TETON ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
Ricks College
Idaho State Historical Society
History Department, Utah State University

TETON DAM DISASTER

James R. Gee
Interviewed by
Richard Stallings
June 22, 1977

Project made possible by funds from the
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Idaho State Legislature through the
Idaho State Historical Society and
National Endowment for the Humanities
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[Signature]

[Date]
S: Jim, will you please spell your name and tell us your address?
G: Do you want my full name?
S: Yes.
G: James Ricks Gee.
S: What is your address, Jim?
G: Route one, Sugar City.
S: How long have you lived there?
G: All my life.
S: Were you born there?
G: I was born in Sugar City.
S: Jim, how old are you?
G: Thirty-three.
S: Do you have a family?
G: Yes.
S: What size, how many children?
G: I have four children and a wife.
S: How many were living in your home at the time of the flood?
G: My wife and three children; she was eight months pregnant at the time.
S: What do you do for a living?
G: I am an administrator at Ricks College.
S: Do you own your own home?
G: Yes.
S: Are you only involved at Ricks, or do you do some farming on the side?
G: I also own a hundred acres just east of Sugar City.
S: When they were considering building the Teton Dam, did you have an opinion on the issue?
G: Yes, I was very much in favor of it. Our farm borders on the Teton River and every year when we had high water, we had several acres that would be flooded. I felt we should. Just for flood control it would be valuable. Then, in addition, being a farmer I was concerned about storage water for irrigation and the canal company that I belonged to had purchased water on the Teton Dam reservoir. So I was involved in it in a couple of aspects.
S: So it was an important issue as far as you were concerned?
G: Yes.
S: Did you or any members of your family have any premonition of the Teton Dam disaster?
G: We didn't have any idea. In fact a couple of months before we'd been visiting with one of our home teachers. He worked up at the dam, and he had said that if that dam ever broke, we'd all be washed clear down to Pocatello. And we were aware of the danger, but any serious thought of the dam ever breaking had never entered our minds.
S: Where were you and your family when the dam broke?
G: That morning I was working with my brothers, Jerald and Stephen. We were branding cattle. We own about two-hundred head of cattle, and we were getting them ready to take up to our Teton Basin pasture the following Monday. We'd been working since about 7:00 that morning and were just about done branding the calves. My wife was working in the yard and someone called her and told her that the radio had been making announcements
that the dam was breaking. She hurried out to talk to us. My first impulse was, "It can't be true." And then, as we thought about it, we thought that maybe the radio was exaggerating a little, and it couldn't be too serious. Then we looked down by our house, which is about a quarter mile away from our corral, and the police were there.

Stephen was the first one to really sense that it was serious. He jumped in his car and took off for home. Jerald and I stood there and talked for a few minutes, and Marilyn was quite upset wondering what we should do. We wondered what to do about our cattle. That was our major concern. We thought, "Well, we'll leave them in the corral. If the water gets two or three feet deep we'd rather have them in there and that would hold them in rather than running around the countryside. And if it were going to be really bad we probably wouldn't have time to get them out to high ground anyway."

We decided maybe we'd go up to our houses and make sure everything was okay there and talk to the policeman who was up there. So I got in with my wife, Jerald didn't come immediately. He went over to the canal that borders our farm and pulled some boards out of the headgate to make sure there was plenty of room for the water to flow through, so it wouldn't wash over the banks. One of the ironies was that we tied our horse up to our truck so it wouldn't get away. When we went down to the house and listened to the radio and Don Ellis was very concerned, and he kept saying, "There goes another chunk, and another chunk..." and we finally decided that maybe this was going to be serious, but still we thought that we were far enough down from the dam that by the time it reached us it would only be maybe three to four feet high at the greatest. So we weren't too concerned. We talked to the policeman down there, and he said,
"You better leave. We don't know how bad it is, but it sounds like it's pretty serious." My wife had just been shopping, and we took the groceries out of the car and put them in the house, so they'd be safe. We kept a few snacks, loaded our kids in and turned our power off.

As we started to leave we started thinking of others who might not have heard about it so we drove past my dad and mother's place. They'd already gone, so we assumed that they had heard. We talked to some of their neighbors who were mowing their lawn, and they said, "Oh yes, we've heard about it." It was a widow and her daughter, and they weren't too concerned. They just went on working in their yard. I think most people didn't want to believe. I didn't. So we drove on down to Jerry Price's house; he had just built a new home on the west side of the railroad tracks in sugar City. He was gone, and so we hoped that everybody we were immediately concerned about had gotten out.

We drove over to Rexburg, and as we pulled in around the corner by the stockyards by Roger's Brothers, they were steering people on up the hill to Rexburg. I went up the hill, and there were just tremendous crowds even by that time and it sounded like it was really going to be serious. Knowing the back roads a little, I drove through the back roads over into the Moody area thinking maybe I could see things better.

It was ironic, I pulled up to a potato cellar, and got out and there was my dad and mother. They had driven up there too.

My wife was pregnant and uncomfortable at the time, and so she just stayed in the car. Several people from Sugar City had come up to this area. We watched and waited and listened to the radio, and kept looking off toward Teton, and couldn't see anything.
Finally, after about an hour of sitting over there, we began to see a dust cloud. I said to my dad, "Gee, do you think that could be the flood?" He said, "No, there's no way. That's just the wind blowing the dust up." I said, "There isn't any wind! And it isn't blowing that hard, and the dust just doesn't blow that way." Sure enough, we decided that it must be the flood. Some people had field glasses, and they said they could see water over there. It wasn't many minutes before houses that we could see started getting water up on them.

We watched a herd of cattle down below us. It was interesting to see their reaction. They were just grazing pretty peaceful, and then, they were right on the outskirts of the flood. Even so, as the water came you could see them all at once perk up and start running toward the far side of the pasture. Then they came to the fence and stopped. Water hit them, and some of them, I guess, got out okay. Pretty soon houses were floating by. We were about a half mile away from the water itself.

I was concerned about my wife, so I didn't go back and get down close to the water like I might have done under normal circumstances. One funny thing about that, there were several people up there, they would look towards the east, then they would jump in the car and run down into town and get a load of stuff, and come back up. One guy came driving an old beat up tractor, he had watched and watched, and he had been about twenty minutes before he finally went down, got his tractor and drove it off. And some did that with their clothes.

Finally, the water did come. I remember watching it with my dad. We were both just shaking our heads and saying over and over again, "I just can't believe it! Houses were floating by, and my first concern
was, "Gee, do you think Morrison-Knudson could be held responsible for this?" They're the contractors on it. He said, "Well, I don't really know. Maybe we wouldn't be able to hold anybody responsible for it." That was a concern from the very beginning. We watched.

