

The Teton Dam Disaster Collection

Don Fowler- Teton Dam Disaster

By Don Fowler

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Box 6 Folder 9

Oral Interview conducted by Nita Edelmayer

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TETON DAM FLOOD

This is oral history, I am Nita Edelmayer. Today, April 12, 1977, I am going to interview Don Fowler. The general topic will be the Teton Dam Flood. Mr. Fowler was born in Rexburg, Idaho. He has lived in Sugar City for about six years. His mother (Hilda Bradshaw Fowler) was born in Egin Bench, a little community about six miles north of Rexburg. His father (Harold Fowler) was born in Retlaw, Alberta, Canada. Mr. Fowler is a Law Enforcement Officer, but he is on medical leave going to Ricks College.

Mr. Fowler's comments on the Teton Dam Flood:

“This is the first flood I have ever been in. It happened on a Saturday morning, which was a very pretty day as I remember. I had only been in school for approximately a month and I'd only been off the Police Department in Rexburg for a month. Therefore when we heard of the flood, of course my first concern was the family, and after making sure everyone was safe and what few valuables we had in our home, which consisted of everything.

“I went to the Rexburg Police Department and began to assist them and help them in helping them move their command center in town which was later Saturday afternoon. We set up an emergency command post upon the hill and then began evacuating all the citizens from the lower part of Rexburg – which would have probably been everything north of Second South and the Hospital all the way to the Golf Course, which was basically what was in the City limits. We had Madison County Deputies removing everybody in Madison County that would be in the way of the water. We had two planes in the air with portable police radios which was telling us the direction of the water, its rate of movement and how high it was; and also giving us locations of where people were stranded. They could see people moving that would not have time to get out of the way of the water and these were all marked on a map, so that after the water had receded we would know where to start looking for people trapped, or bodies, or whichever.

“After we had set up a command post, which was up in the Army Reserve Center, I remember it was very hectic in the office. We had a lot of phone calls

come in from concerned people about their relatives. There (was) were a lot of people coming in just wondering how bad the water was going to get. At that time, we had a pretty good idea there would be quite a stream flowing down Main Street of Rexburg. As to the phone calls, we (was) were telling the people that most of the homes had been evacuated and we had had time to get most of the people out. Very little possessions would be taken out except what could hurriedly be thrown in the back of their cars. There (was) were quite a few phone calls from newspaper and radio stations, and TV station from out of the state of Idaho. Because of the hectic time, there wasn't time to talk to these people. They were simply told we didn't have enough time to talk to them.

“All the police officers were extremely busy and just prior to the water coming into Rexburg, the Courthouse and the Police Department – which is at the Courthouse – all the power was turned off and it was evacuated. I wasn't able to get back to the building until approximately 4:00 A.M. that night, to see what damage had been done. The water had got high enough to where it covered all the carpet. Some of the files were wrecked and destroyed. The building itself, sits about 5-6 feet above the ground. From the ground level it shows how high the water actually got. The courthouse sits right on Main Street in Rexburg.

“After the water entered the city, I was up on the hill with my family and we watched the water come into the city. If it hadn't been such a sad moment it would have been quite interesting. We saw trailer houses floating; we saw one house float down Main street, and of course, we saw the water hit our house in Sugar City by the use of a telescope. After the first two or three hours, and after the shock wore off, you wondered what you (was) were going to do. I was with my brother-in-law and sister (Joseph and Bonnie Folwer Edelmayer) and their family and after talking it over we decided we would all migrate to another brother-s home (Vern Fowler) in between Ririe and Rigby. Later that afternoon about six o'clock, this was still Saturday, my family and my brother-in-law's family all went down to my older brother's which was probably all together 25-30 people; which made for an interesting situation as far as beds go.

“The people over there (Vern's neighbors) were very helpful. One guy brought a camper over and we had tents set up in the yard; so actually it wasn't all that bad. We made (due) do with what we had.

