

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Library Cataloguing Service Data

Name of informant William A. Hixson  
Address Rt. 4 Box 599, Braeburn Addition, Rapid City, South Dakota  
Date of interview July 12, 1972  
Name of Researcher Stephen Ward  
Others Present \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview Home

Added Notes Dr. Hixson lost his mother and stepfather in flood; cf. Ducek Oliver and Beaudette tapes for verification.

Subject Headings under which you feel this interview should be filed:

Evacuation of Braeburn Addition; Estimation of flood water velocity in Creek; Evacuation of parents on Riverdell; Swept onto house roof on Franklin Street; Survival on roof; Afterthoughts on flood.

Demographic Information on Informant

Age 49 Sex Male County Pennington

Socio-economic status Upper middle

Occupation Professor and head, Department of Electrical Engineering, School of Mines

Education B.S., Iowa State; Ph.D., Stanford

Religion \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Arrival of Family in South Dakota \_\_\_\_\_

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

From Where? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Moves in South Dakota \_\_\_\_\_ Reasons for moves: \_\_\_\_\_

- Q. This is Stephen Ward talking to William A. Hixson, H-I-X-S-O-N, of Route 4, Box 599, Braeburn Addition, Rapid City, on July 12, 1972; subject, Black Hills Flood. Mr. Hixson's residence...is in the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 8, Range 7 East, Township, Township 1 North, and it is on Rapid Creek in the Braeburn Addition. Well, let's start with the night of June 9th, what were you doing in the evening, let's start out about 6 o'clock, for example.
- A. Okay, at about 6:00 in the evening, this was just prior to supper, we were sort of sitting around; I believe at that time the rains were coming down pretty hard, and around, oh, 7 o'clock, we were out with our neighbors watching the creek. It was starting to rise fairly rapidly. Just prior to that I had had a call from a friend of mine up around Johnson Siding saying that it appeared that the creek was rising.
- Q. Who was that?
- A. This, his name is Jim Hieb. (Pause)
- Q. We're all right now. Just...
- A. All right. Jim is a hydrologist, he works with Leonard Yarger, they're both with, I believe it's the department of agriculture, and he is familiar with water conditions and is able to estimate the flow pretty well. He estimated that we had about 2000 cubic feet per second coming down Rapid Creek at that time, And thought that we were very likely in for flooding conditions down here in the valley where we are. So having seen 550 cubic feet per second come down where it had been a controlled release from Pactola, I could sort of extrapolate and agreed we had probably better consider getting out. Our

neighbors were standing around the bridge, and we were really watching the water come up, but it wasn't rising very rapidly at that time...

Q. Was it above the banks?

A. No, it was still below the banks at that time, and, but getting fairly close, we could see quite a bit of debris coming down the creek and it would hit the bridge. So I cut out the small swinging bridge I had in the backyard--it was suspended by cables--because I didn't want it piling up debris. And then I went down the basement and lifted my motors out that I have for the water system and irrigation pump and things like this and set them up on the kitchen counter hoping and thinking that they probably wouldn't get wet. I think it was about this time that we were giving serious thought about leaving the Addition, but it was probably two hours later, it was 10 o'clock when I pulled the final switch on the fusebox downstairs to kill all the power in the house and shut off all the gas. And we, in the meantime I had parked our car up in the orchard, which is about four foot higher than the level of our home. And the orchard is just to the north side of the house, away from the creek. So at 10 o'clock my wife and I and a pup-dog got in the car and were going over to pick up my mother and step-father, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Thompson. The kids, Susan and Cynthia, were out that evening. Susan tried to get home just prior to our leaving and called and said that the police would not let her in. We said that that was fine, that she should turn around and find some high ground and just stay there. She had one of the cars. Cindy was out with a friend of hers and Don, our eldest son, had gone to Illinois to attend a convention--he was a delegate

for his fraternity. So he was not even in the area when the flooding occurred. Stephen, our 19-year-old son was down here with us at the time. He and some of his friends took the two motorcycles--one is a 450 and the other is a 305 Hondas--and it was too wet, they wouldn't start, so they pushed them out of the Addition and this was right at 10 o'clock, the waters were getting high, and pushed them up the hill toward Harm's, Gary Harm's residence, got them up about halfway and parked them there and saved the motorcycles; another of Steve's friends drove our Chevrolet out and drove it up to a Hughes' residence up the hill, and so that was saved. And so we left at 10 o'clock then, and there was not any water to speak of coming across the road at the Cleghorn Canyon bridge, got down to the Riverdell Drive where Mother and Paul lived and parked out in front and went in and sat in their living room and watched the creek rise through their living room window looking toward the, the creek flowing along the back. We began to see some of the boats from Canyon Lake floating down the creek, and we decided that was time we ought to leave. By the time we had gotten from the front door to the car and Paul being a double amputee we had to bring him out in a wheelchair, the water had risen approximately, I'm guessing now, about a foot and a half in that short a time.

Q. Up to about what?

A. It was just about to the running board, the floor level of the car by the time we got to the car.

Q. You're dating yourself by saying running board.

A. Okay. (Laughing) But the floor boards of the car. Yeah, and we were able

to get Mother and Paul in the car. Just prior to getting them in I had talked to Jim Kendall next door, said we would take care of Mom and Paul, and also went over to Tom Olivers and said we had Mother and Paul in the car and were leaving. So we headed out of the Riverdell Drive area.

Q. Now, does Tom Oliver live in Riverdell?

A. Yes, Tom Oliver lives two doors down from Mon and Paul. And both, both Tom and Jim were going to look after Mother and Paul in case we couldn't get down there that evening, so that was the reason I let them know. Well, as we pulled out, Paul was in the front seat with me, and Mother was in the back seat with my wife, Phyllis. Tom Oliver came out right behind us in their pickup camper and we got down to 38th and Franklin, just near the Duchek residence, and we could see that we were not going to get out, the car was still running fine, but so many cars had stalled in front of us we knew we couldn't make it up to Jackson Boulevard, so I headed the nose of the car in towards the Duchek residence. And water was rising very rapidly at that time.

Q. Would, would you say this is 10:30, 11:00 now...

A. I would, my recollection would be fairly close to a quarter to 11:00, right around that period in time. But I know by the time I had gotten out of the car and walked up to the Duchek residence, Dorrance was getting his family back in the home, his home, and I told Dorrance, I said, "I need help, I have my mother and step-dad in the car, he is a double amputee, and they are both quite old," and without a moment's hesitation, Dorrance came down and he got ahold of my step-dad, Paul, and I got Mother. Now,

I got Mother out of the car first and we were swept downstream, this was across 38th Street down toward Franklin. And we managed to get to firm footing near the, now, what is the house that...