We were too far away to see our house with the naked eye, but we borrowed some binoculars from people who were with us. I climbed up on top of a potato cellar and tried seeing our house. There were trees in the way and by that time, this was just maybe twenty minutes after the water had hit, there were many landmarks that had washed away. It was hard to identify places. But I was finally able to get far enough around the trees to see our house, and it seemed to be okay. A neighbor had just completed a large machine shed, and that was gone. All of our farm buildings were gone.

I immediately began to think of our cattle. That was the thing that upset me the most, because we had had so many animals there, and I didn't see how any of them could have survived. We looked for Jerry Price's house, and saw that it was gone. My folks' house seemed to be okay in town. But the water was clear up to the eaves. It looked like that on a lot of the houses, it was just unbelievable. Maybe the distance had something to do with that; it's hard to actually tell how high it was.

Everything seemed to be okay, so we drove back over to the college by the back roads and met the rest of our family there. We had all congregated at the Industrial Science Building. We have a farm up in Teton Basin with a home on it, so we all decided to go up there. So about 4:30 in the afternoon we left, went around the back roads and came out by Teton, stopped there and looked at the water going just north of Teton where it dips down.
Some people said there had been a man caught up in the tree there, and they had rescued him. We found out later it had been the one that had been caught in the canyon; he had floated down to Teton, and somehow had caught on that tree, he was clear up on the top; you could see some of the stuff that was still left up there. Water was just boiling out, and as far as you could see to the north, there was water. So we got in our cars and went on up and drove over to the dam. Even then, water was still just boiling out of there, although it had dropped so it was maybe just three or four times the normal river size. It was getting on close to five or five-thirty at the time.

We drove on up to Teton Basin and stayed there overnight. Boy, that's the worst night I've ever had! All night long, all I could hear were those cattle, those cows and calves, bawling, and it was just in my mind. It was just sickening to think that so many living things would die that quick. So I didn't sleep much that night. My wife was pretty upset, but she felt quite calm because our house was in good shape, and she was feeling sorry for our friends whom we knew had lost their homes.

So early the next morning we woke up, and Jerald and I got in my car, and drove down to Teton. We determined that we were going to see what had happened. We got to Teton and they had a roadblock up there, just on the west side of Teton, where you head down toward Sugar. There was a policeman there, and helicopters flying around, and the policeman was talking to somebody, and so we didn't even stop and talk to him, we figured he might try to keep us out if we did. We walked down the road, and we were quite a ways down by the time he saw us. We tried to ignore him; we wanted to see what had happened.
There were other people on up aways, and about a half a mile up the road it looked like it was washed out, so we went up there, and some of our neighbors were there. They were looking through fieldglasses, and they could see our houses, but it looked like they were out in the middle of the road. We said, "Well, we've got to find out what's wrong here." There was a lot of water going through even at that time. I think it was just normal flow from the river. The banks had all been washed out.

We could see dry ground about 100 yards away, but we didn't know for sure how to get to it. We didn't know what the water had done. It had just ripped the road up, like a bomb had hit. There was a deep gully, where the road had stopped, it must have been a good ten to twelve feet deep. So Jerald and I back tracked a little, and there was water south of the road, but it looked like it was pretty shallow. Then we knew there were fields there, so we waded down into that, got into the fields about 100 feet from the road, and then started walking west. We had sticks and were kind of feeling our way, and we went pretty well until it got to where a canal had crossed. The bridge was intact, but it was washed out on both sides. There was a brand-new pickup sitting up in the middle of the bridge.

We looked around, and there were dry spots there, but there were these deep channels that we had to cross, and finally we found a log that had been washed down, it was just a small tree. We picked it up and laid it across the water up onto the bridge. We climbed up onto the bridge and thought, "Well, we can cross there." We looked in the pickup and there was no one in it. But it looked like it was brand-new. It was ironic that it ended up there; trees and debris were all around it. Then we climbed to the other side, and there was a swift channel going there. And we didn't feel like we dared step into that. We reached in with our sticks
and couldn't touch the bottom, so we thought, "Well, we'll have to try something else." And so we got on the North side of the road then, and there was kind of a high bank where a ditch had been. We retraced our steps on this ditch bank back maybe 200-300 yards, and decided to go north. There was water there, but if we could go far enough north, we'd be able to get up on dry ground and continue on around the water. So we started out, and it was kind of scary not knowing what channel the water had cut, and the water kept getting deeper. Finally, it was up to our waists. There wasn't much of a current, because it was just spread throughout the field. But we hung on to each other, and I went first. Jerald hung on to me because he's a pretty big guy, about 6'2", weighs about 220 pounds, and we figured if I slipped and fell, he could hold me, but if he slipped and fell, I couldn't hold him. So I had to go first.

But we finally got out of the water, and then started around back to the road. The first place we came to, there was the home of a couple who had just moved into our ward. There wasn't a brick left of that house, it was a gigantic brick house, an old one. There wasn't a brick left. Across the road, there was one house badly damaged. We thought they were lucky because their house was at least there. Then we started walking toward our homes, and we'd go a little ways and hit a spot where maybe fifty or sixty feet of pavement had just been ripped up, and then we'd see them off in the field, and some of them were big chuncks, about ten feet long, just like a war had been fought there. There were big gullies through the road, and there were several times where we came to trees and we actually had to climb over huge cottonwoods that had been washed out. They ended up across the road. Then we almost passed the next two houses before we realized that that's where they had been. There wasn't
any sign that they'd been there except the lawns. We commented on, I remember, how eerie we felt. There were helicopters flying over, but we were the first ones to go through from this route. I was always afraid maybe the police would see us down there and try and land and keep us from going on; we wanted to see what had happened to our place. So we continued walking on, and it was just so quiet and still except for an occasional helicopter that would fly over.

We got down within a quarter of a mile of our place, and we could see Jerald's house okay and our neighbor, Layne Luke's, house okay, but we couldn't see mine. And I tried to think, "Is my house behind Jerald's a little, or is it in front?" I knew I hadn't lined it up directly with his, and it was possible that I couldn't see it. I kept going toward one side of the road, and the other, and still I couldn't see it. In the meantime, we passed some grain harvesters which were upside-down in the gutter, and more homes that had been completely washed away. There were a couple of houses that had walls ripped off from them. Once again, we thought they were pretty lucky, because at least their homes were there.