“The first night my brother-in-law wanted to come back to his house and protect it, therefore we come back into town later that evening which was about 8:00. I left him at his house. By that time the National Guard had been mobilized and there was several state police officers in town That had stopped the house from going into my brother-in-law’s house was some great big pine trees which were in front of the house. The house had caught in that. In going into the house we had to kick in the door, because of all the mud and straw and etc. which was on the floor. The kitchen had been turned upside down. The refrigerator was on its back. The stove had been lifted up and moved over. The food that was in the house had been dumped out. Some of it that was up in the higher cupboards was alright. There was a tremendous amount of straw and wood and mud on the (floor) floor, which was probably 8 inches deep. The bedrooms were all turned upside down. The mattresses had all floated off the beds. The beds had floated. The clothes and the cupboards were all wrecked. Half of the clothes in the closets – the bottom half were all wet. Some of the things we could save were in the tops of the closets. In the front room water had come in one window and went out another big window on the opposite side of the room. Most of the furniture had went out that big window. You could see where it had been stacked outside, after being busted up quite badly. They had a big dining room table which had some ironing on it that they had been working on that morning, and the ironing was still folded nice and neat. It was on the dining room table. The dining room table was a big oak table that had apparently floated and had stayed on top of the water, and was too big to go out the window. Therefore it was still in the front room. The clothes were still folded nicely and hadn’t got wet. There was an odd thing about it. They had a fish bowl which was sitting on a stand in their front room. This was now on the stand on the couch near the big window where all the furniture had gone out. There was still water in the fish bowl and still two fish in the bowl swimming around as though nothing had happened.

“In going to our house that day the road had all been washed out. And since Sugar City is north of Rexburg, the Teton River flows between the two towns. All the bridges had either been impossible to drive there, however we used a motorcycle and was able to lay some planks across these gullies on a back road which brought us through the Salem area into where the road had been washed away completely or there was big gullies on both sides of the roads. So it was

impossible to drive there, however, we used a motorcycle and was able to lay some planks across these gullies on a back toad which brought us the Salem area into Sugar City. We had to cross several tires that were across the road 0 quite a few spots where the road had been washed away completely, there was just deep gullies. These we either rode or through. We went through water quite often. When we arrived in Sugar City – on the east side of Sugar City was the Main highway which had been. Myself and three other police officers from the city Department started a four-man patrol. Several of the other police cars were out that night, along with quite a large number of State police cars and Madison County Deputies. They decided the best route would be to seal off the down-town portion of Rexburg, which was basically all they could do, and keep people out of it.

“The first night it would have been nice to have a tape recorder with you so you could have recorded what you saw. It’s hard now, six or eight months later to remember all that was there. It was pretty well total destruction. I remember the highway going out of Rexburg to the north. We drove down it almost to where Daniel’s Furniture Store is now. The water had come through with such force that the highway had been literally ripped up. There were big gullies and chunks of the highway had been carried 100-200 feet west of where it had been originally. I don’t believe you could have (drove) driven a vehicle down the (roat) road at all, in fact, it was quite difficult to walk down. Later that night we had occasion to walk down it to check the stores that were closer to the river. The bridge that was on the north highway, there was a gully where the water had washed through there leaving the bridge abutments there, but on both sides of the bridge it had cut new channels. These were about 10-15 feet deep and about 20 feet wide, (chich) which showed the force of the water. I remember looking back at the CAL Farm and Ranch store from the bridge and the whole back wall on the north side and on the east side had caved in, which had been a cinder block building.

“Anyway, that night there were more police men out and about than I’d seen at one time, protecting what was left of the down-town store. We had our command center set up on the hill, which gave us communication between the cars, and also gave us communications with the State Police Headquarters in Idaho Falls. Also, this allowed us any emergency equipment we needed, such as National Guard helicopters, and National Guard (personel) personnel to help evacuate people. All these operations were being set up that night, so that as soon as

daylight came Sunday morning all the emergency operations – people that needed to be picked up and brought into town, that were stranded, or that needed food at the house where they were stranded, or whatever, all these operations were being set up that night, all Saturday night so they could be activated first thing Sunday morning. I remember also, we had a meeting Sunday Morning about 8:00 with all the heads of the various departments that would be involved in emergency operations of helping people in the area. Also, another note, the College's help Saturday when all the people had rushed to the top of the hill there at Rexburg, the streets were just lined with cars and people that didn't know what to do. Ricks College opened its doors and everybody had a place to sleep that night, I believe. Food was provided for them. A number of them went to Ricks College.

