

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Library Cataloging Service Data

NAME OF INFORMANT Jerry J. Shoener

ADDRESS 729 Wood Avenue - Rapid City, South Dakota

DATE OF INTERVIEW July 13, 1972

NAME OF RESEARCHER Earl Hausle

OTHERS PRESENT

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW Informant's office

ADDED NOTES:

SEQUENCE LISTING OF SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS INTERVIEW:

Observation of flood and of search and rescue; comments on news media problems and correspondence

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON INFORMANT

AGE 44 SEX Male COUNTY Pennington

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS Middle class

OCCUPATION Circulation manager - Rapid City Journal

EDUCATION Two years college

RELIGION Catholic

DATE FAMILY ARRIVED IN SOUTH DAKOTA

WHERE?

FROM WHERE?

NUMBER OF MOVES IN SOUTH DAKOTA

REASONS FOR MOVES

- Q. Rapid City, South Dakota, July 13, 1972, Earl Hausle interviewing Councilman Jerry Shoener, alderman from Ward Four. Jerry, on the night of the flood, did you become involved in any way in the activities?
- A. Uh, not immediately. On the night of the flood I had...was at home and I received a call from one of the members of the Civic Center Corporation of which I am president, Mr. Mort Wilkins, and he suggested that we keep an eye on the creek that night because there was reports of high water in the Hills and maybe it would give us a better idea of the particular site that we at the city council had showed them for location of the Civic Center. So at about 10:15 I left my home and went down to view the creek and the bridges at Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and West Boulevard. I took my wife and several of the children, we drove down, unaware of the, of the potential danger that was, uh, developing. And we checked the bridges, the water was in the creek three or four feet higher than usual; however, over the years, many times, I've seen the water almost up to the bridge, and then several times I've seen bridges taken out over the years. So I wasn't unduly concerned, this was probably 10:30 on Friday night of June 9th and I returned home and, uh, still unaware completely of the danger involved. The children had the T.V. on, I, I was reading that particular night, and, uh, there didn't seem to be any alarm, they'd, uh, just flashed a streamer on the screen calling attention to the possible high water and that Mayor Barnett had suggested that people in the low areas consider evacuating and that there was a potential of high water and flooding. I, I didn't have the radio on so I wasn't too fully aware of the potential of the, of the disaster that was forthcoming. At about, uh, midnight, I think we were tired, had, had actually got into bed when one

of the neighbors rang our doorbell, got us up, and all excited, and that there was a flood and fires and explosions, and her son was isolated near the welding shop on 6th Street, 6th and New York, and wanted to know if we could help. And so our...some of the other neighbors and a group proceeded ahead of us down to New York Street and, and Sixth, while I was getting dressed and...to try to rescue this boy, and I was quite shocked when I arrived at the scene of the high water, which at that point was up to Philadelphia Street on the north side of the creek. This is about three blocks from the creek proper. And the water was running very strong, the current was strong, it was taking boats and just simply capsized 'em and pushed 'em aside. There were fires, occasional explosion when a, when a gas line erupted and, and was ignited some way. People were screamin', you could, you could hear 'em, you couldn't see 'em. Occasional, uh, explosion or fire would give you illumination to where you could see people. This...at that time I think it was about 12:30, 1 o'clock. But at any rate we, we walked along the creek, up and down Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, up to West Boulevard, there was very little any of us could do, we...fires, there were several fire trucks on that side of the creek, there were...was some city equipment, city pickups with radios, they tried to coordinate things best they could. It was still raining slightly. There were some people in, in wetsuits with, with rope tied to 'em and innertubes, but as soon as they got down in, the current kind of pushed 'em right back. The rescue was, was hampered very much by the strong current, the darkness and just the utter confusion that there seemed to be, there seemed to be people hollering for help everywhere, and no one really had the equipment, er, really didn't know how to go about it, and there didn't seem to be the leadership

there that...or the equipment to do what should have been done. I think everyone did the best they could. Many of the people had blankets and were giving the people blankets that were bein' rescued from the, the water, a lot of 'em were taken 'em to, uh, uh, to private homes, people would rush up and say, "Well, I've got some room up here ('cause) the water missed me." But as we, as we did what we could along the creek, the water started to recede and by about 3 o'clock in the morning it had receded to...well, maybe it was closer to 4 o'clock, it had receded down to about New York Street from the high point of the railroad tracks on Philadelphia. There wasn't any way of getting across the creek at that point; at about 5:00 in the morning, I got across the creek on Maple Street, which was east of East Boulevard bridge. The water was over the bridge at East Boulevard and the Maple Street area was about the only area you could get across. The West Boulevard Bridge was up, capable of carrying traffic later in the morning, too. From there I went down to the Civil Defense office, and at that point there seemed to be a lot of confusion, I did talk to, to Ron Stevenson who took charge in the absence of our Civil Defense director. Ron seemed to have things well in had, and a lot of the other Civil Defense people were there, they started setting aside the various departmetns in the rooms that would handle equipment, bodies, volunteers and so forth. Assuming that I had problems at the newspaper, I, I left Civil Defense Headquarters about 6:00, 6:30 in the morning, came to the newspaper plant and found that we were without gas, without water, we had some of the staff down here, some of the news people, some of the production people, we tried to make a decision, how bad we were from the standpoint of production that day and whether we should even concern

ourselves with trying to get a paper out, (where) there was so much disaster and human misery in the city. And the decision was to forego the Saturday publication, at that point try to make provisions for water and gas, which we did through a pumper that one of my employees had and through some propane gas that we purchase out on St. Patrick Street. We were able to key up for production going into the Sunday publication.