Then we got down, it was ironic, we hit our first field, and it was just as clean and pretty as could be. There wasn't a bit of silt in it, the grain looked like it had just been watered good, no debris on it you could see to speak of. It was just an ironic thing when you looked at all the damage all around it. We never were able to harvest a crop off of it because we weren't able to irrigate it, but it was so pretty at that time. We walked on up a little further, and there was the large canal that goes past our farm, and the bridge wasn't washed out on it. Then
there was a big check in the canal right by our farm buildings. The check had a lot of debris in it, but it hadn't been washed out. We thought that was pretty good, but it was dammed up, and the banks were washed out, and there was a lot of water running down our fields. So we stayed on the road, all our buildings on our farm were gone, there wasn't a one left. All of our corrals were gone. We were really feeling bad about that, thinking of all the animals that we had had in there. There were about two posts left out of our corral, it just ripped up everything.

So we went on down, and we got closer and closer to our house, and finally I realized my house wasn't there! There just wasn't anything I could do to convince myself that there was any hope left. We looked at Layne Luke's house, and it looked like it hadn't suffered much damage. Just on one corner there was a little bit of siding torn off, and that was it. We later found out he didn't get any water in his upstairs. And my house, I think would have been the same way. It was built up high, and there was a lot of backfin so that the main floor was actually seven or eight feet above ground. Layne was able to get back into his home within two weeks, by the time they had some power back in there. We went on to Jerald's. One side of his garage had been torn off. Otherwise, it was in pretty good shape, except the inside was just a shambles. Then we looked at mine, and all we could see was the foundation. So Jerald went through his house and started looking at things, and I went over the my place and everything was really muddy. I sat down on my front steps, which were still there, and tried to think how I was going to tell my wife about it, because she was sure our house was okay.

Finally, we'd looked around a little, and decided to walk on down into Sugar City. There were more deep cuts in the road, and I had no idea where my house was. We could see debris everyplace. We had walked down
to the junction where Highway 33 comes into 191. All at once we heard a cow, and we looked, and there was one of our cows. I couldn't believe it. We could hear it in a building, and there was a cinder block building there that had all the doors ripped out, and it looked like it was about to collapse. In there was one of our cows. So we started to look around a little more. We could hear more cows. We could see off in the distance several cows walking along a ditchbank. We got down to the warehouses that are on the northeast corner of Sugar City. They're kind of high. We looked, and there were maybe ten or fifteen head of our cows there. One of them had been washed into a pit, and there was lumber all around her, she was in pretty bad shape. We didn't know how to get her out, but we decided we would try. But first, we went down into town. Occasionally we would see a dead animal. We got down to the church house and it was in pretty bad shape. In the cultural hall, all the windows were out. One of our cows was in there! Well, I don't know if it was ours. There was a cow in there, though. It could have been ours. It was gone later when we got there.

The city was deserted; we didn't see anybody, and at first there was a lot of mud. There must have been six or eight inches of silt on some of the streets. It was kind of drifted, like snow. We walked over towards my parents' place and found out that they had lost maybe a third of the wall on the south side of their house for some reason. There was a big telephone pole inside the window, and all the inside of the house was a shambles, but the upstairs seemed to be pretty good except for the wall that was missing to support it. My younger brother, Stephen's house, is right next door to their's and it seemed to be in pretty good shape. So we wandered on around town.
We had gone a little way further and saw a little Ford Falcon station wagon, which was ours. The ironic thing about that was we had left it up at our farm, and it had floated clear down into town. Jerald had a Volkswagon. He left it at his house. They found it over in the Rexburg cemetery. It had floated clear from east of Sugar City down into the Rexburg cemetery. There were a lot of funny things. We went over to look at Brent Kinghorn's place, and it looked like it was in pretty good shape. There were so many homes that had a wall knocked out here or there. And then Brent had debris from the whole city in his two acres. He had a big windbreak that formed kind of a net that stopped stuff in there. Later they must have hauled three or four hundred truckloads of debris out of his yard—it was unbelievable!

By this time we had seen a few people here and there, and talked to them. One guy landed in a helicopter. He was normally the sheriff of Sugar City. We didn't know him for some reason. He said, "Well, we ought to organize a search and check all the houses to see if there are any bodies." We didn't want to do that. We didn't think anybody had been left because they had had plenty of time to get out. So we said we didn't think there was any need to do that. We started back out towards our homes. We saw a lot of homes that were all just piles of rubble. By this time it was afternoon, we had been several hours. We talked to a few people who had come in from the cemetery by this time. There were some that had crossed from Salem. But we decided we had to go back out toward Teton.

We started our journey back. We had been wet and dry, wet and dry, and my boots, we just had cowboy boots on, were pretty miserable to be walking in. We started back and retraced our steps. We got just about back to
where we had started. We had been walking along over the same ground
we had gone over before, the only time we hit anything unexpected was when
I slipped in a hole! Then Jerald stepped in a hole and fell down and got
drenched. I was laughing at him because we were just about out of there.
I stepped back and I fell in a hole that the water had washed out. So we both
were soaking wet. We finally got back up onto the road. People were
still there. They had been standing, and nobody else had tried going through
that way. Some had gotten on horses and ridden around north and come in
a similar route that we had gone on. We had seen them downtown. As
we started back to our car I kept thinking, "How am I going to tell my
wife?"

We looked down the road, and there were some people with cameras,
and they were aiming them at us and taking pictures. I looked a little
closer as I got closer and realized it was my sister and her husband.
They lived in Ogden. They'd heard about it on the news, and had just
packed up a bunch of their food supply and clothes and things and come
immediately. I have another sister who lives in Utah, she had been listening.
They had just loaded up their car with food and clothes and come up
to give us what help they could. We talked to them for a few minutes there,
then we all went back up to Teton Basin to our farm.

My wife had tried to call her family. We hadn't seen them and they
live out in Moody. We were sure they were okay, but we hadn't been able
to get in touch with them. Marilyn's mother had called her when they first
started announcing it on the radio so we knew they were aware of it.
But they didn't know where we were and we tried to get in touch with them.
The phone lines were out. It was almost impossible to make a phone call
anywhere, even from Teton Basin. Finally, we were able to make some round about calls to some people, but we still didn't get in touch with her family. We went back and I kept thinking, "How am I going to tell Marilyn?"

Finally we got there and our wives were both waiting for us out in the yard. I took Marilyn aside and I said, "I don't know how to tell you this, but our..." This is what I told her, "We'd better start looking for house plans." She said, "Oh, no, did it wash away?" I said, "Yes." She started to cry a little bit and walked off by herself. Our daughter, Suzette, who was five years old at the time, realized there had been a disaster, and she went over to comfort her mother. She said, "Don't cry, everything will be all right. We'll get us a new house." Then she thought a minute and she had a jewelry box and a little toy duck that she just treasured. Then she just started to cry as hard as she could. Marilyn asked her what was wrong and she said, "My jewelry box and my duck are gone!" So she realized that, it hit her then. And I guess of all our children she was affected more severely than any of them because from that time on it was almost impossible to get her away from our side. Marilyn finally got herself composed, it didn't take her long.