“On patrol that night, the destruction was tremendous. I remember the northwest part of Rexburg, the water hadn't yet receded and in checking the roads and houses, we had to wade through water that was still up between our knees and belt buckles; the water was still that deep. Two of the roads we couldn't get down because the water was still too deep, and of course these were the lower lying areas. Through most of the city, the water drained off quite rapidly, like in about an hour, or two hours, or three hours. The business area was somewhat dry of water, but it still had a lot of mud, debris, and whatever else had washed in from where the Teton Dam had broke until it hit Rexburg. The northwest section of town we had some refineries down there, big oil tanks and the sawmill – which was known as the Rexburg Sawmill – which had a lot of logs in it. There logs were picked up by the water and used as a battering ram. The houses below there were which were in the westerly direction received a tremendous beating. Several houses – I remember on in particular was completely demolished which looked like it had 50-60 logs stacked up on it. One nice brick home which looked like it taken after by somebody with a baseball bat and beaten until there wasn't anything left of the bricks. We checked a lot of (home) homes that night to make sure the people had got out in time. Several of these (home) homes I remember walking through had 6-7-8- inches of mud. A lot of the windows had been knocked out – some by the logs going through the sides of the houses, some by the furniture coming out of the houses as the water rose and swept them out. Peoples belongings were strung all over; it was impossible to tell what belonged to who. We took them to the police department and stored them.

“Some of the businesses – remember one in particular – was Targhee Sport Shop. They had windows in the front of their store and the water had come from the back towards the front, sending merchandise out their front window. I remember their door was so full of motorcycles, it was completely plugged off. There (most) must have been 6-7 motorcycles all mangled together at their front door – the motorcycles were all brand new. All the front windows were (washed) washed away and all their sporting equipment had been strung across their lot and the main highway and on west to the lumber company. They had some boats, I remember one which was quite a big boat with a motor and stuff like that which was out in back of their store which wound up in the top of a tree which was north and west of the lumber company. A couple other boats – one was in a canal, the other was in a pond which was right in front of the Rexburg Lumber Company, a couple was upside down. We walked this whole area that night looking for guns, we were afraid somebody might come by and get all the guns. Therefore we had the four of us and I think 6-7 Army personnel come out and help. I think we rounded up most of their weapons that they had had in the Targhee Sport Shop at that time. We had probably rounded up 5-60 rifles and about 20 pistols that we could find in the mud. These were strung all the way from the Sporting store all the way across the highway which would be probably 100-200 feet. These were all taken to the Police department and they were later returned to the Targhee Sport Shop. I don't know what they did with them after that. Some of them had the barrels bent on them; some of them were clear full of mud, obviously. I don't know that they would ever work again. The motorcycles they had were strung all over; the water had carried some of them as far away as a half mile. I remember in walking the area, one in particular – a big one had been carried quite a long way by the water. It looked like it had been in a metal crusher that had taken it and rolled it up into a little ball and just deposited it there nice and pretty.

“Some of the other stores – we tried to get into CAL Farm and Ranch that night to see what damage had been done and to see if they had any weapons. The front door was so filled with merchandise and the roof looked like it had apparently caved in or was going to cave in. We decided it wouldn't be safe to go in there. It looked like from the outside there wouldn't be anything worth keeping in there. However, later after the debris had all been cleared up, they had a flood

sale. They had managed to save quite a lot of their merchandise, which they sold at very, very low prices.

“In patrolling the city in the new housing development down by the Fair Grounds – called the Ricks-Wade Addition which had about 25-30 new homes down there that were (young) young couples starting out, or people that just wanted to build a new home had their homes down there. They were all fairly new homes. I don’t believe there were five out of the 25-30 homes that were left on their foundation. Quite a few had gone on further west out onto the Golf Course. We could see them sitting out on the Golf Course that night. It looked like they were very out of place. I remember driving out on Highway 88, west of town, and a couple three of the homes that actually got clear to the highway and washed across it by the water.

“The Rexburg Fair Ground took quite a beating – it had everything washed away. That night it looked like a field instead of a fair ground. All the building, and corrals, and barns, and fences had been washed away. All that’s in there is the big cement bleachers overlooking this nicely cleaned field “That first night it would have been nice to have a tape recorder with you so you could have recorded what you saw. It’s hard now, six or eight months later to remember all that was there. It was pretty well total destruction. I remember the highway going out of Rexburg to the north, we drove down it almost to where Daniel’s Furniture Store is now. The water had come through with such force that the highway had been literally ripped up. There were big gullies and chunks of the highway had been carried 100-200 feet west of where it had been originally. I don’t believe you could have drove a vehicle down the road at all, in fact, it was quite difficult to walk down. Later that night we had occasion to walk down it to check the stores that were closer to the river. The bridge that was on the north highway, there was a gully where the water had washed through there leaving the bridge abutments there, but on both sides of the bridge it had cut new channels. These were about 10-15 feet deep and about 20 feet wide, which showed the force of the water. I remember looking back at the CAL Farm and Ranch store from the bridge and the whole back wall on the north side and on the east side had caved in, which had been a cinder block building.