- Q. Well, I'm trying to think of first three...
- A. It's the first house off of 38th Street on Franklin. And I think you have interviewed someone, this was where this young lad, the 14-year-old was...
- Q. Yeah, right about right here, here's the Duchek residence on the corner, and this is, right next to them is the...
- A. Right. This is the home.
- Q. Well, it was on Franklin though.
- A. Yes, mm-hm.
- Q. Across the street...
- A. Across the street from Duchek's.
- Q. Across 38th Street on Franklin Drive. All right.
- A. I don't remember what it was.
- Q. I can't remember their names either.
- A. But I got Mother in to this house and then Dorrance and Paul were struggling again to get in, and I managed to, I was there first and I managed to just get a hand on Paul and Dorrance too, and we got Paul in all right. At that time I saw Phyllis' blue coat, my wife, tumbling downstream. And so, knowing that Paul and Mom were in the house okay, I jumped in to try to get ahold of Phyll. And we were carried about three houses downstream and, of course, I lost track of Phyll the minute I got in, I was tumbled and couldn't keep track of her. She got in some trees, and...

Q. This is the third house down...

A. This is the third house down on Franklin. And I was getting close to the shore and in quieter water, and a Mrs. Beaudette was in some trees and she reached out her hand and said "Grab it," which I did, and we were hanging then some trees close to this third house.

Q. These are the poplar trees?

A. These are the poplar trees. I was on a little apple tree past the poplar tree. There were some fellows in the doorway, they made a human chain, the three of them, and got Phyllis to the doorway. I didn't realize she was there at that time, I thought she'd gone on downstream. And then I looked and I saw that blue coat and I said, "Phyll, is that you?" and she said, "Bill, is that you?" And it was quite a happy reunion. The fellows in the house then tied some blankets together and got Mrs. Beaudette and myself into the house. We went through the house out the back door and there were quite a group of us, I'm estimating there were 14 of us all total. We got up on the roof of the house and the water continued to rise, I'm sure the dam broke after we had gotten swept downstream from where I had the car, had stopped the car.

Q. You're speaking of the Canyon Lake...

A. ...the Canyon Lake dam, right. And we were on the roof, and we were just up there a few minutes and something apparently hit the house that we had left Mother and Paul in and it just seemed to disintegrate...

Q. You watched it.

A. We could see in the lightning flashes that there really was not much left of

that house but a little rubble that floated downstream. And we felt then at that time that we had lost Mother and Paul. And...

Q. Now, Mr. Duchek was in that house with them.

A. Mr. Duchek was in that house with them, yes. There, I've forgotten how many people, I think there were six people lost in that home when it was carried away by the flood. But as we stood on the roof of the house, it wasn't, oh, probably a half hour later that the next house in line, I'm sure it was struck by something, and it was also washed away, and the house that we were on seemed to be fairly stable, I think it was protected by the poplar trees in front of it. And so we were able to stay on that house throughout the night. It was about 4 o'clock in the morning the water had receded enough so that a gentleman in a house just off Jackson Boulevard waded over and checked, and we were able to then wade to his home on Jackson Boulevard; the people in that house were very hospitable and gave us warm blankets to wrap in. Finally some of the rescue workers took us to the West Junior High, where we stayed until morning. About 6 o'clock in the morning we walked out toward our home in the Braeburn Addition, we wanted to see what we could find out about what was left in this area. How much detail...(Pause in taping) As we were heading out this way, a friend of our son's, a young Conklin boy, picked us up in his car and said that he knew that Steve was staying up with the Taylor's. So he drove us up to the Taylor residence which is on a hill overlooking the Braeburn Addition, and we visited, we found Steve, he was all right. With him was Marnie Thomas. Marnie is a young girl about 18 or 19; she, I believe was the very last one to get out



of the Addition alive that night. Her folks, I'm not sure of the time on this, but they saw the water rising, they had three vehicles and they told Marnie, get in the jeep and get out, that they were going to follow. So Marnie was able to come out of the Addition, just barely making it, apparently the mother and dad, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, Jack and Jean and the son, Jack Jr., perished in the flood, they were not able to make it out the Addition.

- Q. How about in terms of your stepfather and mother now? Where, where did they finally end up, do you have any idea?
- A. Let's see now, we began looking for Mother and Paul in the, the morgues in Rapid City on Saturday afternoon. They said that it would probably be better if we came back on 3 o'clock Sunday, as the bodies were then being brought in and cleaned up. So 3 o'clock Sunday we went back, they had not been found; and on Monday we were able to find Mother's body at the Catron Funeral Home, she had been washed down to Evergreen Drive. Now this was...
- Q. Down in the Meadowbrook area.
- A. Yes, down in the Meadowbrook area. And it was not until that Wednesday that they were able to find Paul's body, and the people at the morgue did not know where they had found him. But he had been in the water all the time so apparently had been in the creek.
- Q. Another thing, on the roof of this third house, now, that survived on Franklin Drive, what, what did you observe in terms of, of debris, did you hear or see any people, cars, were there any trailers or propane gas tanks...
- A. Yes, while we were on the roof of the house that we spent the night, we

were able to see in, when the lightning flashes occurred, it appeared there were complete houses floating down the stream, well, not floating, you know, they were rushing in this torrent of water, so floating is a fairly mild term, but they were going by at a tremendous rate of speed. And propane tanks, large trees, we were very fortunate that none of these seemed to come over and hit the home that we were on. I did not hear any scream of people going down, I think the water was making much too much noise for those to be heard. One young lad and I believe he came out of the house that Mother and Paul were in, was rescued by one of the fellows on the roof. He apparently heard this boy holler as he was being swept by and was able to reach down off the edge of the roof and catch him by his collar and bring him on the roof.

Q. This was probably the Beaudette boy.

A. I think this is probably the one. But I would say everyone was reasonably calm on the roof, we were thankful that we were there; some of the group, there was a flashlight in this house up by the, the main road, Jackson Boulevard, and yelling, we yelled at them to attract their attention, and when they recognized that we were up there, there didn't seem to be any panic or anything like that with any of the people on the roof.

Q. So as far as you were concerned, you were just wet and cold, but other than that relatively safe. How high would you say the water got up to this roof?

A. It seemed to me the water was about a foot below the level of the eaves, maybe two foot, it was, I didn't pay too much attention to it, but it was up fairly high on the house, my recollection would put it between one and

two feet below the level of the eaves.

Q. Now as far as your home is concerned, what sort of damage did you suffer here?

A. Well, compared to most of the homes in the Braeburn Addition, our structural damage to the home itself was quite mild. A few of the large picture windows were broken out; but the house itself is sound, has not moved on its foundation. We did lose, of course, most of the furniture and will have to completely decorate the downstairs. The upstairs was untouched. Prior to leaving the house the night of the house I grabbed all of my papers and just threw them up to the top of the stairs and luckily all the tax returns and the valuable papers I had were untouched by the flood. I still don't know why I did it, just as sort of an afterthought. I was sure the water would never get that high. The garage was swept away, but what we think happened was a lot of debris piled in front of the trees, we have some large spruce and Chinese elm...

Q. On the west side.

A. ...on the west side, upstream. And we think this diverted some of the main force of the water and probably saved the home. It did sweep the garage away, and a small storage shed I had in back, but I think we were very lucky, we have very little damage in the home proper.

Q. Now what about your neighbors, it looks pretty blank out here looking around. You have the neighbors immediately to the west who seem to have survived; were they in the house, or did they evacuate as well?