Q. Jerry, before you go further along this line which I want to pursue, but I want to ask, you said when you were watching this flood, when you got down along where the flood was, along Philadelphia and in there, that occasionally when there was illumination from a fire or something like this, that you could see people occasionally. Where, can you remember where you saw some of those people, where they were?

A. Uh...

Q. Were they in trees or on housetops, or...?

A. One, uh, there was one bright fire immediately north of the creek on Fifth Street, a house there that seemed to have more explosions than normal, and yes, I saw people on a house at New York and Fifth Street, also east of the New York-Fifth Street intersection there were people. And on the other side by A and B Welding there were people up on several buildings there. Most of them were on the buildings, the ones that I were aware of. And later that morning, there were some small boats...the boats with motors weren't too effective, but a man with a, oh, more or less a large rowboat, was able to get to these homes and put the women and the men and where...and there were some children involved, too, into the boats and get 'em back. But at that point the water was about waist deep.

- Q. You don't know who the gentleman was in the boat, by any chance?
- A. No, I, I didn't recognize, oh, a few of the people I, I recognized, but I, I can't recall their names, just familiar people. A number of the firemen and some of the city employees I recognized that were working. But, uh, most of these people...I didn't see any floating down the stream on logs or anything of that nature. The one...the people I saw were, were safe, but they were concerned, they didn't know that the water was receding, they...for all they knew it was still rising, and they were concerned, and hollering. So, uh...
- Q. What kind of debris did you see floating around, can you remember any?
- A. Just about everything. Logs, tanks, cans, uh, parts of buildings, uh, and a lot of it was, was undistinguishable in the, in the semi-darkness, and it was (actually) because all power was out at that point. Later in the morning the power was restored, but not in the flood area. Up on the higher ground you could see the lights where people had power back, Black Hills Power and Light people were on the utility poles adjacent to the flood area, but there were lines down and they were trying to take care of those exposed active wires so that somebody wouldn't be electrocuted.
- Q. You said that boats with motors were not very effective, to what do you attribute that, what was the problem?
- A. Well, I think, I think the problem was that it took, they needed a little, on the bigger boats you needed some depth in the water to get the boat in and started and going, and then you didn't, uh, you...a motorboat, you couldn't just go anywhere, you had to stay where the street was, if you knew where the street was, or you were entangled in, in debris and fences or whatever

else you had. So they did use one boat to advantage to get across the stream. Even, they had a lighter boat that they were picking people up with, and then they would string a line, and then they would follow that line and the, the powerboat would go across with the line and (come up) the stream, and they pulled the other boat over so that they wouldn't lose it. But they didn't seem to be able to get anywhere with the power boat. Probably the inconvenience of the size and the motor and the water (it) required and the debris that would tangle up in the props of the...I think I...during the following day I continued to check with Civil Defense and the newspaper plant; I had, I had many problems here at the newspaper plant, my job as part of management and I advised Ron Stevenson as well as Dr. Leidel, president of the council, some of the other aldermen, that I would be available if they needed me, if they felt there was an emergency where they needed my leadership over there, or else I had so many problems here that I would be up here at the paper plant. So I didn't accept or take on any particular job with Civil Defense, but being in the, the media business as we were, problems I had here, most of my time was spent with the Journal newspaper.

- Q. (I) think one of the things that you did was to help take a problem off their hands in a sense, didn't your newspaper become sort of the headquarters for correspondents from out of town, and can you tell us a little bit about it?
- A. We immediately...(I hadn't anymore arrived) at the office, of course, we didn't have any switchboard girls or any of our regular staff, just news-people and a few production people; the telephones were constantly ringing, first few I answered were from Chicago, Minneapolis, Omaha, Sioux City, uh, called and we, uh, we had utter chaos trying to, to tell these people what

was going on for the calls that did get into us. And then it seemed like a matter of hours and people were flyin' in, we had 25 to 30 outside newspeople here and photographers; they were...we even had two, two reporters here from London, England, that were representing the two major papers in London. We got 'em fro New York and, again, Chicago, Minneapolis, Omaha, just about every major large newspaper and magazine; Newsweek and Life and the others, as well as Associated Press, United Press, and their representatives, news-gathering people. So we did have several dozen people here almost around the clock, and we kept the newspaper plant on a 24-hour basis for the first three or four days. We had somebody here around the clock. And our own people manned the switchboards and made space available for these people. I knew they...there was some bit of a problem at Civil Defense. I mean, everyone in the outside world wanted to know what was going on in this disaster, and they were so busy with rescue work that it was hard to sit down...to take time to sit down and spend 15, 20 minutes with a, with a newsman when you had two or three dozen of 'em comin' in constantly, it was frustrating for the people at the Civil Defense Headquarters to, to take this time and yet they knew that people wanted to know, and they...it was somewhat their duty also to inform 'em. However, I think the alternate answer over there was to hold news conferences periodically and as sign a coordinator that would handle all the news releases and eliminate some of the confusion that did exist in Civil Defense Headquarters. I don't know what else, Earl, that you might wanna...me to touch on, I , we did, we were available, or I made myself available for all of the meetings that the mayor called, we had special meetings almost daily, and sometimes several of them, as I recall. And we