“We had to check all the stores on main street. I remember we started at one end of the town and walked the full length of main street and checked every

business and then come back on the opposite side of the street. Every business had sustained quite sever damage. Most of them had basements in them and the main floor had collapsed or part of the main floor had actually collapsed under the (wight) weight of the mud and the merchandise on the floor itself. They didn't have any floor at all – you could just look in and look right straight down into the basement. The stores merchandise was turned upside down all over. Some of the main windows in the front of the store were all busted out. Some of the merchandise was laying on the sidewalk. I remember picking up packages that had a fishing pole and some hooks and reel all in one package, that we figured must of come out of Western Auto. We marked this and put it in our patrol vehicle. This was in a gutter and it was approximately a block and a half from the Western Auto store. This showed how far some of the merchandise was carried and probably, this doesn't really illustrate it because later I heard stories especially one of Dietrich Insurance had lost some file that he found way outside of town to the west of town. So anything that would float probably went through the front windows and then went on out west of town. Or wherever the water slowed down enough so it could sink. Even with the tight security that first night – stopping everybody from going down into the main part of town where the businesses were, to prevent looting.

“We checked the businesses quite early in the evening after we had made sure there wasn't anyone in danger in any of the northern part of town. Of the three drugstores that we went in which would have been Johnson's and Thriftway and Joy Drug each one of them had been entered before we got there by one person. You could see the footprints in the mud and they had checked the cash registers if they could find it. Some of the cash registers were in the basement. And then they had also went towards where the drugs were kept and it was impossible to tell whether they had actually got any of the drugs. Some of the cash registers you could tell they had been into because they had been busted open or the little slots where they keep their money had been scooped out. The mud had filled all the slots and they had just scraped the slots out and had taken the money that was there. It would probably dry out. I guess this indicates that the store people didn't really realize the water was going to get so deep and didn't take the time to clean out their cash registers, because we found several of them that still had the money in them, that we were able to bag up and take into the police department. Later it was distributed back to the stores. But I guess it shows that when you have a major

disaster like the flood there are still some people that will take advantage of the situation. As shown by this one person that would walk from each store to each store, checking for drugs or money. We couldn't find any store that had looked like it had been entered by the tracks. Most of the stores were just filled with mud and didn't have any track in them until we had made our search of the store.

“Most of the stores, like I said, were completely wrecked. The merchandise, like the clothing stores, were on the floor, upside down, some of them were still hanging up and didn't have any dirt on them. These were the ones that were up high, some had just had the water go up half way on them, like some of the dress shops. Some of the clothes shops – all their clothes were completely ruined – it was on the floor, some of them were muddy, some of them had been covered by something else and had prevented the mud getting on them. But the water that had come through was so impregnated with chemicals that the clothes had rotted away – from all the chemicals that were in the water. I can remember, the store by the show house – Pioneer Audio, we went in there to check their cash register and also to see if they had any of their stereo equipment that was still on the shelf that would be salvageable and this we were going to take to the Police Department and mark it and later return it. But the back of the store had all been cave in and all the merchandise that was in the front of the store had been caved in and all the merchandise that was in the front of the store had been swept towards the back of the store, and since the floor of the store had been swept towards the back of the store, and since the floor had caved in everything was in the basement and then of course it had either been smashed or completely covered with mud. We found some eight track tapes, a couple of CB radios on the main floor that was just a pile of mud as you looked at the floor it was just a hunk in the floor with about six inches of mud on it. These we just left there knowing that they would be impossible to repair or salvage.

“The destruction was almost unbelievable. It was hard to fathom that water could do so much damage in such little time, and then being in the middle of the night, the four of us having been working probably 10-12 hours with our flashlight that night, everything looked really eerie and the destruction I think was magnified by the darkness. Then when the sun started coming up you could actually see how much more destruction we hadn't been able to see. With just our flashlights it was

almost staggering to the imagination or the mind to accept how much damage had been done actually by the water.

