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SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Library Cataloging Service Data

Name of Informant DONALD V. BARNETT - Mayor of Rapid City
Address 24 Nevada Street
Date of Interview 30 Jul 73
Name of Researcher E. Hausle
Others Present -----
Location of Interview Mayor's office - City Hall
Added Notes: the portion of the tape dealing with AIM is restricted until
March, 1978

HEADINGS UNDER WHICH YOU FEEL THIS INTERVIEW SHOULD BE FILED:

Accomplishments since flood; major problem--housing; Rapid City Area Disaster Foundation;
funding and aid to flood victims; AIM in Rapid City--general overview--racial conciliation;
board meeting at City Hall, eviction from motel, breaking up of bars; negative results.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON INFORMANT

Age _____ Sex _____ County _____
Socio-economic Status _____
Occupation _____
Education _____
Religion _____
Date of Arrival of Family in South Dakota _____
Where ? _____
From Where ? _____
Number of Moves in South Dakota _____
Reasons for Moves _____

- Q. Rapid City, South Dakota, July 30, 1973, Earl Hausle interviewing Rapid City Mayor Donald Barnett. Mayor Barnett, what were the major accomplishments that the city has made since the June 9th flood of last year?
- A. At this point about 14 months after the disaster I think that the city has made many, uh, many steps in the right direction concerning recovery from the flood. The most perplexing issue is not concerning Urban Renewal or anything else, it's the issue of permanent housing for the flood victims. This is a nagging problem for local government. Right after the flood the city had two choices--we could have, uh, put together the debris and hauled it out to the dump and forgot it or else we could have chosen to become active in securing housing for the people then needed them. Well, we took the second route and that was to get the government actively involved in providing temporary housing. Well, we accomplished that within 70 days or so and then, uh, during the following year many people were, uh, responsible. They had economic capability to go out and find permanent housing. They moved into one of new homes or the new apartments but some have not. And these have been the very poor and the people who were probably lost the most, and they have not taken the initiative because of economic and personal, psychological and many other factors. So the biggest challenge we have remaining yet is in the area of permanent housing for the very poor. We anticipate that, uh, most of this will be solved by the construction of several hundred low-income housing units that are planned and being developed by the Pennington County housing authority. But that remains the most critical issue in the city to get out of the housing business, to close down the temporary mobile home courts that were established last summer and get these people on their own again.
- Q. Are there any other, uh, special problems that remain?
- A. Oh, we, we definitely have special problems that remain as a result of the flood. For the first thing which is obvious to me in my job city government has got so much larger. We took an aggressive role. We tried to bring every conceivable federal program into Rapid City to meet the disaster. And so we've had some growing pains in city government. It's difficult sometimes for the citizens to understand that for these services and to administer

these programs we need more city employees. The size of our pay, of our payroll has grown a great deal and much of this is a direct result of flood related programs. Uh, I think the attitude of the city is basically very healthy. I don't think city government is, is too responsible for the healthy attitude of the people. I think the great influx of federal money into the city acts as a stimulant with the release of SBA loans and money floating into the economy, jobs being created, uh, many homes under construction. The construction trades generally with more work to do than they can handle. Uh, one problem which does, uh, that does happen though is when, when the city is going along smoothly with a, a, uh, gradual growth that's one thing but then with the availability of federal money you get, uh, so much construction going on that the, uh, availability of work is so high that the contractors are not forced by sheer competitive bidding to give you a low bid or a good price because there's so much work to do. And they could throw something together and add on a massive percentage of factor and throw the bid in. And then because there are so few bidders because there is so much work then often times your bids are way out of kill to where they should be. And then for that difference the city treasury has to make that up because actually you didn't have strong competitive bidding because the guy probably didn't want the work very bad anyway and he threw together a real high proposal and then to his amazement he got it. Well, the city then is, has to accept that unless you throw everything out and start all over again, and you can do that but again you have no assurance that you're going to get a better bid the next time. And so with all of this work available for the contractors we've had to pay a very high price for the work we've got done.

- Q. What, uh, is your feeling at this time as to the response that the federal government has many agencies made to the disaster?
- A. Oh, I've said many time throughout the country that, uh, the federal system worked in Rapid City. I'm an old college teacher. I taught state government, national government. I have some theoretical background in that area from my college teaching experience. I think it was a textbook example of the federal system working and with each level complimenting each other with the local levels determining the need factoring and trying to examine the

direction that we would take, getting some assistance with a massive planning grant from the federal department of housing and urban development. Then the state government providing some coordination and some technical assistance but not much because that just isn't what state government does in South Dakota. But they did do everything they were called upon to do. And then with the massive spending authority of the federal government making a commitment to Rapid City and the Black Hills in the neighborhood of about \$147 million. I think the response of the whole federal system especially the Mountain Plains Regional Council of 16 federal agencies in Denver. I think it's been excellent.

- Q. How important do you think the city capability plus the capability of the Sixth Planning and Development District in writing federal proposals, putting these things together was in obtaining of this aid?
- A. Well, I think without a doubt if that would have been the first Urban Renewal program we would have ever applied for it would have taken us much longer. We would not have had the expertise. We would have tripped all over ourselves and not known what to do. Unfortunately the city had been involved in that program many times before. We never landed a big grant but we knew how to apply for it. So this was critically important to the fact that we had a track record here. We had knowledgeable people on our staff, personalities that we knew their capabilities, etcetera. So this played a very important role in the seeking portion of the federal system. We had to write it down what we needed then we had to fill out the complicated federal applications to land the money. So that was critically important. Now the Sixth Planning and Development District simply provided more expertise on top of what we had in the city, and so it not only helped Rapid City but it helped all of the local units of government in the four-county disaster area. Now the presence and the existence of the four-county disaster policy body which was really a child of the Sixth Planning and Development District, that was a critical factor 'cause we had to work together. We had to compliment each other. We couldn't afford back-biting and independent action. It had to be an overall comprehensive plan. Well, when we could do that and we had the machinery and existence all ready at the Sixth Planning and Development District that just served to help

us very much. So the existence of that planning district was a tremendous factor in the early hours of the disaster. Because then the technical assistance in writing applications and sorting out federal programs, it was already here. We had the machinery. We didn't have to create it in an atmosphere of disaster and crisis. It already existed to help us during and immediately following the disaster, so a very positive and high, high mark for the Sixth Planning bunch.

- Q. Although we did an interview last year on the flood, we didn't talk about something that was very important in granting relief to many people and that was the Rapid City Disaster Foundation in which you were interested, instrumental in establishing. And I'd like to have you tell something about how it was set up and how it functioned.
- A. Well, if, if, uh, you'd like me to do that I will. The, uh, idea of a disaster foundation came to me and it had already come to many others. I was not the father of that outfit. But the second day of the flood a fellow from Homestake Mines saw me in the Civil Defense, uh, uh, room and he said, "Here, Mayor, here's a check for \$10,000 from Homestake Mine." I said, "Gee whiz. Thanks." And I folded it up and I put it in my pocket and I went my way. And I got home that night and I took off these grubby pair of pants--they were ripped and muddy--and I had this check for \$10,000 in it. And I had my wife take that down and, uh, just store it at the bank. Uh, about, uh, a day later or so, uh, the Chamber of Commerce, uh, director came up to me, Larry Waller, and he said, "Mayor, there's going to be a lot of people want to create, want to give money. What are we going to do?" I said, "Well, let's not do it alone. Let's get people from the county and the city and they Chamber of Commerce together and have a meeting to decide how we're going to manage the money." About this time we had about 2,000 people on the missing list and, uh, so there was lots of agony there and we didn't know what to do. On about the fifth day we sat down with the chairmand of the county commission, myself, and the president of the Chamber of Commerce and we tried to think over what we would do. We had got an attorney by that time who donated his services. And thought that if the city and the county and the Chamber of Commerce could each appoint five people to serve on the Foundation Board of Directors that

might be desirable. So we made a list of who we would appoint and we named them and about, uh, two or three days later we called the first meeting. The Chamber of Commerce named five. The county named five and I named five. We sat in a meeting. Uh, we, we elected some officers and away we went. We just went from the seat of our plants. We recognized first of all that it was going to be a very complicated thing to do and secondly, by the end of it we thought we'd all be very unpopular with the flood victims because it's impossible to come up with a program that would be completely fair. Nevertheless, we appointed officers. We appointed an executive board. The board came from minorities, labor unions, business, uh, business, uh, women, everybody in the city would have a chance to be represented on the Disaster Foundation board. Then we had an argument about what we were going to name it and since Rapid City was getting the national attention we called it the Rapid City Area Disaster Foundation. And then, uh, we started to collect money. At first we thought we might raise \$100,000, then \$200,000. Within six weeks we had a million dollars and then it finally rounded off at 1,434,000 the last time I looked. One interesting fact or about the Disaster Foundation was that over 100% of those donations have been given to the people in the form of cash. We invested the money right away in short term certificate of deposit. And that meant from the interest we could pay our phone bill and some of the minor expenses. I don't think we spent \$2,000 in all of the expenses in administering the fund. And the interest from those investments was much more than that. I think when we add it up we'll finally figure out that we've given away about 106% of that money. We set up various stages to, to pass out the money right away. The first stage that we established was the cash in the pocket stage where we set up an arbitrary formula of \$50 for the head of the household and \$10 for each dependent. And they could come down right then and there and we'd issue them a check the very day they applied for it. Well, that took 75 or \$80,000 and the people got that within two weeks after the flood. The next phase was for the, a percent of uninsured personal property that people had lost. That meant they had to come down to the old Elks Club building in downtown Rapid City and fill out a lengthy application, tell us how much they had lost. Then we applied a percent of that for every-

everybody and passed out checks. That took about \$500,000. Then we went into the next phase with uninsured real property loss. And we had them come down and fill out more forms. Then we called that Phase Three and passed out another 3 or \$400,000. Then we had a burial benefit for the families that lost everything. They were set back. Uh, often times the workmen's compensation and everything else and the state programs did not pay for the burial costs or they didn't have insurance. So we had a general death benefit for those families that had lost so much of human life. After that we tried to help out various organizations that had lost their income capability because of financial loss from the flood. And then we had some other procedures for passing out money. There's been a master's thesis that has been written about the procedures of the Rapid City Area Disaster Foundation. I'd be happy to get you a copy of that to enter into the historical record concerning the flood. It did a detailed study of exactly every nickel that came in, how it went, how it came in and how it went out. It would be very good for historical purposes to put that on file someplace.