gave the mayor any and all emergency powers that municipal government could give him. We, we allowed him to cut many, many corners without worrying about the legality involved in it, and some expenditures, and I think a tremendous effort was extended on behalf of all of the council, most of 'em were there off and on during the whole week following the, the disaster, did what they could in what capacity they felt they were best qualified for. And I don't know what else I could add that would be beneficial for a follow-up on that. (Pause in taping) At about daybreak along the north side of the creek in the approximate area of New York and Sixth and New York and Fifth, New York and Fourth, they were a number of people rescued at about daybreak. And we could see 'em, we could find 'em and the people and the boats could get to 'em and bring 'em out, the waters had receded and the heavy current had receded. These people, fro the most part, through radio we were told that, uh, that Cathedral Church and the City Auditorium were available for flood victims that didn't have anyplace to go. And I, I recall a number of people bein' loaded in pickup campers and, and taken to these sights. In fact, I had goine home and picked up about seven or eight blankets that my wife, uh, uh, dug up out of storage and, and we gave them to these people as they were bein' picked up. Some of 'em, many of 'em were immediately taken into homes, there seemed to be people on shore that, that had a place for them, they just volunteered, "Well, you can come over to my house." And many of the people said, "Well, I have, I have a place to go to a couple blocks down," and somebody gave them a ride or they were within waking distance, and some of the men in the area just evidently saw that they got there. I personally didn't escort anyone to any homes, so I, I did...I couldn't say who they were.

- Q. You indicated that you'd seen some of the bridges taken out by floods in the past. How long have you lived in Rapid City?
- A. I've lived here most of my life, having been born east of Rapid City several hundred miles on a ranch, and I, uh, moved here in 1936. So...
- Q. Have you ever seen the water get this high, north of the creek over in that (area)?
- A. (Oh, I) never, never...the highest I've ever seen the water since living here was probably, well, it was over the, it took out the Sixth Street bridge at one point, one year, I don't even recall what year it was; the Fifth Street bridge _____ time I've seen it over those bridges. I recall down by the fairgrounds it took out that bridge and flooded the whole creek area in that lower part down by the fairgrounds, I remember seein' that. I don't recall ever seeing any flooding out west, but my home's always been on this side of the gap, and therefore I'm more familiar with the flooding that occurred on the east side of the gap. But, uh, the bridges have been replaced, and I recall having seen them flooded over.
- Q. Do you remember seeing the water over close to any street north of the creek...
- A. Never.
- Q. ...in a previous flood?
- A. No, no, never have. A lot of the previous floods were contained in Rapid City where you had the flash-type flood where you had heavy water, a couple feet of water even in certain streets, but never from the Rapid Creek flow, or overflow over the banks, I've never seen that occur anywhere down in this area other than just, you know, a few feet out of the banks here and there, but nothing compared to this. One, one incident on East Boulevard... East

Boulevard...the water was over the bridge on East Boulevard and as I recall it was the firemen from, I think, Rapid Valley, that were fighting a fire adjacent, immediately north of the Bean Bag food market--which was badly flooded--a laundrymat, and it was on fire, but they did contain the fire, the building was gutted; they spent most of the night there fighting that particular fire to save the surrounding buildings in the business district. Cars along East Boulevard were...had floated out of the motels and, of course, they were stacked like dominoes in that drainage ditch, which previously had been running full. I don't recall there were many wires down along there, I saw some people near the restaurant on East Boulevard, and I, I thought at first they were looters, and I, I couldn't say for sure, they were...there seemed to be people going in and out of the broken out glass windows, and it coulda been the owners or what, there was so much chaos and loose wires, and what-not that it was hard to say who was who or what was going on, there was just that much confusion.

Q. Now which restaurant do you refer to here?

A. This is the one right...out again at, at New York, right adjacent to New York and East Boulevard, where you have the restaurant and the laundrymat and Bean Bag market, several other small retail outlets there, I'm not familiar with which one it is.

(END OF INTERVIEW)

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 ADDRESS 729 Wood Avenue - Rapid City, South Dakota
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 OTHERS PRESENT _____
 LOCATION OF INTERVIEW Informant's office

ADDED NOTES: _____

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DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON INFORMANT

AGE 44 SEX Male COUNTY Pennington

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS Middle class

OCCUPATION Circulation manager - Rapid City Journal

EDUCATION Two years college

RELIGION Catholic

DATE FAMILY ARRIVED IN SOUTH DAKOTA _____

WHERE? _____

FROM WHERE? _____

NUMBER OF MOVES IN SOUTH DAKOTA _____

REASON FOR MOVES _____

Q. Rapid City, South Dakota, July 13, 1972, Earl Hausle interviewing Councilman Jerry Shoener, alderman from Ward Four. Jerry, on the night of the flood, did you become involved in any way in the activities?