“It was quite hard to secure a store, an individual store. The only thing was secure the area and to have officers at each block stopping the people from entering the down-town area. I remember one store on our first trip through the alley to drive down it. I remember looking at the store – the back of the store itself – the back entrance they had there had been washed clear out, taking out most of the cinder blocks in the back wall, scattering them in the back alley. Apparently they had had quite a lot of cases of pop and small item such as shaving cream and cold cream and stuff like that they’d been washed out into the Alley. The alley was covered with pop bottles and cold cream bottles and etc. and it would have been impossible to have taken time to clean them in that particular area. Then even if there would have been, there wouldn’t have been anywhere to put the bottles. Then even if there would have been, there wouldn’t have been anywhere to put the bottles. The store wouldn’t have been safe enough to hold them or we could have just taken them to the police department. But because of so much merchandise being scattered throughout the business area we couldn’t see any reason to. The grocery stores were in a total chaos. We checked Stephenson’s Market and the Mighty Mite. Safeway’s had their own personnel in the store – we figured the employees could handle it. The Mighty Mite – the west side of that store had been completely wiped out – exposing the inside of the store. There wasn’t much left inside that would have been of much value to anybody. In checking it the food was down in the mud, bread was squashed, all their canned good had either been washed away in the mud or was covered with mud. Their counters and cash register were all upside down. Stephenson’s Market was just exactly like the Mighty Mite only there was about four times as much stuff in the alley. Aisleways – it would have been extremely difficult to walk down the aisles with out stepping on their food that they had had on their shelves. We didn’t check any of the back of the stores – just the front, the cash registers, etc., securing the money if there was any. The rest of the items in the store itself looked like somebody had taken an egg beater and just mixed it all up. We spent the rest of the night patrolling. Because of the type of vehicle we had – it was a four wheel drive – we were instructed to check most of the outlying areas of the city. Especially down in the north west section where water was still in the road ways and in spots. The mud was fairly

deep in some of the areas. I guess there was a comical side of the whole situation. On several occasions that night – in checking some of the homes and some of the roadways we found quite a large number of fish. Sometimes, actually in the front rooms and kitchens of the homes we had checked there (was) were several in puddles along the road. There was a lot of dead fish in the road where the water had receded and had left them laying.

“Well, this (give) gives you an idea of what the town looked like the night of the flood. I believe I’ve probably rattled on about the building and etc.

“A little bit about my family and what happened to us and what our house looked like when we finally got to it. I can’t remember if it had been the next day which would have been Sunday or if it was Monday, we drove to town - this would have been my younger brother and my brother-in-law with the idea of checking my brother-in-law’s house which was in Rexburg. And then trying to get to my house in Sugar City. We arrived at my brother-in-law’s house which was across the street from Dr. Passey. They had a house which was washed across from Smith Park and it floated down Main Street and was sitting in the middle of the road leading to the Professional Plaza. The only thing washed completely out on the corner turning out of Sugar City headed toward St. Anthony. The water was still running through there quite swiftly. We forged that and drove down the Main street of Sugar City. I noticed there was quite a lot of merchandise from the Sugar City Hardware strung about the main street of town and several blocks east and west of it. The grocery store had been totally gutted out except for some merchandise that was all mixed together and ruined. One of the big two or three story houses that had been used for apartments on Main street had collapsed to where you could look right in and see the apartments. The whole corner of the build had fallen into the street. In driving down the side street to our house – we live on the south edge of Sugar City – the west south edge. In driving down the street we passed several items that had come out of the Sugar Mercantile and several homes that were upstream from us. Their merchandise was strung all over the yards. A lot of the houses had been moved off their foundations – some of them had been caved in. quite a few of them had floated and hit trees and had caved in most of the city’s sheds and the smaller buildings had been washed away. Many of the trees had been washed away. The city itself looked like it was in quite bad shape. There, in fact, were very few houses that was still standing – and of those that was still standing we felt there

was very few that could be repaired when we was looking through them. When we came into Sugar City we couldn't find anybody else in town. I knew that there had been helicopters as the sun come up that morning – for any people who had been trapped. There were a few people that were trapped that were trapped that had been picked up and taken into Rexburg since there was no way to get from Sugar City to Rexburg or from St. Anthony to Sugar City, because of the split in the North and the South Forks of the Teton River which made Sugar City completely isolated, with all the roads being washed away. Especially on the highway from Rexburg to Sugar City. The highway took a tremendous beating, with the south fork river bridge being almost totally destroyed. On the north side of Sugar City, the Sugar City Overpass, which the main highway goes over, had been completely washed away, just leaving a crumpled structure where the overpass had been.

