

588

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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Name of Informant Illa Cannon

Address Keystone Rt., Box 666, Rapid City, South Dakota

Date of Interview June 29, 1972

Name of Researcher Earl Hausle

Others Present home

Location of Interview Civil Defense office, Pennington County Courthouse, Rapid City, S.D.

Added Notes Illa Cannon was the only professional Civil Defense Staff member who reached the Civil Defense office the night of the disaster.

Subject Headings under which you feel this interview should be filed:  
Civil Defense operations during the Rapid City flood.

Demographic Information on Informant

Age 42 Sex Female County Pennington

Socio-economic status Middle class

Occupation Civil Defense Operations Officer

Education High School

Religion Protestant

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

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

From where? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Moves in South Dakota \_\_\_\_\_ Reasons for move.: \_\_\_\_\_

- Q. Civil Defense headquarters, Rapid City, South Dakota, June 29, 1972. This office is located in the basement of the Pennington County courthouse, this is Earl Hausle interviewing Illa Cannon, who's the Operations Officer of Pennington County Civil Defense. Illa, will you tell what happened the evening of Jun 9, when the flood hit, the first word you had and what you did during that night?
- A. Well, the first word I had about any flooding was when the, uh, (it) came across the bottom of the TV set, the little letters that said that the Guards were called back because of expected flooding in Boulder Canyon, Box Elder Creek, wherever it was, and as I kept watching this come on the TV set more frequently, I began to think, "Well, I don't know what's going on, maybe I'd better go to the office." And it hadn't even started raining. We live out south of Rapid City on Sheridan Lake Road is where we live, and it hadn't started raining at our house yet then. But by the time I decided I'd better come to the office, and got my clothes changed to come down, it had started raining a little bit. And as I came down Main, of course, there was water on the streets, but this was the size of what flooding there was that time. I imagine this must have been about 8:00 or 8:30, I know it was before it had gotten dark, 'cause it was still quite light out, and before any flooding had happened in this area. And normally, when we leave the office during the day, we turn our telephone over to the police department so they can answer it at the police department, so I had called the police department and they were so busy that I wasn't getting an answer, so I decided I'd better come down at least to answer my own telephone so they wouldn't have that problem. And when I came into the courthouse there were I think about three deputy sheriffs in here at the time.

They were coming in and out, and I came in and got unlocked and got my radios going and went over and sked them, and they had told me then that they had already contacted our REACT members that normally go out on this type of thing and that they were already operating out of the police department at this time. So I turned on my fire department and city street radio to listen to what they were giving back and forth to try and figure out what was going on and how bad the situation was. At that time we did not have a police department radio in, in here, it was over in the jail, because they use it for night, for bringing prisoners into the jail and this type of thing. So I didn't have any direct contact with the de..police department at all. People started calling about, oh, maybe somebody..I remember one call that someone had went out in the Cleghorn Canyon area, and they were concerned about them, I turned this call over to REACT, I don't know what type a reaction they did to it, but this was the type of calls that I was getting at that time of day. I began to get rather busy, so I called the police department and got through to them and asked if they would (have)..send one of their extra REACT members from there over here so they could man the radio from this area to take care of the telephone calls for help that we were getting through our telephone, so one of the members of Rushmore REACT came over and started using our CB unit here in the basement office..uh..

Q. Do you know who that was by any chance?

A. No, I don't. I really don't. Then Ron Stevenson had called me and had said that they were having this band concert, of course, out at Stephens High School and asked what I knew about the situation; well, by that time I could tell by listening to the Street Department radios that they were getting local

flooding and they were starting to cut off some of the streets and this type of thing. So I told Ron that, I said, "Well," he asked what I thought about letting those people out, and I said, well, from what I could tell from listening to the Street Department radio that if they were going to get home they had better dismiss them. So they did, and then later on Ron Stevenson called again and asked if I needed his help down here, and I told him, well, I still wasn't sure what was going on, but I certainly would appreciate it if he did come in. And so he came in. He did leave for a while, I think he went out with one of the policemen to kinda see what was going on. George Behrens, he was in and out during the evening, too, Glen Best, of course, within the sheriff's office had got in in between times, and more of the sheriff's deputies were coming in. So I was trying to answer my telephones here, and find out what they knew about the situation, and this type of thing. I really, 'course I didn't know what was going on, or what the police department was putting out as a warning; not having the police department radio, I didn't, I just presumed that they were taking care of this, because they normally do. Siren buttons are in the police department, and they are the ones that are responsible for activating the sirens and this type of thing. First time that I really got very concerned about the whole situation was when I heard someone from the police department saying, "Well, we think Canyon Lake Dam is going to go out," and so at this point I ran over and told Glen Best, and I asked him, I said, "Did you know what kind of warnings have been given out to the citizens of Rapid City for people that I knew would be on down the creek?" And he says, "No," he says, "I don't but we," he tried to call KOTA and couldn't get them, so he put on, he says, "I'll go to the studio."

And so he put his coat on and ran out and went over to the studio. What he put out or what time it was, I don't know this either, because things were happening rather fast in between time. George Behrens, I think, was the first one then that come in and said to me, he said, of course, being down here, you know, you don't quite know what's going on on the outside, and he said, "Well, you know, I think we've got a real bad situation here," and he says, "We'd better get ready to go into operation." So he had known that we had put in our new telephone system, so I had the key and he went down and helped me get the tele..the telephones unlocked, we had trouble gettin ghe door unlocked, and he said yesterday that he was about ready to take an ax to it, but we got the telephones out and so then I proceeded in connecting up our telephone, emergency telephone systems so we would have that in the operations room. All our electricity, of course, when the big part of the flood came through, all electricity went off and our emergency power took over down here, so we did have emergency electricity to run on the rest of the night. Our telephones here were out for, oh, I suppose, maybe five or ten minutes. We got to a point that all they would do would ring. We could, we'd take them all off the hook and they'd still keep ringing. I was down here in the office at the time and didn't realize, I know George Behrens said he walked out, and he looked back in the operations room, he said, "There sat all those telephones ringing and none of 'em would shut up." But we did, and then apparently the water was getting in someplace it shorting it out and this cleared up by itself, so all of our lines on our emergency telephone system--it has our two regular Civil Defense lines on it plus seven private lines. This..(were) the only extra lines that were coming into the courthouse at the time they

put the system in. So he had these for call out numbers, we also had a direct line to the three hospitals; but, of course, at the time we were ready to use them, Bennett-Clarkson and the line to Sioux San was out, but we did have direct contact with St. John's Hospital at all times. And then, of course, with the police department going under water, this put our city lines out of commission; we normally have--besides having our two outside CB lines, we had one that comes through the city switchboard, and this was tied into our telephones here in the office as well as our telephone system in the operations room. 'Course Ron was back in at the time that the major flooding started, why, he and Glen Best, were the only two officials here right at the present time, and so they, we did have the telephone system set up for them and they started operating from the operations room then to coordinate search and rescue and this type of thing. And, uh..but, 'course, I was running up and down the halls like I was going to a fire or something because everybody was wanting things. I remember Ron saying, "Well, we've got to have flashlight batteries," because we knew all the electricity was out, went and swiped the flashlight batteries out of the RADAF kits and this type of thing, plus the supply we had in the office. Stu Steele had been in and out in between times and he came in and got blankets and this type of thing. When KOTA went off of the air, then I knew that we could use our Emergency Broadcast System from here in our office, and at that time Stu Steele was in here, and I told him that I knew it had to be patched in at the transmitter site before we could broadcast. So he took care of getting someone out to the transmitter site so we could get patched in, and I, sometime later, however long it took them, our Emergency Broadcast System was working and the officials

then--Ron Stevenson and the mayor and whoever happened to be in here--could broadcast directly over KOTA to the people of Rapid City.

- Q. I think at this point we perhaps had better identify some of the people you've named; Ron Stevenson, of course, is a county commissioner, Stu Sttele is a county commissioner, Glen Best is the Pennington County Sheriff.
- A. All three of those happen to be members of my Civil Defense advisory board, too. Which helped.
- Q. Right. Now, did they have any particular duties in an emergency like this?
- A. Uh, not any other than what your normal county and city officials do have, as your commissioners or your city councilman, of course, have.. but they just happened to be the ones that were here and were able to take over. Ron did a very good job of organizing us all, I don't know what I would have done without him.
- Q. Okay, I think we've identified those people, let's go ahead, now and, as the emergency developed further, tell us what you can remember about it and what happened, as you remember it.
- A. Well, things..I said, things started happening very fast, because we were the only ones in this area, I guess--of course, the hospitals had emergency power, but since the police department went out and didn't have, we were one of the few places that did have electricity. 'Course the REACT members that were at the police department got washed out along with the policemen and so they moved all of their operations in here and were still broadcasting directly to the people that they had out in the field yet that were rescuing people and this type of thing. Glen Best did send someone over to the jail and we picked up the PD radio from over there and brought it back in, and plugged

it in. There had been, at one time it had been in the sheriff's office here in the EOC, so the lines were in here for it, so it was just a matter of getting it and plugging it back in so we were able to have direct radio contact with the police department then; by then most of the deputy sheriffs had been in, and...(Pause in taping). Okay. At, at this time, of course, most of the coordination was starting to be done from the courthouse. I know..I'm not sure just in what order events happened, but I know as they realized that the emergency was bad they did call Ron Stevenson, and Glen Best had called the mayor and the department heads that were able to come in and they had a brief meeting in the conference..or our operations room then to kinda lay some plans of what they were going to do and start coordinating. We also started getting people in off of the streets because there were people that, of course, had gotten separated from their children or this type of thing, and they were coming in, so we were trying to do the best for them we could; so, uh, we did start to right at the beginning and set up kind of a missing persons thing in the sheriff's office. This was one thing that, by the time it was all over with, had gotten rather out of control because it was something that we had not really done enough advance planning on, not realizing that we'd ever had a disaster where half the town wouldn't know wherethe other half was at; and we did get a lot more people on the missing persons list than what we probably should have, but at the, that time (you know) all I could think of was these poor people have, don't know where their families are, and the best we can do is at least try. We can't just tell them, "Well, we can't do anything," and send you back out on the street. We had a few people..we didn't get any injuries or anything of this type, we



did have a doctor in here for a while, and then he said, well, he wasn't really doing anything here so he called St. John's hospital and they said, well, they needed him there, so he went on to St. John's hospital. We did have a few people that were rather..suffering from shock and this type of thing, so anyone that was, we gave 'em a couple of blankets and a chair to sit on and put them in one of the other rooms. 'Course activities started really booming as everyone was coming in and we were trying to get organized. Some of the very first people that we got into our operations room, 'course was Colonel Schallberg, who is our Liaison Officer with the National Guard. He was here right away. And, of course, with all of his National Guardsmen in town--which I believe there were about 2000 of them in the immediate area at the time--they, of course, had already been out rescuing people and, of course, they continued through the whole disaster helping us. Two of the other people that we got rather by accident that done a very good job for us, there were two Air Force officers that said that when they had heard of, of the impending flooding that they had started to report for duty at Ellsworth, but they could not get there, so they came here to the EOC. And they ended up by being our military liaison officers for, well, Major Brown stayed with us through the whole thing, I believe the others name was Colonel McDaniels. He was here for several days. So this gave us immediate contact with Ell.. Ellsworth Air Force Base, too, because by using, of course, our lines in the operations room they could get in contact with Ellsworth for any type of assistance that they needed for them. As we knew we were getting more problems, I wanted to leave as many of our Civil Defense lines open for emergency operations as we could; and, of course, people in town knowing that these, so

many people were without homes that didn't have places to go, we started getting calls from people saying, "Well, we have a place that we can take four or six people into our house." So I..(the) first office that I could get into that I had a key for was the kitchen down here which had a phone line from the Probation, they'd been using it as an office, and I had a key for it, so I was able to get into it, and we found another volunteer standing in the hall that really didn't have anything to do, gave him paper and pencil and had him start taking names and addresses and this type of thing of where people would give temporary housing. I knew at this point that there probably wasn't very much that we could do with it that ev..night, but I knew that the next day that the Red Cross or whoever was going to take these was going to need all the places that they could get; so this is what we did, we put over the EBS system then, said, "Well, this number is available that you can call in if," and so by the time Saturday came, we had quite a listing of names that we turned over to the Red Cross. And then I don't know what they..but I imagine they gave them to different people in their shelter areas possibly for..to go in for temporary housing, this type of thing. We also started getting calls on..a little later on on heavy equipment, this type of thing, that people had that they would offer for help, so we opened up another office and put somebody else on a telephone and started taking these kinds of listings. We also opened, opened another office and put someone in there with a separate telephone number so people had located bodies, that they could call and tell the location in case they couldn't get through to the sheriff's office, 'cause, of course, the sheriff's numbers were all quite busy at this time. So we did have a second number that they could call to report any

locations of bodies so we could get the proper authorities out to them; and, of course, we're down here in the judge's office, so it was just a matter of getting a runner to run the information down to the sheriff's office, and then they took care of it from there.

