in this community, it is their community, so we need to give back to our community.

*Tom Walker:* Ditto.

*Max Delsignore:* What have been some of the best experiences that you've had giving back to this area? And not necessarily just a financial commitment, but just your volunteerism and your time as well. What have been some of the best experiences that you remember?

*Mabel Walker:* Well, that's hard to say because -

*Rande Richardson:* Well, talk a little bit about Hospice, because that certainly has been a keystone piece of your life.

*Mabel Walker:* Well, it is, yes. When our first daughter, Wendy, was sick and died, she was in the hospital. We had a lot of people help us, so you need that support. Whereas a lot of people, who have somebody die, especially children, they don't have that same support, so Hospice gives them that support. I took care of our

second daughter that died, she was on Hospice, and Hospice helped us through that, and she died at home. I also took care of my mother at home. Hospice helped us.

*Max Delsignore:* What does it mean to be at the ground floor of creating an organization that has done so much since it's been started here, for 30 years, the organization's evolved in a great way. What does it mean to you to be able to be the person that was kind of the catalyst for this?

*Mabel Walker:* That that organization is able to help families get through a trying situation. Excuse me. I still cry for our daughters.

*Tom Walker:* I can't think of anything specific, but the same idea that Mabel's mentioned, that you get a satisfaction out of doing something that's good for other people in your particular community. Because you can see it and I'm very much interested in doing that, mostly from what the churches used to do, all churches used to do that themselves and the government has taken over a lot of that. That might be the consequence of civilization, I'm not sure. But the idea of the individual working and helping other people, somebody said you don't get through this life by yourself. You need help from other people in the community. I think that's true.

*Mabel Walker:* One thing I'd like to point out is now Tom and I get recognition for the things we do, as well as other people. But I want everybody to know that no matter how much you give, or how little you give, it takes every single person in this city to make this work. And if it wasn't for every single person helping to make it work it wouldn't work. So I just – it just isn't a couple people doing it, it's the whole community working together.

*Tom Walker:* As far as the financing, the government had made a good move in providing an incentive for people to give money so that if they do give up to a certain point that that is deductible against their taxes. I end up giving more than I can write off. But that's alright, I'm comfortable with that, and I'm comfortable with working with an outfit, the Northern New York Community Foundation, that is promoting the idea of philanthropy among younger people to start with. And how do you get them to start? Well, I guess you have to work at it. You have to let them know that we need their help to make the community work, not only money but time and talent.

*Max Delsignore:* How important is that to this area's future? Philanthropy as a whole.

*Tom Walker:* I see it, you know, as a smaller group instead of a big, large group. I think it's quite important that we do this and I think it was really a god send, the way the community foundation here was started. It is probably one of the – well, maybe the third biggest one in the state, I think.

*Rande Richardson:* Tom, you had actually worked at the Community Foundation for a little bit. Can you just talk a little bit about that?

*Tom Walker:* They asked me if I would take over the directorship of the foundation, because at the time they had somebody as a bookkeeper keeping track of the funds and so forth, and they used a lot of it for student loans. At that time the asset value of the foundation was about 600,000 dollars. As compared to what it is now, and when I was told that there was a person in town that was going to give something over a million or so dollars, it meant that now we're talking about some bigger bucks, and they needed somebody to get that directed. So they asked me if I would do that, and I did that for maybe three or four years, I think it was.

*Max Delsignore:* You've seen and you've been involved together in so many agencies, organizations. Tom, when you were the Mayor of the city of Watertown, what layers, different layers of the community did you get a chance to see, that maybe you had not seen before?

*Tom Walker:* Well, quite a few of them. Because you get involved with different layers of the community, whether you want to or not. Because the phone starts to ring. When the bridge is out people call you, what am I going to do? You know, things like that come up, and then we either try to solve them the best way we can, and somebody told me that there's a lot of problems within the city you can't solve, but you can listen, and see what you can do with that experience of just listening.