“My first view of my house – in order to reach it we had to wade in $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ of a block of water. At one point just before I reached my house – about an eighth of a block (100-300 feet) the water got waist deep. Both my brother and I waded in waist deep water to get to their house. In looking at the house – the garage, something had crashed into it, and it had collapsed. All the stuff I had in my garage – I had a deep freezer and quite a lot of camping equipment since just before this weekend was opening fishing day and my family had all got together and went camping and fishing for two or three days. And all this equipment was in the garage which we planned on using this summer. All the kids' bikes, the lawn mower, the roto-tiller, all this kind of stuff that you keep in your garage had been completely washed away. And then the walls of the garage had collapsed. I noticed that the front door had taken quite a severe beating. It was wide open. There (was) were great big logs and trees scattered all over around the house. There was a building up against the house that had caved in, with the roof and the sides crumpled against the house. In the back of our house where the lawn and garden used to be there (was) were big gouges where earth and dirt had been washed away. Up against our patio and sliding glass doors, we had several big logs that had floated in and had been (baracaded) barricaded right there. This stopped what I think would have been quite a large quantity of (juck) junk from coming through our house. Our glass doors weren't broken because there logs had (baracaded) barricaded themselves against the house. I think this probably stopped quite a lot of damage that could have occurred to our house.

“Upon coming in the house, of course, there was mud all over. Everything was upside down – it looked like (sombod) somebody had come in and taken a spoon and stirred the whole place completely topsy-turvey. Our basement was still full of water which was about 3 ½ - 4 feet deep. Everything that we had had was floating around it was almost impossible to walk around down there, because of the fact that the stuff had of course sunk and some was floating around and you couldn't walk around without stepping on a whole bunch of stuff. The front room couch and the TV and stuff like that had all been turned over. The TV was smashed, part of the back was caved in. Something had hit our front door and it was busted. The doors to our garage basement, and closets on the main level had all been busted and everything had floated out of them. Our piano had floated. This was an upright piano and it would have taken quite a lot of water to get it to float and move like it did. The pictures on the wall had been hit hard enough that they had fallen down. We have a third level to our house and quite luckily this is our bedrooms and all our clothes were up there, and the water didn't get that high. We had about six stairs going to the bedrooms and the water got up five stairs. We figured that the water got up about seven-eight feet in our house, which shows how much water was released by the dam. When we were up on the hill watching our house through a telescope we saw the first big wave completely cover it. Then when the water settled down we saw the top of our house poking up through the water. I couldn't believe the water had been this high, but when we started repairing our house I climbed up into the attic or where the trusses are and the insulation, and the insulation was wet. We had to replace it. This indicates the water did actually get up to the roof of our house as we thought when we was watching it. Some of our neighbors' had taken quite severe damage. We have one that was right next door to us here. Their house – ½ of it had actually collapsed and the rood was now about two feet from the ground. They had taken a lot more damage than our house had. Ours was still standing. The only part that had really collapsed was our garage, we had some cracks in our foundation where the water had got in under the cement which was all over the front sidewalk, the steps, the garage and the driveway, and our patio. All these areas sunk and broke away from our house.

“Our neighbor behind us had a car up against his house. The car was sitting on some garbage which put it about for feet above the ground level. Then the back

of the car was another 6-8-10 feet above that, with the back end up against the house and the front end sitting on this pile of garbage. So I imagine this back end was probably 15-20 feet above the ground. And the front end was about four feet above the ground. This shows how much force the water had when it (his) hit Sugar City. Just down the road from us, maybe a block and a half there is a wind-row of trees – probably twenty trees or so and they had collected everything. It looked like when we was looking at them – they had collected everything from Sugar City. After a couple of days the water had gone down and we were able to drive in. when we started looking for the stuff that had washed out of our house and out of the garage. We later walked over to the trees and looked through the stuff. We noticed a couple three camp trailers, a lot of furniture, that had been swept out of peoples' houses. There was a lot of animals in the debris. Some of the debris were 20-25 feet high and many 20-25 feet thick. There was a lot of animals in it – a lot of dead animals, some live ones that were trapped. There were also a lot of animals just (wander) wandering around the town of Sugar and the field to the west and south of Sugar. They had tried to out run the water and then been caught in it and had survived and had no place to go.