- Q. Yes, that would be fine. You mentioned organizations again. Are you talking about organizations like the boys' club, the girls' club?
- A. That's right. The donations dropped off, uh, in so many areas and, uh, off, the boys' club, for instance, was right on the banks of Rapid Creek and had a lot of physical damage. That and the First Step Preschool people lost their building. And, uh, some of these organizations were so needed after the flood that we didn't, we, we had a continuing need for social services after the disaster, and some of these would have folded without cash from someplace. Now, some people might say well, that's an indirect expenditure of the donations. It's indirect but it's had a direct effect upon the community because these organizations continued. We also set aside \$60,000 for a mental health program. Now that might have been indirect but actually it was of direct benefit eventually to the flood victims themselves. Uh, I think the spirit of those donations was carried out. I was treasurer for the Disaster Foundations. We never raised our voices and came to a knock-down, dried-out but we debated the rational of those expenditures and I'm not ashamed of

a nickel that we expended to help those flood victims. And without those early donations I might add a lot of people would have given up. This community could have gone into a state of depression and of hopelessness in late June and July and August of last year. But there was so much good news in the newspaper, headlines about a million dollars being contributed. The Red Cross poured in \$1,202,000. The Mennonites were here all summer long. They didn't charge us a nickel. They did millions of dollars worth of labor for Rapid City and didn't want anything for it. The Salvation Army provided something like 175,000 meals the first 15 days following, the first 30 days following the disaster. With so much help, uh, pardon the expression "floating around", uh, these people didn't give up and it was a vital factor in the moral of the community.

Q. The mental health program that was funded by the funds you've just spoken of has just recently gotten under way, is that right?

A. It just recently got under way. Now, you asked me what I, about 20 minutes ago about what I thought about the federal agencies. Well, I've been asked that all across the country and I've said that I'm not mad at anybody. I think that a real measurement in government is if we're frustrated with each other. And one year after the flood I did an interview for CBS news and they said, "How ya doing?" And I said, "Well, I think the real measurement is the fact that I as mayor of the city--I managed to get reelected in the middle of all of this--I'm not mad at anybody. I don't have a feeling of bitterness or being let down by anybody in the country. The federal system worked, people gave us money. People didn't open their mouth and then fail to deliver the goods, the dollars. But there was one shortcoming in the federal apparatus and it's getting more attention than it probably deserves. But the National Institute of Mental Health did not have the capability of responding the way other agencies did following our disaster. We got the red tape run around. We couldn't get their attention. Our application was left unread in various under secretary's office in Washington, D.C.. It couldn't get out of Denver. They couldn't give it the priority that we thought it needed. Well, finally 13 months later the program has started to trickle down to us after it was cut and cut and cut and they brought out

federal experts. And they fought with us. Now, one of two things happened there. It could have been our fault. The application could have been so illconceived and so out of order that it didn't merit federal consideration. But they never told us that. The people in Denver told us it was excellent. The people in Washington told us it met everything they were looking for. But they couldn't come up with a decision to fund it. Or secondly, the people in that National Institute of Mental Health were not compassionate. They didn't want to deliver the goods and they weren't capable of making a decision. Now, history will judge what was right there. But it's my feeling that they just couldn't give us any priority. That they couldn't get around all the red tape and the maneur and the manusha, and I'll call it maneur 'cause that's what it was because we had people that were in need of help. And finally now we're getting some counselors out here to the flood victims. There's one thing you got to remember now. This flood's not over. The water might have gone down and the creek dried up in some places but the flood's not over for me, it's not over for the city, and it's not going to be over for ten years. And those scars are going to be here for a long time. And I believe those scars would not have been as severe if we could have had an active mental health program that would have jumped out there in August to go out and begin counseling, to search out some of these problems before those scars got deeper to the point where some of them are unsoluble.

- Q. But the present, uh, work that's being done is being done purely through funding from the disaster money given by people, right?
- A. That's right. I think within a few hours or a few days they should begin to trickle down now with this \$100,000. Crimenetly, we applied for \$750,000 grant once and they told us it was, they told us it was needed. They told us the application has met all the guidelines, and then the bureaucrats got ahold of it and could not respond. But I want to say this again, Earl. That's the only agency that I feel that way about, and I'm willing to confess that maybe there was some things wrong in that application. I only wished they'd have told us about 'em so that I could have insisted that we sit down and rewrite the application in September and get it in. But we could never achieve that level of

understanding and they didn't feel that compassionate about Rapid City. All the rest of the federal people I live them, they were fantastic.

Q. This agency is, is or is not a part of the regional council in Denver?

A. Yes. They have one of their, uh, their parent organization is a part of the regional council in Denver. But that's the only place where there's been any misunderstanding and it's the only place where I fell this way.

Q. The Urban Renewal Plan and the other things which, uh, the city was able to obtain through the help of the federal government were moving along at a good rate then.

A. Yes, I believe they are. There was a moment in May where the federal people were a little concerned that we were not closing the deal fast enough in the acquisition of the flood way. I've been on my vacation and I came home and, uh, we worked harder on that for the next few days. Now we're closing at the rate of about 60 parcels of property a week. The federal people are very understanding. They feel like we're doing a real good job and they're satisfied with the rate that we are spending the money. The OEP officials are very satisfied. The only areas where we will need extensions from the OEP guidelines is on the bridges and highway work. But again I might add that will be the advantage of the federal treasury because if we had a little more time we won't get such a haphazard, uh, seat-of-the-pants bidding. It'll be more competitive. Contractors throughout the midwest will have a chance to bid on this work and will eventually save some money in the replacement of bridges and public structures and, uh, and public things in the city. So I believe it's going very well. Our audits are looking very good. One factor about the 1972 flood is that in 1973 it has not been forgotten. Uh, the people in the city would like to get back to normal. I don't care in Rapid City ever gets on NBC or CBS or ABC's evening news again. We had so much bad news in the period following the disaster, first there was the flood then there was the Indian crisis in March and April. Then after that there just in January there was the, uh, hijacked or the potential of a bomb on the seaport on the 747. They had to land at Ellsworth. The community got tired of national publicity that involved bad news. The city would like to return to normal. I think the city is proud of what has

happened. We still feel very compassionately for the flood victims but we want this community to return to normalcy one more time. We don't want anymore agony in this community and we don't want anymore national attention. That's a very prevailing attitude in this city that we're tired of being headline news throughout the country. We want to go back to being a nice little community in western South Dakota and that's a very strong feeling among our people, I sense that, it's there very strongly. I think the community is proud that we've come this far. One factor in our recovery was not what I did or the county commissioner, the city council or the governor or anything but collectively we reached the decision the first hours following the flood to haul every visible means of debris to the dump. Now that might sound crude but when we got that crap out of the city there wasn't there to look at anymore and people could start thinking about next weekend. They could start thinking about their family. They wouldn't have to go by tons and tons of debris that probably have some dead bodies mixed in with it. After about six weeks we had the city basically cleared of the visible evidence of flooding, in other words the broken homes, the bridges, uh, all of the lumber and the trees and the rocks had all been buried at the city dump. Well, you can't say that it was out of sight and out of mind but it wasn't there to look at everyday when you drove by, and that had a major impact upon the welfare and the, the thinking of the citizens of Rapid City. I'll close just by saying the fact that we got that out of, out of sight improved people's moral a great deal.