A. Uh, not immediately. On the night of the flood I had...was at home and I received a call from one of the members of the Civic Center Corporation of which I am president, Mr. Mort Wilkins, and he suggested that we keep an eye on the creek that night because there was reports of high water in the Hills and maybe it would give us a better idea of the particular site that we at the city council had showed them for location of the Civic Center. So at about 10:15 I left my home and went down to view the creek and the bridges at Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and West Boulevard. I took my wife and several of the children, we drove down, unaware of the, of the potential danger that was, uh, developing. And we checked the bridges, the water was in the creek three or four feet higher than usual; however, over the years, many times, I've seen the water almost up to the bridge, and then several times I've seen bridges taken out over the years. So I wasn't unduly concerned, this was probably 10:30 on Friday night of June 9th and I returned home and, uh, still unaware completely of the danger involved. The children had the T.V. on, I, I was reading that particular night, and, uh, there didn't seem to be any alarm, they'd, uh, just flashed a streamer on the screen calling attention to the possible high water and that Mayor Barnett had suggested that people in the low areas consider evacuating and that there was a potential of high water and flooding. I, I didn't have the radio on so I wasn't too fully aware of the potential of the, of the disaster that was forthcoming. At about, uh, midnight, I think we were tired, had, had actually got into bed when one

of the neighbors rang our doorbell, got us up, and all excited, and that there was a flood and fires and explosions, and her son was isolated near the welding shop on 6th Street, 6th and New York, and wanted to know if we could help. And so our...some of the other neighbors and a group proceeded ahead of us down to New York Street and, and Sixth, while I was getting dressed and...to try to rescue this boy, and I was quite shocked when I arrived at the scene of the high water, which at that point was up to Philadelphia Street on the north side of the creek. This is about three blocks from the creek proper. And the water was running very strong, the current was strong, it was taking boats and just simply capsized 'em and pushed 'em aside. There were fires, occasional explosion when a, when a gas line erupted and, and was ignited some way. People were screamin', you could, you could hear 'em, you couldn't see 'em. Occasional, uh, explosion or fire would give you illumination to where you could see people. This...at that time I think it was about 12:30, 1 o'clock. But at any rate we, we walked along the creek, up and down Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, up to West Boulevard, there was very little any of us could do, we...fires, there were several fire trucks on that side of the creek, there were...was some city equipment, city pickups with radios, they tried to coordinate things best they could. It was still raining slightly. There were some people in, in wetsuits with, with rope tied to 'em and innertubes, but as soon as they got down in, the current kind of pushed 'em right back. The rescue was, was hampered very much by the strong current, the darkness and just the utter confusion that there seemed to be, there seemed to be people hollering for help everywhere, and no one really had the equipment, er, really didn't know how to go about it, and there didn't seem to be the leadership

there that...or the equipment to do what should have been done. I think everyone did the best they could. Many of the people had blankets and were giving the people blankets that were bein' rescued from the, the water, a lot of 'em were taken 'em to, uh, uh, to private homes, people would rush up and say, "Well, I've got some room up here ('cause) the water missed me." But as we, as we did what we could along the creek, the water started to recede and by about 3 o'clock in the morning it had receded to...well, maybe it was closer to 4 o'clock, it had receded down to about New York Street from the high point of the railroad tracks on Philadelphia. There wasn't any way of getting across the creek at that point; at about 5:00 in the morning, I got across the creek on Maple Street, which was east of East Boulevard bridge. The water was over the bridge at East Boulevard and the Maple Street area was about the only area you could get across. The West Boulevard Bridge was up, capable of carrying traffic later in the morning, too. From there I went down to the Civil Defense office, and at that point there seemed to be a lot of confusion, I did talk to, to Ron Stevenson who took charge in the absence of our Civil Defense director. Ron seemed to have things well in had, and a lot of the other Civil Defense people were there, they started setting aside the various departmetns in the rooms that would handle equipment, bodies, volunteers and so forth. Assuming that I had problems at the newspaper, I, I left Civil Defense Headquarters about 6:00, 6:30 in the morning, came to the newspaper plant and found that we were without gas, without water, we had some of the staff down here, some of the news people, some of the production people, we tried to make a decision, how bad we were from the standpoint of production that day and whether we should even concern

ourselves with trying to get a paper out, (where) there was so much disaster and human misery in the city. And the decision was to forego the Saturday publication, at that point try to make provisions for water and gas, which we did through a pumper that one of my employees had and through some propane gas that we purchase out on St. Patrick Street. We were able to key up for production going into the Sunday publication.

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Q. Were they in trees or on housetops, or...?

A. One, uh, there was one bright fire immediately north of the creek on Fifth Street, a house there that seemed to have more explosions than normal, and yes, I saw people on a house at New York and Fifth Street, also east of the New York-Fifth Street intersection there were people. And on the other side by A and B Welding there were people up on several buildings there. Most of them were on the buildings, the ones that I were aware of. And later that morning, there were some small boats...the boats with motors weren't too effective, but a man with a, oh, more or less a large rowboat, was able to get to these homes and put the women and the men and where...and there were some children involved, too, into the boats and get 'em back. But at that point the water was about waist deep.