We settled down for our second night up there, only this time several members of my family were there and some of them camped outside. A lot of them slept on the floor of our house. It was kind of an awkward situation; they had all come and wanted to help, and yet there wasn't anything that anyone could do. So we just laid around that night and once again I couldn't sleep. I just kept thinking of those animals again for some reason. We hadn't seen any sign of our horse. The truck we had tied it to was washed about a half mile away, across the canal. It was all banged up, and so we assumed the horse was dead. There were a lot of strange things there.
Early the next morning, Marilyn insisted that we take her down to Sugar City. I got in the car and we loaded our kids in. We drove down, and got down to Moody. We had to drive through Moody to get around the flood zone. As we came down toward Newdale there was a state policeman. He was stopping everyone. We told him we lived down there, so he let us go on through, but I guess they clamped the security down pretty early there.

Anyway, we went on down into Moody and saw Marilyn's brother-in-law. We stopped and went over to talk to him and he said, "I'm glad to see you guys. We've had you on the missing list. We hoped you were okay, but nobody had heard anything about you or seen you." They asked a lot of different people about us so they turned our name in as missing. I guess at that time there were several hundred people who were supposedly missing. We talked to him a few minutes and he told us where Marilyn's mother and his wife were. The sister and her husband lived in Newdale and so they weren't affected by the flood, but she was over with her mother helping as much as she could. We drove on over to Rexburg, stopped and visited with Marilyn's mother and let her know we were all right. Then I went over to the Manwaring Center and got my name taken off the missing list. Then we proceeded down to the Hart Building for the first of many, many days that we went down there because they were giving away free food. I picked up a few supplies for us, and they already had some clothes and things. All I had and what Marilyn had was what we had been wearing at the time. I had dirty old Levis and a T-shirt, and I didn't smell too great because I had been working with those cattle.
We went in the Hart Building and saw President Sondregger, our stake president. He said, "Well, at least your house is okay." We said, "Well, no, it's washed away." And he said, "Well, that's a real surprise to me because I flew over the area and I sighted your house. It was okay."

We talked to other people who had flown over and they said it was okay. But apparently, before the waters subsided, toward the end, something large had hit our house and washed it away. That was not that much comfort to us. Still, it was kind of a puzzle because all the other houses right close to us had stayed even though some had been damaged but had to be moved later. But ours was gone.

My brothers-in-law went down and started helping on my dad's place to clean it up. They wanted to get things cleaned up and save what they could as quickly as possible. So they immediately started working on that.

It seemed like that first day we were able to drive over to Sugar City and finally Marilyn talked me into taking her up to our place. So we started to walk. We walked up to our farm, and she saw the foundation, that's all there was to see. Then we walked back.

A few hours later I saw Marian Forsyth, who lives across the road from us. He said, "Well, did you see your house?" I said, "No, we don't know where it is." He said, "It's piled up against the shed down towards Sugar City, right across from the old Cheese House. And I said, "I've walked by there about six times, and I haven't seen it." He said, "Well, you look, I think it's yours." I hurried back out there and looked, and sure enough, our house had hit an old metal quonset hut and knocked it off its foundation. It had kind of rolled over or slid up against the trees. There were a lot of big cottonwoods there. Then our house had just kind of disintegrated; the roof of the house had slip up over the quonset so one side of the roof was caught up in the trees toward the top. The other side of the roof was
at the bottom. Underneath was this quonset hut. Our house was inter-
mixed, inbetween. Our bedroom had apparently turned around a few times
when it had been floating along. Our bedroom was facing the east end,
where the west would have been. The wall was all torn out. There wasn't
any sign of our kid's bedroom. I was thankful we weren't in that house. It
was really broken up badly. I don't see how anybody could have survived
in it. So, we finally discovered where our house was. It was about a
half mile away from where it had been standing before the flood.

Then we started in on the many days of trying to work with the government
bureaucracies. The Red Cross was just great. We went in one day and
told them we had lost our home. They wanted to give us everything they
possibly could. We did take some money and bought our children some clothes
and a few things like that.

Then there were so many rumours going around. That was the worst
thing of all about the flood. One day you would hear, "They're going to
bring in trailer houses for everybody." Another day you'd hear, "No,
they're not going to do that. There's just no way they can do a thing like
that." Then you'd hear that the government was going to pay for all
damages, and then you'd hear that they weren't going to pay for anything.
Then you'd hear that they would pay a replacement cost, then there would
be rumours that there wouldn't be a replacement cost, but it would be the
value of the building at the time of the flood. It seemed to me I'd just
get myself reconciled to one course, and then I'd hear about something else.
It was so hard to do, especially at a time when there was a lot of
stress.

I spent many hours sitting in lines over at the fieldhouse. I hate
sitting in lines anyway. So sometimes I'd wait in lines for forty-five
minutes to an hour and not think I was doing anything, so I'd just leave. Finally, I'd have to come back and do the same thing over again, just because I was so impatient, I had to be doing something all the time. We were still living up in Teton Basin and driving back and forth, I decided I had to get down closer, it was just too hard on our car, and my wife and kids. So I went in one day to the Manwaring Center, this was about a week after the flood. They had housed a lot of people in college housing by then. I understood that HUD was paying for housing for people off-campus, where they could find it. My dad and mother got them a good basement apartment with my aunt. Stephen was in the village apartments. Jerald was determined he was going to live in Teton Basin, so he stayed up there. But there were two families there, and it was kind of awkward. So I made arrangements. I went to the Manwaring Center this one day, and talked to Irma Anderson. I said, "Are there any houses available, any apartments available?" She said, "We just had one come available over in the girls' dorms. It's the only one that I know of that's available. If you could go over there right now, we'll put you in it." I said, "Okay." It happened to be a cooking dorm; it was just ideal. I went over there and talked to the head resident and made the arrangements. We didn't have much to move. So the next day Marilyn and I moved in. There were two bedrooms, and three bunkbeds in one room. Just ideal for our kids. So finally, we were able to get settled down.

