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Captain Robert Mallow, SDNG and Lt. John Parke, SDNG

Rt. 1, Box 552, Rapid City

7-5-72

Orland Rothlisberger

Camp Rapid, Rapid City

Rescue operations following Rapid City flood. Captain Mallow commanded a patrol to Nemo. Two men were drowned on that patrol. Lt. Parke was swept away by the water but survived and was rescued.

Male

Pennington

M

Company Commander, 235 General Supply Co., SDNG

ORAL HISTORY CENTER

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- Q. We're talking this morning to Captain Robert Mallow, Company Commander of the 235th General Supply Company, South Dakota National Guard, Camp Rapid, in Rapid City, South Dakota. Now Captain, your unit was here at Camp Rapid when the flood occurred the night of June 9, 1972.
- A. Yes, sir.
- Q. That was a weekend, and I think you indicated in our preliminary conversation here that most of the personnel of the unit had been dismissed and had gone home. I suppose your people live right here in the unit, in the locality?
- A. The majority of them live right here in the Rapid City area, we had had our last formation at 16:30 on Friday afternoon, and had dismissed the company except for 10% to keep on camp. Everybody had gone home, and I was at home when I got the notification at approximately 1900 hours.
- Q. I see, and then you immediately alerted your unit, or attempted to contact. . .
- A. Right, as soon as the CQ called me, why I had him notify the platoon sergeants and I notified the platoon leaders, and we put our m.o. plan into order.
- Q. Were you able to assemble your company, most of the, most of the men?
- A. We had 90% there within an hour.
- Q. I see, I see, how many men do you have in your unit, then?
- A. In, I've got seventy-four.
- Q. I see, I see, and then as soon as you received the call, and contacted your officers and NCO's, I suppose you reported here to . . .
- A. Yes, sir, I went over to the orderly room, signed in, and then I went up to

the Adjutant General's office, for, to wait orders.

Q. Now what were your orders when you received them?

A. When I went up to the AG's office, my orders were to go out in the Nemo area, and check out the road conditions, find out if all the bridges had been flooded as reported.

Q. So, you then, you took the \_\_\_\_\_? Is that right?

A. Yes, sir, I took six men from my company.

Q. And what, what sort of vehicles did you . . . ?

A. We took a deuce and a half, a quarter ton.

Q. And went up, what, what highway would that be up through there?

A. This would be the Nemo Road.

Q. I see, and about, this was about 6:30-7:30 now, you say?

A. Well, sir, it, this was about eight or 8:30, right now.

Q. I see, I see, this was before the dam had broken here, at, at Canyon Lake, and . . .

A. Yes, sir . . .

Q. What did you find conditions like up there on the Nemo Road?

A. As we started into the area, the road was becoming washed out. We went back in, we could still travel on the roads, although the, the water was running about a foot deep and cutting the asphalt away. We drove back up in it, as far as we could go, until we were stopped us on the road, and said she had two kids down by the creek, and so we took her with us in the quarter-ton and continued on down towards the creek, and in the process we were stopped

by a pick-up that had, said that there was a car coming on down the creek, and was setting up on some rocks. And as soon as it lit, why the dome light come on in the car. So, we went with the pick-up to the area where this car was sitting on the rocks, and hoping that the kids would be up, had enough sense to get up in a higher area. Why, we figured that our, we should throw our support over toward this car to see if there was anybody in it.

Q. I see, did you find anyone in the car?

A. No, we, when we got there, why we yelled a couple of times, and there was no response in the car, so at that time, is when we sent four people out in the water to go over to the car. The water was running about four to five foot deep then, the four individuals had a rope that they had tied themselves together with, in order to hold themselves back if one of them was swept up in the current. They reached the car, opened up the doors and that, and found nobody there and it was on their return trip when the wall of water come down and the water raised within a ten to twenty minute span, it raised about, I'd say, ten foot, and at this time, they were half way back when the water caught them, and they had to hold onto a tree. At that time, they untied themselves from the rope, so that they would be free if something happened, and then when the tree broke loose, why they went down, downstream with it.