A. The neighbors to the west, these are across, oh, I was gonna think the ones,

Craglands, yeah, this would be John (Kennet), the Guibes and the Billams. They were all there and were able to get up to a guest house that the Guibe's have in back of their house which is well above the water line. The Billam's home was swept away in the flood, but all of them on the other side of the creek, the south side, were, were safe and high and dry and were able to get along very nicely. The neighbor to my immediate east was in Hawaii at the time, and when she came back a couple days after the flood, we asked her if she wasn't just amazed at all of the damage and she said that she was very surprised to find so much still standing, that the reports she got in Hawaii that Rapid City was completely wiped out by the disaster. Continuing on down the creek, the next home, they got out all right--this was the Ritter home--structurally not damaged too much, it's pretty well cleaned up now, and they do want to move back in.

- Q. Now would you surmise that the water went, then, into the north of your, your homes and was diverted into this sort of area in through here that we're looking directly north into, is that what you, in terms...
- A. Well, yes, this is the old creek bed through there. And this is where...a number of the homes that have been built on there said just in terms of the rock formation and everything, they knew they were on the old creek bed, and a number of them ended up with water in their basement everytime the rains came, and they thought it was just seepage there, so apparently the creek went to the old creek bed, and this is where the main damage occurred was in this area to the north and east of us. Now the figure may not be accurate, but it's been reported and we have tried to count up and come

pretty close to that, that there were about 28 deaths in this Braeburn Addition as a result of the flood. It would be fairly close to that number. Not all of them residents, there were a number of visitors down in here, but I think this is a fairly, reasonably accurate figure.

- Q. One other thing, did you, when you were evacuating, did you, were there a lot of people trying to get out at about that same time, or did you sort of feel like you were one of the few people that were getting out at that time.
- A. Oh, we, we were just one of the very few that were getting out that early. No one was really yet very worried about flooding or any serious damage in this area.
- Q. And your reason for leaving was simply to take care of your...
- A. I think we would have left anyway. The water was coming around the driveway of the house, and I wasn't really willing to take too much of a chance where we could up on a highway and be reasonably safe. So it, we were ready to leave at that time, I pulled the fuses and everything, so...
- Q. One other point that's occurred to me, there's a discussion about condemning this area and so on. I see you've moved back in, others may feel the same way, what do you think about continuing to live here and perhaps the condemnation of the land itself?
- A. Well, my personal feeling is that there's no where else in Rapid City I'd really like to live; I very much want to move back in my home on a permanent basis, and I feel we will be able to. And I think all of us that are located in the older homes along the creek feel that way. I know Mrs. McClusky

does, the Ritter's do, the Snediger's do, and as you go down, the Crystal's, I know, are interested in it, and the Snortlin's at the far end, they have cleaned it out and they're very anxious to move back in. I, I would hate to see them condemn the area for something that may happen once in 50 years, I think all of us are willing to take our chances because it is such a beautiful spot to live in.

- Q. From a strictly analytical point, which I'm sure you can handle, does it really seem, aren't you driven more by maybe sympathy toward the area than practical considerations of the possibilities of flood?
- A. Well, somehow, the possibilities of flood don't concern me too much. I realize it could happen again. I think I could best sum it up as that it's a way of life, living out here along the creek and the trees and the secluded area that we're at. All of us out here feel that we're willing to gamble something. Maybe we're gambling our lives on it, we don't feel that way, we think that we would have plenty of warning to get out if a flood did occur, we're willing to gamble money in repairing our homes and moving back into it just to live the way we really like to live out here.
- Q. What about, what about your thoughts in terms of the time you spent on the roof, you mentioned about how you felt about your parents and they might feel about you.
- A. Well, our first feeling when we got on the roof, and I was visiting with Phyll about this, we really felt pretty good, because Mother and Paul, we thought, were safe in the house upstream from us and we were reasonably safe on the roof. I think our main concern at that time was for the feelings of

Mother and Paul. I'm sure they felt that we were swept downstream and probably lost and we were just most anxious to reassure them that we were all right, but there was no way that this could be done. And so I think our big regret right now is that their last thoughts were that we had probably lost our lives in getting them out. I hope this wasn't the case, but it, it very well could have been, and this could have been kind of a tragic note for them to end their lives on. Our main concern after we knew that they were gone, when we saw their house break up, was...

Q. You, you really felt sure...

A. We just knew that we had lost them when that house broke, because Mother was 85 and Paul was 83, and they just could not have survived being swept downstream in that flood, there, there's no way they could have gotten out, we felt. So our immediate thoughts then turned to our family and we felt that we knew our kids were safe, this was of no concern because we had visited with them earlier in the evening and knew they were not in the flood area except for Steve and he had gone up the hill to the north of the house, so we felt he was safe, too. We knew they would worry about us, and we were just very happy that the immediate family was safe, and, and well, reasonably safe while we were on the roof.

Q. Yeah. When you, when you saw that particular house go, I mean, did, what was the reaction on the roof, do you recall any of that?

A. No, I think the reaction that the houses were starting to go ahead of us made us all wonder when ours would go, but there again was no panic or real fear evidenced by any people on the roof that I can recall. I think our

main concern was, we were all just practically freezing to death, it was just terribly cold, I had a t-shirt and one of these transparent raincoats on, and I don't think I've ever been so cold before in my life as I was on that roof. Most of us were just shaking up there.

Q. Do you have a tendency to think of just yourself, do you think of others, for example if you would have seen somebody going sweeping by and there was a risk that you would have taken to save them, do you think you would have?

A. I think almost every one of us would have done that, I think you do this without thinking. I know when I jumped in after Phyll when she was going downstream, the thought is, well, maybe you can get ahold of someone and bring them in. You don't really realize how terribly swift the current is and how it tumbles you and you lose your sense of perspective. But yes, I would say most everyone on that roof would have been willing to try desperate attempts to save other people.

Q. Do you have any other thoughts or things that you thought in terms of the aftermath of all of this?

A. No, there's a great deal of tragedy, but I think the spirit of the people living in the areas that were flooded is simply unbelievable, because they are interested in cleaning up, and as soon as they know what they can do with their homes from the legal standpoint, most of them in the area that we have visited with say, "we would like very much to fix it up and move back in." Now, there has been looting in the area, our home was hit on July 3rd and July 4th, two nights in a row. And we, prior to that time had borrowed a small house trailer from the Robert Ashem's, a 17 footer, pulled it out to a colleagues home on Sheridan Lake Drive and we're living there.



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After the two nights of looting, we felt we had to move back to our property there in Braeburn Addition. So we pulled this small house trailer down and we are the only people in the Addition living here now. Two nights cars have driven down and stopped in the Addition at around 3:30 or 4 o'clock in the morning. When we turn our lights on to investigate, they invariably drive out. I think what we have been able to do is keep looters out of the area simply by having someone living down here, we do leave an outside light on and an inside light on every night, and we are...