- Q. I'd like to turn now to something you've already mentioned and that was the problem that we had with the confrontations with the American Indian movement people and I'd like, uh, to have you just go ahead and, uh, and tell about your experience with this.
- A. In my lifetime at aged 30 right now I hope I never have to go through the pressures and the personal fear that I went through following February 6, 1973 for about three weeks after that. I have never been under such intensive personal pressure in all of my life and I never want it to happen again. The basic problem involving the American Indian movement confrontation in western South Dakota were the ridiculous public statements that were sometimes issued by both sides that served only to put fear in the minds of the population

of this city. I suppose that I was guilty of some that also. The statements which were so foolish and ridiculous brought the people to a sense of uncertainty and fear that had a great deal to do with all of the pressures and the misunderstandings that built up. One of the AIM fellows said that February 6 was a good day to die. Well, the last thing in the world he wanted to do was die on February 6. But that type of statement adds to the confusion; it adds to the inflammatory feelings that, that become a reality and it just confuses the whole situation. I think that the, uh, main problem with the American Indian Movement, uh, civil disobedience was the fact of uncertainty and verbal threats, accusations that were in the headlines that had no basis in fact whatsoever. The AIM leaders did not want to die in Custer. It's the last thing in the world they wanted to do. We did not want a race riot in Rapid City. That was the last thing I wanted. I think that my whole attitude throughout that experience was to minimize this confrontation. When people would call me with ridiculous advice to shoot all the Indians--and I've jokingly said that some people wanted me to shoot the Indians and anybody that had a tan because that's how the passions were. I told them on dozens of occasions that if they wanted Rapid City to be as famous as Selma, Alabama I could take care of that in about 15 minutes but if we did not want that then we were going to do it my way and minimize this confrontation and not have a battle between Indians and police where everybody loses, and try to get Rapid City off the front pages in the newspapers around the country. Now I think what I did was correct. In fact, I'm proud of some of the things we did during that disaster. Because when somebody made a ridiculous statement to me I did not answer it with a ridiculous statement but some people did. And some people thought it was necessary to refute everything that was said by AIM. Well, I felt that the people of Rapid City recognized that about 90 percent of that was complete hogwash and it didn't require refutation because it stood as pure rubbish on its own. Well, there was a misunderstanding and so the issue got prolonged. But I would only say this about the AIM, uh, situation in Rapid City. Some of the things spoken by the AIM leaders were legitimate grievances of the Indian people. But you don't have to burn down the courthouse in Custer to get our attention, and you

don't have to burn down a building in Rapid City to get our attention. You don't have to tear down five or six bars on main street to get the attention of the police department and the, the, the city government. So all-in-all I would say it was a period of time when everything got exaggerated, when fear set into the minds of people. When the mind is afraid and filled with fear it is willing to accept and believe things which could not be possibly true. And it's very difficult for government to eliminate that doubt.

Q. I was, of course, on the council at that time and I remember one evening when I received a call they thought that possible you were, uh, being held as a prisoner at, uh, the city auditorium. Can you tell me about, uh, the events of that evening?

A. I certainly can. That evening at 4 o'clock we were at the National Guard Armory talking with the general and with the leaders of the highway patrol, the sheriff and the various public safety agencies in western South Dakota. We were actually counting how many night sticks we had, how many men we had, how many gas masks we had, and we were almost believing that it would be necessary for a physical confrontation to stop a riot or something like that from our public safety, uh, people. It was then that people from the community relations department of the, of the justice department entered the National Guard headquarters and started to speak with me and then spoke with all of us. And they felt that confrontation and violence could be eliminated if we could move into a stage of negotiations. The negotiations they said would probably not be very, uh, fruitful or useful the first few days but at least that's better than shooting and killing and rioting. I said that sounds like a good deal to me because I didn't want any shooting and killing and rioting 'cause then I knew that would prolong the issue in Rapid City and get Rapid City more negative national publicity. We had to be concerned about our tourist industry. We had to be concerned about the image of South Dakota and everything else. So we, we agreed that we would call a special meeting of the Racial Conciliation Committee for that evening at the city auditorium at 7:30. Well, we planned our strategy there and decided that at this meeting we would not have any policeman whatsoever. We wouldn't have undercover agents. We wouldn't have anything there that would only have an opportunity to meet and discuss things. Well,

that was fine and dandy. We called the meeting. Of course, it started late and nine of us on the racial conciliation committee sat there at the table in the auditorium and waited for the meeting to start. Well, about a half hour late, uh, Banks came in. He brought his, uh, crew with him and then, uh, they did their singing, their war chants, uh, for about a half hour. The meeting started and Banks was called upon to give a speech. And he is a very charismatic individual. He is a very handsome man. He came in the room and started his speech and his first words here were similar to this--he said, "I'm here tonight to give a speech," and he said, "I want you all to clap when I'm done." He made a couple of jokes, And then he said, "But I want you to remeber I'm giving this speech because of my complete hatred for every white man in this country." I figured that was not starting out the negotiations on the most positive terms. Uh, and then he went in to why he hated every white man, why he hated the mayor of Rapid City, why he hated all of us there and why he was going to bring Rapid City to its knees. He got a very inflammatory set of remarks. I think it could be said there were about 40 Indian men there and about 100 teenaged Indian girls that were apparently on a holiday, on a lark just having more fun because they were truants out of the various high schools around the area. They weren't committed civil rights people. They were on a lark. I'll say that to their face if they were here today. Well, then other people started giving speeches and they just tore my hide off verbally. I was obviously the worst individual that had ever breathed and they called me all sorts of names. People stood up and gave speeches. That went on for about an hour. I did not say a word. Then, uh, a fellow who I believe to this day is mentally not altogether named Ronald Petite. I think he's just emotionally not stable becaue I had several verbal confrontations with him already. He threw a chair into the air. It landed on the floor and all the television cameras zoomed on him. And he said how, by george he had, we had these nine blankety-blanks and he went into the most vicious string of profanity I had ever heard. He said you're going to hold these nine until they turn the seventeen Indians that had been arrested in Custer loose. We're going to hold them hostage and kill them in necessary at which time I was scared. Every member of that board was scared. And then Petite went into

a tiraid and roared around the room, running and jumping and giving a speech and trying to bring the other people up to a high pitch of, uh, just into a terrible state of things. I was afraid for myself. I was afraid for the women but I was particularly afraid for the Indian citizens that were serving on the board. They were really under danger now because the Indians are moving closer up to the table. There was a fellow behind me that looked like a Mexican fellow. He had a mustache and was carrying a chain. And one of my friends that serves on the board he tapped me on the shoulder, he said, "Don't turn around because there's a fellow swinging a chain behind you." We could see knives. We could see guns. And we were quite, quite afraid. Uh, they gave some more speeches. They moved closer up to the table, and then the people began insisting that the Mayor of Rapid City speak for himself. Father O'Connell had been handling it and I made a vow I would not say anything. Then they came up closer and they were slobbering on me. They were beating on the table. And I was quite afraid for my personal safety. In the year and a half in Vietnam including the _____ offensive I was never more personally frightened than I was then. And, uh, I asked Father O'Connell if I should say something and he thought I should. So I stood up on the chair. I told them that I, they were saying that, uh, they demanded that an Indian be made city attorney. And I stood up and I started my remarks and told them that I thought that many points had been made but nothing could be settled in, with physical violence and by killing a bunch of people aren't going to solve anything. You're going to put the white community into a state of fear and then a lot more people would die. I talked for about 20 minutes and my own humble way I believe it was the most eloquent I ever was in my life if I've ever been eloquent. I don't think I've ever given a better speech and I gave it completely out of fear. I was to the point of view, of my view of being, somebody had to do something to save the lives of those people on the board because you could see knives being brandished around, and the television cameras were just eating this up. Man, they had controversy. Now whether or not the AIM people would have killed anybody, roughed us up, held us hostage, uh, taken our clothes or done something like that I don't know. But at the time I'd thought they would do that. Well, after I had finished my speech the crowd

started to break up and they started to move away toward the door, and it was at that time that the women thought they ought to leave. And I said, "No, let's sit here for a minute." So Banks stood up and sort of like the thunder had been taken away from him and they'd been to the meeting for about two hours which was apparently as long as they could, could stand one meeting. And Banks stood up and he says, "Well, Rapid City might do what's right." He said, "But I don't think other towns in the Black Hills were and I'm here tonight to declare war on every town in the Black Hills." Okay. I, I jumped up and I said, "Just a minute. Wouldn't it be better to have you and I sit down at a conference table with the ten mayors of the cities in the Black Hills and talk these things over before somebody burns down a building and somebody goes to jail." I said something like that. And that took all the steam out of him. Then I was making more sense to the Indians than Banks was. And the crowd started to disperse and Banks knew he was, he was losing the crowd. He said, "Well, we'll talk about that." And I said, "Now, if you people would have your complaints about discrimination. We've all got legal pads here. Let's line up and the members of the board will take these and check them all out and we'll do what we can." So I stalled for time. We were given then about 20 or 30 minutes where we took down every complaint there was. And then Russell Means gave a speech and he said that he had, he left, he was out on bond. He said he left his Darwin tablets at the jail. I said, "Come on. I'll take you over to the jail and I'll get the Darwin tablets for you." And I thought that was a pretty good thing to do because I knew I was going to get out of the building and I wasn't leaving without the racial conciliation board. And I knew by this time the police had been informed because the janitor I knew had been able to get out of the building. And so we walked out of the building with the women, and I had the men on the board take the women home and then I went over to the police station. And I saw Captain Sullivan and I was so upset I just got ahold of Sully by the arm and I told Sully to take the biggest toughest policemen we had right then to go to my house and to have that policeman stay with Joan and the girls 'til I got home. And Sully moved out and he found one of the sergeants and they went up to the house and stayed with Joan to provide security for her until I got there. I went over to the jail.

