

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY & RICKS COLLEGE

HISTORY DEPARTMENTS

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT THROUGH LOCAL HISTORY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWER AGREEMENT

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Lola Walker, I, Christina Sorensen
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Christina C. Sorensen
Interviewer's Signature

7 Sept 1977
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INTERVIEWEE AGREEMENT

You have been interviewed in connection with a joint oral history program of the History Department, Utah State University, Ricks College, and the Idaho State Historical Society. The purpose of this oral history program is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

A tape recording of your interview has been made by the interviewer. A verbatim typescript of the tape will be made and a final typed and edited transcripts, together with the tape will be made and a final will then be filed in the Milton R. Merrill Library Special Collections, David O. McKay Library at Ricks College, and the Idaho State Historical Society in Boise. This material will be made available according to each of the depositories' policies for research be scholars and by others for scholarly purposes. When the final transcript is completed, a personal copy will be sent to you.
* * * * *

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Lola Ann D. Walker
Interviewee's Signature
Sept. 7, 1977
Date

TETON ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Ricks College
Idaho State Historical Society
History Department, Utah State University

TETON DAM DISASTER

Lola Walker

Interviewed by

Christina Sorensen

September 7, 1977

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ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Lola Walker

INTERVIEWER: Christina Sorenson

DATE: September 7, 1977

TETON DAM DISASTER

S: Lola, would you spell your name, please?

W: My name is spelled Lola Walker.

S: Lola, how old are you?

W: I'll be forty-two tomorrow.

S: And us, where were you born?

W: I was born in Madison County in a little community just immediately west of Rexburg called Burton.

S: And how long have you lived in the Rexburg area?

W: Oh I've lived in and around this area all of my life. We lived in the Independence-Burton area until I was 13, then we moved to Rigby, my family and I, and I went all through high school down there. And then I met my husband and married him while we lived in Rigby and we lived in Rigby until ten years ago and then we moved back to Rexburg.

S: Now, did you own your own home prior to the flood?

W: Yes. We were in the process of buying it and we had lived in the home just nine years.

S: Now, what was the address that you were at prior to the flood?

W: We were living at 72 North 1st East in Rexburg.

S: And what is your address now?

W: The same.

S: Now do you have a family?

W: Yes, I have three sons.

S: And were all of them at home at the time?

- W: My oldest son was the only one that was at home. My middle son, Jody, had just graduated from high school and he and some of his friends for a graduation trip had gone to Mexico on their motorcycles. And my youngest son had just left the day prior, on the Friday, for Lake Powell with his aunt and uncle for a two-week holiday. So they weren't here at the time, but my oldest son Mikel was here.
- S: Now, prior to the construction of the Teton Dam, were you opposed to it or in favor of it or indifferent to it?
- W: Well, I really don't think I even thought anything about it, you know, because it didn't really affect us where we live in town. But I don't know, I just thought at the time it was real good idea. We would have that water in reserve and the Teton River had been kind of a nasty little river. It flooded every spring and caused some damage. But I don't think I really thought about it at the time.
- S: Now, do you work for a living?
- W: I do now. Uh, oh I did off and on before, too. My husband and I ran a restaurant here in town and so I worked part time. I didn't have to work. I just went in, you know, from time to time. So I was very busy with my church duties and this type of thing. But I didn't work all the time. And I don't work steady now. I work more now just for fun.
- S: Now, uhm, prior to the flood did you or any of your family members have any premonition of the disaster coming, any feeling that something was going to go wrong?
- W: No, not really. I've had a lotta people tell me that they had a premonition, that their animals and so forth had been acting strangely and this type of thing. But myself and my family, no, I don't think we did. Uh, a strange thing did happen. When my brother and his wife were getting ready to leave for their vacation down to Lake Powell we

went up that morning to bid them farewell and to get everything ready. And I made the statement, "So you're really gonna do it, huh." It'd been a long time since they'd had a vacation. And he said, "I'm going down there come hell or high water." And I really think that if he'da, you know, if we'd of all thought about what he was sawying or had any indication that we'd have all been scared to death because it was just about 24 hours from the time they left until the water was down.

S: Now that morning do you recall what you were doing and where you were when you first heard that the dam had broken, and what your initial reaction to that news was?

W: Oh, I remember it very well because it was kind of interesting because we had been working very, very hard on the basement of our home, we had this lovely big area in our home and it had more or less just been a place for storage. And so we'd been working for about two years on finishing our basement and we had just barely finished it. That morning I had gone down and just finished hanging the pictures on the wall and putting the books on the shelves and I had just placed the boy's clothes all in their closet and everything. And about, oh, 11:30, 11:35 maybe, my oldest son Mikel was working at the restaurant. And he called home and then he said, "What you doing, Mon?" Just very, uh, nonchalant. And I told him what we were doing. And he says, "Are you listening to the radio?" And I said, "No. Daddy and I had thought it such a beautiful day today that we'd hurry and get these things done in the house and then be the only one home and you'll have to work all afternoon, that we'd drive up to Jackson and have dinner." And he says, "Well, Mom, I think you better listen to the radio." And I said, "Mike, I don't want to listen to the radio." I said, "Daddy and I are gonna hurry. We wanta try and be away from here by noon." And he says,