*Rande Richardson:* And Mabel, as being sort of the other half of the Mayor at the time, how did that impact you, how did you support him and his desires for a better community as Mayor? Just give us a sense of what that meant for you as he was Mayor, and how you dealt with that.

*Mabel Walker:* Well, I just felt that Tom was a capable person and that the city needed a good leader and he was it.

*Rande Richardson:* So you were staunch defender and advocate?

*Mabel Walker:* Exactly. Yeah.

- Tom Walker:* Well, I had some reservations about that, because I never thought in my dreams at all that I'd ever go for public office. And when they came to me and said, 'We'd like to have you run for Mayor.' Then I got to thinking that if I were mayor, and people would climb on your back and call you and call you all kinds of names, that I'm wondering how Mabel would take that, because -
- Mabel Walker:* I think that's what I was getting at.
- Tom Walker:* - when they start attacking me, Mabel's going to on that phone and so I had to weigh that out, and she did very well with that. But I used to tell people when I was in office, I got three - four phones, and they're all listed in the book. Now, you can call me any time you want, but don't call me at night, because the phone is on Mabel's side of the bed.
- Rande Richardson:* I love it.
- Max Delsignore:* And how many calls did you get while you were -
- Tom Walker:* You know -
- Max Delsignore:* - as Mayor?
- Tom Walker:* - it's interesting, Jim Brett, who was one of my favorite councilmen, said, 'You're going to get all kinds of calls when you get in office.' I said, 'That's alright. I think I can handle that.' But I think they realized that I was going to take a lot of nonsense, and out of eight years I had three calls.
- Mabel Walker:* At night time, at night time.
- Tom Walker:* One of which - at night time. And one of them was legit. There was a young lady, home from Christmas -
- Mabel Walker:* That's what you -
- Tom Walker:* - yeah, I just mentioned that, and she was caught with no way to get home, and they'd called the Police Department and said, 'We can't do anything because you're in Black River. That's not our jurisdiction.' I called the police and I said, 'You know about this young lady and she can't get home because her mother's sick and her father's in the hospital.' And that was something like one or two o'clock in the morning. I said, 'Get a taxi, go out and get her and bring her home and send me the bill.' That was it. I didn't hear from her again.

*Rande Richardson:* Will you always feel as though Mayor and Tom Walker, those words will always be used together? I know when you're out, people still see you as the Mayor.

*Tom Walker:* Yeah, I – it seems to work like that. I know when – a couple of years after I'd gotten out of office we would go up to the music up in the park and Mabel would say to me, 'You don't have any special privilege now, you're going to have to find a parking place on your own.' And I said, 'Yeah, that's probably alright.' So when I drove in the policeman said, 'Hi, Mayor. I've got a spot right over here for you.' So I can't escape that particularly, and I get that not only from around here but every once in a while that'll crop up when I'm up in the North Country.

*Max Delsignore:* How has the area changed for the better? In the 60 years you've lived here, more than 60 years you've lived here, what are some of the most positive things, or things that you see about the North Country today that make you proud that you raised your family here?

*Mabel Walker:* Well, that's hard to answer because the main thing is we stayed here to raise our family. So we felt it was a good community, and always has been a good community. Now, the one thing that I am concerned about today is the children, and the drugs. And we are not unique to that situation, so it isn't something that we either haven't done or didn't do. I mean as a community. And this is the one thing that really concerns both Tom and I, is the drug issue. Other than that this community has been fine, we wouldn't have stayed.

*Rande Richardson:* And on that respect, what gives you the most hope for our future? I know there's a lot of negative out there, what gives you the most hope for our future?

*Tom Walker:* I guess staying positive as possible, and trying in whatever way you have of trying to make it that way. You get a little frustrated when you see some of the things that are going on in our national scene, and even in our local scene, that you really don't have a whole lot of control about. But as I say, you do your thing, you do what you think is right, and stay with it. And we hope that other people will take that same position.