For awhile one of my sisters took our boys down to Utah with her. We wanted her to take Suzette, but she wouldn't go. She just cried and cried. So we kept her with us. She was upset because of the flood. Boy, if we got out of her sight, it was just terrible and upsetting for her. She continued on that way for several months.
Finally, people began coming into Sugar, they started getting people from out of town, especially through the church. Busloads of people came into Sugar City. I talked to Glen Dalling, our bishop, a few times. He was working full-time, directing people it seemed like. I was a little concerned about him getting anything done on his place. I guess he was able to channel some people over there too. I felt a little detached from all that because I didn't have anything to clean up. I'd go around with my family, help with my dad's place a little. I just kept being drawn back to the farm, and there wasn't much I could do there because I didn't have much to clean up. Jerald was working quite rapidly on his. He had a lot of people there helping.

So I decided I'd start digging out some of our farm equipment. That was kind of an interesting thing. We have two grain combines, and a potato digger, and disks, and hay balers, quite a bit of equipment. We had it all parked in a row facing east and west. The water had hit that and pushed everything together. Nothing turned over, yet it all floated a hundred yards away as a group. Where a lot of grain combines had turned over, ours didn't turn over. Where potato diggers were all beat to pieces, ours weren't, because they were in this pile of stuff. The only thing we had separate was one of our tractors and our swather. The water had taken the swather and tipped it over and carried it several feet away. It was covered with debris. I walked by it a couple of times before I realized the swather was in there. So I decided I was going to get that out. I started in with a chainsaw and other equipment. It took a whole day to cut all the debris away from that so I could finally hook it on with the chain and tractor and pull it over. It wasn't for several days that we were able
to get out to get the other equipment because the canal was still flooding. We had water running free on one place or another on our farm for six weeks after the flood. They weren't able to contain it. They brought in a lot of heavy equipment and really tore up things a lot. Buried some of them, the mud was so bad. Finally, they were able to get the water all stopped off. But it wasn't til towards the end of July that we were actually able to get on our place.

A few things we did that might have been a little different than others. We contracted with Burgraaf Construction Company to clean up our farm, to clear the debris away. They let a few farmers do that. We had a big tractor and I talked my brother into buying a big front-end loader for it so we could haul debris. About three weeks after the flood my brothers flew back to Michigan, bought a new truck there and drove it home. We got the truck going in July, we had a bed on it and everything. We started hauling debris. We hired a few people to help us. That was an interesting experience, working with them. Wages and things that were being paid were extremely unusual. We paid the guys that helped us $8 an hour, and $12 overtime, and they worked overtime just about everyday. We did that for about a week and just on that cleanup took in about $7,000, just on a week's work, for the equipment and everything. My idea had been, we'd make enough on the cleanup to pay for our loader, and we did that, plus our loan. But then they shut us off on that and Burgraaf Construction finished up what we hadn't done. It was kind of a different experience. Not many people were allowed to do that.

One of the prime concerns in my mind was getting my house built back, and I knew people were all going to be swarming contractors. In fact,
the day of the flood some contractors had people come to them and say, "Will you start building my houses as soon as the water goes down?"

I had salvaged one set of blueprints of my house, so I made arrangements to go over here to the Industrial Science Building, and I traced those blueprints onto a copy that I could make more blueprints from. And at the same time I made a few minor changes, changed the walls in the house that we wanted to have differently. By the end of July, I had worked out where I could get an emergency loan from the FHA, who had financed my house in the first place. I had my bids, and the deal was closed so that by the second week in August we started construction on our house. We used the same foundation, it just had to be patched a little. Then we went from there. Also, I arranged to borrow extra money from the credit union to build a garage on, and I thought I was being pretty extravagant till I saw the homes that were being replaced in Sugar City at a later time. Mine's pretty conservative now, but I was one of the first in our part of the area to get going again on our house.

My brother, Jerald, was able to repair his house, and he did a lot of work on it. He got in his house about the end of October, but it wasn't actually finished until about in December. My new house was completed and I was able to move into it in January. So I was pretty lucky there.

We worked really hard to get our claim filed, and we were able to file our claim in October with the Bureau of Reclamation. Once again, there was much red tape, and so many rumors. You would start doing something, and hear that you ought to be doing it another way. Finally, I just said to my wife, "Let's work out a plan of how we're going to do it, and do it that way, turn it in. If that isn't adequate, we'll go from there."
I'm tired of all this shifting around." So we did that. My brothers and I worked on our farm claim, and finally in September we were able to turn that in. And we were not the first by any means but some of the first to get that in. Some people said we were foolish to do it because we'd keep remembering things we had forgotten, and others said we were lucky to get in done early. Once again, we didn't know.