Q. I see, the four men were on a tree, and the tree . . . Now a couple of these fellows were recovered, is that right?

A. Yes, sir, Lieutenant (Park) was one of them that was recovered, he, he jumped as soon as the trees took off, they, they all agreed that when they were out

on the tree, that as soon as they come close to land, that they would all jump, and it lightnined about that time that the tree broke loose, and Lt. Park seen land and he jumped. And he was the first one I picked up. At that time, we took the quarter-ton, and the deuce and a half and started driving up and down and the shore there, shining our lights out in the water, trying to find them, so we could possibly rescue the rest of them. We yelled and that and there was no respone from any of the individuals. At that time the water was getting so deep that we couldn't stay out on the lowland there on the field, and it was raising up, so that we had to go up into a, up on a knob there where there was a house, we were surrounded with water, then, and we spent the night in the house. The next morning, about three o'clock, we went down to the bank again, as soon as the water had went down, and started hollering again and we got a response. And he was on the other side of the creek where we couldn't get to him.

Q. Now, that, the Lieutenant, you said that was Lieutenant . . .

A. Park.

Q. Lt. Park. You had, you picked him up the night before. Is that correct?

A. Right. Friday night we picked him up at approximately 12:00, 12:30.

Q. I see, and the following, the following morning, then, the other, you found the other man, right?

A. Yes, sir, we found the other man the following morning.

Q. I see, is Captain, is this Lieutenant?

A. Yes, this is Lt. Park.

Q. \_\_\_\_\_ Rothlisberger with the Oral History Project, South

Dakota Historical Society. I was just conducting an interview here with Captain Mallow, on the role that he and you and the unit had played in the Rapid City flood, June 9. And Captain Mallow informed me that you were one of the, you were one of the men that had gone out in the Nemo area to an automobile, that on the return the waters were so deep the four of you siezed onto a tree, and this was swept away, and how far were you carried downstream, Lieutenant, before you came to shore, if that's what happened?

A1. I'd say that myself I was probably carried two, maybe three hundred feet, down to where I could see, first see shore, and I jumped at the first, figured that I was the closest to shore at that time, and then I suppose I was carried another sixty, seventy, maybe a hundred feet on down with the current.

Q. I see, now, this was late at night, it was pitch dark, I suppose, except for the lightning, \_\_\_\_\_ you immediately lost contact and I suppose with, with the, with the other people that were on that tree. Or . . .

A1. Um, when I got onto shore, when I first got on my feet, at shore, well, there, I looked back, and about that time the lightning lit up again and then all three of them were on that tree at that time. They were, probably another hundred feet, down the, down the creek when I, but all three of them were still on the tree, at that time.

Q. Now this, this was up in the Nemo area, you were in the . . .

A. \_\_\_\_\_ wooded canyon or . . . ravine; \_\_\_\_\_ along the creek there.

A1. Yes, it's kind of a wide ravine right in the creek bottom.

Q. The waters, the water, how wide would you estimate the, the waters were there at that time? (Either one of you.) I don't \_\_\_\_\_.

A. I'd say about 200 yards.

Q. And then you came to, to shore. Did you, did you have to, did you have to swim to shore? Did . . . ?

A1. Right, I swam probably, oh, maybe a hundred feet.

Q. I see, and you, you stayed there throughout the rest of, the rest of the . . . no, no you, you were picked up, right?

A1. Right, as soon as I got on shore, why they, I seen them leave with the deuce and a half and the jeep, and I knew that they'd seen the tree go through, so I, as soon as I could, I got back up on the high ground, where, they, I knew the jeep was going to come around, because (we'd) been up there in that area before.

Q. And you were driving along the raod, with your lights . . . ?

A. Along the bank.

Q. Along the bank, looking for people at that time, and you found Lt. Park. Then you, Captain Mallow, and Lt. Park, and there were a couple of other men still with you at this time?