"Mom, the Teton Dam just broke and you'd better listen to the radio!" So I hurried and ran, I just come to Doyle and I said, "Doyle, did you hear what Mike said?" And he said, "What, about the Teton Dam?" And I said, "Mike just said it broke." And he sayd, Oh, it did not." And I said, "Well, he said to turn on the radio." And we turned on the radio just as Don Ellis' voice was at a high pitched scream and he was describing the holocaust that was going on at that time. And you could hear the roar in the background of his voice. And all I could think about at that time, I think people were kind of naive about really what was going to happen because I thought, oh well we live about three blocks from the river. It probably won't get over here. But Keith and Larene live right on the river and they have ten children and all I could think about was getting out and helping them. So we hurried and, and uhm I didn't do a thing in my own house. We just ran, got in the, we have a r-wheel-drive Jeep, and we ran out and by the time we got out to the Teton River we could see that there was a lot of excitement. So my husband stopped one of the patrolment and asked him if there was something we could do. And we had a CB unit in our vehicle and uh, of course we were listening to it all the time and it was getting more excited all the time. And uh so we asked him what we could do and he said, "Alert everybody close to the river." He said, "Go as fast as you can and tell'em to leave, don't take a thing, just tell 'em to leave." So we did that for about a half an hour, forty-five minutes. And then we came back to Keith and Larene's and were helping them move. And then a State Patrolman saw that I had a CB unit in our vehicle so he pulled into the yard and asked whose it was and I told him it was ours and he said, "Come with me. I need you." So they took me and put me on the roadblock rightimmediately north of Rexburg on the Rogers Brothers corner and told me not to leave there and

to stay there and not let anybody go north regardless of what their excuse was. No one was to go north. And us, so they left me there for an hour and twenty minutes. And then finally a State Patrolman came down through and told me that I was going to get very, very wet and I asked him how long and he said about fifteen minutes. So I left there. My husband by that time had been enlisted into another service. I didn't really know where he was. I knew he was alright, but I didn't know where he was. So I came back to the house. My son had a beautiful collection of hybrid (high bred) pigeons and I turned or opened the gates to their pens with the hope that they'd get out alright, and I got my dogs. I ran in the house and I grabbed sleeping bags, a change of clothes for everybody, toothbrushes and makeup--of course, women are vain and I had to have my makeup--and my husband's razor and uh nightclothes and this type of thing and some containers of water. And I got out in the car and I thought, "leather jackets." My family had just gotten leather jackets for Christmas. So I run back in and grabbed all of our leather jackets and my turquoise jewelry and then I thought "sugar." And my sugar was all in the basemnt so I carry it up there and put it on top of the dishwasher 'cause it was going to be alright, took all of the boys' clothes out of their closet. And my home has, has uh lots of plumbing pipes and things that run through the one room. And I took all of the clothes in there and hung 'em up high 'cause I thought, "Oh, the water'll never get this deep." And then I left and went over to the cafe to make sure everything there was alright and went up to my brother's, he lives up on the hill. And uh, in the meantime I had seen my husband and my son so I knew they were alright and they were busy with the police and my sone' worked on the ambulance crew so I knew he was in that type of service. And went up and just watched the water come.

S: Uh, now before I ask the question that I ordinarily ask, I just wanted to ask, uh, did you have any unusual experiences with people when you were trying, when you were there, you know, the roadblock and telling them to go back? Did any people really argue with you or just refuse to follow your directions?

W: No. They were all very, very good. I had some farmers that lived right close in that immediate area and, of course, they were going right home and I could see where they were going. So I didn't argue with them and they were getting their family and so forth. Un, an interesting experience we had a family from Texas. They were in a mobile home and they came through and the fellow looked at me and he says, "Will you tell me what in the world is going on?" He said, "I've never seen anything so, so much traffic." He said, "I've never seen anything like this." And uh I described very briefly to him that, what had happened and asked him to proceed with extreme care to the south, but keep going south. And he told me that they would. And uh, and then later on in the evening when we were able to move out around a little bit and get down into the flood area there he was. And I hollered at him and I said, "What in the world are you still doing here?" And he'd recognized me and uh, I said, "What are you still doing here?" And he said, "Well," he said, "With anything like this happening," he says, "You think I coulda gone on south and not seen it all?" He says, "I went right up on the hill with everybody else and sit there and watched it." And he and his family, to my knowledge, stayed for a week after the flood and helped clean up. I never did find out his name, but there was a man and lady and four children. And uh, I don't know what their name was, but they stayed. And I, I run into them two or three times during the week. But they stayed right here and helped. They just couldn't believe. No, most everybody,

and I was amazed at how calm everyone was. One lady came through and us, she had taken time to take the chest of drawers for her children and taken each one of their drawers and put it in the back of her station wagon. She had bedding for them, she had grabbed baby food and diapers and this type of thing. She had about four little ch---four or five small children and she had come away prepared. Uh, some of them came away without anything. But they were all very calm and they minded very well. In fact, I was amazed at the calmness. There was not a lot of hysteria, not a lot of fright and it was more or less from, from the advantage point that I had as, as we could see the water coming, it was more or less a feeling of reverence, very quiet and hushed and almost a carnival atmosphere. You know, people were, were moving around and seeing if they could see their homes and this type of thing. But there wasn't a lot, a great amount of, of uh hysteria. This came later.

S: Now, when you went up to the hill and were able to see, what did the water look like to you as it came in and how did you feel when you saw it coming in over Rexburg.