Then we started hearing how the Bureau had taken the claim and cut it dramatically, and we thought, "We've been pretty conservative on our claim, if they've cut us much I don't know how we'll make it." At the same time, I had two homes on our farm, a new one and the other an old one that we'd rented. I could see that I stood in quite a bit of money because I didn't intend to replace that old home. I thought, "Well, I'll just put the money either on payment on my new home or pay off the farm with it." Once again, the rumors were just going on all the time, and I didn't know for sure from one day to the next where I stood. Finally, I got my voucher back from the Bureau of Reclamation. My father had gotten his earlier, and they had cut him maybe $5,000. He said, "Well, I'm tired of all of this, I'm just going to accept it. We have enough to do what we wanted to do. It'll be close, and we won't have any to spare, but I think we can make it." So he accepted his. I got mine back a couple of weeks later, and I had been cut something like $8,000 or $9,000. That included my home and farm and everything. So it amounted to a large sum of money, but still to get cut that much with the plans that I had to replace buildings and things. I just couldn't afford it. So I went to the Bureau and first they said, "Well, if you make a formal appeal they don't even have to touch it for six months, so your money's tied up for six months." Then I heard, "You can go in and ask them to reconsider, that isn't like a formal appeal
with all your money, they've got to do something within six weeks."
I thought, "Well, I'll do that." So I went into talk to a man, the man's
name was Robert Price, and I really came to appreciate him. I think he did
more to make me feel good about the Bureau than anybody. I went in
to him and said, "I feel like the verifiers haven't been fair with us
on this claim. They've cut me to what amounts to about $10,000 and I just
can't afford that big of a cut." He was sympathetic and reviewed it with
me and right on the spot, without going through any procedure, he made a
change that made a difference of $8,000. He said he was empowered to
do that. We still were cut a little bit, but nothing like we'd been cut
earlier. We thought we could live with one or two thousand, but if he cut
us as much as we were cut, we didn't think we could live with that.
We went ahead, and within a few weeks we had our money. We paid off our
emergency loans with the FHA, the Farmer's Home Administration, and
since then we began construction on some sheds, and we rebuilt our corrals
on the farm. We tried to do everything a little nicer. We feel like we
probably were ahead as I look back on it. I think we suffered enough to
justify it. All the things we had to go through, and I know people
are still going through a lot of harrassment. Not really harrassment, but
they just get their plans made, and it looks like things are going to go
well for them and then something happens. Especially where they're still
filing claims, that's been difficult for them. But I'm glad that we have
our lot behind us, we've gone ahead and settled our tax problems on most
of the money that we received. On the house that we didn't rebuild we
went ahead and paid our capital gains tax, and it wasn't as bad as I thought
it would be. We're just about back to normal. We still have a few things
that are involved that will have to be worked with in the future.
One interesting thing that I think showed or demonstrated the effect on my children. In September, when our house was coming along pretty well, one night my wife and I were looking at it, and David, our oldest son, came running in breathlessly, and he said, "The dam's broke again!" We knew that couldn't be right and he was just upset. He said, "I heard it on the radio! They said that the dam's broke, and there's more water coming down." I said, "Well, we don't need to worry too much about that, there isn't enough water left to do any damage." And he said, "They said it was going to be two or three feet deep." He was really upset. We said, "Maybe it's serious. You go up and start putting a few things in the car out of our trailer house, and we'll be up in a few minutes." And so we stayed and visited, and others around us had gotten the word too. Right next to us is a young widow, her name is Dennay Arnold. Her husband had died just a month or two after the flood. They lost everything they had in the flood except he had owned a semi, a big truck, and that was all she had left. She was pretty upset. I told Marilyn, "You go up with the kids and I'll help Dennay get calmed down a little bit." Layne Luke was there too. She said, "We've just got to get that truck out of here." Jerald was there too, and so we went over and none of us had ever driven a semi like that. We tried to start it, and the batteries were so low it wouldn't turn the engine over. So Jerald went up to our farm and got our tractor, we hooked it on and pulled it. It was a miracle that it started. I drove it a little ways. It had a big trailer, the tractor and trailer, and they weren't hooked up. So we had to hook onto that trailer. So I backed up, hooked onto that trailer, and then we had to get the brakes unlocked on the trailer. Finally, we got it all ready to go, and Layne
said, "Look, I'm going down this way. I'll take the truck and my wife can follow me." I said, "I'll go up to the trailer and get Marilyn and the kids." So he left, and I started walking up to our trailer, and when I looked in the car, I had to start laughing. David and Suzette and Shawn had loaded every one of their toys in the car, and that's all there was. It was full of toys. There wasn't room for them or us, just toys! They'd gotten their most precious possessions out, and put them in the car. I said, "Look, unload all those things and we'll go see what's happened." So we unloaded a few things and kept just a little bit of food just in case. All I could imagine was if it did flood it couldn't get over a few inches deep. I really wasn't too worried.

I calmed the kids down; we drove up to the dam. Apparently a dike had broken, they had a little water back up. I think in the river the water only rose maybe two or three inches as a result of that. The police had come flying by in their cars when the word first came, and the radio announcer said, "We don't know how serious it is, but be prepared." That makes people edgy.

That was an interesting sideline on that. I hadn't really realized how much the kids missed their toys til that time. Several people had given us things, that's why they had any to put in the car, we hadn't salvaged any of our own. In all it was an interesting experience. We had home evening a few times after that and I got the kids to record their feelings about the flood. It was interesting to see what they thought. In fact, some of them said it had been a big nuisance, caused a lot of trouble, a little delay, but in all it was a real interesting experience.

S: Let me ask a couple of questions that raised as you were discussing this. As you were walking through that, what kind of thoughts were going through
your mind, were you thinking about anything in particular the first time you were walking to your home?

G: I kept hoping, I just had kind of a sick feeling, I was afraid that it was gone. I just kept hoping that the house wasn't washed way. I figured that if the house was there I could stand anything else. I was afraid about that. There was the total devastation. I couldn't get over that. I felt like I was walking--sometimes you see movies of the lone survivor of some worldwide devastation, and that's about the way I felt! Walking through there was just so desolate, not even a bird until we got down to where we heard those cattle, there wasn't a thing that we could hear. I was amazed by the silence and I kept saying in my mind over and over, "It's just unreal!" We measured the water depth at our place, and there was debris as high as nine feet up. So the water, at least at some point had to have been that high. But it was just unreal, I kept saying that over and over. Then I really wasn't too worried about how we'd make it, I knew we would work things out some way. But it was just the devastation that was unbelievable.

S: Did you have any unusual or miraculous experiences connected with this?

G: We didn't really. The only miracle was the one that everyone was so aware of, that nobody to speak of was hurt bad, very few people. Most of those cases, they didn't need to have been hurt.

S: You would say then, as far as damages, that you suffered a total loss, that there was nothing that you could have recovered from this?

G: Right.

S: Did you save a few head of livestock?

G: Right. We did end up, out of 200 cattle, we ended up with about 50. Surprisingly that many.
S: Did you ever find your horse?
G: Never found the horse.
S: What would be your most cherished item that you felt that you lost?
G: I don't know if I've discovered that yet. I'm not too sentimental about things. We did lose a lot of pictures, some scrapbooks that my wife and I had kept. We were able to salvage our genealogy records, which was pretty important to us.
S: Jim, do you have any other unusual experiences with animals?
G: One that comes to my mind that was a little unusual, I think. We had one cow that ended up several miles away. The unusual thing about it was that she had lost a leg. She never had any veterinary treatment that I'm aware of. She survived, and she's still alive. At first we were just going to load her in a truck and haul her up and butcher her, but when we looked at her we could tell she was going to have a calf. So we waited, she's had her calf, and we've got her out on the range now. She's in good shape apparently. It's unbelievable.
S: Jim, you were talking about a sad experience with an animal. Do you want to go on with that?
G: About three days after the flood, or rather four days, I happened to be walking along the road up toward where my house had finally come to rest. As I was walking over to the house I saw a potato digger that was sitting up fairly high, covered with debris. I thought, "I'll just climb up on that digger and take a look around." I climbed up, and clear up in the top wedged among trees and logs and other things was a cow. It was one of ours. And it was still alive. Not very much alive, but it was alive. I thought, "This is sickening, we've got to do something to help this animal." So
I started pulling debris out. Some people that were nearby saw me and came over out of curiosity to see what there was. When they saw the animal they were touched a little too, and so they started helping me. They had been clearing out their house. They worked with me. We went to work for two to three hours trying to get that cow freed. It just seemed like there was a never-ending web of debris in there. It was every which way. I don't know how the cow had ever survived, there was so much pressure on it from different angles. There was one wound on its side, where the skin was broken. It looked fairly severe. But the poor thing seemed to be alive. We worked and worked and worked. Finally we got it free enough to where we thought we could put the rope on the cow and pull her free. So we got a long rope. We had to use chain, actually. Got a long chain and hooked on with the pickup, I believe is what we used to pull it with. We pulled and finally got it out of there. The poor thing was just so weak from what it had been through the last few days that all it could do was lay there. Finally, we determined that it wasn't going to make it, and so we had to kill it. After the work we had been through, trying to get that poor thing out of there, and then to lose it was a little depressing. I guess that happened many times.