Q. Could you give us a time reference on this approximately?

A. All of this was happening before morning, but just what time in here, I don't know because, there again, we were so busy and once you get in the basement morning and night is about the same, too; and we were..ran on emergency power until up until the mid-morning of the next, this, whenever the electricity came back on, because, of course, we're in total darkness down here even during the daytime if we don't have our emergency power. This is something that we were real lucky that we did have our emergency power. We, also, of course, had all of our communications systems and things because of Civil Defense, we're centrally located. 'Course that Saturday morning I think most all of you were, part of you were down here at least by then--city council, and everyone was doing the best that they could, getting us organized, and we had an awful lot of help. I think one of the biggest problems was--at least here in EOC--was trying to control the flow of people, we had so many people that were wanting to volunteer for their help, and to get them steered in the right direction, and, of course, like Sunday we were using a lot of volunteers just here in the courthouse to man a lot of these desks and this type of thing. And we just kind of ran over (man) people all, all of the way, but it was a good thing that they had some place to go to.

Q. How closely was the Civil Defense plan followed in this emergency?

A. Well, one of the problems was that we had not updated our, uh, our emergen..

our..we had some of our emergency call list updated, but our manning chart for the emergency operations room was not totally updated, and so we ran into problems there; plus the fact that when we really realized that we were going to need this, everything had happened so fast that..there wasn't much point of trying to put out telephone calls, because most of the telephone system was out, plus the fact that you didn't know whose house was washed away and who was still there. So, it was pretty hard to follow our manning charts and this type of thing for the emergency operation center. I think where our planning helped the most was that, of course, REACT people and all of these people had responded even before we had, from the very beginning of the emergency. So these people were all here and working; and, of course, the National Guard and all of these type were already into operations and working. I think this is where our planning and training paid off there. We weren't able to file..to follow our proper procedures for our operations room for several days until we got reorganized and the right people in the right places; we were working and we were getting the job done, but in some cases we didn't have the right, the right people in the right places. But in some cases we were, Sunday at least and I don't remember about Saturday, I know Stan Ellstein came from, I believe he's on the Board of Directors at St. John's hospital, was one in, uh, coordinating a medical force just by going back through a report that I had gotten, well by Saturday morning we had a teacher from Douglas High School come in and volunteer his services, and so somebody got him started in the medical coordination room over here, and he was a biology teacher, so he knew the terms and this type of thing; plus, being a teacher, he didn't have a job he had to go back to, so he stayed with us for the entire

week and ran our medical coordination, uh, this..he took care of all getting medical supplies and coordinating where they were going to, plus nurses and this type of thing. We didn't have any problem at all in getting enough medical people because first of all, of course, Bennett-Clarkson had to shut down and move all their people to St. John's hospital, so this made more nurses available, and they were having some type of a conference with nurses at the Imperial 400 right across the street, so these people were available to us. But we were lucky in getting a lot of real good volunteer workers and..in the right places to begin with.

Q. How long was it before you were able to get home yourself?

A. I didn't leave here until about 4:30 Saturday evening. I had worked, of course, a full day on Friday and went home on Friday and then came back down about 8:00 or 8:30, and I didn't leave until approximately 4:30 on Saturday then before I left. This is when Mr. (Arch) came in and a couple o'the guys from the state Civil Defense office came in, and that was when I went home then. Another thing that we made good use of on Saturday as far as Civil Defense was concerned..of course, Rapid City was clear out of water, and so we did know that we didn't have water in the cans, but we knew where our water in the cans were that we use for fall-out shelters, and we got all of those that were available and used it storing and hauling water in. Then we came up with the problem, well, there's no water so you are out of sanitation facilities, especially for the hospitals and for the shelter areas, like the Red Cross where they had so many of these people in, so they started calling for chemical toilets. This I didn't know where it was at, but I did know that we had sanitation kits and our shelter supplies and the areas that these were

located in, so we sent pickups out and picked up the sanitation kits that we'd normally use in a fallout shelter and distributed these to all the places that they needed sanitation supplies, because these did have the plastic bags and the chemicals in that they could use with the chemical toilets and toilet paper and all this kind of thing that you're going to need for sanitation facilities. So we used a lot of those. How many I have no idea yet 'til we go out and start counting what we took out of our supplies. But we did have, uh, well, one major source was at city auditorium, there had been shelter supplies stored there at Northside Fire Station, and then we had a lot of sanitation kits and old water drums out at St. Martin's Academy, and I knew this was a real good area, so we sent people out there to get these, and these helped tremendously.

- Q. What in an emergency of this kind..now, of course, Harold Irish, the Civil Defense Director could not get into town to function as he normally would. What would be your normal function in this situation?
- A. Well, this is the problem I had when it started. What my normal function should have been and what I had been doing prior to this was kind of two different things. I was hired as an operations officer and under this, uh, my \_\_\_\_\_ is in planning and training and this type of thing. But since there was only two of us in the office, I also inherited the secretarial and the bookkeeping type of work, which there isn't enough that we really need any more help. The only thing that this had made a problem as far as I was concerned was the fact that I have remained in the office rather than attending any of the meetings, and this is where I was at the biggest disadvantage was that--like you, I didn't even know who you were until it was all over with.

So many of my city councilmen I did not, I knew by name, but I did not know them face-to-face, even a lot of people in our city. As soon as I found out what their name was, then I knew where, who they were and where they belonged, but just to walk down the hall and meet some man standing there, I did not know them and they didn't know me to know that I did at least have some training in Civil Defense operations and this type of thing. So it made it rather difficult. Plus I was the only one that knew where so many of the supplies and this type of thing were stored, that I was trying to do about four or five jobs at once.

Q. Would you normally have been coordinating the operation?

A. Yes, I probably would have been, this would have been, if both of us would have been here; I would have..this is one of the big problems as far as Civil Defense Director or Operations Officer either, that..is the coordination. Now even after we got more well organized, there was..by the time we'd open up offices upstairs and all around and it was a very big problem of trying to coordinate so everybody knew what everybody else was doing. And this would be what my normal function would be with this, this type of operations. And as a Civil Defense Director, now they're (tryin'), if he'da been here what he should have been doing was acting as a staff man for, say, Ron Stevenson or whoever was taking the charge of the operation and being there to advise the city council and the county commissioners and the ones that are running the operations room and this type of thing as to advise them to what they should be doing and this type of operation. In fact, uh, a lot of places they have changed the name of Civil Defense Director to Civil Defense Coordinator for this reason; this is one of the changes that is going on nationwide.

One thing, I had just attended, uh, our Civil Defense Staff College at Battle Creek, Michigan, I'd only been home a couple weeks when this happened. And of course, they always wonder if you've learned anything in class, and I don't know much about any specific item, but the whole general curriculum that we get at staff college, the fact that that we spent two weeks with other Civil Defense directors and state and region personnel from throughout the United States gave me a lot of background in the type of thing that needed to be done and confidence to do a lot of things I might not have otherwise--like breaking into offices and swiping typewriters and all these kind of things. I think everybody's found everything by now, but during the emergency that night it was necessary that we had what we could get a hold of.

Q. Was there any one thing that you'd consider to be the largest crisis that was faced during the evening from your standpoint?

A. Yes, from my standpoint it would have been trying to get the operations organized. I think it, uh, I think the crisis of this hit about Saturday afternoon when we got so many people in there that we were having problems trying to get anything done and trying to get the right people in, and the ones that didn't have any business in operations room out and keeping them out of the area. This..especially when people were able to wander in and out of the courthouse; normally we try to keep the whole operations area clear for only people that do have official business. So this, from my own standpoint was one of my biggest problems. Of course, during all this the sheriff's department and fire and street and everyone was doing the very best they could rescuing people that were area and this type of thing. Of course, it was their main concern for at least the first day. 'Course the water situation



got to be rather critical by Saturday, too, and this was another problem as far as the whole town was concerned. Of course, they solved this by..we did have some wells in town that were still usable, so we had the water, it was just getting it to the right people, so they used a lot of tank trucks and this type of thing to haul it to the right area. Later on the Guards took over the distribut..distribution of water completely. But for the first couple of days it was whatever equipment we could get ahold of to do it with.

- Q. I realize that we're still so close to the emergency that you probably have not had an opportunity to make a full assessment of what happened and how well you reacted and so on, but can you give me some assessment that maybe you have arrived at personally on how well the situation was handled.
- A. Well, everybody responded very, very we..very well, I mean all sections of the city and county government, uh, everybody was willing to do..I think our greatest problem was again uncoordination. It took us..there was so many thing happening so fast, so many different people trying to do so many different things that it was quite difficult to coordinate all of this so that each one knew what the other one was doing. And I think this is always a problem in this type of the disaster. I know on Sunday, when I came in Sunday morning..of course, by this time they had expanded upstairs and had a number of new telephones installed up into the lobby and they were taking, oh, volunteer workers and this type of thing into the lobby upstairs. And I found this was one of the things--in fact, on Sunday morning shortly after I came in, I had a man walk up to me and say well, he was a civilian from out at the base and he had had some CD training and if there was anything he could do for me, and I told him, well, from the looks of things right then I thought

what I needed worse than anything else was to have somebody go around and find out what telephone everyone was using and what they were doing on that phone and where they were located, because the telephone company had added a lot of extra telephones for us; we had changed from where some of them were working on the first night, had..maybe the operation had gotten too large for the area we had them in, they had moved maybe to another area and was using a different telephone number than they had been. This information, of course, had been, as they, each one of 'em moved, they usually got their information out of the radio, but in the EOC itself, people did not know where the changes had been made; and so he did circulate around with and some help and in an hour or so came up with a complete new listing of all the telephone numbers that were being used in the basement area and then the upstairs section here for emergency operations; so we were able to give listings to whoever needed it in this area to know if they weren't getting the right telephone calls, at least who to refer it to, and this type of thing. We also had a, put a girl in the information desk upstairs, and I know she said, "Well, I've, I'm on information, but I don't have any information to give anyone." So this helped, too, and this type of thing. In fact this seemed to be almost every day a kind of a problem was because things were changing so fast, to keep track of what was being done where. In fact, I think it would be a good idea in the future if someone had nothing else to do except to collect this information so anytime anyone done something to have one person to go to and say "I done this" and everybody else could find out what has been done in a particular area like, especially setting up a new telephone or, or a new section.

