

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Library Cataloguing Service Data

Name of informant Lloyd St. Pierre

Address 2948 W. St. Anne, Rapid City, South Dakota

Date of Interview July 10, 1972

Name of Researcher Earl Hausle

Others Present none

Location of Interview Standard Bulk Plant, 1002 Main, Rapid City, South Dakota

Added Notes Chairman of Pennington County Commissioners and former city council member.

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

Leaving home due to flood; Government and business reactions to the emergency.

Demographic Information on Informant

Age 52 Sex Male County Pennington

Socio-economic status upper middle class

Occupation Standard Oil Bulk Dealer

Education College degree

Religion Protestant

Date of Arrival of Family in South Dakota _____

Where? _____

From where? _____

Number of Moves in South Dakota _____ Reasons for moves: _____

- Q. July 10, 1972, Earl Hausle interviewing Lloyd St. Pierre. Lloyd is the present Chairman of the Pennington County Commissioners, he's also the Standard Oil bulk dealer in Rapid City. Lloyd, I'd like to have you tell us your own personal experiences during the night of the flood, starting on June the 9th.
- A. My wife had been up to a concert by this German Band, at (west) Stephens, at Stephens High School, and evidently they had instructed people there to return to their homes, and my wife arrived home about 9:15 and said there was a possibility of a flood coming down Rapid Creek. But at that time, the only thing we could see, it was raining and we really, we weren't very concerned. We turned the 10 o'clock news on and listened to the weather forecast and-- from television--and it didn't appear from any newscast that I had heard that there was much danger of a flood of the magnitude that we had. It said the worst was yet to come, but they didn't say how much worse it was going to be so we weren't really concerned, and I would say about 10 minutes to eleven my daughter looked out the window and noticed that my pickup was floating down the street 'cause the water was about a foot and a half or two feet high. I put on some rain gear and went out the door to retrieve it, but by that time it was gone, and I began to realize then that the water was much higher in my section of town than I'd ever seen it before, and approximately ten minutes after eleven the lights went out in the house, and I rustled up some flashlights. And my wife was down in the basement with her sister, 'cause some water was coming in the basement window, but she wasn't very much concerned either; and by that time I noticed the water was getting up around the foundation, and I told her and her sister and her aunt and my daughter we'd better leave the house because it looked like the water

was coming quite high. We couldn't get out the front door because of the depth of the water, so we went...I have a split-level home, so we went down to the next level and crawled out my boy's bedroom window. But when we got out in the back yard, the water was only about a foot and a half deep, so I really wasn't concerned, I thought if we would go across to the east two or three ya...lots, we'd be up on plenty safe ground. But, by the time we all got out of the window and started across the next lot...evidently when we got behind that home the crest of the flood had hit us, and we found ourselves in about four and a half feet of water. We tried to go east to get higher ground, but there was a thick hedge, so we couldn't get through this hedge, and we couldn't get back to the house. So our next move was, was, uh, we have a poplar tree in the back yard, the neighbors have a poplar tree, so I said the only al...out we have now is to get to that tree and climb up it, which we did--all five of us. We stayed there approximately two hours, and the house that we were behind, he had come back after the water had gone down considerable, and he was looking at the back yard, and we saw the flashlight shining, so we all yelled in unison, and he finally decided that we were in a tree, and he waded back there and found us, and during...by that time the water was only about two feet deep, so we all, he helped us all out of the tree and got us back to dry ground and then...