W: Well, it made me kind of sick to my stomach. I mean it, because you know our valley is so very beautiful and green, ordinarily. And as you looked up--now I didn't get to see it come a great distance; I only got to observe it for about ten minutes before it went through the high school--but everything in front of it was beautiful and green and then there was this huge cloud of dust just rolling in front of it. And then this, well have you seen Sherlock Holme movies about the werewolf and Dracula where the, the fog comes up over the land and just covers, this is just the way it kinda looked to me only it was such a dirty grey, such an ugly color. And yet it just came down and just consumed everything in its path. It was interesting becuase you could see Sugar City from

where we were and all at once you couldn't see Sugar City. All you could see was just the top of the gymnasium and the water tower. And that's the only buildings you could see. And then as it moved on down and down through the high school the thing, I think, that upset me most of anything was the animals. And they would run in front of it and then a fence would catch them and then you'd see it just catch them, you know. And it just, well, it was just horrible. There wasn't anything you could do except just stand there and watch. I have an uncle that, uh, he's not really a very religious person but he sat there and, uh, he never shows much emotion. But as he was sitting there and I looked over at him and the tears were just running, and he said, "My what small creatures we are in the mighty power of God." And it, this is just kind of the feeling everybody had.

S: How, how long was it before you were able to return to your home, and how did you go about doing that? And when did you, what did you find, and how did you feel about that?

W: Well, I live in a, in a beautiful old house. It's uh, one of the older homes in Rexburg and uh, oh I just love it. We saved it by the way. But it, it was just a beautiful home. And we had worked on it really, and we had it just fixed up till it was just beautiful. We were able that night by around 8:00 o'clock to drive down to the house. We could go, we drive down and observed the debris and the, and the, ooh, the mess that was around the house. We didn't go into the house until late Sunday afternoon. My son that had been on the trip to Mexico, when I, going back just a little bit, when I heard what was happening I knew that when he heard it that he would be upset and there were six boys on motorcycles and four in a pickup and they were all traveling together. So I got in touch, before the phones went out, I got

in touch with the Utah State Patrol and the Arizona State Patrol and told them the route that I presumed they would be taking coming home and that they would be coming and to watch for them and stop them. And that we were all alright and that not for them to hurry but to come home, but they didn't need to hurry. Now they had left, the morning they had left Page, Arizona, that morning. So when they got word of what was happening, when they got the first bulletin of it, they were just between Manti and Provo. And, uh, Jody said the first flash that came over he said they couldn't believe it. And, uh, and then he said as they came further north the bulletins got worse, you know, and, and more exaggerated. There were, uh, there was a twelve foot wall of water that went through Rexburg and there were hundreds dead and this type of thing. And, of course, they started calling, trying to call and, of course, they couldn't get through. There was no way. And then they went into Salt Lake and they got in touch with some friends of theirs, some girls that had been in their graduating class that they knew were in Salt Lake, to see if they had heard anything. And they hadn't, of course, and so they told the girls to stay there, not to try to come home. But they would come home and then they'd get back in touch with them as soon as they could. So they got as far as Brigham City and then they were told there that they couldn't come any further north than Pocatello; they would hold them at Pocatello. So instead of coming that way, they went up through Star Valley, Wyoming, and one of the boys that was with them has a grandfather that lives there. So they came to Star Valley, left their motorcycles there, and got his pickup and in order to avoid the roadblocks they came down across the dry farms. And they got home or got into the area about a quarter to five in the morning on Sunday morning. So they had come right straight through from Page, Arizona. And they said that

as they came up over the crest of the hill where they could first see Rexburg--Rexburg is usually, you know, at night it's very pretty and it's just a blaze of lights. And he said as they looked down over the valley it was just total darkness except for the college. He said that's the only lights they could see. And, and he said they had no idea what to expect as they come down 'cause they hadn't been able to get in touch with any of us. They didn't know how far the flood had gone, you know, how far to the south or back up to the east it had gone or just what the devastation was. So he said he knew that if the family was alright they'd be at Uncle Frank's because Uncle Frank lives up on the hill. So they came down there first and when he walked in he just yelled just as loud as he could and he says, "Mom and Dad, are you here?" And, of course, we were. Two of the boys that were with him, it took us two days to find their parents. We didn't know where they were. I told the boys that they were alright because I had seen them. They had come out of the flood area. I knew they were out, but I had no idea where they were, so it took us two days to find 'em. And so then the boys, my boys decided rather than let me go in the house first, they'd go down and see what the problem was. So the debris had backed up between my house and the garage and the neighbor's house to the point that my oldest son went up over the debris and then down in and had to crawl through a hole where it had broken the back door off and in through the house. The refrigerator had gone over and blocked the door between the kitchen and the dining room and then had just kind of slid out into the room so he had to crawl up over that and up over all the furniture that was piled in there and let Jody in the front door. And when Jody walked in he just looked around. Mike said he just looked around and he says, "Oh, gees, is Mom gonna be mad!" And as a result, I was quite. But when we went

in it was amazing because things, everything in the house had moved except one thing and I had one piece of furniture that was still standing upright. And I have a, I had a beautiful Boston fern, it was a big beautiful thing. And our bishop had just made me a fern stand out of metal. It was iron. And that thing had just stood right there; it hadn't moved at all. And, uh, but everything else was just completely, it was just turned upside down. When I first went in I thought that the fireplace--I have a beautiful marble fireplace in my living room--and I thought it had sunk because it was, you know, and I had a big crack up the side of my wall and everything. But as we investigated it more, instead of the fireplace sinking, the floor had heaved up and so it wasn't as bad as we thought it was a first sight. Then we, uh, started moving in oh, late Sunday afternoon and getting the things out that we could, things that, that we could take out we started taking out on a Sunday. And then there wasn't much done for the next two days because at the time of the flood I was serving as Relief Society president of the Rexburg Eighth Ward and there was not one family in our ward that wasn't totally devastated by the flood--their homes, their land, everything. Uh, we had a trailer court that housed 34 trailers and there wasn't one trailer left. Some of the trailers they never did find. And so there was a lot of checking up on people, finding out where they were, uh, if they were alright and their needs and this type of thing. And so for two or three days after the flood we didn't get much done in our house. And then the crews started moving in, the relatives came, and the people came from Utah and, and Idaho Falls areas and, and started moving in. And we just went in with shovels and buckets and threw it away.