Q. Is there any particularly important event that stands out in your mind over the whole say, week of this operation?

A. Well, I was very glad when we got this operations room reorganized and the proper people in the proper places, (there was a time that), I know you

\_\_\_\_\_ you had been \_\_\_\_\_ helping, but \_\_\_\_\_ we had the \_\_\_\_\_.

(Break in taping)

Well, one thing that did help us when we got reorganized in our operations room so that the people that were running our operations room should not have any other duties that they had to do so that they were able to stay in their positions most of the time, and this kept them coordinated with what was going on. If you suddenly got a problem at least you had somebody there that was an expert in most of the fields to take your problems to. And this made our operations run much smoother than what it had before.

Q. I think that occurred on Monday, was it, when Mr. Trankle...

A. Well, I think it was Tuesday..

Q. ...(took over)

A. ...he came in on Monday but I think it was about Tuesday before you got completely reorganized and we got set up; and then, of course, they..at that time we had a security problem before, because the regular policemen were so busy that they didn't have time to do it as far as, as sitting on the doors and keeping people out of the operations room. By that day we were able to get a couple of regular policemen to do it. And this made it much easier, people would obey somebody in uniform a lot faster than they would somebody else because they had more of an idea of the type of people that we would

allow into the operations room. And this helped tremendously from that area. This was one of our problems probably from the beginning because we did have so much activity going on in the whole emergency operations center. For instance, REACT operated continually from this office because they did have the radio in here, they did bring the (band) in and set it upstairs, but with that they still had to have some type of, of telephone communications out to get other things done; and, of course, they were coordinating quite a lot of different types of search type and this type of thing where the two-way radios would help it along with the police department, this type of thing. Well, one of our big problems that we really hadn't planned too much for was the idea of having so many people displaced. We were, of course, able to put them in shelters and this type of thing, but they were not able to locate, say members of their own family or friends or someone that were worried about them, didn't know where to locate them at, so they reported them as missing persons, and I think at one time we had over 4000 names on our missing persons list. So to try to get these people located and to know who actually probably was flood victims; because, of course, as the days went on they kept, they had no idea how many bodies they had, and a lot of these people that were on this list were actually missing, but a lot of the others had just, in the rush had gotten displaced someplace else in town. So this was one of the really big problems that maybe future planning could get a little more expert help on it right at the beginning, and get a better description and a better detail on how to go about it.

Q. Anything else that you can tell us about this that...?

A. Oh, I went over all..well, one thing I could say for us is that we did learn;

because at the time we had our second emergency on the following Saturday night, our operations room had been phased out on Friday afternoon, after it had been in operation for a whole week, the telephones had been taken down and put back; and when the sirens blew on Friday night, or Saturday night, for our second flooding, everybody knew what they were supposed to do, the telephone company they were not so swamped this time, and they ended up down here in the EOC. I know I was in North Rapid myself, I hadn't went home and was able to hear the sirens, so I dashed down as fast as I could and Mr. Irish was already in here along with Mr. Baker, and almost all of our staff that we had had from the following day did report back to the operations room, and we were able to set up in just a little while that time. So practice does help.

Q. How long, on the 17th of June, did you operate out of that EOC again?

A. Well, I, oh, I think we were in there about three hours. Now we weren't really operating because--most of the time--part of the time we were, because at the beginning of the flooding it was serious in a number of areas and we were taking care of problems. Well, when it did not develop to be a serious flood as what they was afraid it might, so we did kind of just hold tight, and everybody stayed put without too much to do for a couple of more hours, because we had gotten, we were checking with the Weather Bureau all of the time to see what they were getting, and our liaison officer from Ellsworth was back in again, and he was checking with the Weather Service at Ellsworth. And they did say that there were some clouds in the area that could give us some more rain and add to our problems. So we wanted to make sure that we didn't send everybody home until we were sure that things were clear, so we

kinda kept things kinda going 'til I think about 10:00 before we decided  
that we were sure enough that nothing was going to happen, so the people that  
were in the operations room could go back to their normal areas.

(END OF INTERVIEW)

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
Library Cataloging Service Data

Illa Cannon

Keystone Rt., Box 666, Rapid City, South Dakota

June 29, 1972

Earl Hausle

home

Civil Defense office, Pennington County Courthouse, Rapid City, S.

Illa Cannon was the only professional Civil Defense Staff member who reached the Civil Defense office the night of the disaster.

Civil Defense operations during the Rapid City flood.

42

Female

Pennington

Middle class

Civil Defense Operations Officer

High School

Protestant

- Q. Civil Defense headquarters, Rapid City, South Dakota, June 29, 1972. This office is located in the basement of the Pennington County courthouse, this is Earl Hausle interviewing Illa Cannon, who's the Operations Officer of Pennington County Civil Defense. Illa, will you tell what happened the evening of Jun 9, when the flood hit, the first word you had and what you did during that night?
- A. Well, the first word I had about any flooding was when the, uh, (it) came across the bottom of the TV set, the little letters that said that the Guards were called back because of expected flooding in Boulder Canyon, Box Elder Creek, wherever it was, and as I kept watching this come on the TV set more frequently, I began to think, "Well, I don't know what's going on, maybe I'd better go to the office." And it hadn't even started raining. We live out south of Rapid City on Sheridan Lake Road is where we live, and it hadn't started raining at our house yet then. But by the time I decided I'd better come to the office, and got my clothes changed to come down, it had started raining a little bit. And as I came down Main, of course, there was water on the streets, but this was the size of what flooding there was that time. I imagine this must have been about 8:00 or 8:30, I know it was before it had gotten dark, 'cause it was still quite light out, and before any flooding had happened in this area. And normally, when we leave the office during the day, we turn our telephone over to the police department so they can answer it at the police department, so I had called the police department and they were so busy that I wasn't getting an answer, so I decided I'd better come down at least to answer my own telephone so they wouldn't have that problem. And when I came into the courthouse there were I think about three deputy sheriffs in here at the time.



They were coming in and out, and I came in and got unlocked and got my radios going and went over and sked them, and they had told me then that they had already contacted our REACT members that normally go out on this type of thing and that they were already operating out of the police department at this time. So I turned on my fire department and city street radio to listen to what they were giving back and forth to try and figure out what was going on and how bad the situation was. At that time we did not have a police department radio in, in here, it was over in the jail, because they use it for night, for bringing prisoners into the jail and this type of thing. So I didn't have any direct contact with the de..police department at all. People started calling about, oh, maybe somebody..I remember one call that someone had went out in the Cleghorn Canyon area, and they were concerned about them, I turned this call over to REACT, I don't know what type a reaction they did to it, but this was the type of calls that I was getting at that time of day. I began to get rather busy, so I called the police department and got through to them and asked if they would (have)..send one of their extra REACT members from there over here so they could man the radio from this area to take care of the telephone calls for help that we were getting through our telephone, so one of the members of Rushmore REACT came over and started using our CB unit here in the basement office..uh..

Q. Do you know who that was by any chance?

A. No, I don't. I really don't. Then Ron Stevenson had called me and had said that they were having this band concert, of course, out at Stephens High School and asked what I knew about the situation; well, by that time I could tell by listening to the Street Department radios that they were getting local

flooding and they were starting to cut off some of the streets and this type of thing. So I told Ron that, I said, "Well," he asked what I thought about letting those people out, and I said, well, from what I could tell from listening to the Street Department radio that if they were going to get home they had better dismiss them. So they did, and then later on Ron Stevenson called again and asked if I needed his help down here, and I told him, well, I still wasn't sure what was going on, but I certainly would appreciate it if he did come in. And so he came in. He did leave for a while, I think he went out with one of the policemen to kinda see what was going on. George Behrens, he was in and out during the evening, too, Glen Best, of course, within the sheriff's office had got in in between times, and more of the sheriff's deputies were coming in. So I was trying to answer my telephones here, and find out what they knew about the situation, and this type of thing. I really, 'course I didn't know what was going on, or what the police department was putting out as a warning; not having the police department radio, I didn't, I just presumed that they were taking care of this, because they normally do. Siren buttons are in the police department, and they are the ones that are responsible for activating the sirens and this type of thing. First time that I really got very concerned about the whole situation was when I heard someone from the police department saying, "Well, we think Canyon Lake Dam is going to go out," and so at this point I ran over and told Glen Best, and I asked him, I said, "Did you know what kind of warnings have been given out to the citizens of Rapid City for people that I knew would be on down the creek?" And he says, "No," he says, "I don't but we," he tried to call KOTA and couldn't get them, so he put on, he says, "I'll go to the studio."

And so he put his coat on and ran out and went over to the studio. What he put out or what time it was, I don't know this either, because things were happening rather fast in between time. George Behrens, I think, was the first one then that come in and said to me, he said, of course, being down here, you know, you don't quite know what's going on on the outside, and he said, "Well, you know, I think we've got a real bad situation here," and he says, "We'd better get ready to go into operation." So he had known that we had put in our new telephone system, so I had the key and he went down and helped me get the tele..the telephones unlocked, we had trouble gettin ghe door unlocked, and he said yesterday that he was about ready to take an ax to it, but we got the telephones out and so then I proceeded in connecting up our telephone, emergency telephone systems so we would have that in the operations room. All our electricity, of course, when the big part of the flood came through, all electricity went off and our emergency power took over down here, so we did have emergency electricity to run on the rest of the night. Our telephones here were out for, oh, I suppose, maybe five or ten minutes. We got to a point that all they would do would ring. We could, we'd take them all off the hook and they'd still keep ringing. I was down here in the office at the time and didn't realize, I know George Behrens said he walked out, and he looked back in the operations room, he said, "There sat all those telephones ringing and none of 'em would shut up." But we did, and then apparently the water was getting in someplace it shorting it out and this cleared up by itself, so all of our lines on our emergency telephone system--it has our two regular Civil Defense lines on it plus seven private lines. This..(were) the only extra lines that were coming into the courthouse at the time they

put the system in. So he had these for call out numbers, we also had a direct line to the three hospitals; but, of course, at the time we were ready to use them, Bennett-Clarkson and the line to Sioux San was out, but we did have direct contact with St. John's Hospital at all times. And then, of course, with the police department going under water, this put our city lines out of commission; we normally have--besides having our two outside CB lines, we had one that comes through the city switchboard, and this was tied into our telephones here in the office as well as our telephone system in the operations room. 'Course Ron was back in at the time that the major flooding started, why, he and Glen Best, were the only two officials here right at the present time, and so they, we did have the telephone system set up for them and they started operating from the operations room then to coordinate search and rescue and this type of thing. And, uh..but, 'course, I was running up and down the halls like I was going to a fire or something because everybody was wanting things. I remember Ron saying, "Well, we've got to have flashlight batteries," because we knew all the electricity was out, went and swiped the flashlight batteries out of the RADAF kits and this type of thing, plus the supply we had in the office. Stu Steele had been in and out in between times and he came in and got blankets and this type of thing. When KOTA went off of the air, then I knew that we could use our Emergency Broadcast System from here in our office, and at that time Stu Steele was in here, and I told him that I knew it had to be patched in at the transmitter site before we could broadcast. So he took care of getting someone out to the transmitter site so we could get patched in, and I, sometime later, however long it took them, our Emergency Broadcast System was working and the officials

then--Ron Stevenson and the mayor and whoever happened to be in here--could broadcast directly over KOTA to the people of Rapid City.