(END OF INTERVIEW)

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Number of Moves in South Dakota \_\_\_\_\_ Reasons for moves \_\_\_\_\_

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- A. Okay, at about 6:00 in the evening, this was just prior to supper, we were sort of sitting around; I believe at that time the rains were coming down pretty hard, and around, oh, 7 o'clock, we were out with our neighbors watching the creek. It was starting to rise fairly rapidly. Just prior to that I had had a call from a friend of mine up around Johnson Siding saying that it appeared that the creek was rising.
- Q. Who was that?
- A. This, his name is Jim Hieb. (Pause)
- Q. We're all right now. Just...
- A. All right. Jim is a hydrologist, he works with Leonard Yarger, they're both with, I believe it's the department of agriculture, and he is familiar with water conditions and is able to estimate the flow pretty well. He estimated that we had about 2000 cubic feet per second coming down Rapid Creek at that time. And thought that we were very likely in for flooding conditions down here in the valley where we are. So having seen 550 cubic feet per second come down where it had been a controlled release from Pactola, I could sort of extrapolate and agreed we had probably better consider getting out. Our

neighbors were standing around the bridge, and we were really watching the water come up, but it wasn't rising very rapidly at that time...

Q. Was it above the banks?

A. No, it was still below the banks at that time, and, but getting fairly close, we could see quite a bit of debris coming down the creek and it would hit the bridge. So I cut out the small swinging bridge I had in the backyard--it was suspended by cables--because I didn't want it piling up debris. And then I went down the basement and lifted my motors out that I have for the water system and irrigation pump and things like this and set them up on the kitchen counter hoping and thinking that they probably wouldn't get wet. I think it was about this time that we were giving serious thought about leaving the Addition, but it was probably two hours later, it was 10 o'clock when I pulled the final switch on the fusebox downstairs to kill all the power in the house and shut off all the gas. And we, in the meantime I had parked our car up in the orchard, which is about four foot higher than the level of our home. And the orchard is just to the north side of the house, away from the creek. So at 10 o'clock my wife and I and a pup-dog got in the car and were going over to pick up my mother and step-father, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Thompson. The kids, Susan and Cynthia, were out that evening. Susan tried to get home just prior to our leaving and called and said that the police would not let her in. We said that that was fine, that she should turn around and find some high ground and just stay there. She had one of the cars. Cindy was out with a friend of hers and Don, our eldest son, had gone to Illinois to attend a convention--he was a delegate

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Q. Now, does Tom Oliver live in Riverdell?

A. Yes, Tom Oliver lives two doors down from Mon and Paul. And both, both Tom and Jim were going to look after Mother and Paul in case we couldn't get down there that evening, so that was the reason I let them know. Well, as we pulled out, Paul was in the front seat with me, and Mother was in the back seat with my wife, Phyllis. Tom Oliver came out right behind us in their pickup camper and we got down to 38th and Franklin, just near the Duchek residence, and we could see that we were not going to get out, the car was still running fine, but so many cars had stalled in front of us we knew we couldn't make it up to Jackson Boulevard, so I headed the nose of the car in towards the Duchek residence. And water was rising very rapidly at that time.

Q. Would, would you say this is 10:30, 11:00 now...

A. I would, my recollection would be fairly close to a quarter to 11:00, right around that period in time. But I know by the time I had gotten out of the car and walked up to the Duchek residence, Dorrance was getting his family back in the home, his home, and I told Dorrance, I said, "I need help, I have my mother and step-dad in the car, he is a double amputee, and they are both quite old," and without a moment's hesitation, Dorrance came down and he got ahold of my step-dad, Paul, and I got Mother. Now,

I got Mother out of the car first and we were swept downstream, this was across 38th Street down toward Franklin. And we managed to get to firm footing near the, now, what is the house that...

Q. Well, I'm trying to think of first three...

A. It's the first house off of 38th Street on Franklin. And I think you have interviewed someone, this was where this young lad, the 14-year-old was...

Q. Yeah, right about right here, here's the Duchek residence on the corner, and this is, right next to them is the...

A. Right. This is the home.

Q. Well, it was on Franklin though.

A. Yes, mm-hm.

Q. Across the street...

A. Across the street from Duchek's.

Q. Across 38th Street on Franklin Drive. All right.

A. I don't remember what it was.

Q. I can't remember their names either.

A. But I got Mother in to this house and then Dorrance and Paul were struggling again to get in, and I managed to, I was there first and I managed to just get a hand on Paul and Dorrance too, and we got Paul in all right. At that time I saw Phyllis' blue coat, my wife, tumbling downstream. And so, knowing that Paul and Mom were in the house okay, I jumped in to try to get ahold of Phyll. And we were carried about three houses downstream and, of course, I lost track of Phyll the minute I got in, I was tumbled and couldn't keep track of her. She got in some trees, and...

Q. This is the third house down...

A. This is the third house down on Franklin. And I was getting close to the shore and in quieter water, and a Mrs. Beaudette was in some trees and she reached out her hand and said "Grab it," which I did, and we were hanging then some trees close to this third house.

Q. These are the poplar trees?

A. These are the poplar trees. I was on a little apple tree past the poplar tree. There were some fellows in the doorway, they made a human chain, the three of them, and got Phyllis to the doorway. I didn't realize she was there at that time, I thought she'd gone on downstream. And then I looked and I saw that blue coat and I said, "Phyll, is that you?" and she said, "Bill, is that you?" And it was quite a happy reunion. The fellows in the house then tied some blankets together and got Mrs. Beaudette and myself into the house. We went through the house out the back door and there were quite a group of us, I'm estimating there were 14 of us all total. We got up on the roof of the house and the water continued to rise, I'm sure the dam broke after we had gotten swept downstream from where I had the car, had stopped the car.

Q. You're speaking of the Canyon Lake...

A. ...the Canyon Lake dam, right. And we were on the roof, and we were just up there a few minutes and something apparently hit the house that we had left Mother and Paul in and it just seemed to disintegrate...

Q. You watched it.

A. We could see in the lightning flashes that there really was not much left of



that house but a little rubble that floated downstream. And we felt then at that time that we had lost Mother and Paul. And...

Q. Now, Mr. Duchek was in that house with them.

A. Mr. Duchek was in that house with them, yes. There, I've forgotten how many people, I think there were six people lost in that home when it was carried away by the flood. But as we stood on the roof of the house, it wasn't, oh, probably a half hour later that the next house in line, I'm sure it was struck by something, and it was also washed away, and the house that we were on seemed to be fairly stable, I think it was protected by the poplar trees in front of it. And so we were able to stay on that house throughout the night. It was about 4 o'clock in the morning the water had receded enough so that a gentleman in a house just off Jackson Boulevard waded over and checked, and we were able to then wade to his home on Jackson Boulevard; the people in that house were very hospitable and gave us warm blankets to wrap in. Finally some of the rescue workers took us to the West Junior High, where we stayed until morning. About 6 o'clock in the morning we walked out toward our home in the Braeburn Addition, we wanted to see what we could find out about what was left in this area. How much detail...(Pause in taping) As we were heading out this way, a friend of our son's, a young Conklin boy, picked us up in his car and said that he knew that Steve was staying up with the Taylor's. So he drove us up to the Taylor residence which is on a hill overlooking the Braeburn Addition, and we visited, we found Steve, he was all right. With him was Marnie Thomas. Marnie is a young girl about 18 or 19; she, I believe was the very last one to get out

of the Addition alive that night. Her folks, I'm not sure of the time on this, but they saw the water rising, they had three vehicles and they told Marnie, get in the jeep and get out, that they were going to follow. So Marnie was able to come out of the Addition, just barely making it, apparently the mother and dad, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, Jack and Jean and the son, Jack Jr., perished in the flood, they were not able to make it out the Addition.