- Q. You don't know who the gentleman was in the boat, by any chance?
- A. No, I, I didn't recognize, oh, a few of the people I, I recognized, but I, I can't recall their names, just familiar people. A number of the firemen and some of the city employees I recognized that were working. But, uh, most of these people...I didn't see any floating down the stream on logs or anything of that nature. The one...the people I saw were, were safe, but they were concerned, they didn't know that the water was receding, they...for all they knew it was still rising, and they were concerned, and hollering. So, uh...
- Q. What kind of debris did you see floating around, can you remember any?
- A. Just about everything. Logs, tanks, cans, uh, parts of buildings, uh, and a lot of it was, was undistinguishable in the, in the semi-darkness, and it was (actually) because all power was out at that point. Later in the morning the power was restored, but not in the flood area. Up on the higher ground you could see the lights where people had power back, Black Hills Power and Light people were on the utility poles adjacent to the flood area, but there were lines down and they were trying to take care of those exposed active wires so that somebody wouldn't be electrocuted.
- Q. You said that boats with motors were not very effective, to what do you attribute that, what was the problem?
- A. Well, I think, I think the problem was that it took, they needed a little, on the bigger boats you needed some depth in the water to get the boat in and started and going, and then you didn't, uh, you...a motorboat, you couldn't just go anywhere, you had to stay where the street was, if you knew where the street was, or you were entangled in, in debris and fences or whatever

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- Q. (I) think one of the things that you did was to help take a problem off their hands in a sense, didn't your newspaper become sort of the headquarters for correspondents from out of town, and can you tell us a little bit about it?
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- Q. You indicated that you'd seen some of the bridges taken out by floods in the past. How long have you lived in Rapid City?
- A. I've lived here most of my life, having been born east of Rapid City several hundred miles on a ranch, and I, uh, moved here in 1936. So...
- Q. Have you ever seen the water get this high, north of the creek over in that (area)?
- A. (Oh, I) never, never...the highest I've ever seen the water since living here was probably, well, it was over the, it took out the Sixth Street bridge at one point, one year, I don't even recall what year it was; the Fifth Street bridge _____ time I've seen it over those bridges. I recall down by the fairgrounds it took out that bridge and flooded the whole creek area in that lower part down by the fairgrounds, I remember seein' that. I don't recall ever seeing any flooding out west, but my home's always been on this side of the gap, and therefore I'm more familiar with the flooding that occurred on the east side of the gap. But, uh, the bridges have been replaced, and I recall having seen them flooded over.
- Q. Do you remember seeing the water over close to any street north of the creek...
- A. Never.
- Q. ...in a previous flood?
- A. No, no, never have. A lot of the previous floods were contained in Rapid City where you had the flash-type flood where you had heavy water, a couple feet of water even in certain streets, but never from the Rapid Creek flow, or overflow over the banks, I've never seen that occur anywhere down in this area other than just, you know, a few feet out of the banks here and there, but nothing compared to this. One, one incident on East Boulevard... East

Boulevard...the water was over the bridge on East Boulevard and as I recall it was the firemen from, I think, Rapid Valley, that were fighting a fire adjacent, immediately north of the Bean Bag food market--which was badly flooded--a laundrymat, and it was on fire, but they did contain the fire, the building was gutted; they spent most of the night there fighting that particular fire to save the surrounding buildings in the business district. Cars along East Boulevard were...had floated out of the motels and, of course, they were stacked like dominoes in that drainage ditch, which previously had been running full. I don't recall there were many wires down along there, I saw some people near the restaurant on East Boulevard, and I, I thought at first they were looters, and I, I couldn't say for sure, they were...there seemed to be people going in and out of the broken out glass windows, and it coulda been the owners or what, there was so much chaos and loose wires, and what-not that it was hard to say who was who or what was going on, there was just that much confusion.

Q. Now which restaurant do you refer to here?

A. This is the one right...out again at, at New York, right adjacent to New York and East Boulevard, where you have the restaurant and the laundrymat and Bean Bag market, several other small retail outlets there, I'm not familiar with which one it is.

(END OF INTERVIEW)

EH Rapid City, South Dakota, July 13, 1972, Earl Hausle interviewing ^{Councilman} Captain Jerry Shoener, ^{Four} ~~43~~ Jerry, on the night of the flood, did you become involved in any way in the activities?