Q. What's your address, Lloyd, uh...?

A. 2948 West St. Anne.

Q. And what house were you behind? in the poplar tree?

A. Howard Scott's which was (this), I forget their address, but it'd be 2946, I believe, West St. Anne.

Q. Okay, go ahead.

A. And then, uh, so we, we were taken out of the tree, and he had some, they had some friends, that they had gone to, and I'm sorry that I don't remember their names right now, but we got up to their home about 1:30, 2:00, and, of course, the lights were out there, so we all kind of relaxed and got covered up with blankets, and got warmed up, and we stayed there, I imagine about 8:00 the next morning. And then we went down, my wife and I went down to our home, and found out it was still standing; and much to our surprise it...water had never gotten up to our main level so we would have been much better off if we'd stayed in the house, but we didn't know that at the time, because at the time this water ca...was rushing down the street, and cars kept floating by, and I could see a...debris hitting the house and probably knocking a hole in it, and if it ever did, with that rushing water I'm sure we would have been gone, because after I surveyed the neighborhood the next morning, the house just a block north of me that sits on a corner like mine was completely gone. My son wasn't home, uh, he'd gone out for the evening, and, of course, we didn't know where he was, and he didn't know our condition; but I imagine about 9:00, he came driving in. He had found shelter with some friends in the eastern section of town during the night, and we were relieved to know that he did come out all right also. As far as our activities from then on, I, we just were quite stunned as far as...to see the damage in the neighborhood. And my concern then, I had a portable radio, and heard all of the broadcasts that was going through on KOTA and the radio stations and through Civil Defense, so my concern was then to get down to the courthouse to see what help I could be as far as rescue operations were concerned. I, uh, had

lost my car in the flood and my pickup, and fortunately my son was gone for the evening and we salvaged his automobile; so I think I arrived down to the courthouse about 11:00 that morning. And most of the...well, I'm sure that there was a lot of confusion down there and we were trying to regroup and rescue operations and people were calling for help and food and water, and I would say for the next four or five days that I spent most of my time down at the courthouse.

- Q. Do you remember any, any of the specific activity that you were involved in at the courthouse particularly on that first day after you got down there?
- A. Well, it's, I wa...I wasn't getting too involved to start with because Ron Stephenson had sort of, sort of taken over as Coordinator because our Civil Defense Director hadn't gotten in, and by that time, the National Guard was active, the sheriff, Air Force, Civil Defense...I guess about the first activity I got involved in was in the middle of the afternoon, on the committee that was formed, more or less, I guess you might call it coordinating committee to meet almost every hour to determine and survey the needs of the county and the city at that particular time and see what...the things that we needed as far as medical attention, food and water, and so forth.
- Q. Do you have any comments on the, uh, operations of the, the governmental units in Civil Defense and so on, uh, during the crisis and the days following it?
- A. I think it was quite remarkable how things just happened to fall together with a number of things that had to be done; and between the City Council and the County Commissioners and the Mayor and so forth, it seemed like everyone got to working very shortly and meetings and decisions were being made, and

I know there was times it looked like we were quite confused, but things were happening, and I think we did have a fairly good organization after the first day. _____ realize that most of us were, I haven't been real concerned about all the Civil Defense operations that were being, that were set up, and to be sup...set up in case we did have an emergency; and I for one probably didn't think this emergency would ever occur. And I'm very thankful that we did have a Civil Defense operations that was functional (enough) to take over in the time that we did have, and I'm sure I'll be more, uh, I might say, more favorable toward Civil Defense Operations in the future, because I realize that it is a...something now that is very, re...really needed _____ type of emergency. And I'm sure from this operation, that we'll probably fall back and regroup and probably do more in the Civil Defense nature than we have in the past.

Q. Lloyd, how long have you lived in Rapid City?

A. I've been in Rapid City since 1954, or '50, no, 1949, and I lived in my present home since 1954.

Q. Now your home is located on a corner you said, and you gave us a St. Anne address, what's the other street that runs by it?

A. The corner of West St. Anne and Argyle Street. And I was there during the time we had high water in 1952, and I thought this type of water that was coming down might be similar to that, and water never even came near my home at that time.

Q. How about in '62?

A. I mean in '62, no, I was, we had probably two or three feet of water out in the street, but I mean, I was high enough that it never even got up to the

top of my yard.

Q. Then, now were you there actually in '52 too, or were you in a different place?

A. I was in a different location

Q. Oh.

A. No, I moved there in '54.

Q. Now you also have been on the, on the City Council in the past, I don't remember how many terms you've served in the Council.

A. I served for six years.

Q. Now during that time was any consideration ever given to the, uh, flood plain that we're talking about today, as far as building and so on are concerned?

A. I was on the City Council when we had the flood of 1962, and no consideration that I can remember at that time was given to a flood plain area; but most of the damage that was done that particular year, from home standpoint, and coming from a different canyon, was up Nemo Road area, down on Pierre, Pierre and Capital Street areas. This time they didn't receive any damage compared to us.

Q. But in 1962 then, there wasn't any significant damage along Rapid Creek itself?

A. No, there was...because the flood at that time, came down, it wasn't in Rapid Creek at all. It was high water, but very little damage was done in '62 from Rapid Creek. I guess you call it Lime Creek that came down the other time.

Q. Yeah, the South Canyon area...

A. South Canyon area.

Q. ...was where the major part in '62...

A. Yes.

Q. ...then. All right...

- A. I know that we talked about some metering dams up in that particular canyon. Uh, and I'm sure that we're still thinking about them, but, but metering dams this time, it wouldn't, that area wasn't affected this year.
- Q. Well, there was flooding in South Canyon and damage but not, anything like... no homes washed away or cars washed away or lives lost or anything like that, as there was along Rapid Creek this time.
- A. From my business standpoint, I'm sure that if you're planning for Civil Defense from the standpoint of emergencies, I think it's more than just the governmental agencies that should be involved, I am the petroleum bulk dealer and I lost a man in that flood and even though no equipment, but I found that I was quite hamstrung for operations for a few days, because the needs of the community became so great for petroleum products (from me); as far as I can determine, I was the only bulk dealer that was in operation during Saturday and Sunday, during the real emergency to keep fuel for emergency vehicles and for stand-by generators that were placed around the city in various locations. And I know one thing I'm gonna recommend to my company now that they have a plan of attack similar, uh, _____ from the standpoint of emergencies so that if it does arise in some of these communities, they immediately come in activated, uh, activated also. You know, I was quite fortunate here that here are a number of company people who live in Rapid City, and they actually took over the operation of my truck for four...trucks for four or five days when I was involved with the county operations.
- Q. What's the address of the...your place of business here?
- A. 1002 West Main Street.
- Q. Now, that's where this interview is taking place and, uh, how much water,

uh, or did you get any water damage here, and how much water can you ___?

A. Yeah, we have a basement here, and I keep a number of drums of oil, and we only had about six inches of water in the basement; and as far as damage was concerned, we didn't really have any. I assume from the outside appearance on the windows, there must have been two and a half feet of water around these...area, but the windows were tight enough so that it didn't seep in very much.

Q. And this is very near the corner of, uh, West Main and, and West Boulevard, on the west side. Now you think, what you're saying here then is that, we ought to do more than just have governmental plans...

A. Yes.

Q. ...for emergencies.

A. I'm sure we should, because during these crises, there's, there's quite a need for petroleum products, because if your electricity goes out--which it did all over town--we at least have trucks there that can be operated by our own pumping units that are self-contained in our trucks to service equipment.

(END OF INTERVIEW)

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^{But} At that time, the only thing we could see, it was raining and we really^{we} weren't very concerned. We turned the 10:00 o'clock news on and listened to the weather forecast and^{from television} and it didn't appear from any newscast that I had heard that there was much danger of a flood of the magnitude that we had. ^{It} ~~They~~ said the worst was yet to come, but they didn't say how much worse it was going to be so we weren't really concerned, and I would say about 10 minutes to eleven my daughter looked out the window and noticed that my pickup was floating down~~xxx~~ the street 'cause the water was about ^{a foot} 2³ and a half, ^{at} to two feet high. I put on some rain gear and went out the door to retrieve it, but by that time it was gone, and I began^{to realize} then that the water was much higher in my section of town than I've^d ever seen it before, and approximately ten minutes after eleven the lights went out in the house, and I rustled up some flashlights, and my wife was ^{down in} in the basement with her sister, 'cause some water was coming in the basement window, but she wasn't very much concerned with it, and by that time I noticed the water was getting up around the foundation, and I told her and her sister, and her aunt and my daughter we'd better leave the house because it looked like the water was coming quite high. We couldn't get out the front door because of

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EH What's your address, Lloyd ^{uh..}?

LS 2948, West St. Anne. ~~---~~

EH And what house were you behind? in the popular tree?

LS ~~(Howard Scott's)~~ ^(his) which it was, I foget the ^{iv} address, but it'd be 2946, I bēlēeve, West St. Anne.

EH Okay, go ahead.

LS And then, ^{uh,} so we, we were taken out of the tree, and he had some, they had some friends, that they had gone to, and I ^(im) sorry ^{that} I don't remember

LS their names right now, ^{but} ~~but~~ we got up to their home about 1:30,
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 home, ^{uh,} ~~and~~ he'd gone out for the evening, and, of course, we didn't know
 where he was, and he didn't know our condition; but I imagine about
 9:00, he came driving in, he had found shelter with some friends in
 the eastern section of town during the night, and we were relieved
 to know that he did come out all right also. As far as our activities
 from then on, I, we just were quite stunned ^{as far as ..} to see
 the damage in the neighborhood. And my concern then, I had a portable
 radio, and heard all of the broadcasts that ^{was} ~~were~~ going ^{through} ~~on~~ KOTA and
 the radio stations and through Civil Defense, so my concern was then
 to get down to the courthouse to see what help I could be as far as
 rescue operations were concerned. ^{uh} ~~And~~ I had lost my car in the flood
 and my pick ^{up}, and fortunately my son was gone for the evening, ^{and} we
 salvaged his automobile; so I got ^{think I arrived} ~~a ride~~ down to the courthouse about
 11:00, ^{well,} that morning. And most of the ^{that} (I'm sure there was a lot of
 confusion) ^{ns} ~~we~~ were trying to regroup and rescue operations
 and people were calling for help and food and water, and I would say

ES for the next four ~~on~~ five days that I spent most of my time down at the courthouse.

EH Do you remember any, any of the specific activity that you were involved in at the courthouse? particularly on that first day after you got down there?

LS Well, it's I, I wasn't getting too involved to start with because Ron Stephenson had sort of ^{sort of} taken over as Coordinator because our Civil Defense Director hadn't gotten in, and by that time, the National Guard was active, the sheriff, Air Force, Civil Defense, ... I guess about the first activity I got involved in was in the middle of the afternoon, on the committee that was formed, more or less, I guess you might call it coordinating committee to meet almost every hour to determine and survey the needs of the county and the city at that particular time and see what the things that we needed as far as medical attention, food and water, and so forth.

EH Do you have any comments on the ^{uh,} operations of the ^{the} governmental units in Civil Defense and so on, ^{uh,} during the crisis and the days following it?

LS I think it was quite remarkable how things just happened to fall together with a number of things that had to be done; and between the City Council and the County Commissioners and the Mayor and so forth, it seemed like everyone got to working very shortly and meetings and decisions were being made, and I know there was times it looked like we were quite confused, but things were happening, and I think we did have a fairly good organization after the first day. _____ realize that most of us were, I haven't been real concerned about all the Civil Defense operations ~~being~~ that were being, that were ~~set up~~, and ^{to be sup.. set up} in case we did have an emergency; and I for one probably didn't think this emergency would ever occur. ^{And} I'm very

LS THANKful that we did have a Civil Defense operations that was functional (enough) to take over in the time that we did have, and I'm sure I'll be more, ^{wh.} I might say, more favorable toward Civil Defense Operations in the future, because I realize that *it is a...* something *now* *that is very, re... really* needed _____ type of emergency. And I'm sure from this operation, that we'll probably fall back and regroup and probably do more in the Civil Defense nature than we have in the past.

EH Lloyd, how long have you lived in Rapid City?

LS I've been in Rapid City since 1954, or ~~fifty~~, ^{'50} no, 1949, and I lived in my present home since 1954.

EH Now your home is located on a corner you said, and you gave us ^a the ST. Anne address, what's the other street ^{by it} (that runs)?

LS The corner of West St. Anne and Argyle Street, ⁴ and I was there during the time we had high water in 1952, and I thought this type of water that was coming down might be similar to ~~that~~, and ~~the~~ water never even came near my home at that time.

EH How about in '62?

LS I mean in '62, no, I was, we had probably ^{two three} 2' or 3' feet of water out in the street, but I mean, I was high enough that it never even got up to the ¹ (top) ² of my yard ³.

EH Then now were you there actually in '52 ~~2~~ too, or were you in a different place?

LS I was in a different location, ^{EH: Oh.} . . . no I moved there in '54.

EH Now you also have been on the, on the City Council in the past, I don't remember how many terms you've served in the Council. . .

LS I served for six years, . . .

EH Now during that time was any consideration ever given to the ¹ flood plain ² that we're talking about today, as far as building and so on are concerned?

LS I was on the City Council when we had the flood of 1962, and no

LS consideration that I can remember ^a ~~at~~ that time was given to a flood plain area; but most of the damage that was done ~~that~~ particu^aar year, from home standpoint, would ~~have been~~ ^{and} coming from a different canyon, ~~it~~ was up Nemo Road area, down on Pierre, Pierre, ^{and} Capital Street area, ~~which~~ this time they didn't receive ~~the~~ ^{any} damage
 compared to us

EH But in 1962 then, there wasn't any significant damage along Rapid Creek itself?

LS No, there was, because the flood at that time, came down, it wasn't in Rapid Creek at all, ^{it} was high water, but very little damage was done in '62 ^{from Rapid Creek}. I guess you call it ^(Lime Creek) that came down the other time.

EH Yeah, the South Canyon Area. ^{LS: South Canyon area.} . . . was where the major part in 62 ^{LS: yes} then. ^{All right...}

LS I know that we talked about some ^{metering} dams up in that particular canyon. ^{Uh, and} I'm ~~not~~ sure ^{we're} ~~(that)~~ ^(they're) still thinking about them, but, .but ^{metering} dams this time, it wouldn't, that area ^{(wasn't fit} ~~to be sheered)~~ ^{affected this year.}

EH Well, there was flooding in South Danyon and damage but not, anything like, .no homes washed away or cars washed away or lives lost or anything like that, as theye was along Rapid Creek ^(this time).

LS From my ^(business) standpoint, I'm sure that, ^{if} you're planning for Civil Defense ^{from} the standpoint of emergencies, I think it's more than just the governmental agencies that should be involved, I ^(am the) petroleum bulk dealer and I lost a man, ^{in that flood} ~~that's what I been,~~ ^{and even} ~~(though~~ ^{no}) equipment, but I found ^{that} I was quite hamstrung for operations for a few days, because the needs of the community became so great for petroleum products ^(from me); as far as I can determine, I was the only bulk dealer that was in operation during Saturday and Sunday, during the real emergency to keep fuel for emergency vehicels and for

LS stand-by generators ^d what were places around the city in various locations. And I know one thing I'm ^{gonna} going to recommend to my company now that they have a plan of attack similar, ^{uh,} _____ from the standpoint of emergencies so ^{uh,} that if it does arise in some of these communities, they immediately ^{(become inactivated) or,} ^{uh,} activated also. ^{You know,} because I was quite fortunate here ^{uh,} that there are a number of company people who live in Rapid City, and they actually took over the operations of my ~~company~~ truck for four, ^{uh,} trucks for four or five days when I was involved with the county operations.

EH What's the address of your place of business here ?

LS ¹ 2002, West Main Street.

EH Now, that's where this interview is taking place and ^{uh,} how much water, ^{uh,} or did you get any water damage here, and how much water. . . .? ^{can you —}

LS ^{uh,} Yes, we have a basement here, and I keep a number of drums of oil, ^{uh,} and we only had about ^{5 1/2} 6 inches of water in the basement; and as far as damage was concerned, we didn't really have any. I assume from the outside appearance on the windows, there must have been ^{two} 2' and a half feet of water around this ^{uh,} area, but the windows were ~~high~~ tight enough ^{so} that it didn't seep into them, ^{uh,} very much.

EH And this is very near the corner of ^{uh,} West Main and ^{uh,} West Boulevard, on the west side, now you think, what you're saying here then is that, we ought to do ~~more~~ ^{uh,} more than just have governmental plans, ^{uh,} for emergencies. ^{uh,}

LS ^{uh,} Yes, I'm sure we should, ^{uh,} because during these crises, ^{uh,} there's quite a need for petroleum products, because if your electricity goes out, ^{uh,} which ^{uh,} it did all over town, we at least have trucks there that can be operated by ^{uh,} own pumping units ^{uh,} that are self-contained in our trucks to service equipment.

(End of interview)