S: You mentioned that you moved into the girl's dorms up at Ricks College. How long did you stay there?

G: We were in the girl's dorms for approximately six weeks. And then they moved a trailer house out onto our farm. That was an interesting experience too. The dorms were great. We were in the dorms where the girls for summer school were living. They spent a lot of time playing with my kids. There were other young children there. For the situation, it was just great.
In the meantime, we were working with HUD to get trailers in. I had a well out there on the farm, where our house had been that we weren't going to replace; it was fairly smooth ground. We decided that we'd see if we could get several trailers moved in there. My father and mother wanted to be out there, Stephen wanted to be out there, and Rawson Child, Stephen's father-in-law, wanted to be out there. There was a widow who was in her late 70's or early 80's, she's good friends with my father and mother, she wanted to be out there. Then I was there. So we went to HUD and said that we had the potential for five trailers out there, and wondered if they could do that, rather than putting them in a trailer court. They said they would. In fact, if I'd like to they would even pay rent for that facility if I would let them put those trailers out there. Of course, I wouldn't pay rent for my own. I said that that would be great. I accepted that. So I signed releases for all those trailers to be put out there.

They brought them out and began putting them up. The way they did it was they would have a crew come in and each do a different thing. One crew brought the trailer in, another crew would stake it down and block it up, and another crew put in a septic tank system and run water lines from our wall over there, and one crew would dig the trench. One did this and another did that. They didn't always get all their connections made. It got to be a little awkward later.

Finally, one day I went into HUD and said, "Look, we've got all these trailers out there, now what kind of agreement are we going to have as far as the rent? How much are you going to pay for the use of the facility?" They said, "We're not going to pay you rent for that." I said, "When I signed that thing, that release, the official that I was talking to said I would be paid rent to have those trailers on my place." They said,
"There's no way we're going to do that for you. We've put in two septic tanks out there. We've run a water line out there. We're not going to pay the rent on top of that." I said, "Your man said that you would pay me rent." They said, "None of our men had ever said anything like that." All I know is that I made the agreement based on that. They acted like I was trying to take them, you know. Maybe I was, I might have been. I didn't really care about the money that much, it just irritated me that there was this lack of communication. One official would say one thing and another would say another. That happened to me so many times, finally I thought, "Well, I'm going to pursue this." If it hadn't been my family, I'd have refused to let them have their stuff on my property because I was irritated about it.

Finally, they got the trailer in, and we moved in on a Saturday. They had crews working while we moved in, they were making the final adjustments on the water system. They turned the water on and when the water pressure hit our trailer there were leaks in some of the water lines, and the water was actually spraying in a big stream from some of the lines. I said, "Well, we can't have that." But they said, "That's not our job to fix these things. Our contract was to get the water to the trailers and that's what we've done. Someone else will have to come to fix this." Finally they said, "It's all coming from your hot water heater, so we'll turn the water from it off, and you'll have cold water going in." I said, "Fine." That was Saturday night and our kids needed baths. We started heating water on our stove to give them baths.

We filled the tub and gave the first one his bath, went to drain the tub and the water wouldn't drain. We went to flush the toilet and the water wouldn't drain. We ran water in the sink and it wouldn't drain.
It was just a terrible, frustrating experience. We had those kids, and we had a new baby by that time; she needed a lot of attention. You use a lot of water with a little baby. It was just a frustrating experience. During the night we had a real hard rainstorm, too. I thought that trailer was going to blow away, but it didn't. The next morning it was muddy all around. I thought, "I'm going to see what's wrong." They hadn't put the sewer lines in very deep, so I started digging out from the trailer. First I dug over the septic tank, which is about ten feet away, and I couldn't find a pipe! I dug all around that thing, and I found all the openings but I couldn't find a pipe going into that. So I started back at the trailer and dug out and they had run one length of pipe out and capped that thing and left it. They just capped it with some tape, so a little water was seeping out, and over maybe an hour you'd be able to drain a toilet or something. They'd just left it that way.

The person who was supposed to make the final connection into the septic tank hadn't done it. And my trailer was that way, and Rawson Child's trailer was that way. And so Rawson and I thought, "This is too much." But I wasn't going to say much. But Rawson was really irritated. He got in his car and he went over to the HUD office and they were just starting to assign their crews. They were working seven days a week, around the clock at that time, and they were just starting to assign their crews. Boy, he lit into them, cussed them up one side and down the other. They said, "We'll get a crew out there and fix that. We went to church, and by the time we got back from church, they had guys out and they had put in extra pipes and fixed it. We didn't have any major problems after that. We had some guys come and fix the water line. We were in pretty good shape
and I was grateful for the trailer. They weren't the nicest things on earth by far, but it was a place to live, and we were out on our farm, on our own property. It was just something that built the morale knowing that we were there. And so we did appreciate HUD for that.

S: Did you have any unusual or uplifting experiences during this period of operation?

G: I don't think anybody could have helped but been uplifted by the people that came in and helped. It was just unbelievable. My family responded to help us so well. The thousands of people that came didn't know us. Toward the end I did get one group of guys to come out and work for a couple of hours to shovel the dirt out of my basement. It was dry by then, it wasn't mud, but the manhours that were spent on that cleanup--we'd still be digging out if they hadn't come and helped us. I think it's that to me, if I have a soft spot about the whole thing, it's that. People helped so much.

S: Did you suffer any vandalism or any forms of lawlessness?

G: We didn't. When our house was almost completed, I think one of the workers, one of the crew who came to work on the house, stole our garbage disposal unit that we were going to install, but that was the only thing I know. My dad and mother had a riding lawnmower that was badly damaged that was sitting out in the yard after we had come and cleaned it up a little. One night they were driving down by their house and saw some people just pulling away with that in their pickup. They gave the license plate number to the police, but we never did hear anything on it. I kept hearing of vandalism, but no specific cases, really.