*Mabel Walker:* I think the best thing that could happen is for the whole electrical system to go down. This would eliminate these kids doing all of these things that would keep them off of all of this stuff. They

would have to knuckle under, they would have to learn to read and write and communicate with their mouth, so to speak. It would eliminate all this kind of stuff, whereas kids seem to be stuck with these iPads, or iPhones or whatever heck you call them. You can tell that we're not in tune to this stuff, but these kids need to get rid of that stuff and learn to communicate and work with each other, either separately or in – and in a group. And if as long as we have all of these things, they're not going to learn to do that.

*Tom Walker:*

You know, I look back on our life and life of our family, is that you live in a certain area and do certain things, and then when you get older you see that the new generation is doing things differently. And you're sort of out of the loop, and we see that too. But life will go on, and we're not the Twitter kind of philosophy. But I remember when I was a kid we didn't have radio, we didn't have television. We went out and made our own fun. I don't mean getting into trouble, but we were finding out how to live out in the woods and do some fishing, and maybe hunting. I'm not a hunter, but I can see those things that are more positive than trying to hack into a system, or some of these other things that are going on now.

And we're just sort of out of the loop, and I think that's normal.

*Mabel Walker:*

For old people.

*Rande Richardson:*

I want to just – this is not on script but I want to just – and you can answer it or not, but I really – more directly, how do you – what does it mean to you to know that for instances, Laurie, who's here in this community, Laurie -

*Mabel Walker:*

Yeah.

*Rande Richardson:*

- what does it mean to you to know that now she is becoming more engaged and has begun her own journey of philanthropy and becoming involved, what does that mean to you personally? I mean it's got to be important to you, it's got to feel good, because part of that came from you.

*Mabel Walker:*

Well, following in our footsteps, basically. And not letting the outside world influence her that much.

*Rande Richardson:*

So you would say that you're very happy that it's developed this way?

*Mabel Walker:*

Yes.

- Tom Walker:* Oh yeah. Yeah, and she does it well, I think.
- Rande Richardson:* And does it give you some comfort to know that she will be part of perpetuating your legacy as well?
- Tom Walker:* Very much so. Very much so. We like the community here and we think it's got a good potential and we're glad to see that they've made the decision to be in the area after we're passed off.
- Mabel Walker:* Well, Pete and Laurie work very well together. So that they complement each other -
- Rande Richardson:* Sort of like you two?
- Mabel Walker:* - with what they're doing, yes.
- Rande Richardson:* Yeah. This one's just for you, Mabel. And again, you can answer or not but if you were to answer the question what do you feel is the biggest misconception about Mabel Walker?
- Mabel Walker:* Well, I used to say to people I'm a real bitch. I worked hard to get that title and believe me, I work just as hard to keep it.
- Rande Richardson:* So – but what – so I think most people recognize that.
- Mabel Walker:* Most people recognize that.
- Rande Richardson:* So what would you say that maybe people don't know about you that you'd like them to know about you?
- Mabel Walker:* Well -
- Tom Walker:* They know her through – pretty much through Hospice. And a lot of people would call her for minor information on medical problems, and they used to say be careful, because now you're treading on medical -
- Mabel Walker:* Well -
- Tom Walker:* - precedent.
- Mabel Walker:* - two – when our children were growing up, we had kids from all over in the neighborhood, and different – the kids would say to me, 'Do you remember I lived with you for over a month?' I don't remember that, and a girl said to me the other day, 'Do you remember you gave me a surprise birthday party?' I don't

remember doing that, it was just the fact that we had kids around all the time, because we felt that this was the way it should be as a family. So you know, there were just kids around all the time and we treated those kids like we treated our own kids.