S: Now, where did you stay during the next few days and weeks?

W: We stayed up at my brother's. Now he lives, his name is Frank Daniels,

and he lives up on the hill. And they have a beautiful home up there. And thank goodness that my mother had a key to the house. We just went in and made ourselves at home. There were, when Frank and Sharon and their family arrived home from Lake Powell on the Wednesday following the flood, there were 32 of us in the house. And we stayed that way for two weeks. And then the ones that were there started being able to go back to their homes and being able to, to be out or housed in other areas. And then my family and I, we lived there until the first of August. And then my aunt and uncle out in Burton have a lovely home out there and they were going to be gone until the end of September, so we moved out there and we lived out there during the summer and it was just real nice. It was clean and, and everything. And it took us about that long to, to get things rounded up and to try to get things catalogued together so we knew where things were. And then about the end of September they parked a trailer right, right behind my house so it was real convenient so we could work on the house.

S: Now that was a HUD trailer?

W: Uh, huh, yeah. We lived in a HUD trailer. And we lived in there from about the first part of October until the latter part of May of this year and then we moved back into our home. It's not finished yet, but it's coming right along. It's really starting to shape up.

S: Oh, that's good.

W: So, it's coming right along.

S: Now, I imagine then in those next few weeks that you received some aid and help from the various organizations such as the Red Cross and the LDS Church and, of course, the government with the trailer and such things. Uhm, what did you think of the services that these various groups provided?

W: Well, it was almost uh, to me, it was just miraculous at the rate of speed they moved in here. Uhm, now when you think that the flood, the water came into Rexburg about between 1:30 and 2:00 it came here, there were very few people that by 9:30 that night were not housed. As soon as they got the word in Salt Lake, the supplies started moving in. The Red Cross was here by Sunday. They were in here with convenience-like things, like toothpaste and toothbrushes, shaving cream, uh and this type of thing. Clothing, clothing was in here by Monday. It was and, and food. I can't believe it, as fast as it came in. 'Course being in the restaurant business we paid a lot of attention to this because my husband knew that there were going to have to be a lot of people fed. So he enlisted our crew that had worked for us, he got in touch with as many of 'em as we could, and he went immediately to the college and, and volunteered his time. Uhm the only business on Main Street that was not totally devastated was Safeways and they had sandbagged their windows and doors with their flour and sugar and it held very well. They got very little water in their store. And I really don't think they'da got any in it but a car came down and hit into the one big front window and broke it out. And I don't think they woulda got hardly any water at all. But it wasn't enough to contaminate anything. So by late evening the trucks had moved in there and was moving all of that food out and up to the college. Uhm and so really it was a terrible disaster, but as far as people physically suffering, they didn't have to for very long because they were being fed, they were being housed. It might not, not've been as convenient as what they were used to, but they weren't suffering. And thank goodness there was no rain. It was a nice warm evening and it stayed that way for about five days, then the rains came and it cooled right down. And I really think that that

was a blessing because if it hadn'ta done all the dead animals and all of the debris around, the stench woulda been so bad we couldn'ta stood it. 'Cause just right down my street alone there were 14 dead cows just laying right down, down the street. Now I was fortunate enough in the debris and stuff that was piled up around my home I had no dead animals in it. But the people across the street had a lot of 'em. And so if it hadn'ta cooled down and stayed as hot as it was on June 5th, I really think the stench woulda been so bad we couldn't of stood it.

S: You know something I wondered before when you mentioned the, uh, animals running from the floodwaters, uh, did they make noises like could you ever hear them?

W: Yes. Yes, you could tell they were frightened. And, and you know after the flood I think this is the thing that upset me more is because those poor cows, you know, they were lost. Some of 'em weren't milked for up to six days and they'd just stand and bawl and bawl, and the pigs and the chickens and, and the sheep, you know. And they were just lost. They didn't know, and they just wandered aimlessly. They'd go anywhere. Uh, one amusing thing with animals was, uhm, as, as we came down that evening and got back down to our restaurant to see what had happened there, there was an old cow just as contented as she could be. She was up, just as high as she could get up on the doorstep of this house, and standing there chewing her cud just as contented as can be. So we, we got out and shooed her off the porch. She just stood around there in the water for a few minutes, looked around and found a higher step and went over and got up on the step. But, uh, this is the thing, I think, the animals and I, I really think that they felt, before the water ever got to them that something, because we were noticing before the water got to 'em and they'd mill just wildly in the fields.

We, we had a real good observation of north and up through the, some of the big pastures up there and you could see them just running and, uh, and then the fences'd catch 'em and uh. But a lot of amusing things happened. There was one bull, uh, got up in an apartment over on College Avenue got up in the apartments over there and up on the third story. And, uh, they'd go and try to get him out and he was mad and he was scared and he didn't know what and he'd, was just right mean. And, uh, so they finally found out who owned him and they got in touch with him and told him and he said, "Oh," he says, "That's ridiculous. That bull's just as gentle as can be." And he said, uh, this fellow said, "Okay," he said, "I'll back my trailer up to that door and you go in and persuade him out." And they left him three more days before he'd come out. Now I don't know how true it is, but there was one story about a cow that got in a bathroom down on the west side and got into the bathroom and got the door shut. She was fine, but she, they couldn't get the door open. And there she was in there. I don't know how they finally did get her out. But, but they just wandered aimlessly.