Q. I think at this point we perhaps had better identify some of the people you've named; Ron Stevenson, of course, is a county commissioner, Stu Sttele is a county commissioner, Glen Best is the Pennington County Sheriff.

A. All three of those happen to be members of my Civil Defense advisory board, too. Which helped.

Q. Right. Now, did they have any particular duties in an emergency like this?

A. Uh, not any other than what your normal county and city officials do have, as your commissioners or your city councilman, of course, have.. but they just happened to be the ones that were here and were able to take over. Ron did a very good job of organizing us all, I don't know what I would have done without him.

Q. Okay, I think we've identified those people, let's go ahead, now and, as the emergency developed further, tell us what you can remember about it and what happened, as you remember it.

A. Well, things..I said, things started happening very fast, because we were the only ones in this area, I guess--of course, the hospitals had emergency power, but since the police department went out and didn't have, we were one of the few places that did have electricity. 'Course the REACT members that were at the police department got washed out along with the policemen and so they moved all of their operations in here and were still broadcasting directly to the people that they had out in the field yet that were rescuing people and this type of thing. Glen Best did send someone over to the jail and we picked up the PD radio from over there and brought it back in, and plugged

it in. There had been, at one time it had been in the sheriff's office here in the EOC, so the lines were in here for it, so it was just a matter of getting it and plugging it back in so we were able to have direct radio contact with the police department then; by then most of the deputy sheriffs had been in, and...(Pause in taping). Okay. At, at this time, of course, most of the coordination was starting to be done from the courthouse. I know..I'm not sure just in what order events happened, but I know as they realized that the emergency was bad they did call Ron Stevenson, and Glen Best had called the mayor and the department heads that were able to come in and they had a brief meeting in the conference..or our operations room then to kinda lay some plans of what they were going to do and start coordinating. We also started getting people in off of the streets because there were people that, of course, had gotten separated from their children or this type of thing, and they were coming in, so we were trying to do the best for them we could; so, uh, we did start to right at the beginning and set up kind of a missing persons thing in the sheriff's office. This was one thing that, by the time it was all over with, had gotten rather out of control because it was something that we had not really done enough advance planning on, not realizing that we'd ever had a disaster where half the town wouldn't know wherethe other half was at; and we did get a lot more people on the missing persons list than what we probably should have, but at the, that time (you know) all I could think of was these poor people have, don't know where their families are, and the best we can do is at least try. We can't just tell them, "Well, we can't do anything," and send you back out on the street. We had a few people..we didn't get any injuries or anything of this type, we

did have a doctor in here for a while, and then he said, well, he wasn't really doing anything here so he called St. John's hospital and they said, well, they needed him there, so he went on to St. John's hospital. We did have a few people that were rather..suffering from shock and this type of thing, so anyone that was, we gave 'em a couple of blankets and a chair to sit on and put them in one of the other rooms. 'Course activities started really booming as everyone was coming in and we were trying to get organized. Some of the very first people that we got into our operations room, 'course was Colonel Schallberg, who is our Liaison Officer with the National Guard. He was here right away. And, of course, with all of his National Guardsmen in town--which I believe there were about 2000 of them in the immediate area at the time--they, of course, had already been out rescuing people and, of course, they continued through the whole disaster helping us. Two of the other people that we got rather by accident that done a very good job for us, there were two Air Force officers that said that when they had heard of, of the impending flooding that they had started to report for duty at Ellsworth, but they could not get there, so they came here to the EOC. And they ended up by being our military liaison officers for, well, Major Brown stayed with us through the whole thing, I believe the others name was Colonel McDaniels. He was here for several days. So this gave us immediate contact with Ell.. Ellsworth Air Force Base, too, because by using, of course, our lines in the operations room they could get in contact with Ellsworth for any type of assistance that they needed for them. As we knew we were getting more problems, I wanted to leave as many of our Civil Defense lines open for emergency operations as we could; and, of course, people in town knowing that these, so

many people were without homes that didn't have places to go, we started getting calls from people saying, "Well, we have a place that we can take four or six people into our house." So I..(the) first office that I could get into that I had a key for was the kitchen down here which had a phone line from the Probation, they'd been using it as an office, and I had a key for it, so I was able to get into it, and we found another volunteer standing in the hall that really didn't have anything to do, gave him paper and pencil and had him start taking names and addresses and this type of thing of where people would give temporary housing. I knew at this point that there probably wasn't very much that we could do with it that ev..night, but I knew that the next day that the Red Cross or whoever was going to take these was going to need all the places that they could get; so this is what we did, we put over the EBS system then, said, "Well, this number is available that you can call in if," and so by the time Saturday came, we had quite a listing of names that we turned over to the Red Cross. And then I don't know what they..but I imagine they gave them to different people in their shelter areas possibly for..to go in for temporary housing, this type of thing. We also started getting calls on..a little later on on heavy equipment, this type of thing, that people had that they would offer for help, so we opened up another office and put somebody else on a telephone and started taking these kinds of listings. We also opened, opened another office and put someone in there with a separate telephone number so people had located bodies, that they could call and tell the location in case they couldn't get through to the sheriff's office, 'cause, of course, the sheriff's numbers were all quite busy at this time. So we did have a second number that they could call to report any



locations of bodies so we could get the proper authorities out to them; and, of course, we're down here in the judge's office, so it was just a matter of getting a runner to run the information down to the sheriff's office, and then they took care of it from there.

Q. Could you give us a time reference on this approximately?

A. All of this was happening before morning, but just what time in here, I don't know because, there again, we were so busy and once you get in the basement morning and night is about the same, too; and we were..ran on emergency power until up until the mid-morning of the next, this, whenever the electricity came back on, because, of course, we're in total darkness down here even during the daytime if we don't have our emergency power. This is something that we were real lucky that we did have our emergency power. We, also, of course, had all of our communications systems and things because of Civil Defense, we're centrally located. 'Course that Saturday morning I think most all of you were, part of you were down here at least by then--city council, and everyone was doing the best that they could, getting us organized, and we had an awful lot of help. I think one of the biggest problems was--at least here in EOC--was trying to control the flow of people, we had so many people that were wanting to volunteer for their help, and to get them steered in the right direction, and, of course, like Sunday we were using a lot of volunteers just here in the courthouse to man a lot of these desks and this type of thing. And we just kind of ran over (man) people all, all of the way, but it was a good thing that they had some place to go to.

Q. How closely was the Civil Defense plan followed in this emergency?

A. Well, one of the problems was that we had not updated our, uh, our emergen..

our..we had some of our emergency call list updated, but our manning chart for the emergency operations room was not totally updated, and so we ran into problems there; plus the fact that when we really realized that we were going to need this, everything had happened so fast that..there wasn't much point of trying to put out telephone calls, because most of the telephone system was out, plus the fact that you didn't know whose house was washed away and who was still there. So, it was pretty hard to follow our manning charts and this type of thing for the emergency operation center. I think where our planning helped the most was that, of course, REACT people and all of these people had responded even before we had, from the very beginning of the emergency. So these people were all here and working; and, of course, the National Guard and all of these type were already into operations and working. I think this is where our planning and training paid off there. We weren't able to file..to follow our proper procedures for our operations room for several days until we got reorganized and the right people in the right places; we were working and we were getting the job done, but in some cases we didn't have the right, the right people in the right places. But in some cases we were, Sunday at least and I don't remember about Saturday, I know Stan Ellstein came from, I believe he's on the Board of Directors at St. John's hospital, was one in, uh, coordinating a medical force just by going back through a report that I had gotten, well by Saturday morning we had a teacher from Douglas High School come in and volunteer his services, and so somebody got him started in the medical coordination room over here, and he was a biology teacher, so he knew the terms and this type of thing; plus, being a teacher, he didn't have a job he had to go back to, so he stayed with us for the entire

week and ran our medical coordination, uh, this..he took care of all getting medical supplies and coordinating where they were going to, plus nurses and this type of thing. We didn't have any problem at all in getting enough medical people because first of all, of course, Bennett-Clarkson had to shut down and move all their people to St. John's hospital, so this made more nurses available, and they were having some type of a conference with nurses at the Imperial 400 right across the street, so these people were available to us. But we were lucky in getting a lot of real good volunteer workers and..in the right places to begin with.

Q. How long was it before you were able to get home yourself?

A. I didn't leave here until about 4:30 Saturday evening. I had worked, of course, a full day on Friday and went home on Friday and then came back down about 8:00 or 8:30, and I didn't leave until approximately 4:30 on Saturday then before I left. This is when Mr. (Arch) came in and a couple o'the guys from the state Civil Defense office came in, and that was when I went home then. Another thing that we made good use of on Saturday as far as Civil Defense was concerned..of course, Rapid City was clear out of water, and so we did know that we didn't have water in the cans, but we knew where our water in the cans were that we use for fall-out shelters, and we got all of those that were available and used it storing and hauling water in. Then we came up with the problem, well, there's no water so you are out of sanitation facilities, especially for the hospitals and for the shelter areas, like the Red Cross where they had so many of these people in, so they started calling for chemical toilets. This I didn't know where it was at, but I did know that we had sanitation kits and our shelter supplies and the areas that these were

located in, so we sent pickups out and picked up the sanitation kits that we'd normally use in a fallout shelter and distributed these to all the places that they needed sanitation supplies, because these did have the plastic bags and the chemicals in that they could use with the chemical toilets and toilet paper and all this kind of thing that you're going to need for sanitation facilities. So we used a lot of those. How many I have no idea yet 'til we go out and start counting what we took out of our supplies. But we did have, uh, well, one major source was at city auditorium, there had been shelter supplies stored there at Northside Fire Station, and then we had a lot of sanitation kits and old water drums out at St. Martin's Academy, and I knew this was a real good area, so we sent people out there to get these, and these helped tremendously.

Q. What in an emergency of this kind..now, of course, Harold Irish, the Civil Defense Director could not get into town to function as he normally would. What would be your normal function in this situation?

A. Well, this is the problem I had when it started. What my normal function should have been and what I had been doing prior to this was kind of two different things. I was hired as an operations officer and under this, uh, my \_\_\_\_\_ is in planning and training and this type of thing. But since there was only two of us in the office, I also inherited the secretarial and the bookkeeping type of work, which there isn't enough that we really need any more help. The only thing that this had made a problem as far as I was concerned was the fact that I have remained in the office rather than attending any of the meetings, and this is where I was at the biggest disadvantage was that--like you, I didn't even know who you were until it was all over with.

So many of my city councilmen I did not, I knew by name, but I did not know them face-to-face, even a lot of people in our city. As soon as I found out what their name was, then I knew where, who they were and where they belonged, but just to walk down the hall and meet some man standing there, I did not know them and they didn't know me to know that I did at least have some training in Civil Defense operations and this type of thing. So it made it rather difficult. Plus I was the only one that knew where so many of the supplies and this type of thing were stored, that I was trying to do about four or five jobs at once.

Q. Would you normally have been coordinating the operation?

A. Yes, I probably would have been, this would have been, if both of us would have been here; I would have..this is one of the big problems as far as Civil Defense Director or Operations Officer either, that..is the coordination. Now even after we got more well organized, there was..by the time we'd open up offices upstairs and all around and it was a very big problem of trying to coordinate so everybody knew what everybody else was doing. And this would be what my normal function would be with this, this type of operations. And as a Civil Defense Director, now they're (tryin'), if he'da been here what he should have been doing was acting as a staff man for, say, Ron Stevenson or whoever was taking the charge of the operation and being there to advise the city council and the county commissioners and the ones that are running the operations room and this type of thing as to advise them to what they should be doing and this type of operation. In fact, uh, a lot of places they have changed the name of Civil Defense Director to Civil Defense Coordinator for this reason; this is one of the changes that is going on nationwide.

