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I am 18 years of age or older and I am competent to contract in my own name. I have read this release before signing below, and fully understand the contents, meaning and impact of this release. I understand that I am free to address any specific questions regarding this release prior to signing, and I agree that my failure to do so will be interpreted as a free and knowledgeable acceptance of the terms of this release.

I have read the release, understand it, and intend it to be a binding instrument.

X Ronald Kohn 2/4/2013 Elyse M. Meun 31 Jan 2013  
Signature of the Interviewee/Photo Subject      Date      Signature of Authorized Agent      Date

Summary of Restrictions:

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\_\_\_\_\_ [See Deed of Gift: Restrictions ]

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Library Cataloguing Service Data

Name of informant Ronald Kohn  
Address 3725 Western Avenue, Rapid City, South Dakota  
Date of Interview June 28, 1972  
Name of Researcher O. A. Rothlisberger  
Others Present \_\_\_\_\_  
Location of Interview 323 East Indiana, Rapid City, South Dakota  
Added Notes Informant, his wife, son, and family dog stranded and spent  
night in their flood ravaged house.

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

Rapid City flood victim  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Demographic Information on Informant

Age 26 Sex Male County Pennington  
Socio-economic status Middle  
Occupation Advertising Agency.  
Education \_\_\_\_\_  
Religion \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Arrival of Family in South Dakota \_\_\_\_\_  
Where? \_\_\_\_\_  
From where? \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Moves in South Dakota \_\_\_\_\_ Reasons for move: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Q. This evening I'm talking to Mr. Ron Kohn of Rapid City, South Dakota. Mr. Kohn, your house and property located on 3725 Western Avenue, correct?
- A. Yeah, that's correct.
- Q. And, as you and I just before we began to tape were looking at the map, I guess we located that property as in the northwest quarter of the southeast quarter of section 9, township 1 north, range 7 east, did we not?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Now, Mr. Kohn, you were home on the evening of June 9th, that was the date of the flood was it not?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You were home, you, your wife, and you have a . . . .
- A. A son.
- Q. Your son, and he's about. . . .
- A. He's three.
- Q. He's three, I see. What time was it, Mr. Kohn, when you, when you became concerned that this was more than just an unusually heavy rain, that a flood, a crisis condition was rapidly developing.
- A. Well, we, I believe we saw something on the news about National Guard being on alert, I think that was it, and so the guy that lived next door, Gary, can't think of his last name, we went up the corner of 38th and Western Avenue, to see, you know, we'd heard water was rising. And we also had a creek in our backyard. \_\_\_\_\_ we had, Rapid Creek was to the north and this little, just a little creek, you know, was to, right behind our house, right in through the backyard. And it had risen, you know, quite a bit, and Rapid Creek had risen, but we really didn't think much about it at all.

Until we heard the message over TV to evacuate, and then Gary, next door neighbor, tried to get his car out and couldn't. The water was too high in the street, so we went back in the house and I really didn't think much of it, until about, I don't recall these times very well, but I would say about 10 or 10:30, when I noticed the neighbor's lawn was starting to become flooded. To the left of us. And I didn't even actually think much of that, because I presumed that it would just keep going, you know, the water was flowing so fast that it would keep going, and, plus the creek behind us began to creep up in our backyard. And I still didn't give that much thought, my wife had our son up on the washer in the kitchen, and we were running around, and then the water began to trickle in, just barely trickle in the doors, the front door and the back door, and we tried to put rugs and blankets and things \_\_\_\_\_ we thought that would stop the water. And the house became filled with about, oh, I'd say three, four inches of water, something like this. And it stayed that way for a while. And then the house to the west of us came off its foundation. Now, the water was not that high yet, either. When this house came off its foundation. But it did, you know, made a noise when it hit into our house. And the next thing I knew is, my wife pointed out that our car was floating away. The fence had, you know, gone down, and now the water was about three to four feet.