S: Now, when you and your husband filed your claims with the government, were you satisfied with your settlement that you received?

W: Well, now ours hasn't been settled yet. Ours had to be, uh, filed as a business and as a residence and so, uh, we had to close out the year of our business, uh, we wanted to just as if we were closing out a year so that we could figure a little better profit and loss. And, uh, or course, in the flood we had lost all of our records because everything pertaining to the restaurant had been in the basement of the building. And, uh, some of them you could read a little bit, but most of them weren't even legible and so, uh, as a result, we had to go back and compare. And so as, uh, our, uh, claim has only been in about a month. So, uh, we haven't had that experience yet.

S: Now, what was the name of your restaurant?

W: We had Doyle Walker's restaurant.

S: And, uh, when you went down there how were things down there?

W: Well, it was interesting! Becuase there was one window broken out in the building, one is all that was, except the back. The back was really devastated and, and broken up. But in front of the building there was one window and it was in the coffee shop. We had two large dining rooms and then the coffee shop and the only window that was broken out of the building was the coffee shop. But when we went in, out of enough tables to seat 250 people we found 11 tables and I think 17 chairs. It had just sucked it right out the front window. We had sliding, uh, you, know, closing partitions that we had closed between the big dining room on the back and the big, and the smaller dining room on the front. And there was a 50-gallon oil drum in there and the doors were still closed. Now, how it got in there we don't know unless the door floated up, the barrel floated in, and then closed it back down. It was, it was just really, it made you wonder. We had a pickup camper in, in our back entry, was right in there. And the debris was just something. And, but it had taken, we had a, a large pot of soup sitting on the stove at the time and he uses these great big kettles--I think they're, what are they, about 25 or 30 gallons, big ones--and it was about half full of soup and it had just floated that up, carried it out into the coffee shop, set it down on the counter, and it didn't even have any mud in it. And then in contrast, it had pick the big heavy grill up, well you can imagine how big those grills are, and just taken it and just picked it right up and put it over in the dishwashing area. But it didn't spill the soup. It was just strange little things like this, you know, that happened.

S: Now, Lola, was there any time during these weeks immediately following the flood and maybe even the months after it when you ever felt close to just despair or absolute hopelessness?

W: I don't think, oh, I shed a lotta tears I think during the summer. But it wasn't from despair. I think the tears were from observing the mass of people that moved in here to help. It was my responsibility as Relief Society president to greet those buses every morning and disperse the work crews. And some of those people came back time after time after time. Every morning I bawled. And every night when they left I bawled. Uhm, I think the only time that I really did break down, and I didn't quite know why or what it was about, was I have an aunt--she's always been just real special to me--she's quite wealthy and she didn't have any need to come up. And she walked in one day with a whole crew from Idaho Falls and they worked there just, just as hard as they could work, you know. She hauled clothes for me down to have 'em dry cleaned and, and this type of thing, just carload after carload of tings she took. I think that's the hardest that I ever did cry. Uhm, I'm, I'm quite a strong person and I just made up my mind it's not gonna beat me. And, uh, I think most people had this way. I think we would've had a lot more depression and a lot more despair if the work crews hadn't worked, moved in here the way they did. We had one gentleman that said, he says, "They're gonna kill me." He said, "I work all day long just as hard as I can tryin' to keep up with 'em and they send in a fresh crew every morning." And I really think that they ha--if the work crews hadn't of come in the way they did and we'da been left on our own to try to clean that up, I don't think we'd have ever done it. I think there would've been a lot more uh despair. I think there'd have been a lot of suicides. I think there'd have been a lot more divorces than there were. Now this

is just speculation, but I really think that the people coming in and helping us, giving a boost all the time, and the kindness of the college feeding the way they did, and uh, and the people that hadn't been affected by the flood, for instance the people just in the immediate area that hadn't been affected and they moved in and manned these food service areas and, and uh, you know, it was just uh. I really think that's what pushed everybody on over to the point that there wasn't a lot of depression and, and uh because I know that if I'da gone into my house and uh, I just had to, had to try to do it as a family I don't think we'd have ever done it. Uh, I've heard a lot of people say that, uh, that if they'da had to they'da wished that it'd burned or just taken their whole house or, or something. But I really think that, at least this is the way I feel, that the people coming in to help and the kindness, and the Red Cross was so good and uh, and, and the, and the members of the Church. There were a group of, uh, Mennonites that stayed in here all summer long. The housed them up at the Lincoln School, and those people stayed here all summer. And they worked hard. There was a group from over in the Burley area that came in and they, they housed them at the North Stake Center and they stayed here for two weeks, adn those men had crops to put in and they brought in all their heavy equipment. They brought in their own tire crew and everything and they stayed right here for two weeks. They slept, ate and slept over at the North Stake Center and then they'd just work out from there every day. So I really think this is what helped.

S: Now, as you've watched the community recovering over the last year, what good things do you think have come out of this for Rexburg and the surrounding towns? And what, if any, negative things do you think are happening as a result of the flood?