- Q. How about in terms of your stepfather and mother now? Where, where did they finally end up, do you have any idea?
- A. Let's see now, we began looking for Mother and Paul in the, the morgues in Rapid City on Saturday afternoon. They said that it would probably be better if we came back on 3 o'clock Sunday, as the bodies were then being brought in and cleaned up. So 3 o'clock Sunday we went back, they had not been found; and on Monday we were able to find Mother's body at the Catron Funeral Home, she had been washed down to Evergreen Drive. Now this was...
- Q. Down in the Meadowbrook area.
- A. Yes, down in the Meadowbrook area. And it was not until that Wednesday that they were able to find Paul's body, and the people at the morgue did not know where they had found him. But he had been in the water all the time so apparently had been in the creek.
- Q. Another thing, on the roof of this third house, now, that survived on Franklin Drive, what, what did you observe in terms of, of debris, did you hear or see any people, cars, were there any trailers or propane gas tanks...
- A. Yes, while we were on the roof of the house that we spent the night, we

were able to see in, when the lightning flashes occurred, it appeared there were complete houses floating down the stream, well, not floating, you know, they were rushing in this torrent of water, so floating is a fairly mild term, but they were going by at a tremendous rate of speed. And propane tanks, large trees, we were very fortunate that none of these seemed to come over and hit the home that we were on. I did not hear any scream of people going down, I think the water was making much too much noise for those to be heard. One young lad and I believe he came out of the house that Mother and Paul were in, was rescued by one of the fellows on the roof. He apparently heard this boy holler as he was being swept by and was able to reach down off the edge of the roof and catch him by his collar and bring him on the roof.

Q. This was probably the Beaudette boy.

A. I think this is probably the one. But I would say everyone was reasonably calm on the roof, we were thankful that we were there; some of the group, there was a flashlight in this house up by the, the main road, Jackson Boulevard, and yelling, we yelled at them to attract their attention, and when they recognized that we were up there, there didn't seem to be any panic or anything like that with any of the people on the roof.

Q. So as far as you were concerned, you were just wet and cold, but other than that relatively safe. How high would you say the water got up to this roof?

A. It seemed to me the water was about a foot below the level of the eaves, maybe two foot, it was, I didn't pay too much attention to it, but it was up fairly high on the house, my recollection would put it between one and

two feet below the level of the eaves.

- Q. Now as far as your home is concerned, what sort of damage did you suffer here?
- A. Well, compared to most of the homes in the Braeburn Addition, our structural damage to the home itself was quite mild. A few of the large picture windows were broken out; but the house itself is sound, has not moved on its foundation. We did lose, of course, most of the furniture and will have to completely decorate the downstairs. The upstairs was untouched. Prior to leaving the house the night of the house I grabbed all of my papers and just threw them up to the top of the stairs and luckily all the tax returns and the valuable papers I had were untouched by the flood. I still don't know why I did it, just as sort of an afterthought. I was sure the water would never get that high. The garage was swept away, but what we think happened was a lot of debris piled in front of the trees, we have some large spruce and Chinese elm...
- Q. On the west side.
- A. ...on the west side, upstream. And we think this diverted some of the main force of the water and probably saved the home. It did sweep the garage away, and a small storage shed I had in back, but I think we were very lucky, we have very little damage in the home proper.
- Q. Now what about your neighbors, it looks pretty blank out here looking around. You have the neighbors immediately to the west who seem to have survived; were they in the house, or did they evacuate as well?
- A. The neighbors to the west, these are across, oh, I was gonna think the ones,

Craglands, yeah, this would be John (Kennet), the Guibes and the Billams. They were all there and were able to get up to a guest house that the Guibe's have in back of their house which is well above the water line. The Billam's home was swept away in the flood, but all of them on the other side of the creek, the south side, were, were safe and high and dry and were able to get along very nicely. The neighbor to my immediate east was in Hawaii at the time, and when she came back a couple days after the flood, we asked her if she wasn't just amazed at all of the damage and she said that she was very surprised to find so much still standing, that the reports she got in Hawaii that Rapid City was completely wiped out by the disaster. Continuing on down the creek, the next home, they got out all right--this was the Ritter home--structurally not damaged too much, it's pretty well cleaned up now, and they do want to move back in.

- Q. Now would you surmise that the water went, then, into the north of your, your homes and was diverted into this sort of area in through here that we're looking directly north into, is that what you, in terms...
- A. Well, yes, this is the old creek bed through there. And this is where...a number of the homes that have been built on there said just in terms of the rock formation and everything, they knew they were on the old creek bed, and a number of them ended up with water in their basement everytime the rains came, and they thought it was just seepage there, so apparently the creek went to the old creek bed, and this is where the main damage occurred was in this area to the north and east of us. Now the figure may not be accurate, but it's been reported and we have tried to count up and come

pretty close to that, that there were about 28 deaths in this Braeburn Addition as a result of the flood. It would be fairly close to that number. Not all of them residents, there were a number of visitors down in here, but I think this is a fairly, reasonably accurate figure.

- Q. One other thing, did you, when you were evacuating, did you, were there a lot of people trying to get out at about that same time, or did you sort of feel like you were one of the few people that were getting out at that time.
- A. Oh, we, we were just one of the very few that were getting out that early. No one was really yet very worried about flooding or any serious damage in this area.
- Q. And your reason for leaving was simply to take care of your...
- A. I think we would have left anyway. The water was coming around the driveway of the house, and I wasn't really willing to take too much of a chance where we could up on a highway and be reasonably safe. So it, we were ready to leave at that time, I pulled the fuses and everything, so...
- Q. One other point that's occurred to me, there's a discussion about condemning this area and so on. I see you've moved back in, others may feel the same way, what do you think about continuing to live here and perhaps the condemnation of the land itself?
- A. Well, my personal feeling is that there's no where else in Rapid City I'd really like to live; I very much want to move back in my home on a permanent basis, and I feel we will be able to. And I think all of us that are located in the older homes along the creek feel that way. I know Mrs. McClusky

does, the Ritter's do, the Snediger's do, and as you go down, the Crystal's, I know, are interested in it, and the Snortlin's at the far end, they have cleaned it out and they're very anxious to move back in. I, I would hate to see them condemn the area for something that may happen once in 50 years, I think all of us are willing to take our chances because it is such a beautiful spot to live in.