“Our church house had taken quite a beating. We went up and lookep it over. We looked at the house and a couple of wall had been knocked out. Most of the rooms and etc. inside we didn't go inside – we just looked at the outside, but the damage had been quite severe. However, because of the damage of the church house, that didn't stop the church in organizing. They acted very promptly. As soon as the people came back into Sugar City and started working on their homes trying to get what few items they could salvage and a few of their keepsakes and memories put back in boxes or whatever.

“The Church, as a stake and then out of direct orders from Salt Lake started having meetings almost nightly the first month or two. They had bulletins to let the ward members know – theses were given out by the bishop and his counselors – to let the ward members know exactly what was happening with the federal people coming in and the federal aide and the organizations and etc. that were coming in the area to help. This was a great moral builder for the people and (espectially) especially for our family. The kids – we had 3 children in our family – and they came over and helped us almost every day after we were sure it was safe for them to come. They come over and helped as did everybody in the family, not

only our family but other families. My brother-in-law's family and my little brother's family. The church was very well organized – other churches and other stakes come into the area – like they assigned one whole stake to just our Sugar Ward here. They would come into the area and the people would disperse to the houses that needed help. There (was) were a lot of things to be washed as everything was covered with mud with that could be salvaged and then there was a tremendous amount of garbage to be hauled away and a lot of things to be gathered up off the properties. Our ward set up a central spot for all the items that had floated in and didn't belong to you yet were of some value to somebody else – the people that lost them. We took all these things to a central location and then every night I assume that the people would go in and check to see if any of their property had been turned in.

“That first two or three weeks we lived with my brother over by Ririe. This was quite a unique situation. He has a family of course and then had three other families move in with him due to the flood, which put a lot of people in a small house. Like I said at the first his neighbors had come through real good. One of his neighbors had brought a camper over and we set up on the lawn and we set out a big tent. And as long as the weather was nice the kids had a ball sleeping out on the lawn. They made a spot for all the grown-ups in the house, and a bed and each night it was fairly hectic. We would start out about 7:30 in the morning and have breakfast and then be over here about 8:30-9:00, ready to work. We worked on the houses in Rexburg and then on my house here in Sugar City. And we worked well past dark and sometimes we shouldn't get back there until 11:00 or 12:00 at night. I guess maybe a panic or an urgency to get all the mud off your belongings. In our house we had quite a unique situation. We got the water pumped out of our basement once and then the Corps of Engineers had to reroute the river again and it came down the old river. It flowed right directly in front of our house – the old river bed does. And of course the water followed the old line and our basement got flooded again. And the about four days later a fire hydrant was broke out here and water come shooting out of it. I don't know that the city hadn't shut off all the main lines or that this line wasn't hurt or something. Anyway our basement got flooded again. It took about three weeks before we could start digging in our basement trying to get the stuff out of it that we had had stored down there. By that time of course all the paneling had started to curl up and all the chemicals – all of

our clothes we had had stored down there which was all of our winter clothes, sweaters, coats, the girls' long dresses, some of our slacks, stuff like that had all rotted away and there was very little down there that was actually worth keeping.

“Like I said we lived over there between Ririe and Rigby with my brother for about 3 weeks and then we felt that we had imposed long enough so we obtained a trailer house which was a little camper trailer, we borrowed it and we lived in Ashton. We rented in a trailer spot up there and this was the first part of July which was about 25 after the flood was the first day we had lived in it. We set it up in Ashton which is about 25 miles north of Rexburg or Sugar City here. Every day we would drive back and forth. Of course the kids thought it was great fun for the first few weeks, but after that it had got quite crowded. By the time we were able to move out of it, we were glad to be leaving it, although during the time we lived in it the whole family actually grew quite close together because of the fact that we spent a lot of time outside playing. We were working 10-12 hours a day between my wife and I and the 3 children and then that night we would go back to this camper trailer and we wouldn't have the nice modern conveniences of modern TV to sit and watch. We'd play with the kids and they'd play with us and we had games. We went to a few little drives. One the weekends sometimes we would go camping – this would be just one night. Grandma (Don's Mother) (come) came through quite brilliantly at this time. Our kids spent several weeks with her – she lives down by Burley – as did my brother-in-laws children, which relieved some of the pressures from the parent while we (was) were (thrying) tryin to get the houses back in ----