We got the medicine for Russell Mean. We took half a dozen Indian fellows and we went down with Father O'Connell and the police chief to Wong's Cafe and had hamburgers and coffee 'til 3 o'clock in the morning.

Q. Who were the members of the board who were with you at that time at this meeting do you, can you tell us...?

A. Uh, Glenda Hines, Mrs. Leonard Hines, uh, Bob, uh, Rogers was there and that Indian fellow, James Emery and an Indian fellow, FATHER O'Connell, John Howard, Jerry Magsted, uh, that's all I can remember that were there. Uh, Bob Williams, the teacher.

Q. You want to, uh, comment on the events that happened following that?

A. Sure. Following that there was lots of headlines that the mayor had been held captive and the general tried to tone things down. I think the general and the press were very responsible. They had to report the news but they did not report the news in inflammatory language. I think the news was reported in a very, very fine way and I've complimented all members of the press that handled that. Then thought during the next few days rumors started to abound in Rapid City. The rumors would be that a bunch of Indians went into a meat market and stole all the meat. And the manager was afraid they'd burn the building down so he let them have the meat. That never happened. But rumors of it spread all over Rapid City. So I went on that stupid radio program "Opinion, please" and I tried to answer these rumors. And I told people where to call to get rumors answered, to call my office, the police chief. Well, some did and some didn't and the rumors continued. Then a member of the council chose to take a different attitude than I did and, uh, he went on the radio program, too. And I didn't agree with the statements he made but he had every right to make them. I was trying to minimize the issue and get it over with. And I did not feel it was necessary to answer all the stupid things being said by the AIM leaders and he did. And so then we had to have a confrontation over a racial consili, over the racial consiliation ordinance. We had to have a confrontation over a meaningless resolution which really told everybody in Rapid City to obey the law. And we had a confrontation at the city council meeting where because of the obnoxious conduct of the AIM leaders the city council had no alternative other than to

pass the resolution. It was meaningless but the AIM leaders forced the city council into a position where they couldn't tolerate that type of boisterous conduct. So by unanimous opinion the council then had to pass the resolution. Well, the resolution to the AIM leaders was what a red flag is to a bull in the arena. It just absolutely was just tormented 'em. Well, then the resolution was passed and it was not needed and then the Indians had a new symbol that they could hate, another piece of paper the white man had written up that was discriminatory against the Indians. Two hours after it became necessary to pass that resolution. A gentleman came to the city council and he said that he could not get any help in evicting a group of Indians who werestaying at the Imperial 400 Motel. Well, they asked him why, he said, well, he couldn't get the warrants prepared properly. The warrants he was talking about were at the sheriff's office in the state's attorney's office not at the police department. I excused myself from the meeting. I got the police chief. We got 40 policeman. Twenty minutes later a patrol car picked me up in front of City Hall. I personally went over to the Imperial 400 Motel with a strong security guard behind me of 40 policeman with night sticks and shotguns. I told them they had a bill for \$2500. They had not paid. They were defrauding an innkeeper. And I ordered them out of that hotel ri, motel right there. They left. During the search of the motel 60 deadly weapons were confiscated by the police department. They were later taken to the police department and, uh, and put on record there. But, uh, after the Indians realized that the foolishness of defrauding and innkeeper and insulting the city council had come to an end they decided to leave town. They had an election down at Pine Ridge where Russell Means ran for chief and got slaughtered, uh, not, not slaughtered physically but he got slaughtered, uh, because of the, of the votes of the Indian people on the reservation. And Mr. Wilson was reaffirmed as chief and Russell Mean was defeated. After this they recognized that the foolishness in Rapid City had come to an end. They had physically been forced out of a motel with the mayor himself standing there with the police chief and the two best attorneys in town were advising me, Don Schultz and Bill Porter. They told me without a doubt we had the right and the authority to evict those people in the motel and I did it. And they left. And

after they left they recognized that it was over in Rapid City. The tolerance of the people had come to an end within three or four days they'd left and gone to Pine Ridge.

- Q. The night that the bars were raided up town I think you became involved directly in that action. Will you...?
- A. The night that we had the bars, uh, in Rapid City I'd just finished a meeting of the racial consiliation committee informally. I was driving down toward the heart of the city with Father O'Connell who was chairmand of the racial consiliation committee and I heard the dispatcher announce that there was a fight in one of the bars. And he sent a unit and then, uh, he announced a fight in another bar and then he announced over the radio that all units proceed to the north side of main street because there's fighting in every bar. I headed down that way and then I heard Lieutenant Henny announce that he was in personal danger because his keys were locked in the car and he couldn't get his helmets and things, and nobody responded and I was the closest. And I told Tom over the radio, I says, uh, "Lieutenant Henny, this is the mayor. We're about three blocks away. We'll get there as fast as we can. Just before I got down there I heard, uh, Henny came on. He siad, "i'm all right now, I got in." And I said, "All right, I'll stay away." And by this time, uh, there was really a lot of violence. But by this time we had about 15 policemen there and more were on the way. And I just circled the block surrounding that in an effort to keep the situation under control or did, I couldn't do anything physically and I didn't want to get out of the car and get beat up very bad. And I was not a policeman and I'd only confuse the thing if I was in the middle of it. Then Roger Thenison arrived on the scene and some people attmepting to flee. And I was down, uh, near, uh, the Journal and I had the window down and I heard shooting. And I said the Father O'Connell I said, "We finally killed our first citizen in a riot in Rapid City." And we both were shocked because we were afraid that there had been death or at least terrible injury. I heard someone call for an ambulance. And I drove as close as I could by the hotel. Then we had plenty of forces on the scene a few moments later. And I heard, uh, Lieutenat Henny agian say call for the patty wagon. Well, I knew the patty wgaon holds six or eight. It wouldn't hold very many. So we needed

something to haul the, uh, prisoners in. I was coming by the hotel and I saw this bus. I said, "FATHER O'Connell, there's the patty wagon." And he, he roared over to the bus stop there on Kansas City Street between Fifth and Sixth and I blocked off the street. We couldn't go any further in my car and I jumped out and I ran in. I says, "Now, driver," I said, "I'm the mayor of the city and you've got to do something." I said, "Now, I'm going to commandeere your bus because we've had a riot and I have to get about 45 prisoners to the jail right now. Now, have your, have your passengers get off the bus 'cause I need it." He said, "I understand." He said, "Just a moment." He told the passengers to get out of the bus quickly. They did. I said, "Now, you follow me." We went down into Fifth Street. We went north to main street. We broke every red light. And I called Lieutenant Hennies. He came on the, on the radio. I says, "Tom," I've know Tom all my life since I was a Boy Scout in Rapid City. I says, "Tom, this is the mayor. I've got a bus. I'm coming through the traffic. Use the bus as a patty wagon. He says, "Beautiful. We're ready for you." So I come runnin', I come roaring up the street about 20 miles an hour. I pulled right in front of the Harney Hotel and I stopped and the bus stopped. Two or three policemen were there to provide security for the bus. They marched the prisoners on. And I saw one of the sargents and I says, "You got this taken care of?" He says, "Yes, sir." I said, "Then I'm gettin' out of here." He said, "That's a good deal." Or something like that. I was scared so I got out of there. And they loaded the passengers onto the bus. I went back in front of the hotel then, and about four minutes later two policemen were, two police cars were giving excort to this bus and it came by going about 50 miles an hour to the jail. And they went down to the jail, and after 20 minutes they processed about 40, I think it was, 45 people from the bus into the jail. There has not been any vandalism done to the bus either. And then we called every policeman in Rapid City to work. And that night it was just a matter of chasing down errands. I do remember during that night, uh, one of the policemen, uh, had to leave to go to the hospital because his wife had a baby boy. And about 2 o'clock that morning I went on the radio and I announced that such and such officer was doing fine at the hospital and that he was a father.

Q. Do you think that the action that took place here while AIM was in Rapid City was, uh, beneficial or detrimental as far as our Indian citizens are concerned?

A. I think it was detrimental.

Q. Has, has any, anything good come out of it at all?

A. I think quietly behind the scenes there is an effort being made without headlines, without organizing a formal group to provide, uh, more jobs for Indian citizens. We, in the city are doing it quietly. I know many of the construction companies now are trying to help out Indian citizens job opportunity. I believe that the Indian project or problems or situation will only be solved with wholesome employment for Indian citizens. It'll be solved on a one-to-one basis. We don't need anymore civil rights legislation or things like that. We need jobs and security. And we have to have it so the Indian citizen has hope of, uh, improving the economic condition of himself and his family. And if we can solve it one by one then we will have done what is right. We can't ignore it but when the white community got so scared that they were willing to believe some of the stupid rumors then there wasn't any headway being made in civil rights.