S: You dealt with several federal agencies during the recovery. You mentioned the BOR, HUD, the FHA. How would you evaluate their effectiveness?
G: HUD, I guess, deals with a lot of disaster, they seemed to know what they were doing pretty well. FHA, they were in a shambles. They were hit hard themselves, they had lost most of their records, and then on top of that they had a lot of people come in and one of their administrators told me outright one day, "We don't know what we're doing. We've never had any experience with this before, we'll just do the best we can for you." They did give us money, and we needed it pretty quick. But I bet I spent a good ten solid hours just going over application forms with the officials, with the FHA. I'm surprised that the only actual mistake that was ever made, I made one of my house payments, and they credited it to a loan I had to build a shed. I got an emergency loan to do that and I paid it off when I got my money back from the Bureau of Reclamation. That was the only mistake made, but they still haven't corrected that. In general, they have too many rules and regulations, and I guess they have them because people tend to be dishonest. I try to keep telling myself that, but they were pretty disorganized. I don't hold it against them because I don't know how they could have been any different.

The Bureau was similar, I think, many of the Bureau officials had the feeling that people were trying to take advantage of the government. It irritated me a little bit to have people talk to me, and I know they had that attitude, you could tell it just by the way they were talking, and me trying to be honest. They most frustrating experience I had at the Bureau of Reclamation was, they kept saying, "If you claim too great a value on a piece of equipment or something, or household item, we'll cut you down to what we think it ought to be. If you don't claim enough, we're not going to tell you." That irritated me more than anything else. Finally, one day I just said to them, "Look, you guys. I'm going to come in
and jack everything I claim up twenty percent because I know if I'm too high you are going to cut me down to what's fair and honest, and I appreciate that. But if I'm low, you're not going to tell me, and if I want any guidelines, you're not going to give them to me." The thing that frustrated me at the time, was I was trying to find out the value of my crop. And I said to them, "If you guys will work with me, I'll just work it out." They said, "Nope, you've got to turn that in yourself." That made me mad, so I said, "I'll jack it up twenty percent."

S: Did you deal at all with state officials?

G: I didn't have anything to do with the state officials.

S: How about local authorities, were they effective in their handling of the disaster? Sheriffs, local police?

G: Sheriffs had a lot of roadblocks up. I guess there was still some vandalism that went on. I think they helped. The fact that they were there, and their patrolling 24 hours a day helped keep things down. I appreciated them being there, really. The local government officials, really most of it was out of their hands, but whatever they could do they did well. I think as far as actual work, the church officials did probably more than the local government officials to organize the cleanup on individual homes. Maybe on a public basis, and things like that, the local government officials did more, but that's just my personal observation.

S: Do you feel that any who assisted in recovery operations took advantage, especially in getting a lot of money without really earning it, without using names.

G: Would this be victims too, as well?

S: Yes.

G: I don't know any victims that took advantage of--I keep hearing about some that did. My feeling is, I know some people are building some pretty big
homes. Some people seem to have quite a bit of money, but who knows their circumstances? And I'm certainly not too excited about prying into it. I do feel maybe some of the contractors have jacked prices up. My own home is an example, I was really surprised. It was only two years old and when I built it, it cost me $24,500. To rebuild that same amount, not including the garage I added on, but just the bid to restore that much was $37,665. The guys, I think, were basically honest, and I hope they didn't just jack that up at the time, but I did hear of some. One lawyer told me they had, contractors had submitted bids on his house, the Bureau of Reclamation people came out and talked to the contractors and went over the house with them and showed realistically that they had inflated their bills. I'm afraid some of that has gone on. I hope it isn't as expensive to build everywhere else in the country as it is here right now.

S: In retrospect, do you feel that the flood was a form of divine punishment, was it a natural disaster, or was it just a man-made fiasco?

G: I think it was just a man-made fiasco. I think some good has come from it. Being an active member of the church, I tend to look for things like that, but I haven't seen many people get active in the church as a result of the flood. The ones who were inactive are still inactive, the ones who were active are still active. The thing I do feel, financially I think I'm probably better off because of the flood. My home's about the same, my farm is about the same, but on my farm instead of older buildings I have new buildings because how do you replace an old building? You have to build a new one. Our corrals are probably a little nicer, a nicer place to look at. Rather than going ot a lot of land leveling, which I would have needed to do on the property, I put in a sprinkler system,
which, according to going prices on land leveling, probably was cheaper, and yet it's a better irrigation system than I had before. So, I think there's been a lot of good come from it. I hope I've grown as a result of the experience. But I don't think it was sent to punish anybody, I don't think we're that bad.

S: Do you feel that the dam should be rebuilt?

G: I don't know if I could ever be comfortable again, and yet I think the same needs are here that were here before. They have built a dike all along the river where it runs by my place. I don't think I'd really have any danger of flooding. But if we had that dam and that reservoir I sure wouldn't be sweating about water this year for irrigation, plus the power that could be generated there. I have always tended to have an opinion that wasn't exactly like many of the conservationists that want to keep the streams completely virgin, no dams or anything. I think they're a great resource, and they could benefit us a lot more than they do. But to do it you'd have to have some dams. I'd like to see it rebuilt, I don't think the chances are too great, but I hate to think of that big pile of dirt sitting up there, halfway across that canyon.

S: Would you put the dam back in the same place?

G: I don't know. I don't know if there's a better place. I don't think there could be many worse places. How could anyone say, really. I can't decide. If it were put back, I would sure hope they would work out some kind of emergency warning system in case it should ever break.

S: I suspect that would always be in the back of your mind though, if it was rebuilt?

G: I think maybe after so many years a person might get comfortable, but, gee I drive by Idaho Falls, and it's surprising how often I think of maybe
Palisades Dam going out now, and that thought had never entered my mind before. I think our thinking has changed, and we'll never be able to forget that, especially if there's a dam built.

S: How is it that the disaster has changed your life, Jim?

G: Well, I explained a few things, as far as my home and the property that I own. Other than that, things seem to be going pretty much normal as they've gone in the past. I haven't had any earthshaking changes, just that financially I'm a little better off.

S: Are your children all right, emotionally are they back to normal?

G: Yes, they seem to be. They still talk about it a lot. David and Shawn, I don't think they ever really were affected as emotionally as Suzette, but I think Suzette's calmed down pretty much now.

S: How about you, is it still painful at times to think about it, are there phases of it that still hurt a little bit?

G: Yes, there are. Sometimes I just walk out in my fields, and I can see that water rolling over there, get a little shiver go through me. There have been some things, working with some of the government agencies, but I had never become frustrated with the government before, I've become a little frustrated at times since. I always considered people that seemed to have grudges against the government kind of a radical or reactionary, one or the other. What the government is doing in general is doing a pretty good job, and yet when I've seen all of the technicalities involved, it makes me feel bad that we have to have so much of that. I guess if there's anything that has affected me it's been my attitude toward the government. I appreciate the payment. I'd be in a hard time if I didn't have that. And yet it's frustrating that this country would have to have so many regulations, and safeguards, and watches, and things like that.

S: Thank you, Mr. Gee.