- Q. From a strictly analytical point, which I'm sure you can handle, does it really seem, aren't you driven more by maybe sympathy toward the area than practical considerations of the possibilities of flood?
- A. Well, somehow, the possibilities of flood don't concern me too much. I realize it could happen again. I think I could best sum it up as that it's a way of life, living out here along the creek and the trees and the secluded area that we're at. All of us out here feel that we're willing to gamble something. Maybe we're gambling our lives on it, we don't feel that way, we think that we would have plenty of warning to get out if a flood did occur, we're willing to gamble money in repairing our homes and moving back into it just to live the way we really like to live out here.
- Q. What about, what about your thoughts in terms of the time you spent on the roof, you mentioned about how you felt about your parents and they might feel about you.
- A. Well, our first feeling when we got on the roof, and I was visiting with Phyll about this, we really felt pretty good, because Mother and Paul, we thought, were safe in the house upstream from us and we were reasonably safe on the roof. I think our main concern at that time was for the feelings of

Mother and Paul. I'm sure they felt that we were swept downstream and probably lost and we were just most anxious to reassure them that we were all right, but there was no way that this could be done. And so I think our big regret right now is that their last thoughts were that we had probably lost our lives in getting them out. I hope this wasn't the case, but it, it very well could have been, and this could have been kind of a tragic note for them to end their lives on. Our main concern after we knew that they were gone, when we saw their house break up, was...

Q. You, you really felt sure...

A. We just knew that we had lost them when that house broke, because Mother was 85 and Paul was 83, and they just could not have survived being swept downstream in that flood, there, there's no way they could have gotten out, we felt. So our immediate thoughts then turned to our family and we felt that we knew our kids were safe, this was of no concern because we had visited with them earlier in the evening and knew they were not in the flood area except for Steve and he had gone up the hill to the north of the house, so we felt he was safe, too. We knew they would worry about us, and we were just very happy that the immediate family was safe, and, and well, reasonably safe while we were on the roof.

Q. Yeah. When you, when you saw that particular house go, I mean, did, what was the reaction on the roof, do you recall any of that?

A. No, I think the reaction that the houses were starting to go ahead of us made us all wonder when ours would go, but there again was no panic or real fear evidenced by any people on the roof that I can recall. I think our



main concern was, we were all just practically freezing to death, it was just terribly cold, I had a t-shirt and one of these transparent raincoats on, and I don't think I've ever been so cold before in my life as I was on that roof. Most of us were just shaking up there.

Q. Do you have a tendency to think of just yourself, do you think of others, for example if you would have seen somebody going sweeping by and there was a risk that you would have taken to save them, do you think you would have?

A. I think almost every one of us would have done that, I think you do this without thinking. I know when I jumped in after Phyll when she was going downstream, the thought is, well, maybe you can get ahold of someone and bring them in. You don't really realize how terribly swift the current is and how it tumbles you and you lose your sense of perspective. But yes, I would say most everyone on that roof would have been willing to try desperate attempts to save other people.

Q. Do you have any other thoughts or things that you thought in terms of the aftermath of all of this?

A. No, there's a great deal of tragedy, but I think the spirit of the people living in the areas that were flooded is simply unbelievable, because they are interested in cleaning up, and as soon as they know what they can do with their homes from the legal standpoint, most of them in the area that we have visited with say, "we would like very much to fix it up and move back in." Now, there has been lotting in the area, our home was hit on July 3rd and July 4th, two nights in a row. And we, prior to that time had borrowed a small house trailer from the Robert Ashem's, a 17 footer, pulled it out to a colleagues home on Sheridan Lake Drive and we're living there.

After the two nights of looting, we felt we had to move back to our property there in Braeburn Addition. So we pulled this small house trailer down and we are the only people in the Addition living here now. Two nights cars have driven down and stopped in the Addition at around 3:30 or 4 o'clock in the morning. When we turn our lights on to investigate, they invariably drive out. I think what we have been able to do is keep looters out of the area simply by having someone living down here, we do leave an outside light on and an inside light on every night, and we are...

(END OF INTERVIEW)



SW This is Stephen Ward talking to William A. Hixson, H-i-x-s-o-n, of Route 4, Box 599, Braeburn Addition, Rapid City, on July 12, 1972; subject, Black Hills Flood. Mr. Hixson's residence...is in the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter of section 8, range 7 east, township, township 1 north, and it is on Rapid Creek in the Braeburn Addition. Well, let's start with the night of June 9th, what were you doing in the evening, let's start out about 6 o'clock, for example.

WH Okay, at about 6 in the evening, <sup>this</sup> which was just prior to supper, we were sort of sitting around; I believe at that time the rains were coming down pretty hard, and around, oh, 7 o'clock, we were out with our neighbors watching the creek. It was starting to rise fairly rapidly. Just prior to that I had had a call from a friend of mine up around Johnson Siding saying that it appeared that the creek was rising. <sup>Q: Who was that?</sup> This, his name is Jim ~~Heeb~~ <sup>Heeb</sup>. (pause)

SW ~~Alright~~ We're all right now. just..

WH All right. Jim is a hydrologist, he works with Leonard Yarger, they're both with, I believe it's the department of agriculture, and he is familiar with water conditions and is able to estimate the flow pretty well. He estimated that we had about 2000 cubic feet per second coming down Rapid Creek at that time. And ~~xxxx~~ thought that we were very likely in for flooding conditions down here in the valley where we are. So having seen 550 cubic feet per second come down where it had been a controlled release from Pactola, I could sort of extrapolate and agreed we had probably better consider getting out. Our neighbors were standing around the bridge, and we were <sup>(really)</sup> watching the water come up, but it wasn't rising very rapidly at that time,..

SW Was it above the banks?

WH No, it was still below the banks at that time, and, but getting fairly close, we could see quite a bit of debris coming down the creek and it would hit the bridge. So I cut out the small ~~xxxxxx~~ swinging bridge ~~xx~~ I had in the backyard; it was suspended by cables because I didn't want it piling up debris, and then I went down the basement and <sup>looked</sup> looked at my motors out that I have for the water system and irrigation pump and things like this and set them up on the kitchen counter hoping and thinking that they probably wouldn't



WH get wet. I think it was about this time that we were giving serious thought about leaving the addition, but it was probably two hours later, it was ten o'clock when I pulled the final switch on the fusebox downstairs to kill all the power in the house and shut off all the gas. And ~~the~~<sup>we</sup>, in the meantime I had parked our car up in the orchard, which is about 4 foot higher than the level of our home. And the orchard is just to the north side of the house, away from the creek. So at ten o'clock my wife and I and a pup-dog got in the car and were going over to pick up my mother and step-father, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Thompson. The kids, Susan and Cynthia, were out that evening. Susan tried to get home just prior to our leaving and called and said that the police would not let her in. We said that that was fine, that she should turn around and find some high ground and just stay there. ~~She~~ had one of the cars. Cindy was out with a friend of hers and Don, our eldest son, had gone to Illinois to attend a convention, he was a delegate for his fraternity. So he was not even in the area when the flooding occurred. Stephen, our 19-year-old son was down here with us at the time. He and some of his friends took the two motorcycles ~~one~~<sup>is a 300</sup> is a 450 and the other Honda, and it was too wet, they wouldn't start, so they ~~pushed~~ pushed them out of the addition and this was right at ten o'clock, the waters were getting high, and pushed them up the hill toward Harms's, Gary Harms's residence, got them up about halfway and parked them there and saved the motorcycles; another of Steve's friends drove our Chevrolet out and drove it up to a Hughes' residence up the hill, and so that was saved. And so we left at ten o'clock then, and there was not any water to speak of coming across the road at the Cleghorn Canyon bridge, got down to the Riverdell Drive where Mother and Paul lived and parked out in front and went in and sat in their living room and watched the creek rise through their living room window looking toward the , the creek flowing along the ~~(back.)~~<sup>back</sup> ~~Began~~<sup>we</sup> to see some of the boats from Canyon Lake floating down the creek, and we decided that was time we ought to leave. By the time we had gotten from the front door to the car and Paul being a double amputee we had to bring him out in a wheelchair, the water had risen approximately, I'm guessing now, about a foot and a half in that short a time. <sup>Q: Up to about what?</sup> It was just about to the running board | the floor level of the car by the time we got to. ~~the car.~~

SW You're dating yourself by saying running board.