(END OF INTERVIEW)

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Library Cataloging Service Data

Name of Informant DONALD V. BARNETT - Mayor of Rapid City
Address 24 Nevada Street
Date of Interview 30 Jul 73
Name of Researcher E. Hausle
Others Present -----
Location of Interview Mayor's office - City Hall
Added Notes: the portion of the tape dealing with AIM is restricted until
March, 1978.

HEADINGS UNDER WHICH YOU FEEL THIS INTERVIEW SHOULD BE FILED:
Accomplishments since flood; major problem--housing; Rapid City Area Disaster Foundation;
funding and aid to flood victims; AIM in Rapid City--general overview--racial conciliation;
board meeting at City Hall, eviction from motel, breaking up of bars; negative results.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON INFORMANT

Age _____ Sex _____ Country _____
Socio-economic Status _____
Occupation _____
Education _____
Religion _____
Date of Arrival of Family in South Dakota _____
Where ? _____
From Where ? _____
Number of Moves in South Dakota _____
Reasons for Moves _____

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EH Rapid City, S.D., July 30, 1973, Earl Hausle Interviewing Rapid City mayor Donald Barnett. Mayor, Barnett, what were the major accomplishments that the city has made since the June 9th flood last year.

DB At this point, about 14 months after the disaster, I think that the city has made many steps in the right direction concerning recovery from the flood. The most perplexing issue is not concerning urban renewal or anything else, it's the issue of permanent housing for the flood victims. This is a nagging problem for local government. Right after the flood, the city had two choices; we could have put together the debris and hauled it out to the dump and forgot it. Or else we could have chosen to become active in securing housing for the people that needed them. We took the second route, and that was to get the government actively involved in providing temporary housing. We accomplished that within 70 days or so, and then during the following year, many people were responsible, they had economic capability to go out and find permanent housing, they moved into one of the new homes or new apartments..but some have ~~not~~ not. And these have been the very poor and the people who were, probably have lost the most and they have not taken the initiative because of economic and personal ~~suffering~~, psychological and many other factors. So the biggest challenge we have remaining yet is in the area of permanent housing for the very poor. We anticipate that most of this will be solved by the construction of several hundred low-income housing units that are planned and being developed by the Pennington County housing authority, but ~~that~~ that remains the most critical issue in the city, to get out of the housing business, to close down the temporary mobile home courts that were established last summer and get these people on their own again.

EH Are there any other special problems that remain?

DB Oh, we, we definitely have special problems that remain as a result of the flood. For the first thing, which is obvious to me in my job, city government has gotten so much larger. We took an aggressive role, we tried to bring every conceivable federal program into Rapid City to meet the disaster. And so we've had some growing

DB in city government. It's difficult sometimes for the citizens to understand that for these services and to administer these programs, we need more city employees. The size of our, of our payroll has grown a great deal. And much of this is the direct result of flood related programs. I think the attitude of the city ~~is~~ is basically very healthy. I don't think city government is too responsible for the healthy attitude of the people. I think the great influx of federal money into the city acts as a stimulant with the release of SBA loans and money floating into the economy, jobs being created, many homes under construction. The construction trades generally with more work to do than they can handle. One problem which does happen though, is that when the city is going along smoothly with a, a gradual growth, that's one thing. But then with the availability of federal money, you get so much construction going on that the availability of work is so high that the contractors are not forced by sheer competitive bidding to give you a low bid ~~for~~ a good price because there's so much work to do. And they can throw something together and add on a massive percentage of factors and throw the bid in. And then because there's so few bidders, because there's so few work, that often times your bids are way out of kilter to where they should be. And then for that difference the city treasury has to make that up, because actually, you didn't have strong competitive bidding because the guy probably didn't want the work very badly anyway, and he threw together a real high proposal and then to his amazement, he got it. Well, the city then, is, has to accept ~~that~~ that unless you throw everything out and start all over again, and you can do that, but again, you have no assurance that you're going to get a better bid ~~than~~ the next time. And so for all of this work available for the contractors, we've ~~an~~ had to pay a very high price for the work we've got done.

EH What is your feeling at this time as to the response that the federal government ~~and~~ many agencies made to the disaster?

DB Oh, I've said many times throughout the country that the federal system worked in Rapid City. I'm an old college teacher, I taught state government, national government, I have some theoretical background in that area from my college teaching experience.

- DB I think it was a textbook example of the federal system working and with each level complimenting each other. With the local levels determining the need factor and trying to examine the direction we would take , getting some assistance with a massive planning grant from the federal department of housing and urban development. And the state government providing some coordination and some technical assistance, but not much, because that just is n't what state government does in South Dakota, but they did ~~xx~~ do everything they were called upon to do, and then with a massive spending authority of the federal government, making a commitment to Rapid City and the Black Hills in the neighborhood fo about a hundred and forty-seven million dollars. I think the response of the whole federal system, especially the Mountain-Plains regional council of 16 federal agencies in Denver, I think it's been excellent.
- EH How important do you think the cities capability, plus the capability of the sixth planning and development district in writing federal proposals, putting these things together was in obtaining a lot of this aid?
- DB Oh,I think without a doubt, if that would have been the first urban renewal program we had ever applied for it would have taken us much longer, we would not have had the expertise, we would have tripped all over ourselves and not known what to do. Fortunately, the city had been involved in that program many times before. We never landed a big grant, but we knew how to apply for it. So this was critically important, the fact that we had a track record here, we had knowledgeable people on our staff, personalities that we knew their capabilities, etc., so this played a very important role in the seeking portion of the federal system. We had to write it down what we needed, then we had to fill out the complicated federal applications to land the money. So that was critically important. Now, the sixth planning and development district simply provided more expertise on top of what we had in the city . And so it not only ~~xxx~~ helped Rapid City, but it helped all of the local units of government in the four-county disaster area. Now, the presence and the existence of the four county disaster policy body, which was really a child of the sixth planning and development district, that was a critical factor because we had to work together, we had to complement each other, we couldn't afford

- DB backbiting and independent action, it had to be an overall and comprehensive plan. For when we could do that, had the machinery in existence ~~and~~ already at the Sixth Planning and Development District, that just served to help us very much. So the existence of that planning district was a tremendous factor in the early hours of the disaster. Because then the technical assistance in writing applications, and sorting out federal programs, it was already here. We had the machinery, we didn't have to create it in an atmosphere ~~xxx~~ of disaster and crisis, it already existed to help us during and immediately following the disaster, so a very positive and high marks for the Sixth planning bunch.
- EH Although we did an interview last year on the flood, we didn't talk about something that was very important in granting relief to many people, and that was the Rapid City Disaster Foundation in which you were instrumental in establishing, and I'd like to have you tell something about how it was set up and how it functioned.
- DB Well, if you'd like me to do that, I will. The idea of a disaster foundation came to me and it had already come to many others, I was not the father of that outfit, but the second day of the flood, a fellow from Homestake Mines saw me in the Civil Defense room and he said, "Here, Mayor, is a check for \$10,000 from Homestake Mine," I says "Gee whiz, thanks", and I folded it up and I put it in my pocket and I went about my way, and I got home that night, I took off this grubby pair of pants that were ripped and muddy and I had this check for \$10,000 in it, and I had my wife take that down and just store it at the bank. About a day later or so, the Chamber of Commerce director came up to me, Larry Waller, and he said, "Mayor, there's gonna be a lot of people want to create, want to give money, what are we gonna do?" Well, I said, "Let's not do it alone, let's get people from the county and the city and the chamber of commerce together and have a meeting to decide how we're going to manage the money." About this time, we had about 2000 people on the missing list, so there was lots of agony there, and we didn't know what to do. On about the fifth day, we sat down with the chairman of the county commission, myself and the president of the Chamber of Commerce

DB And we tried to think over what we would do, we had got an attorney by that time who donated his services, and we thought that if the city and the county and the Chamber of Commerce could each appoint five people to serve on the foundation ~~and~~ board ^{of} directors, that might be desirable, so we made a list of who we would appoint, and we named them, and about two or three days later we called the first meeting. The Chamber of Commerce named five, the county named ~~five~~, and I named five. We sat at a meeting, we elected some officers and away we went. We just went from the seat of our pants, we recognized first of all it was going to be a very complicated thing to do, and secondly, by the end of it we thought we'd ~~all~~ be very unpopular with the flood victims because it's impossible to come up with a program that ~~was~~ would be completely fair. Nevertheless, we appointed officers, we appointed an executive board, the board came from minorities, labor unions, business, business, women, everybody in the city who could have a chance to be represented on the disaster foundation board. Then we had an argument about what we were going to name it, and since Rapid City was getting the national attention, we called it the Rapid City area disaster foundation, and then we ~~started~~ to collect money. At first we thought we might raise a hundred thousand dollars, then two hundred thousand dollars. Within six weeks, we had a million dollars, and then it finally rounded off at a million, 434 thousand the last time I looked. One interesting factor about the disaster foundation was that over one hundred percent of those donations have been given to the people in the form of cash. We invested the money right away in short term certificates of deposit, and that meant from the interest we could pay our phone bill and some of the minor expenses. I don't think we spent two thousand dollars in all of the expenses of administering the fund, and the interest from those investments was much more than that. I think when we added it up ~~we finally figured out~~ we'll finally figure out that we've given away about a hundred and six percent of that money. We set up various stages to pass out the money right away. The first stage that we established was the cash in the pocket stage, where we set up an auditory formula of fifty dollars for the head of the household and ten dollars for each dependent, and they could come down right then and there and we'd issue them a check the very day they applied for it. That took