One thing, I had just attended, uh, our Civil Defense Staff College at Battle Creek, Michigan, I'd only been home a couple weeks when this happened. And of course, they always wonder if you've learned anything in class, and I don't know much about any specific item, but the whole general curriculum that we get at staff college, the fact that that we spent two weeks with other Civil Defense directors and state and region personnel from throughout the United States gave me a lot of background in the type of thing that needed to be done and confidence to do a lot of things I might not have otherwise--like breaking into offices and swiping typewriters and all these kind of things. I think everybody's found everything by now, but during the emergency that night it was necessary that we had what we could get a hold of.

Q. Was there any one thing that you'd consider to be the largest crisis that was faced during the evening from your standpoint?

A. Yes, from my standpoint it would have been trying to get the operations organized. I think it, uh, I think the crisis of this hit about Saturday afternoon when we got so many people in there that we were having problems trying to get anything done and trying to get the right people in, and the ones that didn't have any business in operations room out and keeping them out of the area. This..especially when people were able to wander in and out of the courthouse; normally we try to keep the whole operations area clear for only people that do have official business. So this, from my own standpoint was one of my biggest problems. Of course, during all this the sheriff's department and fire and street and everyone was doing the very best they could rescuing people that were area and this type of thing. Of course, it was their main concern for at least the first day. 'Course the water situation

got to be rather critical by Saturday, too, and this was another problem as far as the whole town was concerned. Of course, they solved this by..we did have some wells in town that were still usable, so we had the water, it was just getting it to the right people, so they used a lot of tank trucks and this type of thing to haul it to the right area. Later on the Guards took over the distribut..distribution of water completely. But for the first couple of days it was whatever equipment we could get ahold of to do it with.

Q. I realize that we're still so close to the emergency that you probably have not had an opportunity to make a full assessment of what happened and how well you reacted and so on, but can you give me some assessment that maybe you have arrived at personally on how well the situation was handled.

A. Well, everybody responded very, very we..very well, I mean all sections of the city and county government, uh, everybody was willing to do..I think our greatest problem was again uncoordination. It took us..there was so many thing happening so fast, so many different people trying to do so many different things that it was quite difficult to coordinate all of this so that each one knew what the other one was doing. And I think this is always a problem in this type of the disaster. I know on Sunday, when I came in Sunday morning..of course, by this time they had expanded upstairs and had a number of new telephones installed up into the lobby and they were taking, oh, volunteer workers and this type of thing into the lobby upstairs. And I found this was one of the things--in fact, on Sunday morning shortly after I came in, I had a man walk up to me and say well, he was a civilian from out at the base and he had had some CD training and if there was anything he could do for me, and I told him, well, from the looks of things right then I thought

what I needed worse than anything else was to have somebody go around and find out what telephone everyone was using and what they were doing on that phone and where they were located, because the telephone company had added a lot of extra telephones for us; we had changed from where some of them were working on the first night, had..maybe the operation had gotten too large for the area we had them in, they had moved maybe to another area and was using a different telephone number than they had been. This information, of course, had been, as they, each one of 'em moved, they usually got their information out of the radio, but in the EOC itself, people did not know where the changes had been made; and so he did circulate around with and some help and in an hour or so came up with a complete new listing of all the telephone numbers that were being used in the basement area and then the upstairs section here for emergency operations; so we were able to give listings to whoever needed it in this area to know if they weren't getting the right telephone calls, at least who to refer it to, and this type of thing. We alsoe had a, put a girl in the information desk upstairs, and I know she said, "Well, I've, I'm on information, but I don't have any information to give anyone." So this helped, too, and this type of thing. In fact this seemed to be almost every day a kind of a problem was because things were changing so fast, to keep track of what was being done where. In fact, I think it would be a good idea in the future if someone had nothing else to do except to collect this information so anytime anyone done something to have one person to go to and say "I done this" and everybody else could find out what has been done in a particular area like, especially setting up a new telephone or, or a new section.



Q. Is there any particularly important event that stands out in your mind over the whole say, week of this operation?

A. Well, I was very glad when we got this operations room reorganized and the proper people in the proper places, (there was a time that), I know you \_\_\_\_\_ you had been \_\_\_\_\_ helping, but \_\_\_\_\_ we had the \_\_\_\_\_.

(Break in taping)

Well, one thing that did help us when we got reorganized in our operations room so that the people that were running our operations room should not have any other duties that they had to do so that they were able to stay in their positions most of the time, and this kept them coordinated with what was going on. If you suddenly got a problem at least you had somebody there that was an expert in most of the fields to take your problems to. And this made our operations run much smoother than what it had before.

Q. I think that occurred on Monday, was it, when Mr. Trankle...

A. Well, I think it was Tuesday..

Q. ...(took over)

A. ...he came in on Monday but I think it was about Tuesday before you got completely reorganized and we got set up; and then, of course, they..at that time we had a security problem before, because the regular policemen were so busy that they didn't have time to do it as far as, as sitting on the doors and keeping people out of the operations room. By that day we were able to get a couple of regular policemen to do it. And this made it much easier, people would obey somebody in uniform a lot faster than they would somebody else because they had more of an idea of the type of people that we would

allow into the operations room. And this helped tremendously from that area. This was one of our problems probably from the beginning because we did have so much activity going on in the whole emergency operations center. For instance, REACT operated continually from this office because they did have the radio in here, they did bring the (band) in and set it upstairs, but with that they still had to have some type of, of telephone communications out to get other things done; and, of course, they were coordinating quite a lot of different types of search type and this type of thing where the two-way radios would help it along with the police department, this type of thing. Well, one of our big problems that we really hadn't planned too much for was the idea of having so many people displaced. We were, of course, able to put them in shelters and this type of thing, but they were not able to locate, say members of their own family or friends or someone that were worried about them, didn't know where to locate them at, so they reported them as missing persons, and I think at one time we had over 4000 names on our missing persons list. So to try to get these people located and to know who actually probably was flood victims; because, of course, as the days went on they kept, they had no idea how many bodies they had, and a lot of these people that were on this list were actually missing, but a lot of the others had just, in the rush had gotten displaced someplace else in town. So this was one of the really big problems that maybe future planning could get a little more expert help on it right at the beginning, and get a better description and a better detail on how to go about it.

Q. Anything else that you can tell us about this that...?

A. Oh, I went over all..well, one thing I could say for us is that we did learn;

because at the time we had our second emergency on the following Saturday night, our operations room had been phased out on Friday afternoon, after it had been in operation for a whole week, the telephones had been taken down and put back; and when the sirens blew on Friday night, or Saturday night, for our second flooding, everybody knew what they were supposed to do, the telephone company they were not so swamped this time, and they ended up down here in the EOC. I know I was in North Rapid myself, I hadn't went home and was able to hear the sirens, so I dashed down as fast as I could and Mr. Irish was already in here along with Mr. Baker, and almost all of our staff that we had had from the following day did report back to the operations room, and we were able to set up in just a little while that time. So practice does help.

Q. How long, on the 17th of June, did you operate out of that EOC again?

A. Well, I, oh, I think we were in there about three hours. Now we weren't really operating because--most of the time--part of the time we were, because at the beginning of the flooding it was serious in a number of areas and we were taking care of problems. Well, when it did not develop to be a serious flood as what they was afraid it might, so we did kind of just hold tight, and everybody stayed put without too much to do for a couple of more hours, because we had gotten, we were checking with the Weather Bureau all of the time to see what they were getting, and our liaison officer from Ellsworth was back in again, and he was checking with the Weather Service at Ellsworth. And they did say that there were some clouds in the area that could give us some more rain and add to our problems. So we wanted to make sure that we didn't send everybody home until we were sure that things were clear, so we

kinda kept things kinda going 'til I think about 10:00 before we decided that we were sure enough that nothing was going to happen, so the people that were in the operations room could go back to their normal areas.

(END OF INTERVIEW)



EH Civil Defense headquarters, Rapid City, South Dakota, June 29, 1972. This office is located in the basement of the Pennington County courthouse, this is Earl Hausle interviewing Ila Cannon, who's the operations officer of Pennington County civil Defense. Ila, ~~when you~~ will you tell what happened the evening of June 9, when the flood hit, the first word you had and what you did during that night?

IC Well, the first word I had about any flooding was ~~when~~ <sup>from when (it) came</sup> the ~~stream~~ <sup>stream</sup> across the bottom of the tv set, the little letters that said that the Guards were called back because of ~~excessive~~ <sup>expected</sup> flooding in Boulder Canyon, Box Elder Creek, wherever it was, and as I kept watching this come on the tv set more frequently, I began to think, "Well, I don't know what's going on, maybe I'd better go to the office." And it hadn't even started raining. We live out south of Rapid City on Sheridan Lake Road is where we live, and it hadn't started raining at our house yet then. But by the time I decided I'd better come to the office, and got my clothes changed to come down, it had started raining a little bit. And as I came down Main, of course, there was water on the streets, but this ~~would be~~ <sup>(besides)</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> the size of what flooding there was ~~then~~ at that time. I imagine this must have been about 8 or 8:30, I know it was before it had gotten dark, 'cause it was still quite light out, and before any flooding had happened in this area. And normally, when we leave the office during the day, we turn our telephone over to the police department so they can answer it at the police department, so I <sup>had</sup> called the police department and they ~~were~~ were so busy that I wasn't getting an answer, so I decided I'd better come down ~~to~~ at least to answer my own telephone so they wouldn't have that problem. And when I came into the courthouse there were I think about three deputy sheriffs in here at the time. They were coming in and out, and I came in and got unlocked and got my radios going and went over and asked them, and they <sup>had</sup> ~~said~~ told me then that they had already contacted our REACT ~~members~~ <sup>members</sup> that normally go out on this type of thing and that they were already operating out of the police ~~department~~ <sup>department</sup> at this time. So I turned on my fire department and city street radio to listen to what they were giving back and forth to ~~kind of~~ <sup>try and</sup> figure out what was going on and how bad the situation was. At that time we did not have a police department radio in, in here, it was over in the jail, because they use it for night, for ~~bringing~~ bringing prisoners into the jail and this type of thing. So I didn't have any direct

IC contact with the <sup>de..</sup> police department at all. People started calling about, oh, maybe somebody. I remember one call that someone had went out in the Cleghorn Canyon area, and they were concerned <sup>about</sup> them, I turned this call over to REACT, I don't know what type a reaction they <sup>did</sup> to it, but this was the type of calls that I was getting at that time of day, . I began to get rather busy, so I called the police department and got through to them and asked if they would <sup>(have)..</sup> send one of their extra REACT members from there over here so they could man the radio from this area to take care of the telephone calls for help that we were getting through our telephone, so one of the members of Rushmore REACT came over and <sup>started</sup> ~~tried~~, using our <sup>CB</sup> unit here in the <sup>basement</sup> ~~business~~ office... <sup>uh..</sup>

EH Do you know who that            was <sup>by any chance?</sup>

IC No, I don't. I really don't. Then Ron Stevenson had called me and had said that they were having this band concert, <sup>of course,</sup> out at Stephens High School and asked what I <sup>knew</sup> ~~would do~~ about the situation; <sup>well,</sup> by that time I could tell by listening to the street department radios that they were getting local flooding and they were <sup>starting</sup> ~~trying~~ to cut off some of the streets and this type of thing. So I told Ronnie <sup>that</sup>, I said, "Well," he asked what I thought about letting those people out, and he said Well, from what I could tell from listening to the street department radio that if they were going to get ~~home~~ home they had better dismiss them. So they did, and then later on Ron <sup>Stevenson</sup> called again and asked if I needed <sup>his</sup> ~~any~~ help down here, and I told him, well, I still wasn't sure what was going on, but I <sup>certainly</sup> ~~sure~~ would appreciate it if he did come in. And so he came in. He did leave for a while, I think he went out with one of the policeman to kind <sup>of</sup> see what was going on. ~~George~~ George Behrens, he was in and out during the evening, too, Glen Best, <sup>with</sup> ~~was~~, of course, <sup>had got</sup> ~~(would drop)~~ in in between times, and more of the sheriff's deputies were coming in. So I was trying to answer my telephones here, <sup>and find out</sup> what they knew about the situation, and this type of thing. I really, 'course I didn't know what was going on, <sup>or</sup> what the police department was putting out as a warning; not having the police department radio, I didn't, I just presumed that they were taking care of this, because they normally do. <sup>Siren buttons are in the</sup> police department, and they are the ones that are responsible for activating the sirens and this type of thing.