WH Okay. (laughing) But the floor boards of the car. <sup>Yeah -</sup> And we were able to get Mother and Paul in the car. Just prior to getting them in I had talked to Jim Kendall next door, said we would take care of Mom and Paul, and also went over to Tom Oliver's and said we had Mother and Paul in the car and were leaving. So we headed out of the Riverdell Drive area.

SW Now, does Tom Oliver live in Riverdell?

WH Yes, Tom Oliver lives two doors down from Mom and Paul. And both, both Tom and Jim were going to look after Mother and Paul in case we couldn't get down there that evening, so that was the reason I let them know. Well, as we pulled out, Paul was in the front seat with me, and Mother was in the back seat with my wife, Phyllis. Tom Oliver came out right behind us in their pickup <sup>camper</sup> and we got down to 38th and Franklin, just near the Duchek residence, and we could see that we were not ~~gxx~~ going to get out, the car was still running fine, but so many cars had stalled in front of us we knew we couldn't make it up to Jackson Boulevard, so I headed the nose of the car in towards the ~~Duchek~~ Duchek residence. And water was rising very rapidly at that time.

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SW Well, I'm trying to think of first the <sup>three</sup> ~~the~~.

WH It's the first house off of 38th Street on Franklin. And I think you have interviewed someone, this was where this young lad <sup>the</sup>, 14-year-old was..

SW Yeah, right about right here, here's the ~~Duchek~~ Duchek residence on the corner, and this is, right next to them is the..

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38

SW Across ~~22~~th Street on Franklin Drive. All right.

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SW I can't remember their names ~~with~~.

WH But I got Mother in to this house and then Dorrance and Paul were struggling again to get in, and I managed to , I was there first and I managed to just get a hand on Paul and Dorrance too, and we got Paul in all right. At that time I saw Phyll's blue coat, my wife, tumbling downstream. And so, knowing that Paul and Mom were in the house okay, I jumped in to try to get ahold of Phyll. And we were carried about three houses downstream and, of course, I lost track of Phyll the minute I got in, I was tumbled and couldn't keep track of her. She got in some trees, and..

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WH from where I had the car, had stopped the car.

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WH

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ saw the water rising, they had three vehicles and they told Marnie,

get in the jeep and get out, that they were going to follow. So Marnie was able to come out of the addition, just barely making it, apparently the mother and dad, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, Jack and Jean and the son, Jack Jr., perished in the flood, they were not able to make it out of the addition.

SM

How about in terms of your stepfather and mother now? Where, where did they finally end up, do you have any idea?

WH

Let's see now, we began looking for Mother and Paul in the, the morgues in Rapid City on Saturday afternoon. They said that it would probably be better if we came back on three o'clock Sunday, as the bodies were then being brought in and cleaned up. So three o'clock Sunday we went back, they had not been found, and on Monday we were able to find Mother's body at the Catron funeral home, <sup>A. Durr in the Meadowbrook area</sup> she had been washed down to Evergreen Drive. Now this was <sup>yes</sup>, down in the Meadowbrook area. And it was not until that Wednesday that they were able to find Paul's body, and the people at the morgue did not know where they had found him. But he had been in the water all the time so apparently had been in the creek. Another thing, on the roof of this third house, now, <sup>that survived</sup> on Franklin Drive, what, what did you observe in terms of, of debris, did you hear or see any people, cars, were there any trailers, <sup>or</sup> propane gas tanks..

WH

Yes, while we were on the roof of the house that we spent the night, we were able to see when the lightning flashes occurred, it appeared there were complete houses floating down the stream, well, not floating, you know, they were rushing in this torrent of water, so floating is a fairly mild term, but they were going by at a tremendous rate of speed. And propane tanks, large trees, we were very fortunate that none of these seemed to come over and hit the home that we were on. I did not hear any screams of people going down, I think the water was making much too much noise for those to be heard. One young lad and I believe he came out of the house that Mother and Paul were in, was rescued by one of the fellows on the roof. He apparently heard ~~xxxx~~ this boy holler as he was being swept by and was able to reach down off the edge of the roof and catch him by his collar and bring him on the roof.

SM

This was probably the Beaudette boy.

WH I think this is probably the one. But I would say everyone was reasonably calm on the roof, we were thankful that we were there; some of the group, there was a flashlight in this house up by the, the main road, Jackson Boulevard, and yelling, we yelled at them to attract their attention, and when they recognized that we were up there, there didn't seem to be any panic or anything like that with any of the people on the roof.

SW So as far as you were concerned, you were just wet and cold, but other than that relatively safe. How high would you say the water got up to this roof.

WH MM It seemed to me the water was about a foot below the level of the eaves, maybe two foot, it was, I didn't pay too much attention to (ti), but it was up fairly high on the house, my recollection would put it between one and two feet below the level of the eaves.

SW Now as far as your home is concerned, what sort of damage did <sup>you</sup> it suffer here?

WH Well, compared to most of the homes in the BraeBrun addition, our structural damage to the home itself was quite mild. A few of the large ~~picture~~ picture windows were broken out; but the house itself is sound, had <sup>s</sup> not moved on its foundation. we did lose, of course most of the furniture and will have to completely decorate the downstairs. The upstairs was untouched. Prior to leaving the house the night of the house I grabbed all of my papers and just threw them up to the top of the stairs and luckily all the tax returns and the valuable papers I had were untouched by the flood. I still don't know why I did it, just as sort of an afterthought. I was sure the water would never get that high. The garage was swept away, but what we think happened was a lot of debris piled in front of the trees, we have some large spruce and a chinese elm on the west side, upstream. <sup>OR: On the west side.</sup> And we think this diverted some of the main force of the water and probably saved the home. It did sweep the garage away, and <sup>a</sup> small storage shed I had in back, but I think we were very lucky, we have very little damage in the home proper.

SW Now what about your neighbors, <sup>x</sup> looks pretty blank out here looking around. you have the neighbors immediately to the west who seem to have survived; were they in the house, or did they evacuate as well?