DB 75 or 89 thousand dollars and the people got that a week after the flood. The next phase was for a percent of the uninsured personal property that people had lost. That meant that they had to come down to the old Elks Club building and downtown Rapid City and fill out a lengthy application, tell us how much they had lost, then we applied a percent of that for everybody and passed out checks. That took about \$500,000 . Then we went into the next phase was uninsured real property loss. And we had them come down and fill out more forms and we called that phase three and we passed out another three or four hundred thousand dollars. Then we had a burial benefit for the families that lost everything, they were set back, oftentimes the workman's compensation and everything else in the state program would not pay ~~for~~ for the burial costs or they didn't have insurance. So we had a general death benefit for those families that had lost so much of human life. After that we tried to help out various organizations ~~xx~~ that had lost their income capability because of financial loss from the flood, and we had some other procedures for passing out money. There's been a master's thesis that has been written about the procedures of the Rapid City area Disaster foundation, I'd be happy to get ~~xx~~ you a copy of that , enter into the historical record concerning the flood. It did a detailed study of exactly every nickel that came in, how it went, how it came in and how it came out and it would be very good for historical purposes to put that on ^{file} ~~xxxx~~ someplace.

EH Yes, that would be fine. You mentioned organizations had got money. Are you talking about organizations like the boys club, the girls club..

DB That's right. The donations dropped off in so many areas, and the boys club, for instance, was right on the banks of Rapid Creek and had a lot of physical damage. That and the First-Step pre-school people lost their building and some of these organizations were so needed after the flood. We didn't, we could, we had a continuing need for social services after the disaster. And some of these would have folded without cash from someplace. Well, some people might say, "well, that's an indirect expenditure of the donation." It's indirect, but it had a direct affect upon the community because these organizations continued. We also set aside 60,000 dollars for a mental health program.

DB Now, that might have been indirect, but actually it was a direct benefit eventually to the flood victims themselves. I think the spirit of those donations was carried out. I was treasurer for the disaster foundation. We never raised our voices and came to a knock-down drag out, but we debated the rationale of those expenditures, and I'm not ashamed of a nickel that we expended to help those flood victims. And without those early donations, I might add, a lot of people would have given up. This community could have gone into a state of depression and of hopelessness in late June and July and August of last year. But there was so much good news in the newspaper. Headlings about a million dollars being contributed. The Red Cross poured in a million, 202 thousand dollars. The Mennonites were here all summer long. They didn't charge us a nickel. They did millions of dollars worth of labor for Rapid City and didn't want anything for it. The Salvation Army provided something like a hundred and seventy-five thousand meals the first fifteen days following the, the first thirty days following the disaster. With so much help, pardon the expression, floating around, these people didn't give up, it was a vital factor in the morale of the community.

EH The mental health program, what was funded by the fund you've just spoken of has just recently gotten under way, isn't that right?

DB It just recently got under way. Now, you asked me, twenty minutes ago, what I thought about the federal agencies. Well, I've been asked that all across the country, and I've said that I'm not mad at anybody. I think that a real measurement in government is if we're frustrated with each other. And one year after the flood, I did an interview for DBS news and they said, "How you doing?" and I said, "Well, I think the real measurement is the fact that I, as mayor of the city, I managed to get reelected in the middle of all of this, I'm not mad at anybody. I don't have a feeling of bitterness or being let down by anybody in the country. The federal system worked. People gave us money. People didn't open their mouth and then fail to deliver the goods, the dollar. But there was one shortcoming in the federal apparatus, and it's getting more attention than it probably deserves. But the national institute of Mental Health, did not have the capability of responding the way other agencies did following our disaster. We got the red tape runaround, we couldn't get their attention, our application was left unread in various

DB undersecretaries' office in Washington, DC, it couldn't get out of Denver, they couldn't give it the priority that we thought it needed. Well, finally, 13 months later, the program has started to trickle down through after it was cut and cut and cut and they brought out federal experts and they fought with us. Now, one of two things happened. It could have been our fault. The application could have been so ill-conceived and so out of order that it didn't merit federal consideration, but they never told us that. The people in Denver told us it was excellent. The people in Washington told us it met everything they were looking for. But they couldn't come up with the decision to fund it. Or secondly, the people in that Institute of Mental Health were not compassionate, they did not want to deliver the goods and they weren't capable of making a decision. Now, history will judge which was right there, but it's my feeling that they just couldn't give us any priority, they couldn't get around all the red tape and the manure and the minutia, and I'll call it manure, cause that's what it was, cause we had people that were in need of help. And finally now, we're getting some counselors out here to the flood victims. There's one thing you've got to remember now, This flood's not over. The water might have gone down, the creek dried up in some places, but the flood's not over for me, it's not over for this city, and it's not gonna be over for 10 years. And those scars are gonna be here for a long time. And I believe those scars would not have been as severe if we could have had an active mental health program that would have jumped out there in August to go out and begin counseling, to search out some of these problems before those scars got deeper to the point where some of them are unsolvable.

EH But the present work that is being done is being done purely through funding from the disaster fund given by people, right?

DB That's right, I think within a few hours or a few days, they should begin to trickle down now with this 100,000 dollars,. Crimenetly, we applied for a 750,000 dollar grant once and they told us, they told us it was needed, they told us the application met all the guidelines and then the bureaucrats got ahold of this and could not respond. But I want to say this again, Earl, that's the only agency that I feel this way about

DB and I'm willing to confess that maybe there was some things wrong in that application. I only wish they had told us about them so that I could have insisted that we sit down and rewrite the application in September and get it in, but we could never achieve that level of understanding and they didn't feel that compassionate about Rapid City. All the rest of the federal people, I love them, they were fantastic.

EH This agency is or is not a part of the regional council in Denver.

DB Yes, they have one of the, their parent organization is a part of the regional council in Denver. But it's the only place where there's been any misunderstanding, and it's the only place where I fell this way.'

EH The urban renewal plan and the other things which the city was able to obtain with the help of federal government are moving along at a good rate.

DB Yes, I believe they are. There was a moment in May where the federal people were a little concerned that we were not closing the deals fast enough in the acquisition of the flood way. I'd been on my vacation and I came home and we worked harder on that the next few days, now we're closing at the rate of about 60 parcels of property a week. The federal people are very understanding. They feel like we are doing a very good job and they're satisfied with the rate we are spending the money, the OAP officials are very satisfied, the only areawhere we will need extensions from the OAP guidelines is on the bridges and highway work, but again I might add, that will be to the advantage of the federal treasury, because if we have a little more time we won't get such a haphazard seat of the pants bidding, it'll be more competitive, contractors from throughout the midwest will have a chance to bid on this work and will eventually save some money in the replacement of bridges and public structures and , and public things in the city so I believe it's going very well. Our audits are looking pretty good. One factor about the 1972 flood is that in 1973 it has not been forgotten. The people in the city would like to get back to normal. I don't care if Rapid City ever gets on NBC or CBS or ABC's evening news again. We had so much bad news in the period following the disaster. First there was the flood. Then there was the Indian crisis in March and April. Then after that, there, just in January there was the hijack or the potential of a bomb on the 747 had to land at Ellsworth. The community got tired of national publicity that involved

DB bad news. The city would like to return to normal. I think the city is proud of what has happened. We still feel very compassionately for the flood victims, but we want this community to return to normalcy one more time. We don't want any more agony in this community. And we don't want any more national attention. That's a very prevailing attitude in the city, that we're tired of being headline news throughout the country. We want to go back to being a nice little community in western South Dakota and that's a very strong feeling among our people. I've sensed that, it's there very strongly. I think the community is proud that we've come this far. One factor in our recovery was not what I did or the county commissioner, the city council or the governor or anything, but collectively, we reached the decision the first hours following the flood to haul every visible means of debris to the dump. Now, that might sound crude, but when we got that crap out of the city, it wasn't there to look at any more. And people could start thinking about next weekend, they could start thinking about their family. They didn't have to go by tons and tons of debris that probably had some dead bodies mixed in with it. After about six weeks we had the city basically cleared of the visible evidence of flooding. In other words, the broken homes, the bridges, all of this lumber and the trees and rocks, they had all been buried at the city dump. You can't say it was out of sight and out of mind, but it wasn't there to look at every day when you drove by. That had a major impact upon the welfare and the thinking of the citizens of Rapid City, and I'll close just by saying the fact that we got that out of sight improved people's morale a great deal.

EH I'd like to turn now to something you've already mentioned, and that was the problem that we had with the confrontations with the American Indian Movement people, and I'd like to have you just go ahead and tell about your experience with this.