W: Well, the good things that have heppened is that a lot of the debris and the old topple down ramshackle areas have been cleaned up. I don't think there's another area in the world that everybody has brand new barns, brand new fences. The roads are going to be all new and the bridges are gonna be all new. All of the debris is cleaned up. Uhm, a lot of people that would never ever have the experience of the opportunity to move into new homes are moving into new homes. Uhm, it's, it's, they're beautifying the community and building it back, I think, better than it was before. A lot of the things that they had made mistakes on before, now they'll be able to improve on that. These are some of the good things. We were fortunate in this area that, uhm, where it was a man caused disaster that we had the aid that came in immediately. I feel so sorry for these people like in Johnstown, Pennsylvania and Thompson River down in, in Colorado, uh, because these people don't have the subsidy that we're getting here and that we. They, these have all been good things. Some of the negative things--I think backbiting, uh greediness, uh neighbor against neighbor, this type of thing. And I think this shows up anytime that there's prosperity comes into an area. Uhm, I think land prices have gone far out of reason. It's ridiculous what you have to pay for a building lot, and yet they're getting it. And so these are some of the, the other things. I think the business have all improved. Main Street's gonna be more beautiful than it's ever been. I think people are more, uh, careful about the type of businesses they're going into and uh. It's interesting working where I do that we have the opportunity of meeting with a lot of these people that are doing their homes. Most of them have never had the opportunity before, and they never will again, of doing a whole home at the same time, and it's scary for most everyone. They're not geared for this. Most people

are, are geared for maybe doing a room or piece by piece type furniture. But to go in and do a whole home, it's scary for them. Some of the women don't even wanna be affected with it at all. They'll, they'll call on a decorator and they'd rather have a decorator do it than even be involved in it at all. It's a worry to a lot of them. I have never seen people shop the way they do now. They want to make sure everything is right. Their color schemes have to be exact, their furniture has to be just right, it's got to be something that they can live with for years, and they're really shopping. They, they're, very little impulsive buying is going on. Sometimes it'll take them two and three months to decide and so it isn't impulsive things. And I think they've gotten to the point that "we've lived with it this long, we can live with it a few more months." And they're not, oh some of them are very anxious and want to get in and get out of their trailers. But the trailers are moving out very rapidly and, and they are getting into their homes. But it just amazes me the way they are shopping. And everything has to be just right because they'll never have this opportunity again. And I think this is good. And yet a lot of them have made mistakes and they're sad about this already. They went back too fast, tried too hard, and they were, they were, uh, too anxious. They turned their claims in too soon, they didn't check prices closely enough, and this was, this's a lot why I'm involved with a lot of them that're doing this. They find that they priced things the way they could've bought them say five or six years ago and with the rapid increase in the economy and with the price raises we're getting and everything, there is no way you can buy a sofa for what you bought it for six years ago. And so these are some of the mistakes and some of the bad things that've been done. They tried to hurry too fast.

S: Now, are you still Relief Society president?

W: No, they released me last January and it seemed like after I got them over the hump of the flood and I knew that everybody was well and taken care it just kind of drained out of me. I just didn't have any, uh, any ambition left anymore. I couldn't get enthusiastic about anything. And you cannot serve as a Relief Society president and not be enthusiastic about what you're doing. So I talked with the bishop and he released me. But they put me right back in. I'm on the Stake Relief Society board now.

S: Keep you busy.

W: Yeah.

S: Now, as you served though over the next few months after the flood as Relief Society president, what sorts of problems did you think that most of the, well, the women especially being the ones that you would have the most, perhaps, to do with. What sort of problems seemed to weigh the most heavily on their minds in those say six or eight months after the flood?

W: Housing their children for the winter. This was a worry. They were worried about living in the trailers, the confinement of, of where they'd there from a home. And some of them had, had to house their families in two trailers because one trailer wouldn't house them. This worried them because it was a different surrounding. How could they make a trailer as comfortable or as homey as the homes they'd, they'd moved out of? Uhm I think this was the biggest worry. Uh, so many of them expressed to me, "Oh, I hope that I'm in a permanent housing before winter." I really think that if we'da had a hard winter that it woulda been a lot harder, but the children, most of them, most of this winter the children could be out some most of, most every day and they weren't confined strictly to the trailers. Uh, they were worried about, of course, of

course about their homes and if they would ever be able to restore them back or rebuild. Uhm, immediately following the flood within about, oh I guess about five days we were organized in our ward so that each night we met at the church at 6:00 o'clock. We quit working and we met at the church and ate as a ward, together. And for those that, that didn't have a place to eat. And we would meet there. We would discuss the problems of the day. We would, uhm, find out what had to be done the next day, who needed sewer pumps, who needed electricians, who needed bucketers to carry the stuff out of their basement. And then we would write these down, then we'd assign them out the next day. We'd laugh and talk together and we'd, we'd cry together. And, and I think this helped a lot. But we did pull into a ward meeting every night at 6:00 o'clock. Then they would come and tell us their problems and the things they were having problems with. I think this helped a lot with the morale of the people. It was interesting because never again will those women dress the way they did. It was ridiculous, really, some of the outfits they wore, and it was so funny. So this one night we were having dinner and and this one lady said, "Why don't we have a fashion show?" And so we just, we uh had a flood fashion show one night. And, and this, this one lady in our ward, she's a card anyway, and she wrote up a narrative about the gumboots and the, and the clothes that we wore, and it was really funny. then, uhm, let's see, when was it, about July, in July we had a Relief Society meeting in the ward for all of the ladies and we took out, sent out a special invitation and, uh, invited them all to take the afternoon off and come to Relief Society. And we had a special program and, and we had some lovely refreshments and we asked them all to dress up the best that they could and we came and spent the afternoon as a Relief Society. And then in August we had a Stake Relief Society meeting and Sister