A1. Right, we still had, by this time the 740th had brought in six men and they were with us, too.

Q. The 740th, now, is that . . . ?

A. 740th, transportation.

- Q. I see, I see, and they were with you also?
- A. Right, they had six people with them.
- Q. Six, and did they have, were they up on a reconnaissance patrol too? Or did they have any emergency equipment or anything with them?
- A. No, they brought some rope and that with them, some more rope, but, their mission was to come out and go up into that area, also. To see if there was anything they could do for anybody, that was stranded up in that area.
- Q. Well, then you were at, at a house on high ground, both of you?
- A. Yes, sir.
- Q. Throughout, throughout the night, until I think you said in the morning?
- A. It was about 2:30, 3:00 when the water receded where we could go out and start looking again.
- Q. And then you found one of . . . ?
- A. We got answers from my calls, he was on the other side of the creek, and we didn't get a chance to see him until it was noon, and he had worked his way around, we had to, in order to get across the creek, we had to come back into Rapid, and go down to the Black Hawk area, and cross the bridge there, and then we walked the creek back up.
- Q. You crossed at Black Hawk, and then you walked?
- A. We walked both sides of the creek, back up to (Shmitz) up there in the Nemo area.
- Q. And it was the following day, then, that the other man, when the other man was recovered?
- A. Yes, Saturday we found the one man, and then it was Sunday before we found



the other two.

Q. I see, then (they were recovered)?

A. They were recovered.

A. . . . on Sunday then. Now, then, you, you were out on patrol again on Sunday, looking for these . . . ?

A. Yes, sir, we, each unit sent up twelve people, and put twelve on each side of the creek, and went back up there, they were equipped with radios that they could talk back and forth, and that's Sunday is when they found both bodies.

Q. I see. Now, were, this was a search and rescue operation then, I suppose?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Were, did you assist, or was there any occasion to assist any of the civilians up in the area, at that time, or had they all been evacuated by now? Saturday or Sunday?

A. Uh--I come back in Saturday morning, and we'd had, there was ten, ten troops left there, that helped the people in the immediate area, they went around and check the houses to make sure that everybody was okay. There was an old couple down there that had walked in mud all the way up to the waist all night long, and they had made sure they were alright, and the majority of the people were up at this Doty School. So . . .

Q. That's a school house on high ground up there?

A. Right.

Q. Well, then after, well, see this Friday, that was the end of your first

week in camp, right?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. So you had another week in camp, where, was your unit held over any, any of the following, beyond the two weeks of summer camp?

A. No, sir, we dismissed the company at regular time when camp was over and we asked for volunteers, and I think we got fifteen, about fifteen people from the unit, that volunteered.

Q. Well, that second week in camp, after the flood, and after you'd gone back up and had, recovered the men lost in your patrol, what was the mission of your company then, that second week?

A. Our main mission during camp is to supply the units with rations and take care of the general supplies, in addition to that, why we've got some full-time employees that can operate this heavy equipment, and we were put out on projects of hauling, hauling stuff with dump trucks, our unit from Phillip used to be a dump truck company, and they're the other half of us, they were called in on Saturday, and they were put in dump trucks driving dump trucks out on security patrol. We went up to Black Hawk area, and, and used our wrecker to pull out trailer houses and cars, we also hauled trash and that and debris and that from the Black Hawk area.

Q. Now, this supplying rations, I, I think you filled me on the preliminary conversation here, Captain but your unit assisted in supplying the Adjutant General with rations that were \_\_\_\_\_ distributed to civilians.

A. Right, Friday night we had a mess hall open all night long, and anybody

that come in we had hot coffee and sandwiches, and we kept sandwiches and that going up to the Adjutant General's office for the people who were working all night long. Anything to get 'em warmed up after they come back into the area.