IC First time <sup>that</sup> I really got very concerned about the whole situation <sup>was</sup> when I heard someone from the police department saying ~~"well, it's like"~~ <sup>we think</sup> "well, ~~that this~~ Canyon Lake Dam is going to go out," and so at this point I ran over and told Glen Best, and I asked him, I <sup>id</sup> says, "Do <sup>id</sup> you know what kind of warnings have been given out to the citizens of Rapid City for people that <sup>I knew</sup> would be ~~(on down the creek)?"~~ And he says, "No", he says, "I don't," but we," he tried to call KOTA and couldn't get them, so he <sup>put on</sup>, he <sup>says,</sup> said "I'll go to the studio." <sup>And</sup> So he put his coat on and ran out and went over to the studio. What he put out or what ~~ix~~ time it was, I don't know this either, <sup>i.e.</sup> Because things were ~~happening~~ happening ~~xxx fast~~ rather fast in between times. George Behrens, I think, was the first one then that come in and <sup>id</sup> said to me, he said, of 'course being down here, you know, you don't quite know what's going on on the outside, and he said, "Well, ~~xxx~~ you know, I think we've got a real bad situation here," and he says, "we <sup>id</sup> better get ready to go into operation." So he had known that we had ~~put~~ in our new telephone system, so I had the key and he went down and helped me get <sup>the tele..</sup> the telephones unlocked, ~~and~~ we had trouble getting the door unlocked, and he said yesterday that he was about ready to take an ax to it, <sup>but</sup> we got the tele-phones out and so then I ~~proceeded~~ proceeded in connecting up our telephone, emergency telephone systems so we would have that in the operations room. All our electricity, of course, when the big part of the flood came through, all electricity went off and our emergency power took over down here, so we did have emergency electricity to run on the rest of the night. Our telephones here were out for, oh, I suppose, maybe five or ten minutes. We got to a point ~~where~~ that all they would do would ring. We could, we'd take them all off the hook and they'd still keep ringing. I was down here in the office at the time and didn't realize, I know George Behrens said he walked out, <sup>and</sup> he looked back in the operations room, he said <sup>There sat all</sup> "There sat all those telephones ringing and none of them would shut up." But we did, and then apparently the water <sup>was getting</sup> would in someplace it shorted <sup>ing</sup> it out and this cleared up by itself, so all of <sup>our</sup> the lines on our emergency telephone system <sup>our</sup> it has <sup>own</sup> two regular Civil Defense lines on it plus seven private lines. this.. (were) the only extra lines that were coming into the courthouse at the time they put the system in. So he had these for call out numbers, we also had a direct line to



IC the ~~xxx~~ three hospitals; but of course at the time we were ready to ~~use~~ them, Bennet-Clarkson and the line to Sioux San was out, but we did have direct ~~xxx~~ contact with St. John's Hospital at all times. And then, of course, *with* the police department going under water, this put our city lines out of commission; *we normally have = besides having one had* two outside ~~CD~~ CD lines, we had one that comes through the city switchboard, and this was tied into our telephones herein the office ~~was~~ as well as our telephone system in the operations room. <sup>course</sup> ~~cause~~ Ron <sup>was</sup> back in ~~and~~ at the time that the major flooding started, *why, he and* ~~(Gordon Beck), Glen Best,~~ *we're* were going back of course, ~~we're~~ the only two ~~xxx~~ officials here right at the present time, and operating from so, <sup>they</sup> ~~and~~ we did have <sup>the</sup> a telephone system set up for them and they started ~~out~~, ~~they~~ ~~xxx~~ the operations room then to coordinate search and rescue and this type of thing. ~~xxx~~

*And, uh...* But, <sup>course</sup> I was running up and down the halls like *I was going to a fire or something* because everybody was ~~(warning)~~ *wanting things*. I remember Ron saying, "Well, we've got to have flashlight batteries" because we knew all the electricity was out, went and swiped the flashlight batteries out of the <sup>RADAR</sup> ~~RADAR~~ *hits* and this type of thing, <sup>plus the</sup> ~~source of~~ supply we had in the office. ~~(Stu Steele)~~ <sup>(Stu Steele)</sup> had been in and out in between times and he came in and got blankets and this ~~type~~ of thing, ~~xxx~~. When KOTA went off of the air, then I knew that ~~it was~~ we could use our emergency broadcast system from here in our office, and at that time ~~(Stu Steele)~~ <sup>(Stu Steele)</sup> was in here, and I told him that I knew it had to be *patched in* at the transmitter ~~site~~ site before we could broadcast. So he took care of getting someone out to the transmitter site so we could get *patched in*, and I, sometime later, however long it took them, our emergency broadcast system was working and ~~the~~ <sup>then =</sup> officials ~~and~~ Ron Stevenson and the mayor and whoever happened to be in here ~~= could~~ *broadcast* directly over KOTA to the people of Rapid City.

EH I think at this point we perhaps had better identify some of the people you've named; Ron Stevenson, of course, ~~is~~ a county commissioner, Stu Steele is a county commissioner, Glen Best is the Pennington County sheriff.

IC All three of those happen to be members of my Civil Defense advisory board, too. Which helped.

EH Right. Now, did they have any particular duties in an emergency like this?

IC <sup>the,</sup> Not any other than what <sup>your</sup> ~~the~~ normal county and city officials do have, <sup>as your</sup> ~~which is,~~ commissioners or your city councilman, of course, <sup>here.</sup> but they just happened to be the ones that were here and were able to take over. Ron did a <sup>very</sup> ~~real~~ good job of organizing us all, I don't know what I would have done without him.

EH Okay, I think we've identified those people, let's go ahead, now and, as <sup>the</sup> ~~your~~ emergency developed further, tell us what you can remember about it and what happened, <sup>as you remember it.</sup>

IC Well, things, I said, things started happening very fast, because we were the only ones in this area, I guess, <sup>of course,</sup> ~~because~~ the hospitals had emergency ~~on~~ power, but since the police department went out and didn't have, we were one of the few places that did have electricity. 'Course the REACT members that were <sup>at the</sup> police department got washed out along with the policemen and so they moved all of their operations in here and were still broadcasting directly to the people that they had out in the field yet that were rescuing people and this type of thing. Glen Best <sup>did send someone over to the jail</sup> ~~said "come on over to the jail"~~ and we picked up the PD radio from over there and brought it back in, <sup>and</sup> plugged it in, <sup>there</sup> ~~it~~ had been, at one time it had been in the sheriff's office here in the <sup>EO</sup> ~~(EO)~~, so the lines were in here for it, so it was just a matter of getting it and plugging it back in, <sup>so</sup> ~~but~~ we were able to have direct radio contact with the police department then; <sup>by then</sup> most of the deputy sheriffs had been in, and.. (Pause in taping). Okay, ~~XXXXX~~ At, at this time, of course, most of the coordination <sup>was starting</sup> to be done from the courthouse. <sup>I know.. I'm</sup> not sure just in what order events happened, but I know as they realized that the emergency was bad they did call Ron Stevenson, and <sup>Glen Best</sup> ~~Glen Best~~ <sup>had</sup> ~~said~~ <sup>call</sup> the mayor and the department heads that were able to come in and they had a brief meeting <sup>in the</sup> conference. <sup>at our</sup> ~~all the~~ operations <sup>room then to</sup> kind <sup>of</sup> lay some plans of what they were going to do and start coordinating. We also started getting people in off of the streets because they <sup>we</sup> ~~we~~ were people that, of course, had gotten separated from their children or this type of thing, and they were coming in, so we were trying to do the best for them we could; <sup>so,</sup> ~~while~~ we ~~just~~ did start to right at the beginning and <sup>set</sup> up kind of a missing persons <sup>thing</sup> into the sheriff's office. This was one thing that, by the time it was all over with, had gotten rather out of control because it was something that we had not really done <sup>enough</sup> ~~much~~ advance

IC planning on <sup>Not realizing that</sup> that ~~we~~ <sup>if</sup> we'd ~~just~~ ever had a disaster <sup>where</sup> ~~we~~ half the town wouldn't know where they <sup>other half was</sup> had an office at; and we did get a lot more people on the missing persons list than what ~~was~~ <sup>we</sup> probably should have ~~known~~, but at the <sup>that</sup> ~~full~~ time <sup>(you know)</sup> all ~~at least four people~~ ~~don't~~ I could think of was these poor people ~~don't~~ have, don't know where their families are, and the best we can do ~~is~~ is at least try. We can't just tell them, "well, we can't do anything," <sup>and send you back out on the street. We had</sup> a few people, we didn't get any injuries or anything of this type, we did have a doctor in here for a while, and then he ~~waid~~, well he wasn't really doing anything here so he called St. John's hospital and they said, well, they needed him there, so he went on to St. John's hospital. We did have a few people that were <sup>rather..</sup> suffering from shock and this type of thing, so anyone that was <sup>new</sup> ~~him~~, we gave ~~him~~ a couple of <sup>blankets and a chair to sit on</sup> and put them <sup>one of</sup> in the other rooms. Course <sup>activities</sup> after ~~started~~ really <sup>forming as</sup> everyone was coming in and we were trying to get organized, some of the very first people that <sup>we got</sup> into our operations room, course with <sup>was</sup> ~~(Colonel Shelburg)~~ <sup>Schallberg,</sup> <sup>who is our Liaison Officer with the</sup> ~~help~~ National Guard. He was here right away. And, of course, with all of his National Guard smen in town, ~~which~~ I believe there were about 2000 of them in the immediate area at the time ~~They~~, of course, had already been out rescuing people and, of course, they continued through the whole disaster helping us. Two of the other people that we got rather by accident that done a very good job for us, <sup>there</sup> were two air force officers that said <sup>that</sup> when they had heard of <sup>the</sup>, of impending flooding that they had started to report <sup>for</sup> ~~to~~ duty at Ellsworth, but they could not get there, so they came here to the <sup>0</sup> (EJC?) And they ended up by being our military liason officers for <sup>ell..</sup>, well, Major Brown stayed with us through the whole thing, I believe the others name was Colonel <sup>Mc Daniels</sup> ~~(Macanville)~~. He was here for several days. <sup>so</sup> This gave us immediate contact with <sup>ell..</sup> Ellsworth Air Force Base, too, because <sup>by using, of course, our lines in the</sup> ~~Ellsworth~~ operations room they could get in contact with Ellsworth <sup>for any</sup> ~~type~~ of assistance that they needed for them. <sup>As</sup> And we knew we were getting more problems, I wanted to leave as many of our Civil Defense lines open for <sup>these</sup> emergency operations as we could; and, of course, people in town knowing that, <sup>were</sup> so many people <sup>these</sup> without homes that didn't have places to go, we started getting calls from people saying, "well, we have a place that we can take <sup>four</sup> or <sup>six</sup> people into our house."