*Rande Richardson:* And this is more of a comment than a question, but I've always felt that while you might call it bitch, I call it you care enough about this community to speak your voice, and there's a lot of people who don't do that and let things just pass. So you know, I'm just saying that maybe on your behalf, but I've always felt like the reason that she's maybe perceived that way is because she genuinely cares.

*Mabel Walker:* Oh, I do care about the community. There again, we've been here all this while. If we didn't care about the community we would've been long gone.

*Rande Richardson:* And you probably wouldn't be as vocal, if you didn't care, right?

*Tom Walker:* Right.

*Mabel Walker:* Exactly, I wouldn't be as vocal.

*Tom Walker:* I was out with a fellow here that's a native in the area, and he said, 'Well, how long have you been here?' Well, I said, 'I've been here over 60 years.' He said, 'You've been here longer than I've been alive.' So being out of the area is not a big problem for it. We like to use that as a crutch in a way, but we probably – part of the community. I think we've had a good life up here. I don't know whether I'd want to be anywhere else than in the North Country. I like the uniqueness of it, the Adirondack Park, and the openness of the area. They say, well, we're a little bit slow. That's alright, where the hell are we going? You know, everybody's got to have to have this and have to have that.

I learned to deal with what I have available. Whereas my brother in law loves to get new equipment all the time, new computers and so forth. I'm satisfied with the dial phone, because I know the damn thing works.

*Mabel Walker:* Well, back to my speaking up, I do speak up when I see something wrong I speak up, I don't hold back. And even today, a lot of people when they see me instead of saying hello they'll say, 'Well, what kind of trouble are you in today?'

- Max Delsignore:* I was just going to say, I think it's fair to say that the community has evolved the way it has because of your voices, in a very positive way. I mean the way the community has changed because of some of the advocacy and things that you believe in. When you reflect back and think about the time you spent here and your life as a whole, how do you want the community to remember Tom and Mabel Walker?
- Tom Walker:* Well, I'd say you ought to ask the people that are here. We don't know that, we're doing our thing as we see and the way we've been brought up, to make a good community. And if we're known, we're known because people will follow maybe our example.
- Rande Richardson:* I've a couple questions that are really more Community Foundation-centric, but also – and I guess I'll start with a more broad question. You know, you give to so many things, geographically and types and but when you make a decision, either individually or as a couple, what are the primary factors that influence that decision and then what do you expect in return for your support of a project or an organization?
- Mabel Walker:* Well, Tom Walker – we expect to give to many things, instead of giving one lump sum to one big project, we feel that all of these organizations need help. And if we help these organizations and we feel that other people will follow suit and help them also.
- Tom Walker:* I was an Executive for a foundation out of Pittsburg, and – a small foundation that was a family foundation, and we did the very same thing that we're doing now, is to try to help the small groups that need a little help here and there. It's you buy the dinner and I'll buy the cigarettes, and we've done that with a number of outfits in and about Pittsburg. We've worked with Melon [Inaudible: 41:54] Foundation, they buy the dinners, we buy the chocolate, chips, you know, things like that. And they said that's very helpful, because they'll do the one thing but they don't do the follow up on the little things. And that's what – I guess that's what I'm coming from, is – I don't have that kind of money to do that, either – is that we like to help where we can in our local community.
- Rande Richardson:* And when you give, other than the satisfaction of giving, what do you expect from the organizations you give to, what do you expect from them if they don't do this it might influence your future decisions?
- Tom Walker:* Well, I guess I have in mind that I don't like to pay taxes. I like the incentive of giving, for one thing, I'm not sure when we were

talking with Heritage Foundation, when they came up with the idea of the flat tax, and it sounded like a good idea, but he said nobody wants to take it. They're not running with it. And it seems to me that spreads your flat tax over the person with a lot of money, as opposed to the person that has little money. Everybody has a skin in the operation. I think that's the way it goes. Now I think they're getting closer to that idea, is that the fellow that makes a lot of money, they either use it for themselves and keep it, or they may start business or help business as an investor to get started.

I think that's a good incentive to use your money wisely.

*Rande Richardson:* In regards to – obviously you've been loyal supporters of our organization. What would you like to see happen, I mean in the time that Max and I are there over the next two decades, what would you dream for the Community Foundation to accomplish?

*Mabel Walker:* That's hard to answer, because you're working very hard at it now.

*Tom Walker:* I think that's -

*Mabel Walker:* And accomplishing a lot of things.

*Tom Walker:* Keep doing what you're doing.

*Rande Richardson:* But what stands out in that respect? What do you like best about what we're doing?

*Tom Walker:* I think everything. The idea is that you – we have the advantage of having a large pot of money to be able to help the community.

*Mabel Walker:* The best thing that I can see that you've instituted within your group now is going into the school system and having the young people do what you're doing on a smaller scale, and this is teaching these young people the idea of philanthropy, and how it works. Letting these kids know, these young people know how things work is very important, because they're get – all they're doing is stuff on these iPads. So this I think is a good teaching tool for these children.

*Rande Richardson:* I have one more and then I'm going to let Max finish, but so we talked a lot about – I mean we covered a lot and maybe this is repetitive but I'd like to bring it down to three things. So if I said to Mabel Walker and Tom Walker, I'm going to ask both of you, I'm going to start with Mabel. Complete this sentence for me: Mabel Walker is? Three things. Mabel Walker is?

*Mabel Walker:* Well, that's hard to say.

*Rande Richardson:* Well, give it a shot.

*Mabel Walker:* I hope I'm a good wife. I'm a good mother, and a good community person.

*Tom Walker:* I would second that motion.

*Mabel Walker:* Except you're a good father. And a good husband.

*Rande Richardson:* That's great, thank you.

*Max Delsignore:* I'm going to follow with another question that either of you can answer, but it's similar to what Rande just asked. Philanthropy is? Fill in the blank.

*Mabel Walker:* Helping many people.

*Tom Walker:* Yeah.

*Mabel Walker:* In a few words, helping many people.

*Max Delsignore:* How would you finish that sentence, Tom?

*Tom Walker:* I said if I were in trouble, financially or otherwise, physically, Jefferson County would be the place to go. You've got all kinds of facilities here, and I know that the United Way is trying to make that much more profitable, you might say, by combining some of those, and I think your point is when you buy – bought the old Black River Valley Club, and making part of that available for non-profits was a good idea. One of the things that I was in years ago, we had somebody that was going to give a building and we were looking at ways in which we could put that into lower rental for the charities, and it just didn't go. I think you're going to be the ones that are going to have to make that go, but you're not going to have that many around.

But the combination of doing that I think helps the charities survive. When we bought into the key bank HSBC, the idea was is to provide lower rentals for some of the ones that came in there. But being a business, that was hard to sustain. So you needed more of the professional people moving in, and that has worked both very well.

*Rande Richardson:* And part of what we'll be doing beyond that will be sharing of staff and resources, copiers and technology, and not just space. And I think that's to your point, is something that we're positioned to do that maybe isn't as easy to do in the private sector.

*Tom Walker:* Yeah. That's good.

*Max Delsignore:* I think it's safe to say that the Walker last name and philanthropy are tied together probably in the annuals of North Country history in a lot of ways, as folks reflect on what you've done here. This was a really special interview and we appreciate you sharing your story and your thoughts on what the community has meant to you and what you've given to this community, and doing so on this platform. Thank you so much for sharing.

*Mabel Walker:* Thank you very much.

*Tom Walker:* I thought that was normal.

*Max Delsignore:* We hope it's normal for the next generation too.

*Tom Walker:* Yeah, right.

*Max Delsignore:* Once again thanks to all of you for tuning in. We hope this story inspires you to do more in your community, and until next time please join us again on the Northern New York Community Podcast.

[Music playing]

Northern New York Community Podcast. Stories from the heart of our community.

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