DB Well, in my lifetime at age 30, right now, I hope I never have to go through the pressures and the personal fear I went through following February 6, 1973, for about 3 weeks after that. I have never been under such intensive personal pressure in all of my life and I never want it to happen again. The basic problem involving the American Indian Movement confrontation in ~~the~~ western S.D. ~~was a very~~ were the ridiculous public statements that were

DB sometimes issued by both sides that served only to put fear in the minds of the population of this city. Now, I suppose I was guilty of some of that ,a also. The statement which was so foolish and ridiculous brought the people to a sense of undertainty and fear that had a great deal to do with all of the pressures and misunderstandings thatubilt up. One of the AIM fellows said that February 6 was a good day to die. Well, the last thing in the ~~xxx~~ world he wanted to do was die on February 6. But that type of statement adds to the confusion, it adds to the inflammatory feelings that become a reality and it just confused the whole situation. (...) I think that the main problem with the American Indian Movement civil disobedience was the fact that the uncertainty and verbal threats, accusations that were in the headlines that had no basis in fact whatsoever. The Aim leaders did not want to die in Custer. Last thing in the world they wanted to do. We did not want a race riot in Rapid City. That was the last thing I wanted. I think in my whole attitude throughout that experience was to minimize this confrontation. When people would call me with ridiculous advice to shoot all the Indians and I~~x~~ jokingly said that some people wanted me to shoot the Indians and anybody that had a tan, because that's how the passions were, I told them on dozens of occasions that if they wanted Rapid City to be as famous as Selma, Alabama, I could take care of that in about 15 minutes. But if we did not want that, then we were gonna do it my way and minimize this confrontation and not have a battle between Indians and police where everybody loses and try to get Rapid City off the front pages of the newspapers around the country. Now, I think I did what was correct. In fact, I'm proud of some of the things we did during that disaster. Becase when somebody made a ridiculous statemtn to me, I did not answer it with a ridiculous statemtn. But some people did. And some peoplle thought it was then necessary to refute everything that was said by AIM. Well, I thought that the people of Rapid City recognized that about 90% of that was complete hogwash, it didn't require refutation because it stood as pure rubbish on its own. Well, there was a misunderstanding and so the issue got prolonged. But I would only say this about the AIM situation in Rapid City. Some of the things spoken by the AIM leaders were legitimate grievances of the Indian people. But you don't have to burn down the courthouse in Custer go get

DB our attention. And you don't have to tear down five or six bars on Main Street to get the attention of the Police Department and the city government. So all in all, I would say it was a period of time ~~in which~~ when everything got exaggerated, when fear set in to the minds of the people. When a mind is afraid and filled with fear, it ~~is~~ willing to accept and believe things which could not be possibly true; it's very difficult for government to eliminate that doubt.

EH I was of course on the council at that time and I remember one evening when I received a call and they thought that possibly you were being held as a prisoner at the city auditorium, and can you tell me about the events of that evening?

DB Certainly can. That evening at four o'clock we were at the National Guard armory talking with the general and with the leaders of the highway patrol, the sheriff and the various public safety agencies in western South Dakota. We were actually counting how many night sticks we had, how many men we had, how many gas masks we had, and we were almost believing that it would be necessary for a physical confrontation to stop a riot or something like that from our public safety people. It was then that people ~~xx~~ from the community relations department of the Justice Department entered the National Guard headquarters and started to speak with me and then spoke with all of us, and they felt that a confrontation and violence could be eliminated if we could move into a stage of negotiations. The negotiations, they said, would probably not be very fruitful or useful the first few days but at least that's better than shooting and killing and rioting. I said, that sounds like a good deal to me, because I didn't want any shooting and killing and rioting. Cause then I knew that would prolong the issue in Rapid City and get Rapid City more negative national publicity. We had to be concerned about our tourist industry, we had to be concerned about the image of South Dakota and everything else. So we, we agreed that we would call a special meeting of the racial conciliation committee for that meeting at the city auditorium at 7:30. Well, we planned our strategy there and decided that at this meeting we would not have any policemen ~~whatsoever~~, we would not have undercover agents, we wouldn't have anything there but only have an opportunity to meet and discuss things. Well, that

DB was fine and dandy, we called the meeting, of course it started late, and nine of us on the racial conciliation committee sat there at the table in the auditorium and waited for the meeting to start. Well, about a half hour late, Banks came in, he brought his crew with him, and then they did their singing, their war chants, for about half an hour, the meeting started, and Banks was called upon to give a speech. And he is a very charismatic individual, he ..very handsome man, he came in the room and started his speech, and his first words here were similar to this. He said, "I'm here tonight to give a speech, and he said, "I want you all to clap when I'm done", he made a couple of jokes, and then he said, " But I want tyou to remember, I'm giving this speech because of my complete hatred for every white man in this country." I figured that was not starting out the negotiations on the most positive terms, and then he went into why he hated every white man, why he hated the mayor of Rapid City, why he hated all of us there, and why he was going to bring Rapid City to its knees. He had a very inflammatory set of remarks. I think it could be said there were about 40 Indian men there and about a hundred teen-age Indian girls that were a-parently on a holiday, on a lark, just having more fun , because they were truants out of the various high schools around the area, they weren't committed civil rights people, they were on a lark. I'd say that to their face if they were here today. Well, thne other people started giving speeches, and they jsut tore my hide off verbally, I was obviiously the worst individual that had ever breathed, and they called me allsorts of names, people stood up and gave speeches, that went on for about an hour. I did not say a word. Then, a fellow who I believe to this day is mentally not all together named Ronald Petite, I think he's just emotiaonally not stable, because I'd had several verbal confrontations with ~~in~~him already, he threw a chair into the air, it landed on the floor, and all the television cameras zoomed in on him, and he said how, by George, he had , we had these nine blankety-blanks and went into the most vicious string of profanity I've ever heard, he said we were gonna hold these nine until they turned the 17 Indians that had been arrested in Custer loose. We gonna hold them hostage and kill them if necessary. At which time I was scared. And remember that board was scared. And then Petite went into a tirade, roared around the room , running andjumping and giving a speech and trying to ring the other people up to a high pitch of,

DB jnst into a terrible state of things; I was afraid for myself, I ~~wax~~ afraid for the women, but I was particularly afraid for the Indian citizens that were serving on the board. They were really under danger, now, because the Indians were moving closer up to the table, there was a fella behind me that looked like a Mexican fella, he had a moustache and wa s carrying a chain, and one of my fri~~ends~~ that served on the board, he tapped me on the shoulder, he said, "Don't turn around, because there's a fella swinging a chain behind you." We could see knives, we could see guns, and we were quite afraid. They gave some more speeches, they moved closer up to the table, and then the people began insisting that the mayor of Rapid City speak for himself. Father O'Connel had been handling it and I made a vow I would not say anything. Then they kame up closer and they were slobbering on me, they were beating on the table, and I was quite afraid for my personal safety. And in a year and ahalf in Viet Nam including the Tet offensive, I was never more personally frightened than I was then. And I asked Father O'Connel if I should say something and he thought I should, so I stood up on the chair and I told them that I, they were sayting, they demanded that an Indian be made city attorney. And I stood up and I started my rem-
m marks, and I told them that I thought many points had been made but nothing could be settled with physical violence and by ki-ling a bunch of people you weren't going to solve anything, you were going to put the white community into a state of fear and al lot more people would die. I talked for about 20 minutes in my own humble way, I believe it was the most eloquent I've~~xxxx~~ ever been in -my life if I ~~w~~ever was eloquent, I don't think i've ever given a better speech, and I gave it completely out of fear. I was , the point of view, of my view, some~~xxxx~~body had to do something to save the lives of those people on the baord,. Because you could see knives being brandished around and the television cameras were just eating this up. Man, they had controversy. Now, whther or not the AUM people would have killed anybody, roughted us up. held us hostage, taken our cdothes or done something like that,-I dont' know. But at the time, I thought they would do that. Well, after I finished my speech, the drowd started to break up. And they started to move away toward the door, and it was at that time that the women thought they ought to leave, and I said, "No, let's sit here for a minute." So Banks

DB stood up, and sort of like the thunder had been taken away from him, and they'd been to the meeting for about two hours which was apparently about as long as they could stand one meeting, and Banks stood up and he said, "Well, Rapid City might do us right." He said, "But I don't think other towns in the Black Hills would and I'm here tonight to declare war on every town in the Black Hills." And I stood up again and I said, "Just a minute." (...)

Okay. I jumped up and I said, "Just a minute. Wouldn't it be best to have you and I sit down at a conference table with the ten mayors of the ~~six~~ city in the Black Hills and talk these things over before somebody burns down a building and somebody goes to jail", I said something like that. And that took all the steam out of him. Then I was making more sense to the Indians than Banks was. And the crowd started to Disperse and Banks knew he was losing the crowd. He says, "Well, we'll talk about that." And I said, "Now you people have got your complaints about discrimination, we've all got legal paths here, let's line up and the members of the board will take these and check them all out and we'll do what we can." So I stalled for time; we were given then about 20 or 30 minutes where we took down every complaint there was, and Russel Means gave a speech and he said, he, he was out on bond, he said he left his Darvon tablets at the jail, I said, "Come on, I'll take you over to the jail, I'll get the Darvon tablets for you." And I thought that was a pretty good thing to do, because I knew I was gonna get ~~me~~ out of the building and I wasn't leaving without the racial conciliation board, and I knew by this time the police had been informed because the janitor I knew had been able to get out of the building, and so we walked out of the building with the women and I had the men on the board take the women home and then I went over to the police station and I saw Captain Sullivan, and I was so upset I just got ahold of Sully by the arm and I tol Sully to take the biggest, toughest policemen we had right then to go to my house and have that policeman stay with JoAnn and the girls until I got home. And Sully moved out and he found one of the sergeants and they went up to the house and stayed with Joann, to provide security for her until I got there, I went over to the jail, we got medicine for Russel Means, we took half a dozen Indian fellas and we went down

DB With Father O'Connell and the police chief to Wong's cafe and had hamburgers and coffee till 3 o'clock in the morning.