Daryl Hoole from Salt Lake came up and spent the day with us, gave them some real good ideas on entertaining children in small areas, uh, some uh, uh pastime games that children can do, space savers, time savers, and she brought us a lot of recipies. And this helped. But I think of all of the things that I had to do was the first time that I could make a tour around the ward and see the devastation. We had some very beautiful homes in our ward and as I drove out through and observed the dev--the, the complete just destruction of everything, I think that's the hardest thing I did, uh, becuae I, I wanted to go and see the situations that they were living in because where I was, I was comfortable. I was perfectly comfortable. But a lot of them weren't as comfortable as I was and, uh, this was hard. But we did, we met as a ward and, and uh it took a lotta time and it took a lot of, uh, lot of prayer in order to get through it. But it worked out fine. It, most everyone in our ward we had at the time of the flood, I had 42 single women in my ward and 27 of those were over 80. And they were a worry, they were a real worry. But it has taken a lot of 'em. They, uh, they've passed away and, and uh moved out of the ward and this type of thing. But, uh, they were a worry 'cause I didn't know where they were. I didn't know if they were alright or not. I had an interesting thing happen to me. You know the news crews, moved in here so fast and CBS was here, it was on the Sunday morning after. And I had gone up to the college and, uh, I was in, well I was on the food line helping with the food that morning. And, uh, as, uh, as my ladies would come through, you know, I'd jot them down and, uh, then I was just wandering out through the crowds to see, and all at once I, I can't remember who I was standing talking with someone and I said, "Oh, there's one of my ladies." And one of the, the news commentators that was inhere, it was a big negro fellow, and he

turned to a fellow that was by him and he says, "Well, she's a Relief Society president and she's taking count of her ladies in the ward so she knows where they all are." Later on that day I was back up at the college and this, this negro fellow--I never did learn his name. I wish I had 'cause I visited with him two or three times just off the cuff.

S: Did he have a beard?

W: Yeah, a beard. Great big guy.

S: Oh he's Bradley, Ed Bradley.

W: Is that Ed Bradley?

S: I'll bet that's Ed Bradley.

W: Great big guy. He was here for three or four days, yeah, big guy.

S: That's Ed Bradley.

W: And uh, I, I just visited with him two or three times off the cuff, you know. And, uh, he asked me and I said, I told him by that, by late that Sunday night that I had count, I knew where all of my ladies were, that I knew approximately what their needs were and I knew where they were. And uh, he, he couldn't believe that, you know, that we could organize that fast and find out where everybody was and take a count so we knew of the deaths and the, and this type of thing. But it was interesting visiting with him. But he was here for two or three days and he came thr--he'd come thorough as we were on the food line and he'd always say, "Find any more of your ladies this morning?" It was interesting. But I never did find out his name. I just visited with him, you know.

S: I'll bet that sounds like him with his _____?

W: That great big negro guy. And I know he came in with CBS.

S: Yeah, yeah that must be him. Now talking about the different age groups. Now, you have teenage sons and then you worked with the elderly widows and everything. What age group do you think in your experience suffered the most?

W: This might sound strange but I think that the small children did. The mothers were so busy and the children were housed at day care centers most of the time, especially for about the first two or three weeks they were housed at day care centers. And I really think that the small children suffered the mu--the most. The mothers and the fathers were suffering, but it was a different type. The children had lost their home and then they were being deserted during the day. The day care centers were very very good, uh I'm not saying this. But, but it's just the thought of being torn from everything that's familiar to you. And, uh, our bishop's little girl, she was just oh she was just really little, and to this day she just clings to her mother and she was never a mother's baby before then. But, uh, her mother says that when she gets ready to leave or anything that Leecie just still clings to her and just screams. And uhm, I, _____ mother say this. Now my son that was in Mexico, it took him just about five days to really realize what had happened. Every time we'd need him he'd be out riding back up the hill on his dirt bike. And he, he didn't wanna see it and so he'd go back up over. Uhm my little boy, when he got home from Lake Powell, all he could say was, "Why didn't you get my things out of my room? Why didn't you, wll, Mom, why dind't you save this? Well, Mom, why, well Mom, why could--how come's you let this get in the water?" You know. And this went on for about a week. And then finally he got into the swing of things and then he realized. Then he had the opportunity of seeing some film and this type of thing and then he could realize why we didn't save his things. And, uh, but we started trying to get in touch with them down at Lake Powell as soon as it happened. There was no way. They were out on Lake Powell. They didn't even come in to where they were, they were staying until the Tuesday evening. Then finally there was a message at

the desk and they got the message from the desk, uh, just about the same time that Ralph Huskinson got through to them on his, on his radio. And they were home the next night, on Wednesday night by around 7:00 o'clock. They came right straight through.

S: Now, Lola, did you or any of your family members have any either general or specific spiritual experiences during this time that you would care to relate?

W: Oh, I think, I think the spirit, the one I think that affected me the most was it really made me thankful for what we had was when all my family got back together and we were all safe. We were disrupted and we had all, oh, all kinds of problems going on. But we were all together as a family. Uh, and then as the work crews came in every day. To me it was really hard for me to meet those buses every morning. I'd try to put it off as long as I could and then I knew I had to be down there at a certain time to meet those buses to get those work crews dispensed. When President Kimball came, uhm, was another great occasion. I, I really feel like that, that the things that he told us and uh, and Governor Andrus and the remarks that he made and uh, this type of thing was all very very good. As the water was coming down I could see our stake center from where I was and we had only been in it two weeks. And uh, all I could think of _____ some of the things you think about, you don't think about anything else except I knew that we had a \$28,000 pipe organ in that building and all I could think of was that organ was gonna get ruined. I know as a result we didn't even get damp, thank goodness. There was no water in that building. You know, I really feel like that the Lord preserved that building because we needed it so badly. We used it, we were serving about 480 meals a day out of there until about the middle of August. Uhm, we had, but as, as the

water came in it stopped just before it got into the chapel and it didn't get in on the gym floor. It was about the third or fourth day, I can't remember for sure, it was before the end of the first week anyway, and I had gone back over to the stake center about noon to check on things and as I pulled into the parking lot this organ music was just beautiful. And I started to cry. And as I went in I opened the chapel doors and there was this young man from Idaho Falls sitting there playing the organ and they had opened all the building, all the windows in the building and you, that was just floating out across, you know. And it just sounded so good. And everybody that came in that day, they weren't in a hurry to have their lunch like they usually were, but they just came in and sat around on the floor and listened to him play the organ. And I think he played the organ for um, an hour. And it just made everybody just kinda relax and realize everything wasn't so bad. But uh, it, it coulda been a lot worse. It coulda come in the middle of the night. It coulda come at, on a different day when the people were scattered more and, uh, it it coulda been just a lot worse.

S: Now, well, there's been a lot of talk about the cause of the dam breaking and, of course, most people have the belief that it was a man-made disaster although a few people have expressed the idea that it was a punishment for the people's sins. Now, how do you feel about that idea?

W: No, I don't think so. I think that this was definitely a mistake in design. I don't think it was any one person's fault, uh, but I really think that it was a bureaucracy to a certain degree. They don't listen to people. They were told before they ever put a dam in there that that wasn't a safe place to put it, that the rock was too porous. My oldest son was a very very good friend of Robbie Robison's son and so he, he heard Keith talk a lot about the dam, you know, and, and the problems

they were having up there and some of the things that went on. And, uh, I thought as I was out on the roadblock one of the last cars that came through was Mr. Robison and I will never until my dying day forget the look on his face. And I said, "How is it?" And he said, "Oh my dear. It is far worse than you can imagine." And then he went home and started getting his family, oh, as much as he could because they were hit too. And he told his wife at that time, he said, "I never in the rest of my life will ever get out of court for what has happened today." And thank goodness that they have, they're, they're broadminded enough to realize that he was not totally to blame. He had nothing to do with the design of the dam. He just carried out what he was told to do. And uh, he said, there were times, you know, that he wondered and, but he said, these, these men have been building dams for years. He said they just, they just don't make mistakes like that. But they do. And I really feel like I don't think it was a punishment for people's sins. I think if it'd been a punishment for people's sins--of course, here we go again-- I really didn't suffer as far as physical suffering, they, mental a lot, but a lot of physical they didn't. They worked hard. They, uh, but as I say, they were, they were housed and they were comfortable. They had a, they had good food being poured to them all the time. They had people come in and help 'em. And so I think if it'd been for people's sins I really think it would've been a far worse thing. It woulda been more devastating. The, the government wouldn't have moved right in and helped us at the, at everything. No I, I, I don't feel that way.

S: Uhm, now that they're talking about rebuilding the dam, are you in favor of that or opposed to it or, and would you mind if they did it in the same location?

W: I don't want it in the same location. I, uh, I think eventually they

will build a dam again. I think, I don't think they'll hurry it this time. I think we need the dam. We need something there to retain that water. Uhm, but I don't think, I don't know. It's kind of scary. I know that if it ever happened again I don't know if I'd wanta go through it. I think I might just pack up and leave. But uh, no, I, I think eventually they'll rebuild the dam. But I hope they don't build it in that same place. That rock is too porous right there. It's been proven, and I, I don't think, I don't care how they design the dam, I still think it's too porous right there.

S: Well, as you look back on this year and all that you've experienced in your family, uhm, what, if any, changes have you noticed in your own personal values, attitudes, beliefs, perhaps even your personality, that you would attribute directly to the flood and the aftermath experience?

W: Well, in our personal family, our whole lifestyle was changed. We were born and raised in the restaurant business and if the, this hadn'ta come we'da still been restaurant people. As a result, uh, I have gone into a field that has always interested me, but I never would've done it. Uhm, my husband is doing something working with people as a public relations type person. He loves to do this type of thing. And so our whole lifestyle has changed. Before the flood we were uh, uh we were never an organized family. We if, if something came up that we couldn't have a meal together we ran to the cafe. Now, we're on a schedule, we eat our meals together and, and so forth. We're more like a regular family now. And, uhm, in a way our lifestyle is better than it was before. We spend more time together. And we've done a lot of really fun things this summer as, we--as a family. And, uh, in a way it's been a good thing because we never ever would've made that break if it hadn't of been for this. But now we have. And my husband still hasn't decided whether he's

going to go back into the restaurant or if he's going to pursue another line of work.

S: Well, I don't have any more specific questions. Is there anything else that you'd like to say at this time or any other thoughts or feelings about the whole experience that you'd like to express?

W: I think it's been a growing experience. I really think that I'm more understanding of people. I'm a little quicker tempered than I was before and I, I've heard a lot of people say this. They are not as patient as they were before. And yet this is settling more all the time. I've had experiences that I never would've dreamed of. I have more compassion for people now, I think, than I did before. Every time I hear of a, of a disaster somewhere else I can just feel the way those people are feeling. And uh, I've had some fun experience, too. I worked on a survey crew last summer all summer long for the State Highway Department; I never would've done that. And, uh, I've travelled a lot since. I've had the opportunity of, of going to San Francisco and to Portland and, and uh with, in the job that I'm in. And so I, it's, it's been a good experience. It's been hard and it's been trying, but I feel like my family, personally, we have grown tremendously since this. We've learned to work together. We don't argue and fight as much. And in a way that's good.

S: Well, thank you very much.

W: Thank you.