IC <sup>I.. (the)</sup> so first office <sup>that I could</sup> get into <sup>it</sup>, I had ~~it~~ a key <sup>for was</sup> the kitchen down here which had a phone line <sup>from the</sup> <sup>Probation</sup>, they'd been using it as an office, and I <sup>had</sup> <sup>know</sup> a key <sup>for it,</sup> so I was able to get into <sup>it</sup>, and <sup>we</sup> <sup>they</sup> found another volunteer standing in the hall that really didn't have anything to do, gave him <sup>a</sup> paper and pencil and had him start taking names and addresses and this type <sup>of thing of</sup> where people would give temporary housing. I knew at this point that there probably wasn't very much that we could do with it that <sup>ex.</sup> night, but I knew that <sup>the</sup> next day that the Red Cross or whoever <sup>was going</sup> <sup>to take</sup> these was going to <sup>need</sup> all <sup>places</sup> that they could get; so this is what we did, ~~we~~ <sup>put</sup> <sup>(typed)</sup> over the <sup>EBS</sup> system then, said, "well, this number is available that you can call ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> if," <sup>so</sup> and <sup>by</sup> the time Saturday came, we had quite a listing of names that we turned over to the Red Cross. And then I don't know <sup>what they</sup> but I imagine they <sup>gave</sup> them to different people in <sup>their</sup> shelter areas, <sup>possibly for.. to go in</sup> for temporary housing, This <sup>type of</sup> thing. We also <sup>started</sup> <sup>ring calls on.. a little later on on</sup> ~~tried to get~~ <sup>calls later on</sup> heavy equipment, this type of thing, that people had that they would offer for help, so we opened <sup>up</sup> another office and put somebody <sup>else on</sup> out with a telephone and started taking <sup>these</sup> kinds of listings. We also <sup>opened</sup> another office and put someone in there with a separate telephone number so people <sup>had</sup> <sup>would</sup> located <sup>a</sup> body, that they could call and tell the location in case they couldn't get through to the sheriff's office, <sup>because</sup>, of course, the sheriff's numbers were all quite busy at this time. So we did have a second number that they could call to report <sup>any</sup> locations of bodies so we could get the proper authorities out ~~to~~ <sup>and</sup> to them; of course, we're down here in the <sup>(judge's)</sup> office, so it was just a matter of getting a runner to run the information down ~~to~~ the sheriff's office, and then they took care of it from there.

EH ~~XXXX~~ Could you give us a <sup>time</sup> ~~frame~~ of reference on this approximately?

IC All of this was happening before morning, but just what time in here, I don't know because, there again, we were so busy and <sup>once you get</sup> in the basement <sup>morning and night's</sup> about the same, too; and we were.. ran on emergency power until up until the mid-morning of the next, this, whenever <sup>the</sup> ~~our~~ electricity came back on, because, of course, we're in total darkness down here even during the daytime if we don't have our emergency power. This is something that we were real lucky that we did have our emergency power. We, also, of course, had all

IC of our communications systems and things because of Civil Defense, were centrally located. Course that Saturday morning I think most all of you, <sup>were part</sup> of you were down here at least by then, city council, and everyone was doing the best that they could, getting us ~~organize~~ organized, and we had an awful lot of help. I think one of the biggest problems was, at least here in <sup>EOC</sup> (ELC?) was trying to control the flow of people, we had so many people that were wanting to volunteer for their help, and to get them steered in the right direction, <sup>and, of course, like Sunday we</sup> were using a lot of volunteers just here in the courthouse to man a lot of these desks and this type of thing. And we just kind of ran over <sup>(many)</sup> people <sup>all, all of the way, but it was a good thing that</sup> cause they knew they had someplace to go <sup>to</sup> through, EH How closely was the Civil Defense plan followed? <sup>(In this initial stage.)</sup> IC Well, one of the problems was that we had not updated our <sup>uh, our emergency... our...</sup> emergency <sup>emergency?</sup> call list updated, but our <sup>(manning)</sup> chart for the emergency operations room was not totally updated, and so we ran into problems there; plus the fact that when we really realized that we were going to need this, everything had happened so fast that..there wasn't much point of trying to <sup>put</sup> ~~get~~ out telephone calls, because most of the telephone system was out, plus the fact that you didn't know whose house was washed away and who was still there. So, it was pretty hard to follow our manning charts and this type of thing for the emergency operation center. I think where our planning ~~helped~~ <sup>that's of course,</sup> the most was ~~like our~~ REACT people and all of these people had <sup>responded</sup> ~~(started)~~ even before we had, from the very beginning of the emergency. So these people were all here and working, and, of course, were the National Guard and all of these type ~~groups~~ already into operations and working. I think <sup>to file..</sup> this is where our planning and training payed off there. We weren't able to follow our proper procedure <sup>3/</sup> for our operations room for several days until we got reorganized and the right people in the right places; we were working and we were <sup>getting</sup> doing the job ~~done~~, but in some cases we didn't have the right, <sup>the right</sup> people in the right places. <sup>But</sup> in some cases we were, <sup>at least</sup> Sunday ~~I believe,~~ and I don't remember about Saturday, I know <sup>Stan Ellis</sup> ~~came~~ <sup>trav</sup> came from, <sup>I believe he's on the</sup> Board of Directors at St. John's hospital, <sup>was one in, uh,</sup> coordinating a medical ~~squad~~ <sup>force</sup> Just by going back through <sup>a</sup> our reports that I had gotten, <sup>well by</sup> ~~well by~~ <sup>Saturday</sup> Sunday morning we had a teacher from Douglas High School come in and <sup>volunteer</sup> ~~offer~~ his services, and so somebody got him started in the medical coordination room over here, and he was a biology teacher,

IC so he knew the terms and this type of thing; plus, being a teacher, he didn't ~~have~~ a job he didn't ~~have~~ <sup>had</sup> to go back to, so he stayed with us for the entire week and ran our medical coordination, <sup>uh, this..</sup> I ~~guess~~ <sup>plus</sup> he took care of all getting medical supplies and coordinating where they were going to, <sup>plus</sup> nurses and this type of thing. <sup>we</sup> they didn't have any problem at all in getting enough medical people because first of all, of course, Bennet-Clarkson had to shut down and move all their people to St. John's hospital, so this made more nurses available, and they were having some type of a conference with nurses at the Imperial 400 right across the street, so these people were available to us. But we were lucky in getting a lot of real good volunteer workers and... <sup>that's in the right places to begin with.</sup>

EH How long was it before you were able to get home yourself.

IC I didn't leave here until about 4:30 Saturday <sup>evening.</sup> I had worked, of course, a full day on Friday and went home on Friday and <sup>then</sup> came back down about 8 or 8:30, and I didn't leave until approximately 4:30 on Saturday <sup>then</sup> before I left. This is when Mr. (Arch) came in <sup>o' the</sup> and a couple <sup>other</sup> guys from the state Civil Defense office came in, and that was when I went home. <sup>then</sup> Another thing that we made good use of on Saturday ~~xxx~~ as far as Civil Defense <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ concerned, of course Rapid City was clear out of water, and so we did know that we didn't have water in the cans, but we knew where our water in the cans were that we use for fall-out shelters, and we got all of these that were available and used it storing and hauling water in, <sup>and</sup> then we came up with the problem, well, there's no water <sup>so</sup> for ~~you~~ <sup>are out of</sup> sanitation facilities, especially for the hospitals and for the shelter areas, like the Red Cross <sup>where they</sup> really had so many of these people in, so they started <sup>calling for chemical toilets.</sup> this I didn't know where it was at, but I did know that we had sanitation kits and our shelter supplies and the areas that these were located in, so we sent pickups out and picked up the sanitation kits that <sup>we'd normally</sup> ~~(was no longer used)~~ in a fallout shelter and distributed these <sup>to all the</sup> places that <sup>they</sup> needed sanitation supplies, because these did have <sup>the</sup> plastic bags and the chemicals in that they could use with the <sup>chemical</sup> ~~toilet~~ <sup>toilet</sup> paper and all this kind of thing that you're going to need for sanitation facilities. <sup>So</sup> Well, we used a lot of those. How many Ixxx have no idea yet till we go out and start counting what we took out of our supplies. <sup>But</sup> We did have, <sup>uh, well,</sup> ~~now~~ one major source was <sup>at</sup> the city auditorium, <sup>i.e.</sup>

IC <sup>these had been</sup> shelter supplies stored there at Northside Fire Station, and then we had a lot of sanitation kits and <sup>(old water drums)</sup> out at St. Martin's Academy, and I <sup>knew</sup> believe this was a real good area, so we sent people out there to get these, and these helped tremendously.

EH <sup>What</sup> in an emergency of this kind, now, of course Harold <sup>(Avery)</sup>, the Civil Defense Director could not get into town <sup>to function as he normally would</sup>, ~~anyway~~. What would be your normal function in this situation?

IC Well, this is ~~probably~~ the problem I had when <sup>it</sup> started. What my normal function should ~~be~~ have been and what I had been doing prior to this was kind of two different <sup>(things)</sup>. I was hired as an operations officer and under this, <sup>uh, my</sup> ~~or~~ <sup>is</sup> planning and training and this type of thing. But since there was only two of us in the office, I also inherited the secretarial and the bookkeeping type of work, <sup>which</sup> ~~There~~ isn't enough that we really need any more help. The only <sup>thing that this had</sup> ~~thing~~ <sup>place it</sup> made a problem as far as I was concerned was the fact that I <sup>have</sup> ~~had~~ remained in the office rather than attending any of the meetings, and this is where I was at the biggest disadvantage was that ~~like~~ you, I didn't even know who you were until it was all over with. So many of my city councilman I didn't, I knew by name, but I did not know them face-to-face, even a lot of people <sup>in our</sup> city. As soon as I found out what their name was, then I knew <sup>where</sup> who they were and where they belonged, but just to walk down the hall and meet some man standing there, I did not know them and they didn't know me, ~~to~~ know that I did at least have some training in Civil Defense operations and this type of thing. <sup>So it</sup> ~~That~~ made it rather difficult. <sup>Plus</sup> ~~Course~~ I was the only one that knew where so many of the supplies and this type of thing were stored, that I was trying to do about four or five jobs at once.

EH Would you normally have been coordinating the operation?