JS ^{Wb. i.c.} Not immediately, ^{had...} on the night of the flood I was at home and I received a call from one of the members of the Civic Center Corporation of which I am president, Mr. ^{Wb.} Wilkins, and he suggested that we keep an eye on the creek ^{at that night} because there was reports of high waters ^{maybe it would} in the hills and ^{particular} give us a better idea of the ^{at} that we the city council, had showed them for location of the Civic Center. So at about 10:15, I left my home and went down to view the creek and the bridges ^{at} Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and West Boulevard. I took my wife and several of the children, we drove down, unaware of ^{the, of} the potential danger that was ^{uh.} developing, and we checked the bridges, the water was in the creek three or ~~or~~ four feet higher than usual; however, over the years, many times, I've seen the water almost up to the bridge, and then several times I've seen bridges taken out ^{over the years}. So I wasn't unduly concerned, this was probably 10:30 on Friday night of June 9th ^{and} I returned home and ^{uh.} still unaware completely of the danger involved, the children had the tv on, ^{I,} I was reading that particular night, and ^{uh.} there didn't seem to be any alarm, they ^{uh.} just flashed a streamer on the screen calling attention to the possible high water and that Mayor Barnett had suggested that people in the low areas consider evacuating and there was a potential of ^{that} high water and ~~if~~ flooding. ^{I,} I didn't have ^{the} a radio on so I wasn't too fully aware of the potential of the disaster that was forthcoming. At about ^{uh,} midnight, I think we ^{we,} were tired, ^{had,} had actually got into bed when one of the neighbors rang our doorbell, go ^t us up, and all excited, ^{and} that there was a flood and fires and explosions, and her son was isolated near the ^{welding} shop on 6th Street, ~~8~~6th and New York, and wanted to know if we could help. ^{And} So some of the other neighbors ^{and} and a group proceeded ahead of us down to New York Street ^{and,} and Sixth, ^{while} I didn't ^{was getting dressed} get any rest, and ^{to} was trying to rescue this boy, and I was quite shocked when I arrived at the scene of the high water, which at that point was up to Philadelphia Street on the north side of the creek. This is about three blocks from the creek proper. And the water was running very strong, the current was strong, it was taking ^(boats) and just simply capsized ^{uh,} them and pushed them

JS aside . There ^{or} were fires, occasional explosions ^{when a} when a gas line erupted and ignited some way. People were screaming, you could ^{you could} hear them, you couldn't see ^{them} them. Occasional, ^{and} explosion or fire would give you illumination to where you could see people. This ^{at} at that time ^{I think} it was about 12/30, 1 o'clock. ^{But} At any rate we, we walked along the creek, up and down ~~XXX~~ Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, up to West Boulevard, there was very little any of us could do, we ^{with} fires, there were several fire trucks on that side of the creek, there was some city equipment, city pickups with radios, they tried to coordinate things best they could. It was still raining slightly. There were some people ^{in,} in wet ^{with,} suits with rope tied to them and innertubes, but ^{down} soon as they got ^{out} out in the current kind of pushed them right back. The rescue ^{was,} was hampered very much by the strong current, the darkness and just the utter confusion that there seemed to be, there seemed to be people hollering for help everywhere, and no one really had the equipment ^{and} and really didn't know how to go about it, and there didn't seem to be the leadership there that ^{as the equipment to} do what should have been done. I think every ^{one} body did the best they could. Many ^{of the} people had blankets and were giving ^{the} people blankets ^{that were} being rescued from the water, a lot of them were taken ^{12m to, uh, uh, to} into private homes, people would rush up and say, you know, "Well, I've got some room up here ^('cause) the water missed me." But as we, as we did go ^{what we could} ~~the current~~ along the creek, the water started to recede and by about 3 o'clock in the ~~morning~~ morning it had receded to ^{well, maybe} ~~I think~~ it was closer to 4 o'clock, it had receded down to about New York Street from the high point of the ~~xxxxxx~~ railroad tracks on Philadelphia. There wasn't any way of getting across the creek at that point; ^{at} about five in the morning, I got across the creek on Maple Street, which was east of East Boulevard bridge, the water was over the bridge at East Boulevard, ^{And} And the Maple Street area was about the only area you could get across. ^{The} West Boulevard Bridge was up, capable of carrying traffic later ~~on~~ in the morning, too. ^{From there} But I went down to the Civil Defense office, and at that ~~point~~ point there seemed to be a lot of confusion, I ~~didn't~~ did talk to, to Ron Stevenson who took charge in the absence of ^{new} a Civil Defense director, Ron seemed to have things well in hand, ^{and} but a lot of the other Civil Defense people were there, they started setting aside the various departments in the rooms that would handle equipment, bodies, volunteers and

JS so forth. Assuming that I had problems at the newspaper, ^{I,} I left Civil Defense Headquarters about 6 , 6:30 in the morning, came to the newspaper plant and found that we were without gas, without water, we had some of the staff down here, some of the news people, some of the production people, we tried to make a decision, how bad we were from the standpoint of production that day and whether we should even concern ourselves with trying to get a paper out, ^(where) ~~where~~ there was so much disaster and human misery in the city. And the decision was to forego the Saturday publication, at that point ^Y tried to make provisions for water and gas, which we did through a pumper that one of my employees had and through some propane gas that we purchased out on St. Patrick Street. We were able to key up for production, ^{going} went into the Sunday publication.

EH Jerry, before you go further along this line which I want to pursue, but I want to ask, you said when you were watching this flood, ^{when you} and got down along where the flood was, along Philadelphia and in there, that ^{occasionally} when there was illumination from a fire or something like this, that you could see people occasionally. Where, can you remember where you saw some of those people, where they were, ^{Q: Uh...} were they in trees or ^{on} in ^{house tops} , or...?

JS One, ^{uh, there was} one bright fire immediately north of the creek on Fifth Street, a house there that seemed to have more explosions than normal, and ^(yes), I saw people on a house at New York and Fifth Street, also east of the New York-Fifth Street intersection there were people. And on the other side by ^A and ^B ~~D~~ welding there were people up on several buildings there. Most of them were on the buildings, the ones that I ^{were} ~~was~~ aware of. And later that morning, there were some small boats, the boats with motors weren't too effective, but ^a man, ~~what~~ with a, oh, ^{more or less} it's a large rowboat, was able to get to these homes and put the women and the men and ^{what's} ^{and} there were some children involved too, into the boats and get ^{them} ~~them~~ back. But at that point the water was about waist deep.

EH You don't know who the gentleman was in the boat, by any chance?

JS No, I ~~xxx~~, I didn't recognize, oh, a few of the people ^{I,} I recognized, but ^{I,} I can't recall their names, just familiar people. A number of the firemen and ^{some of} the city employees I recognized that were working, ^{But, uh,} most of these people, I didn't see any floating down the stream on logs or anything of that nature. ^{one-the} The people I saw ^{were,} were safe, but they ~~were~~ concerned, they didn't know ^{that} the water was receding, they, for all they knew it was still

JS rising, and they were concerned, and (hollering). So...uh...

EH What kind of debris did you see floating around, can you remember? ^{any?}

JS Just about everything. Logs, ^{tanks} ~~tents~~, cans, ^{uh,} parts of buildings, ^{uh,} and a lot of it was, ~~was~~ undistinguishable in the, in the semi-darkness, ^{and it was (actually) because} all power was out at that point. Later in the morning the power was restored, but not in the flood area. Up on the higher ground you could see the lights where people had ~~the~~ power back, Black Hills Power and LIGHT people were on the utility poles adjacent to the flood area, but there were lines ^{down} and they were trying to take care of those exposed active wires ^{so} that somebody wouldn't be electrocuted.

EH You said the ^{at} boats with motors were not very effective, to what ^{do} can you attribute that, what ~~was~~ the problem?

JS ^{Well,} I think, I think the problem was that it took, they needed a little, ^{on the bigger boats} a ~~bigger~~ motor, ^{you} needed some depth in the water to get the boat in and started and going, and then you didn't, ^{uh, you...} a motorboat, you couldn't just go anywhere, you had to stay where the street was, if you knew where the street was, or you were entangled ⁱⁿ in debris and fences or whatever else ^{you} had. ~~So~~ So they did use one boat to advantage to get across the stream. Even, they had a lighter boat that they were picking people up with, and then they would string a line, and then they would follow that line and the powerboat would go across with the line and ^(come up) the stream, and they pulled the other boat over so that they wouldn't lose it. But they didn't seem to be able to get anywhere with the power boat. ^(probably) the inconvenience of the size and ^{the} motor ^{and} in the water ^(it) required and the debris that would tangle up in the props ^{of the...} I think I, during the following day I continued to check with Civil Defense and the newspaper plant; I had, I had many problems here at the newspaper plant, my job ^{was} part of management, and I advised Ron Stevenson as well as Dr. Leidel, president of the council, some of the other ^{the} Aldermen, ^{i.e.} that I would be available if they needed me, if they felt there was an emergency where they needed my leadership over there, or else I had so many problems here that I would be up here at the paper plant. So I didn't accept or take on any particular job with civil defense, but being in the ^{the} media business as we were, problems I had here, most of my time was spent with the Journal newspaper.

EH ^(E) Think one of the things that you did was to help take a problem off their hands in a sense, didn't your newspaper become sort of the headquarters for correspondence ^{to} from out of town, and can you tell us a little bit about it?

JS We immediately.. ^(I hadn't anymore arrived) arise at the office, of course we didn't have any switchboard girls or any of our regular staff, just news ^{to} people and a few production people; the telephones were constantly ~~xxxx~~ ringing, first few I answered were from Chicago, Minneapolis, Omaha, Sioux City, ^{who,} ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{who,} (called) ^{and we had,} we had utter chaos trying ^{to,} to tell these people what was going on. ~~xxxxxx~~ for the calls that did get into us. And then it seemed like a matter of hours and people were flying ^{in,} in, we had 25 to 30 outside newspeople here and photographers, ^{they were..} ~~here,~~ ^{two,} we even had two reporters here from London, ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{again,} England, that were representing the two major papers in London. We got ^{them} from New York and Chicago, Minneapolis, Omaha, just about every major large newspaper and magazine; Newsweek and Life and the others, as well as Associated Press, United Press, and ~~xxxx~~ their representatives, news-gathering people. ^{So} We did have several dozen people here almost around the clock, and we kept the newspaper plant on a 24-hour basis for the first 3 or 4 days. We had somebody here around the clock. And our own people manned the switchboards and made space available for these people. I knew ^{they..} there was some bit of a problem at Civil Defense. I mean, everyone in the outside world wanted to know what was going on, in this disaster, and ~~but~~ they were so busy with rescue work that it was hard to sit down, ^{to,} take time to sit down and spend 15, 20 minutes ^{with,} with a newsman when you have ^d 2 or 3 dozen of them coming ^{in,} in constantly, it was frustrating for the people at the Civil Defense Headquarters ^{to,} to take this time and yet they knew that people wanted to know, and ^{they..} it was somewhat their duty also ^{to} inform them. However, I think the ~~alternate~~ ^{ultimate} answer over there was to hold news conferences periodically and ^{as} sign a coordinator that would handle all the news releases and eliminate some of the confusion that did exist in Civil Defense Headquarters. I don't ^{na... me to} know what else, Earl, that you might want to touch on, I, we did, we were available, ^{we} I made myself available for all of the meetings that the mayor called, we had special meetings almost ~~daily~~ daily, and sometimes several of them, as I recall. And we gave the mayor any and all emergency powers that municipal government could have