WH The neighbors to the west, these are across, oh, I was gonna think the ones, Craglands, yeah, this would be John (Kennet), the Guides and the Bill <sup>5</sup> ms. They were all there and were



WH able to get up to a guest house that the Guide's have in back of their house which is well above the water line. The Billam's home was swept away in the flood, but all of them are on the other side of the creek, The south side, were, were safe and high and dry and were able to get along very nicely. The neighbor to my immediate east was in Hawaii at the time, and when she came back a couple days after the flood, we asked her if she wasn't just amazed at all of the damage and she said that ~~xxxx~~ she was very surprised to find so much still standing, that the reports she got in Hawaii that Rapid City was completely wiped out by the disaster. Continueing on down the creek, the next home, they got out all right, this was the Ritter home, structurally not damaged too much, ~~xxx~~ it's pretty well cleaned up now, and they do want to move back in.

SW Now would you surmise that the water went , then, into the north of your, your homes and was diverted into this sort of area in through here that we're looking directly north into, is that what you, in terms..

WH Well, yes, this is the old creek bed through there. And this is where a number of the homes that have been built on ~~xxxxxx~~ there said just in terms of the rock formation and everything, they knew they were on the old creek bed, and a number of them ended up with water in their basement everytime the rains came, and they thought it was just seepage there, so apparently the creek went to the old creek bed, and this is where the main damage accured was in this area ~~through~~ <sup>to</sup> the north and east of us. Now the figure may not be accurate, but it's been reported and we have tried to count up and come pretty close to that, that there were about 28 deaths in this Braeburn Addition as a result of the flood. It would be fairly close to that number. Not all of them residents, there were a number of visitors down in here, but I think this is a fairly , reasonably accurate figure.

SW One other thing, did you, when you were evacuating, did you, were there a lot of people trying to get out at about that same time, or did you sort of feel like you were one of the few people that were getting out at that time.

WH Oh, we, we were just one of the very few that were getting out that early. No one was really yet very worried about flooding or any serious damage in this area.

SW And your reason for leaving was simply to take care of your..

WH I think we would have left anyway. The water was coming around the driveway of the house, and I wasn't really willing to take too much of a chance where we could up on a highway and be reasonably safe. So it, we were ready to leave.at that time, I pulled the ~~fuses~~ fuses and everything, so..

SW One other point that's ocured to me, there's a discussion about condemning this area and so on. I see you've moved back in, others may lfeel the same way, what do you think about continuing to live here and perhaps the condemnation of the land itself?

WH Well, my personal feeling is that ~~there's~~ there's no where else in Rapid City I'd really like to live; I very much want to move back in my home on a permanent basis, and I feel we will be able to and I think all of us that are located in the older homes along the creek feel that way. I know Mrs. McClusky does, the Ritter's do, the Snediger's do, and as you go down , the Crystal's, I know, are interested in it, and the Snortlin's at the far end, they have cleaned it out and they're very anxious to move back in. I, I would hate to ~~xx~~ see them condemn the area for something that may happen once in 50 years, I think all of us are willing to take our chances because it is such a beautiful spot to live in.

SW From a stricltly analytical point, which I'm sure you can handle, does it really seem, aren't you driven more by maybe sympathy toward the area than practical considerations of the possibilities of flood?

WH Well, somehow, the possibilities of flood don't concern me too much. I realize it could happen again. I think I could best sum it up as that it's a way of life , living out here along the creek and the trees and the secluded area that we're at . All of us out here feel that we're willing to gamble something. Maybe we're gambling our lives on it, we don't feel that way, we think that we would have plenty of warning to get out if a flood did occur, we're willing to gamble money in repairing our homes and moving back into it just to live the way we really like to live out here.

SW What about, what about your thoughts in terms of the time you spent on the roof, you mentioned about how you felt about your parents and they might feel about you.



WH Well, our first feeling when we got on the roof, and I was ~~(visiting)~~ with Phyll about this, we really felt pretty good, because Mother and Paul, we thought, were safe in the house upstream from us and we were reasonably safe on the roof. I think our main concern at that time was for the feelings of Mother and Paul. I'm sure they felt that we were swept downstream and probably lost and we were just most anxious to reassure them that we were all right, but ~~xx~~ there was no way that this could be done. And so I think our big regret right now is that their last thoughts were that we had probably lost our lives in getting them out. I hope this wasn't the case, but it, it very well could have been, and this would have been kind of a tragic note for them to end their lives on. Our main concern after we knew that they were gone, ~~after~~ <sup>when</sup> we saw their house break up, was ...

SW You, you really felt sure..

WH We just knew that we had lost them when that house broke, because Mother was ~~xx~~85 and Paul was 83, and they just could not have survived being swept downstream in that flood, there, there's no way they could have gotten out, we felt. So our immediate thoughts then turned to our family and we felt that we knew our kids were safe, this was of no concern because we had visited with them earlier in the evening and knew they were not in the flood area except for Steve and he had gone up the hill to the north of the house, so we felt he was safe, too. We knew they would worry about us, and we were just very happy that the immediate family was safe, and, and ~~xxxxxx~~ <sup>well</sup> reasonably safe while we were on the roof.

SW Yeah. When you, when you saw that particular house go, I mean, did, what was the reaction on the roof, do you recall any of that?

WH No, I think the reaction that the houses were starting to go ahead of us made us all wonder when ours would go, but there again was no panic or real fear evidenced by any people on the roof that I can recall. I think our main concern was, ~~xxxxxx~~ we were all just practically freezing to death, it was just terribly cold, I had a t-shirt and one of these transparent raincoats on, and I don't ~~xx~~ think I've ever been so cold before in my life as I was on that roof. Most of us were just shaking up there.

SW Do you have a tendency to think of just yourself, do you think of others, for example if you would have seen somebody going sweeping by and there was a risk that you ~~would~~

SW would have taken to save them, do you think you would have?

WH I think almost every one of us would have done that, I think you do this without thinking. I know when I jumped in after Phyll when she was going downstream, the thought is, well, maybe you can get ahold of someone and bring them in. You don't really realize how terribly swift the current is and how it tumbles you and you lose your sense of perspective. But yes, I would say most everyone on that roof would have been willing to try desperate attempts to save other people.

SW Do you have any other thoughts or things that you thought in terms of the aftermath of all of this?

WH No, there's a great deal of tragedy, but I think the spirit of the people living in the areas that were flooded is simply unbelievable, because they are interested in cleaning up, and as soon as they know what they can do with their homes from the legal standpoint, most of them in the area that we have visited with say "we would like very much to fix it up and move back in." Now, there has been looting in the area, our home was hit on July 3rd and July 4th, two nights in a row. And we, prior to that time had borrowed a small house trailer from the Robert Ashem's, a 17 footer, pulled it out to a colleague's home on Sheridan Lake Drive and were living there. After the two nights of looting, we felt we had to move back to our ~~property~~<sup>the</sup> in Braeburn Addition. So we pulled this small house trailer down and we are the only people in the Addition living here now. Two nights cars have driven down and stopped in the Addition around 3:30 or 4 o'clock in the morning. When we turn our lights on to investigate, they invariably drive out. I think what we have been able to do is keep looters out of the area ~~since~~ simply by having someone living ~~down~~ down here, we do leave an outside light on and an inside light on every night, and we are....

(END OF INTERVIEW)