IC Yes, I probably would have been, this would have been, if both of us would have been here, <sup>or</sup> I would have, this is one of the big problems as far as Civil Defense Director Operations Officer either, that ~~there's no~~ <sup>is the</sup> coordination. Now even after we got <sup>more</sup> ~~real~~ well ~~authorized~~ organized, <sup>there was ...</sup> ~~so that~~ <sup>by the time we'd open up offices</sup> upstairs and all around and it was a very big problem of trying to coordinate so everybody knew what everybody else was doing. And this ~~was~~ would be what my normal function would be with this, this type of operation. And as a Civil

IC Defense Director, <sup>now they're (tryin')</sup> <sup>he'da</sup> if he ~~had~~ been here what he should have been doing was acting as a staff man for, say, Ron Stephenson or whoever was taking <sup>the</sup> charge of the operation and being <sup>(there)</sup> to advise the city council and the county commissioners and <sup>the ones that are</sup> running the operations <sup>norm and</sup> doing this type of thing as to advise them to what they should be doing and this type of an operation. In fact, <sup>uh,</sup> a lot of places they have changed the name of Civil Defense Director to Civil Defense Coordinator. <sup>for this reason; this is one of the changes</sup> that is going on nationwide. One thing, I <sup>had</sup> just attended <sup>such, own</sup> a Civil Defense staff college <sup>At Battle Creek, Michigan, I'd only been home a couple weeks when this happened, and so</sup> if you <sup>of course they always wonder</sup> learned anything in class, and I don't know much about any specific item, but the whole ~~thing~~ general curriculum that <sup>was, we get at</sup> staff college, the fact that that we spent two weeks with other civil defense directors and state and region personnel from throughout the United States gave me a lot of background in the type of thing that needed to be done and confidence to do a lot of things ~~that~~ I might not have otherwise. <sup>= like breaking into offices and swiping typewriters</sup> ~~typewriters~~ and all these kind of things. I think everybody's found everything by now, but during <sup>the</sup> emergency that night it was necessary that we <sup>had</sup> what we could get hold of.

EH <sup>Was</sup> ~~Is~~ there any one thing that you <sup>id</sup> consider to be the largest crisis that was faced during that evening? From your standpoint?

IC <sup>Yes, from</sup> my standpoint <sup>it</sup> would have been trying to get the operations organized, I think that, <sup>it, why</sup> I think <sup>the</sup> a crisis <sup>of this hit</sup> originated about Saturday afternoon when we got <sup>so many</sup> the new people in there that we were having problems trying to get anything <sup>done and trying</sup> down in time to get the <sup>night</sup> people in, and the ones that didn't have any business in operations <sup>norm</sup> out and keeping them out of the area. <sup>This is</sup> Especially when people were able to wander in and out of the courthouse; normally we <sup>try</sup> to keep the whole operations area clear <sup>for only</sup> of all the people that didn't <sup>do</sup> have official business. <sup>So this,</sup> But ~~just~~ from my own standpoint, <sup>that</sup> <sup>was one of my biggest</sup> problems. <sup>Of course, during all this the</sup> because <sup>sheriff's department and fire and street and</sup> everyone was doing the very best they could rescuing people <sup>that were</sup> area and this type of thing. Of course, <sup>it was</sup> their main concern for at least the first day. <sup>'cause</sup> Cause the water situation got to be rather critical by Saturday, <sup>too,</sup> and this <sup>was another problem</sup> as far as the whole town was concerned.



IC Of course they solved this by... *we did have some wells* from in town that were still usable, *So* ~~But~~  
*we had the* water, *it was* ~~were~~ just *getting* giving it to the right people, so they used a lot of tank  
Q trucks and this type of thing to haul it to the right areas. Later on the Guards took over  
*the distribuit..*  
xxxxxxx distribution of water completely. But for the first couple of days *it was whatever*  
equipment *we could get ahold of* to do it with.

EH *I realize that* we're still so close to the emergency that you probably haven't had  
an opportunity to make a full assessment of what happened and how well you reacted and  
soon on, but can you give me some assessment that maybe you ~~would arrive that quickly~~ on  
how well the situation was *handled*.

IC Well, everybody responded *very* *very* well, I mean all sections of the city and county  
government, *who* everybody was willing to do. I think our greatest problem was again un-  
coordination. *It* ~~That~~ took us, there was so many things happening so fast, so many different  
people trying to do so many different things that it was quite difficult to coordinate  
all of this so that each one of ~~us~~ knew what the other one was doing. And I think *this* ~~that~~  
*is always a* ~~the valuable~~ problem in this type of the disaster. I know on Sunday, when I came in  
Sunday morning, of course by this time *they* had expanded upstairs and had a number of new  
telephones *and installed* up into the lobby and they were taking, oh, volunteer workers and  
this type of thing into the lobby upstairs. And I found this was one of the things, ~~=~~  
*in fact,* on Sunday *morning* shortly after I came in, I had a man walk up to me and ~~say~~ say well, he  
was a civilian from out at the base and he had had some ~~RRXXCD~~ training ~~at~~ and if there  
was anything he could do for me, and I told him, well, from the looks of things right then  
I thought what I needed worse than anything else was to have somebody go around and find  
out what telephone everyone was using and what they were doing on that phone and where  
they were located, because the telephone company had added a lot of extra telephones for  
us; we had changed from where some of them were working on the first night, had maybe the  
operation had gotten too large for the area we had them in, they had moved maybe to  
another area and was using a different ~~kind of~~ *tele* phone number than they had been. ~~this~~  
information, *of course, had been,* *as they,* each one of ~~it~~ them moved, they usually got their information  
out of the radio, but in the EOC itself, people did not know where the ~~(chambers)~~ *changes* had  
been *made, and* ~~moved;~~ so he *did* just *circulate around with* *and* *some help and* *in an hour or so came up with a* complete new listing  
*compile*

IC of all the telephone numbers that were being used in the basement area and then the up-  
stairs section here for emergency operations; so we were able to give listings to whoever  
needed it in this area to know if they weren't getting the right telephone calls, at least  
who to refer to, and that kind of thing, we also had a girl at the information desk up-  
stairs, and I know <sup>id</sup> she says, "Well, I've, I'm <sup>on</sup> information, but I don't have any information to give  
anyone.." So <sup>this helped, too,</sup> and this type of thing. In fact <sup>there</sup> seemed to be almost  
every day a kind of <sup>a</sup> problem <sup>was</sup> because things were changing so fast, <sup>to</sup> keep track of what was  
being done where. <sup>In fact, I</sup> So ~~they~~ thing it would be a good idea in the future ~~if~~ someone had  
nothing else to do except to collect this information so anytime anyone <sup>done something</sup>  
<sup>to</sup> have one person to go to <sup>and say "I done this"</sup> and everybody else could find out what  
has been done in a particular area like, <sup>especially setting up a</sup> new telephones <sup>on</sup> new section <sup>of</sup>.  
EH Is there any particularly important <sup>event that stands out in your mind over, say, the whole,</sup> (experience) after ~~oh,~~ say, ~~a~~ week of this  
operation?

IC Well, I was very glad <sup>when</sup> ~~that~~ we got this operations room reorganized and <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>proper</sup> people  
in the proper places, ~~it~~ (there was a time that), I know you <sup>you</sup> had been  
helping, but <sup>we</sup> had the

(End of side 1)

IC Well, one thing that did help us when we got reorganized in our operations room so that  
the people that were running <sup>our</sup> operations room should not have any other duties that they  
had to do so that they were able to stay in their positions most of the time, and <sup>this</sup> ~~since~~  
<sup>kept them</sup> (then) <sup>dit</sup> coordinated <sup>with</sup> what was going on. <sup>if</sup> you suddenly got a problem at least you had  
somebody there <sup>that was an expert</sup> ~~with the necessary~~ <sup>in</sup> most of the fields to take your problems to. And  
this made our operations run much smoother than what it had before.

EH I think that occurred on Monday, was it, when Mr. Trankle..

IC well, I think it was Tuesday, <sup>oh: (trunk over)</sup> "he came in on Monday but I think it was about Tuesday before  
you got completely reorganized and we got set up; and then, of course, they, at that time we  
had a security problem before, because the regular policeman were <sup>so</sup> busy that they didn't  
have time to do it as far as <sup>as</sup> sitting on the doors and keeping people out of the operations  
room, <sup>by</sup> that day we were able to get a couple of regular policemen to do it. And this

IC made it much easier, people would obey somebody in uniform, <sup>a</sup> lot faster than they would somebody else because they had more of an idea of the type of people that we would allow in to the operations room. <sup>And</sup> ~~This~~ <sup>i.e.</sup> helped tremendously <sup>from</sup> ~~in~~ that area. This was one of the <sup>the</sup> problems probably from the beginning because we did have <sup>much</sup> activity going on in the ~~whole~~ ~~emergency~~ operations center, for instance ~~we had~~ <sup>REACT</sup> operated continually from this office because they did have the radio in here, they did bring the (band) in and set it upstairs, but with that they still had to have some type of <sup>of</sup> telephone communications out to get other things done, and, of course, they were coordinating quite a lot of different types of search type and this type of thing where the two-way radios would help it along with the police department, this type of thing.

Well, ~~was~~ one of <sup>our</sup> ~~the~~ big problems that we really hadn't planned too much for was the idea of having so many people displaced, we were, of course, able to put them in shelters and this type of thing, but they weren't able to locate, <sup>say</sup> ~~the~~ members of their own family or friends or someone that were worried <sup>;</sup> about them, did n't know where to locate them at, so they ~~started~~ ~~in~~ reported them as missing persons, and I think at one time we had over 4000 names on our missing persons list. So to try to get these people located and to know who ~~asked~~ actually probably was flood victims; because, of course, as the days went on they kept, they had no idea how many bodies they had, and a lot of <sup>these</sup> people that were on this list were actually missing, but a lot of the others <sup>had</sup> just, in the rush had gotten displaced someplace else <sup>in</sup> town, <sup>so</sup> this was one of the really big problems that <sup>maybe</sup> ~~future~~ planning could get a little more expert help on it right at the beginning, and get a better description and a better detail on ~~this~~ <sup>how to go about it</sup>.

EH ~~Any~~ Anything else that you can tell us about this? <sup>that ... ?</sup>

IC <sup>Oh, I went over all...</sup>, well, ~~one~~ <sup>us</sup> thing I could say for ~~it~~ is that we did learn; because at ~~by~~ the time we had our second emergency on the following Saturday night, our operations room had been ~~closed~~ <sup>it had</sup> out on Friday afternoon, after ~~having~~ been in operation for a whole week, the telephones had been taken down and put back; and when the sirens blew on Friday night, or Saturday night, for our second flood, <sup>ing</sup> ~~and~~ everybody knew what they were supposed to do, the telephone company they ~~were~~ <sup>;</sup> not so <sup>swamped</sup> this time, and they ended up down here

IC in the EOC. I know I was <sup>in North Rapid</sup> ~~at~~ myself, I hadn't went home and was able to hear the sirens, so I dashed down as fast as I could and Mr. Irish was already in here along with <sup>Mr. Baker</sup>, and ~~xxxxxx~~ almost all of our staff that we had had from the folloiwng day did report back to the operations room, and we were able to set up in just a little while that time. ~~nx~~ So practice does help.

EH How long, on the 17th <sup>of June</sup> did you operate out of that EOC <sup>again?</sup>

IC Well, I, oh, I think we were in there about <sup>three</sup> hours. Now we weren't really operating because ~~=~~ most of the time, ~~=~~ part of the time we were, because at the beginning of the flooding it was serious in a number of areas and we were taking care of problems. <sup>Will</sup> ~~But~~ when it did not develop to be a serious flood as what they <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ afraid it might, so we did kind of just hold tight, and everybody stayed put without too much to do for a couple of more hours, because we had gotten , we were checking with the weather bureau all of the time to see what they were getting, and our liason officer~~x~~ from Ellsworth was back in again, and he was checking with the weather service at Ellsworth . And they did say that there were some clouds in the area that could give us some more rain and add to our problems, <sup>until</sup> ~~so~~ we wanted to make sure that we didn't send everybody home, ~~so~~ we were sure that things were clear, so we kind <sup>of</sup> kept things kind <sup>of</sup> going till I think about ten before we decided that we were sure enough that noth ing was going to happen , <sup>so</sup> the people that were in the operations room could go back to their normal areas.

(end of interview)