EH Who were the members of the board who were with you at that time at this meeting?
Can you recall..

DB Linda Hines, Mrs. Leonard Hines...Bob Rogers was there, and an Indian fellow, James Emery, and Indian fellow, Father O'Connell, John Howard, Jerry Magstead, that's all I can remember that were there..Bob Williams, the teacher.

EH You want to comment on the events that happened following that?

DB Sure. Following that, there was lots of headlines that the mayor had been held captive, and the Journal tried to tone things down, I think the journal and the press were very responsible. They had to report the news, but they did not report the news in inflammatory language. I think the news was reported in a very, very fine way. And I complemented all members of the press that handled that. Then, though, during the next few days, rumors started to abound in Rapid City. The rumors would be that a bunch of Indians went into a meat market and stole all the meat. And the manager was afraid they'd burn the building down, so he let have the meat. That never happened. But rumors of it spread all over Rapid City. So I went on that stupid radio program, Opinion Please, and I tried to answer these rumors and I told people where to call to get rumors answered, to call my office, the police chief, well, some did and some didn't and the rumors continued. Then a member of the council chose to take a different attitude than I did and he went on the radio program too and I didn't agree with the statements he made, but he had every right to make them; I was trying to minimize the issue and get it over with, and I did not feel it was necessary to answer all the stupid things being said by the AIM leaders and he did, so then we had to have a confrontation over a racial , over the racial conciliatory ordinance, we had to have a confrontation over a meaningless resolution which really told everybody in Rapid City to obey the law. And we had a confrontation at the city council meeting , where because of the obnoxious conduct of the AIM leaders, the city council had no other alternative than to pass the resolution. It was meaningless. But the AIM leaders forced the city council into a position where they couldn't tolerate that type of belligerous conduct. So by unanimous opinion, the council

DB then had to pass the resolution. Well,, the resoljtion to the AI M leaders was what a red flag is to a bull in the arena. It just absolutely,was just tormented them. Well, then the resolution was passed and it was not needed and then the Indians had a new symbol that they could hate, another peice of paper the white man had written up that was discriminatory against the Indians. Two hours after it became necessary to pass that resolution, a gentleman came to the city ~~seminex~~ council , and he said that he could not get any help in evicting a group of Indians who were staying at the Imperial 400 Motel. Well, I asked him why, he said, ~~Welly~~ well, he couldn't get the warrants prepared properly. The warrants he was talking about were the sherriff's office and the state's attorneys office, not at the police department, I exuused myself from the meeting, I got the police chief, we got forty policeman, twenty minutes later a patrolcar picked me up in front of city hall, I personally weent o ver to the Imperial 400 Motel with a strong security guard behind me of 40 policeman with night sticks and shotguns, I told them they had a bill for 2500 dollars , they had not paid, they were defrauding an innkeeper, and I ordered them out of that hotel, or motel, right there. They left. During the search of the motel, sixty deadly weapons were confiscated by the police department, they were later taken to the police department and put on record there, but after the Indinas realized that the foolishness of defrauding an innkeeper and insulting the city council had come to an end, they decided to leave town. They had an election down at Pine Ridge where Rusell Means ran for chief and got slaughtered, not slaughteredphysically, but he got slaughtered because of the votes of the Indian people on thexx reservation, and Mr. Wilson was reaffirmed as chief and Russell Means was defeated. After this, they recognized that the foolishness in Rapid City had cme to an end. They had physidcally been forced out of a motel with the mayor himself standing there with the police chief and the two best attorneys in town were advising me, Don Schultz and Bill Porter; they told me without a doubt we had the right and the authority to evict those people from the motel and I did it and theyleft, and after they left they recognized that it was over in Rapid City. The tolderance of the people had come to an end, within 3 or 4 days they'd left and gone to Pine Ridge.

EH The night that the bars were raided uptown, I think you became involved directly in that education, would you ..

DB The night that the bars in Rapid City, I'd just finished the meeting of the racial conciliation committee informally, I was driving down toward the heart of the city with Father O'Connell who was chairman of the racial conciliation committee, and I heard the dispatcher announce that there was a fight in one of the bars, and he sent a unit and then he announced a fight in another bar and then he announced over the radio that "all units proceed to the north side of main street because there's fighting in every bar." I headed down that way and then I heard Lt. Hennies announce that he was in personal danger because his keys were locked in the car and he couldn't get his helmet and some things, and nobody responded and I was the closest, and I told Tom over the radio, I says, "Lt. He-nies, this is the mayor, we're about 3 blocks away, we'll get there as fast as we can." Just ~~about~~ before I got down there I heard Hennies came on and he said, "I'm all right now, I got in," and I said, "All right, I'll stay away." And by this time there was really a lot of violence. But by this time we had about 15 policeman there and more were on the way, and I just circled the block surrounding that in an effort to keep the situation under control, or, I couldn't do anything physically and I didn't want to get out of the car and get beat up very bad, and I was not a policeman, and I would only confuse the thing if I was in the middle of it. Then Roger Theneson arrived on the scene and some people attempting to flee, and I was down near the Journal, and I had the window down and I heard ~~the~~ some shooting. And I said to Father O'Connell, I said, "We finally killed our first citizen in a riot in Rapid City." And we both were shocked because we were afraid that there had been death, or at least terrible injury. I heard someone call for an ambulance, and I drove as close as I could by the hotel. Then we had plenty of forces on the scene a few moments later, and I heard Lt. Hennies again call for the paddy wagon. Well, I knew the paddy wagon holds six or eight, wouldn't hold very many. So we needed something to haul the prisoners in and I was coming by the hotel and I saw this bus. I said, "Father O'Connell, there's the paddy wagon." And he over the the bus stop there on Kansas City street between Fifth and Sixth and I blocked off the street so he couldn't go any

DB farther, with my car, and I jumped out and I ran in, I says, "Now, Driver", I says, "I'm the mayor of the city and you got to do something." I said, "Now, I'm going to commandeer your bus because we've had a riot and I have to get about 45 prisoners to the jail right now. Now, have your passengers get off the bus, because I need it." He said, "I understand." He said, "Just a moment." He told the passengers to get out of the bus quickly. They did. I said, "Now you follow me." We went down into Fifth Street, we went north to Main Street, we broke every red light, and I called LT. Hennies, he came on the radio, I says, "Tom", I 've known Tom all my life, since I was a Boy Scout in Rapid City. I says, "Tom, this is the mayor, I got a bus, I'm coming through the traffic, use the bus as a paddy wagon." He said, "Beautiful, we're ready for it." So I come running, I come roaring up the street about 20 miles an hour, pulled right in front of the Harney Hotel and I stopped, and the bus stopped, two or three policemen were there to provide security for the bus, they marched prisoners on and I saw one of the sergeants, and I said, "you got this taken care of?" and he said "Yes," then I said "Then I'm getting out of here." And he said, "That's a good deal" or something like that, and I was scared, so I got out of there, and they loaded the ~~ap~~ passengers onto the bus, I went back in front of the ~~xxx~~ hotel then, and about four minutes later two policemen were, two policemen cars were giving escort to this bus, and it came by going about 50 miles an hour to the jail. And they went down to the jail and after twenty minutes they processed about forty, I think it was, forty-five people from the bus into the jail. There had not been any vandalism done to the bus either, and then we called every policeman in Rapid City to work and that night it was just a matter of chasing down errands, I do remember during that night one of the policeman had to leave to go to the hospital because his wife had had a baby boy. And about two o'clock that morning I went on the radio and I announced that such and such officer was doing fine at the hospital and that he was a new father.

EH Do you think that the action that took place here while AIM was in Rapid City was beneficial or detrimental as far as our Indian citizens are concerned?

DB I think it was detrimental.

EH Has any, anything good come out of it at all?

DB I think quietly, behind the scenes, there is an effort being made without headlings, without organizing a formal group to provide more jobs for Indian citizens. We in the city are doing it quietly, I know many of the construction companies now are trying to help out Indian citizens with job opportunitais, and I believe the Indian~~problems~~ project or problem or situation will only be solved with wholesome employment for Indian citizens. It'll be solved on a one to one basis. We don't need any more civil rights legislation or anything like that. We need jobs and security . And we have to have it so the Indian citizen has hope of improving the economic condition of himself and his family. And if we can solve it one by one, then we will have done what is right. Can't ignore it, but when the white community got so scared that there were willing to believe ~~xx~~ some of the stupid rumors, and there wasn't any headway being made in civil rights.

(end of interview)

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South Dakota Oral History Center

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