Q. Uh-huh. It was rising very rapidly.

A. Very, very rapidly. And I went in my son's bedroom, and the water then was above, about, not above the windows, but, you know, to the windows and a little above the bottom part. And it was coming, it was dirty, muddy, it was coming very fast, and then the worst thing that happened all night was, the house that

had already hit us once from the west, somehow turned around and turned our house around off its foundation and shoved our house into the house to the east of us. So there were three houses together. And my wife and I and my son were in the kitchen, and all this, all the kitchen stuff--cupboards, and cans and glasses--came tumbling down on top of us. And we thought that was it, right there. You know, we just thought we'd float away. And then nothing happened for a while, you know, just an occasional cup would fall out of a cupboard, and the house tilted. And so we were on the high end, like a sinking ship. And so I smashed out the screen, to at least open the door. You know, you could open the door because our end of the house was above the water.

Q. I see, yeah, yeah.

A. And watched the water all night long, we got flashlights, we repeatedly kept thinking, we were very worried, of course, about our son.

Q. Uh-huh. Now, the boy is three.

A. He's only three.

Q. Yeah. Now how did he react to this, was he quite frightened, or. . . ?

A. He wasn't frightened, he was very good, as a matter of fact, actually, through the whole thing. But he wasn't really frightened at all. In fact it didn't seem to be \_\_\_\_\_ any until the house crashed into the next house. And then he knew, you know, something was very, very wrong with all the water and everything. But until then I don't, I don't think he really got that excited. And then we did have, managed to get two flashlights that just happened to be in the right place, and we did happen to find a candle that we already had burning. I was carrying it around I guess, we stuck that in the mud which

kept light on the inside. 'Cause we believed for some reason, that, you know, we'd never been in anything like this, that maybe the rescuers would show up just any minute. You know, boats and helicopters, I can see now, it was impossible that. . . . And anyway, we kept flashing lights out in the water and across the way, but we couldn't tell where we were because our house had been turned around and we weren't even sure that it was our, Gary and Nancy's house on the left of us, right, I should say. We weren't even sure that that was their house. We just didn't know where we were. And. . . .

- Q. Now, you'd lost your power, of course, you had no lights, other than these flashlights.
- A. Oh, no. We'd lost all power, in fact, we lost power about, I'd say \_\_\_\_\_ time, 11:05, when the clock stopped. And we had lost phone service much, very early in the evening. Every time it rained at our house the phone went out. And so anyway, we waited for this, it just kept getting worse. We thought, the water pounding by, all this stuff floating by, and we thought of many things. I attempted once to climb on the roof, and we had a, we got a rope out, we were going to tie my son to my wife or me, and we were just really worried about him. I believed through the whole thing that somehow I, 'course I didn't know how bad it was, I was under the belief that the flood was gonna end in the golf course, which is about three blocks up. And, but, we were really worried about our son, you know, \_\_\_\_ has a chance. So anyway, the night proceeded on and eventually we, I guess must have decided, we, we always thought about, you know, jumping out in the water, trying to swim it out, \_\_\_\_\_ on the roof, and all this, and finally we decided, being the house wasn't moving and we were out of water, you know, mud, but no flowing water, we found out

later it was flowing through the other house, but where we were it was just junk. And then little by little, I could tell that the water was going down. There was a tree out in front, well, it was out neighbor's house, now in front of ours, but all this debris and the water of course was hitting this bottom branch came out of this huge tree. But little by little it kept going down, and we'd always keep flashing the lights and the neighbors would flash the lights. And we always kept thinking we heard helicopters and boats, you know, which wasn't true. And then it began to get light and the water kept going down and down, and of course when the water started getting down to where you could tell that it had gone down at least four or five feet and was slowing down a little bit. Was getting lighter, but we knew then, you know, we were at least gonna make it out as long as the rest of the house didn't fall in, which was a worry all the time.

Q. Yes, I suppose it was. Were there any fires out in your area, out there?

A. No, not \_\_\_\_\_ seen.

Q. I had heard that someplaces gas lines had burst and fires had resulted, that sort of thing. But your house was not dislodged entirely from its foundation.

A. Oh, yes.

Q. You floated down stream, in other words.

A. Yes, it was moved completely off its foundation into, across what was out driveway into the other people's house.

Q. I see. Well, you were there then all night, all night long. That, that, about what time, do you, you probably don't know, but could you guess at what time it was when the water started to recede and you could, to use a \_\_\_\_\_ expression, see the light at the end of the tunnel, you know?

A. I would say it was probably about 4, about 4:30, you know, you, just a, glimpse of light, you know. At first you think you're seeing things, but you know, just getting light. And had the flood happened in the daytime I think it would have, you know, been better, if there is such a thing. It was just pitch dark.

Q. Now how, how did you, how were you evacuated then, the following morning, Saturday morning.

A. Saturday morning. It was about, let's see, what time was it? I don't know, it'd be 5 or 5:30. And finally you could see where we were. It was light enough to see, you know, we knew this one house across the street next to us, the most ghastly thing was looking to the left where there used to be houses and seeing nothing. And there was a camper, a huge Winnebago camper that was coming down the road, you know, it'd come down from up in the hills. And so I decided to get out and the first time I tried it I thought I was going to sink away in all that mud, but then there was some stones and debris and everything. I pitter-pattered my way over to the neighbors and they were safe, and the water was still running down the street, you know, the road itself, very fast, you know, it could probably \_\_\_\_\_, in fact it did. But that's when I realized, you know, we were at least going to live. And we had some neighbors that had a split level house up the hill, they, in fact, they housed the whole neighborhood for half a day, 'til I finally met my partner across the way. (Inaudible.)

Q. I see. That was. . . .

A. Steve Hughes.

Q. Yeah, mm-hm. Well, it, it wasn't necessary for you and your family to be



evacuated by some of the rescue squads about. . .that sort of thing?

- A. \_\_\_\_\_ there weren't any anyway. Well, see, on our side of the creek, there was no way to get there. Because of, the bridges were gone. And then they didn't figure out till about the middle of the day, they decided to use the golf course and come in these back roads. But at the time there was no way to get over there.
- Q. Now in your immediate neighborhood there, Mr. Kohn, were, were there casualties?
- A. No, they found just two days ago a dead person under our house. But I don't know who it was. But people that we knew in the neighborhood which is about, you know, my wife knew almost all of them, and there were none, they did find a policeman, I believe, that attempted to rescue earlier in the evening across the way. But nobody that we knew in our neighborhood. Died in. . . .
- Q. I see. I see. But a good many of your neighbors were in much the same situation that you were, stranded there in their houses over night.
- A. Yes. Well, the house to the left of us that crashed into us in the first place, they were not there. They had gone out to get an icecream cone and just couldn't get back. And had they been there, it would have been \_\_\_\_\_, 'cause their house was, at least ours you could at least tell it was a house. Theirs, it was, oh nothing. And it was a big, nice house.
- Q. Now, you have a dog here, the dog was with you?
- A. Yes. That's Chipper, and she was there. She'd just gotten her hair cut that day. She used to have, you know, look like more like a cocker. And she was there, when the cupboards came crashing down we sat her up on one of them and she went through the whole thing, too.
- Q. How did she react to water coming in? Did she, did she want to get out, or

was she content to stay. . . ?

A. No, just, yeah, she was content to stay with us. She didn't. . . .

Q. Whimper around a bit or. . . .

A. No, she was just afraid. I mean, she knew something was wrong.

Q. Yeah, I suppose, I suppose.

A. (Unintelligible.)

Q. Well, Mr. Kohn, you have anything else to tell us about this flood, of your experience in it, reaction to. . .to this thing?

A. Well, no, just a lot of people all of a sudden pulled together, and I found out who my neighbors were overnight.

Q. Yes, I suppose, I suppose. Now the following Saturday then, what, what time did you say it was that you were \_\_\_\_\_ leave and get out to go to wherever you went to, your parents', wife's parents'.

A. Late in the afternoon. Yeah, later that afternoon.

Q. And you, you went with friends then.

A. Yeah, it was Steve and Susan Hughes. And, of course, all our friends were all over and everything.

Q. Yeah. Well, okay, then thank you, Mr. Kohn, for an informative and interesting tape on this flood. Thank you very much.