“As I was saying, the kids – our kids and my brother-in-laws kids – stayed with Grandma quite a bit that summer which relieved the pressure from the parents in taking care of them. Although they were really a lot of help. There was a lot of things they could do. Like I said every item that you took from your house had to be washed as it was covered with mud and grime. They could do all the washing out in the driveway or in the road. After the items were washed we boxed them up. Also some of the services that were provided – like I was saying the church had large numbers of people coming into the area – busloads of people would come in the morning and the at night get on the bus and go home. They wouldn't stay in the area because it would be a burden on the community. They would bring their own lunches since food was short. Of course there was so much chemicals and so many

dead animals laying around, disease control was pretty tight. All of us had to go to the hospital to get shots and this included the kids. Although the shots didn't really help – the kids all got sick and there were a couple of days where my wife and I also got sick. There was so much to be done. There was a lot of work to do in the area. And as everybody was trying to get things put back together or closed up enough for winter. Everybody expected the winter to be normal which it wasn't. Although thankfully we didn't have a normal winter. We only had (on) one major snowstorm and that came January one. The temperatures were not that unseasonably cold. But the lack of snow helped a great deal – many people were just not prepared for the snow to come and they would have been hurt a lot more and their house would have been damaged quite a lot more if the snow had come and covered most of them.

“Although, you couldn't say we did most of it ourselves. Everybody chipped in and helped. This would be all my family and our friends. If we did have a problem we could always find somebody that would show us or tell us how to correct it or do it right, so that after we got all done the house would be just as before – be just as strong and just as nice.

“It was quite an experience. Several choice experiences and quite a lot rather unpleasant experiences which you suffer when you don't have a home and a place to go to at night. I don't think the real choice experiences would compensate having to go through it again, although it was really a good learning experience. We learned that we could survive by ourselves – we could do things we had never done before in our lives. Everybody – although the church members, all your brothers and sisters and friends – everybody chipped in to work together and proved that people still care about people. When we worked on the house – started cleaning it up – everybody would work on the house. This would be our family. We would take one house at a time and clean it up as much as we could in cleaning it up and saving what we could – special little items in the house that means a lot to the people – memorials that you couldn't (never) ever replace. Of course you tried to save most of them.

“Most of the furniture and stuff like that all had to be thrown away. It was either beat up or warped up or broken. In the case of curtains, it was just actually deteriorated, rotted away because of the chemicals in the water.

“Now when I see floods on the TV or disasters on the TV, I know what it means. Before you’d just watch the show and it wouldn’t mean anything to you. Now I know – when they say a flood – I know that the people feel and how much mud they have to shovel out of their house.

“I guess I’ve rattled on long enough about the flood. It’s been almost a year now, later. Our house has all been completed and we’ve moved into it. We haven’t finished the basement, but now we can do that now that we’re in the house, we can work on it a little more calmly and take our time.

“Over in Sugar City there’s a tremendous amount of building going on right now. A lot of the people are just starting to dig their basements and new homes are going up all over. It looks like Sugar will completely be rebuilt. When it gets done there won’t be hardly any old buildings in the town, or old house. All of them will be quite new and fairly modern. It looks like to me there will be a lot more rich looking homes.

“The last question that –the last thing I was supposed to talk about was whether I thought the Teton Dam should be rebuilt. That takes in a lot of thought. Most of the people in this area are farmers, of course, and the dam was supposed to be of a great benefit because of the flood waters or because of the water that could be stored and then later used for irrigation and they did had quite a lot of irrigation waters planned for storage and use this summer that was being backed up behind the dam. I guess for (his) this one point the dam should be rebuilt.

“However, I really hope that when they do rebuild it that it will be built in a much more suitable location and that the men building it will take a more personal interest in it. I think this last time they were more interested in doing a great service for the community and the big shot government would just come in and do it and everybody would be proud of it; but nobody really took time or paid any attention to the studies that were made on the location and whether it was safe or not. And obviously, since the dam collapsed and did a lot more damage the location

wasn't safe. And if it is rebuilt I would (hop) hope somebody had enough brains to rebuild it in a proper location.”