Q. Now, Lt. Park, did you have any special assignment during this, this second week?

A1. No, no, I'm ration breakdown officer, and I run ration breakdown, and issued rations to 'em, to the troops and the people remaining here in camp.

A. Yes, a task force.

Q. This, this mission must have (been) or was of course quite unanticipated, now all normal training operations I suppose were just suspended that, that second, that second week, and your unit had a much greater, a heavier burden was just suddenly thrust on it, than, than normally and you, you had, you had to continue to supply to the troops of the National Guard, and then these, these added \_\_\_\_\_ as, as well.

A. Well, see, as far as rations go, we had rations drawn for about 2500 troops, and when the flood hit we called everybody in the state in, and then we had a requirement for approximately 5000.

A1. We, that middle weekend, we used, we had rations, or camp strength the first week was about approximately 1800, and we had three days rations on hand, because of the weekend, and that middle weekend we used all three days rations, we used up approximately 5000 rations (in) that middle weekend.

- Q. Now, the, most of the, you say, you dismissed all of your personnel at the end of their usual camp period and had about fifteen volunteers that remained on for another week.
- A. Yes, sir.
- Q. Both, both of you, both of you are full-time \_\_\_\_\_ personnel, \_\_\_\_\_ are you not, \_\_\_\_\_? What did this small detachment then, did they have any, any, what was their primary mission?
- A. Most of their mission was to go down and work with the civilian contractors and that when they were cleaning up the debris and that, we were also driving dump trucks, but they'd pick up the debris we were to go in and search the area for any bodies and to watch when they were picking up debris and that for bodies. And also we went down and (walked) different areas of town that people said that hadn't been hit yet, and walked through the areas there and tried to find bodies.
- Q. Now, when the earlier reports came out on, on the flood, that is over the media, there were some, there were some reports of, of looting and that sort of thing. Was the National Guard used in \_\_\_\_\_ patrols and police operations? That sort of thing?
- A. Right after the first night of flooding we set up this security patrol, and we used the artillery battalion in order to hold security, and they had approximately a hundred people, there were a hundred patrols out and they would go throughout the night, watching different areas at random, in order to check out the area, and make sure that there was no looting going on. During the night, they said that they could see dome lights

going on and off all the time, and anytime they'd come around the area, why the dome lights would go off, and the people would start running, but. . .

Q. I see, \_\_\_\_\_ the artillery, and artillery battery . . .

A. Right, they had the mission of the security of the town. We also sent security patrols up to Keystone.

Q. Were they drawn from the artillery as . . . ?

A. The first week, yes. The following week, after, after the artillery pulled out, why then the 235th and the 211th had the security patrol for two nights, at that time, then the, the public officials decided that they had enough security, that they could take it themselves.

Q. Did, did you personally command this, this security patrol mission of the 235th, Captain?

A. No, I coordinated it with the Lt. O'Connor who was in charge of the patrol.

Q. I see, okay, well, either one of you, Captain Mallow, Lt. Park, do either of you have anything else that we might include on this historical tape, here? Your experience, either of you, the role of your unit, personnel in your unit, (at all)?

A. I know, we had a couple of, well, we had four trucks that we sent to the firehall (two tractors) in order to haul water for the fire department, and also we were hauling water around town to different locales, where, or churches, or areas where there was people were grouped, with water trailers and managed to supply them with water.

Q. That is to supply them with clean drinking water?

A. Right.

Q. Where, where did you obtain your water, (out in) . . . ?

A. The first couple of days, we drew our water up here at Hills Materials, shortly after that we had our own pump unit set into effect, our water purification company from Wagner was in, and at that time, then we could start getting our water from our own water points, and deliver it throughout the county, the city.

Q. Okay, Lt. Park

A. No, not, I think it's pretty well covered.

A. Alright, well, thank the both of you gentlemen then for this informative tape on, on your experiences, role with the National Guard in the Rapid City flood, in the spring of 1972, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW