

TETON ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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

TETON DAM DISASTER

Clyde W. Anderson

Interviewed by

Alyn B. Andrus

July 27, 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

# 24  
O

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY & RICKS COLLEGE

HISTORY DEPARTMENTS

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT THROUGH LOCAL HISTORY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWER AGREEMENT

In view of the historical and scholarly value of this information contained in the interview with

Clyde Anderson, I, Allyn B. Andrews  
(name, please print) (interviewer, print)

knowingly and voluntarily permit the Milton R. Merrill Library at Utah State University, the David O. McKay Library at Ricks College, and the Idaho State Historical Society at Boise, Idaho, the full rights and use of this information.

O

Allyn B. Andrews  
interviewer's Signature

July 27, 1977  
Date

# 24

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY & RICKS COLLEGE

HISTORY DEPARTMENTS

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT THROUGH LOCAL HISTORY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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.

\* \* \* \* \*

In view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, I, CLYDE W. HENDERSON, do hereby assign full (please print full name) and all rights of this material to the Merrill Library at Utah State University, to the Library at Ricks College, and to the Idaho State Historical Society at Boise, Idaho, for scholarly purposes according to each of the institutions governing policies.

Clyde W. Henderson  
Interviewee's Signature

7-27-77  
Date

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEVELOPMENT OF TETON DAM DISASTER. . . . .	1
DAMAGES SUSTAINED. . . . .	2
Buildings. . . . .	2
Vehicles . . . . .	2
Parking and Driveways. . . . .	2
Heating and Air Conditioning . . . . .	2
Outside Plant. . . . .	3
Telephone Sets . . . . .	3
PBX's. . . . .	3
TELEPHONE RESTORATION. . . . .	3
Rexburg Central Office . . . . .	3
Installation . . . . .	4
Facilities . . . . .	6
GENERAL INFORMATION. . . . .	9
Order Activity . . . . .	9
Adjustments. . . . .	9
People . . . . .	9
SUMMARY. . . . .	9
APPENDIX . . . . .	11

## TETON DAM DISASTER

### Development of Teton Dam Disaster

1. About 10:00 a.m. on June 5, a large leak developed in the dam embankment about 15 feet from the right abutment. This was about 130 feet below the crest of the dam. This leak rapidly increased in size and the water flowing out began to dig a crater on the downstream slope of the dam.
2. At 11:00 a.m., a whirlpool developed on the upstream side of the dam. Dozers began pushing sand, gravel, and rock material into the whirlpool area.
3. At 11:30 a.m., the two dozer operators had to abandon their machines, which were within minutes, lost in the opening.
4. At 11:57 a.m., the dam was breached and water surged through the opening of the dam.
5. By 5:00 p.m., the water had dropped 215 feet below the spillway.
6. At 8:00 p.m., approximately eight hours after the break, the flow was nearly stabilized, with the canyon channel downstream from the dam being filled to a depth of approximately 30 feet.
7. The floodwaters damaged portions of Madison, Bonneville, Fremont, Jefferson, and Bingham Counties.

Jefferson County officials estimate 5,000 acres and 225 homes were destroyed or damaged. The Red Cross reported a survey that listed 773 homes, apartment complexes, and mobile homes destroyed with another 3,000 suffering major or minor damages. They said, 4,026 families suffered losses and 246 businesses were affected.

### Damages Sustained

#### Buildings

At Rexburg, three of our buildings, the central office and two garages were inundated with approximately six feet of water and mud. These buildings will require cleaning, interior wall replacements, painting, and some replacement of floor tile. The business office was not damaged.

At Roberts, the CDO received approximately four feet of water and sustained similar damage as the Rexburg buildings. The damage to our central office equipment was extensive.

#### Vehicles

Of our fourteen vehicles, five sustained damage to the engines and electrical systems. Four vehicles have been repaired and one damaged beyond repair.

#### Parking and Driveways

Parking areas and driveways adjacent to the Rexburg buildings will require gravel and blacktop.

#### Heating and Air Conditioning

Extensive damage was incurred at Rexburg, both have been restored. The damage at Roberts was minimal.

### Outside Plant

Damage to our outside plant, in the rural areas, was extensive. Approximately 100 miles of outside plant was destroyed and another 60-65 miles sustained water damage.

### Telephone Sets

Approximately 3,000 telephone sets have been damaged or destroyed.

### PBX's

Several of our 770 and 756 type PBX's were damaged and required replacements.

## Telephone Restoration

### Rexburg Central Office

On June 5, at 6:00 p.m., our Rexburg Central Office crew came to the office to assess the damage. Investigation indicated the water had been about six feet deep in the switch room.

Twelve o'clock midnight, the C.O. crew began cleaning. Sixteen people with shovels, mops, etc., and the help of the local fire department truck, commenced the "mop-up" operation. By Sunday noon, the building and equipment had been washed down and generally cleaned out.

The fire hose, with the (fog-nozzle), was used to wash down the area that had been under water. This method proved to be the saving part of the work!

Air compressors were used to dry the equipment.

By June 7, some of the power plants were working in the central office and the batteries could be used in locations where the drying had been completed to that point.

By June 10, one-half of the central office was operational and toll facilities were again working at Rexburg, Teton, and St. Anthony. This was done with a portable microwave system. During this same period of time, crews were working in the Roberts Central Office, and by June 11, full service was restored.

The central offices at Shelley, and Firth, Idaho, were sandbagged and sustained little if any damage.

Central office service at Rexburg is now restored to 98 percent efficiency.

### Installation

Monday, June 7, we set up a Telephone Center at Ricks College. This involved installing five direct lines to the Idaho Falls switchboards via portable microwave, located on top of the COB building at Ricks College.

The employees not effected by the flood in the Rexburg Business Office and employees from Marketing, and Idaho Falls Commercial, helped in the Telephone Center by putting in approximately 430 hours (from 6/07/76 to 6/13/78).

The center was open at 6:00 a.m., each day and closed when people stopped calling out. This was usually around 1:00 a.m.

All calls were placed by third number billed, collect, or credit card. Only a few actually paid cash for their calls.

During the seven days the center was open, approximately 4,900 calls were placed from the Phone Center.

On June 13, we installed five pay booths in the same areas as the Phone Center. This replaced the five direct lines to Idaho Falls.



Going back to June 9, we installed ten open-faced booths with coin telephones. These were placed in front of the Rexburg Central Office, and has enabled flood victims to originate outgoing operator handled calls. These stations are still operational.

By June 16, we had placed back into service, 704 subscribers or 18 percent of the total. During this period of time, emergency lines were installed for all essential service subscribers, plus the Civil Defense, National Guard, State Police, and the Federal Disaster Administration.

By June 30, all businesses were contacted and 58 percent have been given service to meet their needs. The other 42 percent are either out of business, or waiting for new quarters.

Approximately 60 percent of our residence subscribers are back in service and the remaining 40 percent are homeless. About 20 percent of those now without service will re-establish service within the next six months. HUD trailer-homes are now being placed on many lots where homes have been destroyed or damaged.

On Tuesday, June 8, the floodwaters had reached Idaho Falls and crested about midnight. The main bridge crossing over the Snake River into Idaho Falls was totally inundated and we were asked to cut six cables serving the entire western-half of Idaho Falls. These cables provided service to over 8,000 subscribers. In compliance with the city's request, the cables were cut. The following morning the waters receded, and temporary restoration commenced. Within hours, service was restored. Combined with the temporary service, a total of 25,000 splices were made.

By June 22, a new manhole and permanent cabling was installed and service has now been totally restored.

The following is a summary of the services we had working prior to the flood and the number now working.

Table 1. Telephone restoration.

REXBURG		
Subscribers	Prior to Flood	Now Working
Residential Subscribers	3440	2045
Business Subscribers	556	337

At Roberts, Idaho Falls, Shelley and Firth, service has been restored to all subscribers. There were a few in Firth and Roberts, that relocated because of the damage to their homes. However, service is available at their old homes if they wish to have it.

#### Facilities

1. Planning Group--All existing telephone plants destroyed or damaged is identified and marked by color codes on outside plant maps. Replacement cables have been sized and gauged. Those repaired through restoration are identified. Routing has been examined and cable sectionalized for EFRAP. All taper codes are being converted from five to six digit numbers. An estimated map for cable placed due to flood damage is being maintained by route and sheet numbers.

Three 1976 estimates have not been submitted for approval as scheduled. The commercial forecasts for Ashton and Idaho Falls have not been spread. The Rexburg forecast has been received, but will have to be redone.

2. Route Analysis Group--Each route is being analyzed before going to design to determine loading, device locations and transmission requirements. Several special requests for large requirements to government agencies have been satisfied. Analysis is being provided on routes where merely replacing existing plants were not practical or economical.

The problem in analyzing feeder routes is the lack of accurate assignment records as the disconnects and reconnects are in a constant state of flux. The analysis for 1976 projects is current although some of the routine analysis is falling behind.

- 3.. Right-of-Way and B.I.C.--Liaison between our company and county, city and state road restoration with the installation of new telephone cable facilities is being co-ordinated. The Right-of-Way Agent is the contact for the company and HUD. This procedure will enable us to have advance information of the areas where potential reconnects may be required.

The major problem is co-ordination and timing. To find the person actually responsible is quite an achievement. "Too many bosses." Lack of material for a proposed project can change work scheduling which is not always reported. These are trying times.

4. Design Groups--Nine people working 12 hours per day, six days a week. Two people working part time.
- a. One hundred and ninety construction and removal sheets have been issued representing twenty-nine miles of exchange cable restoration. Totaling 35.8 MCF of cable.
  - b. Thirteen miles have been fielded and drawings are being prepared.
  - c. Eleven miles of trunk cable from Rexburg to Teton and St. Anthony including exchange distribution is nearing completion.
  - d. Twenty-five to thirty terminals for businesses and apartments in downtown Rexburg have been replaced or restored. Eight to ten blocks of aerial distribution has been restored in both Rexburg and Sugar City.
  - e. Trailer parks and subdivisions are being watched so telephone plants can be restored as debris is removed. A one hundred and fifty-unit trailer park is being constructed in Sugar City. Two more trailer parks (120 ± each) are being constructed in Rexburg. These will house the flood victims while they rebuild or remodel their existing residences.

An estimated 50-60 miles of damaged telephone plant remains to be either purged or replaced. Three non-flood related projects, nine

3127's and thirty-three 3140's have been issued since 06/05/76. Held orders and regrades are being provided for with only minor delay.

### General Information

#### Order Activity

During the past two weeks, we have processed in excess of 3038 service orders. This represents a 280 percent increase over the normal.

#### Adjustments

Through June 30, 8413 subscribers have received out-of-service adjustments. This equates to 34,285 days credit given on local service.

#### People

The local work forces were increased by 400 percent. These are people who have come to us from districts within Idaho and Utah.

### Summary

In Rexburg and Idaho Falls, we started to have immediate activity from government agencies wanting to set up temporary (6 months to 18 months) quarters. Most of these agencies went to existing buildings that were vacant. There have been approximately 16 agencies ask: 90 IFB's, 15 FTS lines, 1 WATS line, and approximately 170 telephone sets ranging from 0 BTNS to 20 BTNS. All departments coordinated extremely well to give the government people the service they wanted and within the time frames they wanted.

Just prior to the flood, the marketing people had sold many COM KEY SYSTEMS in the Rexburg area. Six COM KEYS were affected by the

flood and 3 PBX systems. By 06/11/76, two COM KEYS were working. On 06/21/76, the Utah Power and Light PBX system was replaced and working with series 300 features (an upgrade from series 100). The Valley Bank PBX, will arrive in Rexburg on 07/01/76, and be installed approximately 07/08/76. The seven COM KEY SYSTEMS at Ricks College are now being installed.

While much has been done, there remains countless hours of work yet to be done. Many problems are before us and many unknowns will yet torment us.

Our employees have done their best and have done it well. Only they know the hours they have put in and few of us will really know of their devotion and sacrifice.

APPENDIX

---