JS give him. We ^{was} allowed him to cut ^{money} many corners without worrying about the legality involved in it, and some expenditures, ^{and I think} ~~took~~ a tremendous effort ^{was} extended on behalf of all of the council, most of ^{of} them were there off and on during the whole week following ^{the} the disaster, did what they could ⁱⁿ, in what capacity they felt they were best qualified for. And I don't know what else I could add that would be beneficial for a follow-up on that. (Pause in taping) At about daybreak along ^{the north} ~~in our~~ side of the creek

EH ^{in the} ~~an~~ approximate area of New York and Sixth and New York and Fifth, New York and Fourth, they were a number of people rescued at about daybreak. ^{And we could} ~~see them,~~ ^{we could} ~~and find them~~ ^{and the} people and the boats could get to ^{them} and bring ^{them} out, the waters had receded and the heavy current had receded. These people, for ^(the) most part, through radio we were told ^{that, who} that Cathedral Church and the city auditorium were available for flood victims that didn't have any place to go. And ^I recall a number of people being ^{loaded} in pickup campers and, and taken to the ^{sights}. In fact, I ^{had} gone home and picked up about seven or eight blankets that my wife ^{who, why} dug up out of storage, ^{and, and} then we gave them to these people as they were ^{being} picked up. Some of them, ~~and~~ many of ^{them} were immediately taken into homes, ^{these} ~~as soon as those~~ people on shore had a place for them, they ^{just} volunteered, "Well, you can come over ^(at) my house." ^{and} Many of the people ^{said} says, "Well, I have, I have a place to go to a couple blocks down," and somebody gave them a ride ^{or} they were within walking distance, and ^{some of the} ~~several~~ men in the area just evidently saw ^{that} they got there. I personally ~~didn't~~ didn't escort anyone to any homes, so ^{I did... I} couldn't say who they were.

EH You indicated that you'd seen some of the bridges taken out by floods in the past. How long have you lived in ^{Rapid City} ~~that~~ vicinity?

JS I've lived here most of my life, having been born east of Rapid City several hundred miles on a ranch, and I ^{who} moved here in 1936. So...

EH Have you ever seen the water get this high, ^{north of} ~~from~~ the creek ^{over in that (area)?}

JS (Oh, I) never, never... ^{the} highest I've ever seen the water since living here was probably, well, it was over the, it took out the Sixth Street bridge at one point, one year, I don't even recall what year it was; but ^{the Fifth Street} bridge, ^{time} I've seen it over those bridges. I recall down by the fairgrounds it took out that bridge and flooded ^{the} whole creek area in that lower part down by the fairgrounds, I remember seeing ^{that}.

JS I don't recall ever seeing any flooding out west, but my home's always been on this side of the gap, ^{and therefore I'm} more familiar with the flooding that occurred ⁱⁿ on the east side of the gap.

^{But, uh... i.e.} The bridges have been replaced, ^{and} I recall having seen ^{them} a flood ^{ed} go over.

EH Do you remember seeing ^{the} any water over close to any street north of the creek? ^{In a previous flood?}

JS No, ^{uh} Never have. A lot of the previous floods were contained in Rapid City where you had the flash-type flood when ^{if} you had heavy water, a couple feet of water ^{even} in certain streets, but never from the Rapid Creek flow, ^{or} overflow over the banks, I've never seen that occur anywhere down in this area other than just, you know, a few feet out of the banks here and there, but nothing compared to this. ^{one} One incident on East Boulevard, East Boulevard, the water was over the bridge on East Boulevard and as I recall it was the firemen from, ^{I think, Rapid Valley,} that were fighting a fire adjacent, immediately north of the Bean Bag food market, ^{which had been} which ~~had been~~ was badly flooded. ^A A laundromat, and it was on fire, ^{and} they did contain the fire, ^{but} the building was gutted; they spent most of the night there fighting that ^{particular} fire, ^{to} Saved ^{the} the surrounding buildings in the business district. Cars along East Boulevard were ^{had} floated out of the motels, and, of course, they were stacked ~~right down~~ ^{like} like dominos in that drainage ditch, which ~~previously~~ ^{previously} had been running full. I don't recall there were many wires down along ~~there~~ there, I saw some people near the restaurant on East Boulevard, and I, I thought at first they were looters, and I couldn't say for sure, they ^{seemed} seemed to be people ^{drug} drug in and out of these broken ^{out} glass windows, ^{and} but it could ^{have} have been the owners, ^{or what,} there was so much chaos and loose wires, ^{and} what-not that it was hard to say who was who or what was going on, there was ^{just} that much confusion.

EH Now which restaurant do you refer to here?

JS This is the one right ^{out again} at, at New York, right adjacent to New York and East Boulevard, where you have the restaurant and the laundromat and Bean Bag market, several other small retail outlets there, ^{I'm not familiar with which one it is.} ~~in front of it.~~

(END OF INTERVIEW)