

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Library Cataloguing Service Data

Name of informant Donald S. Walch
Address 412 Adams, Rapid City, South Dakota
Date of Interview June 26, 1972
Name of Researcher Stephen R. Ward
Others Present _____
Location of Interview St. Mathew's Church
Added Notes St. Mathew's appears to minister to the Indian population of
the area - also a disaster relief center

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

Activities on night of the flood; Attempts to rescue; Association with REACT and
citizen bank radios; Observation of flood victims.

Demographic Information on Informant

Age 40 Sex Male County Pennington
Socio-economic status Middle
Occupation Episcopal Minister
Education _____
Religion _____
Date of Arrival of Family in South Dakota _____
Where? _____
From where? _____
Number of Moves in South Dakota _____ Reasons for moves: _____

- Q. All right, this is June 26th, 1972. I'm talking to Donald S. Welsh, Walch, excuse me, W-A-L-C-H, Rapid City, South Dakota, subject Black Hills flood. And you had some remarks you wanted to begin with, Father Walch, so perhaps we'll start there.
- A. Okay. The night of the flood I was up at Mr. Rushmore to begin with, and they have a movie at nine o'clock and then they turn on the lights of the monument at 9:30 and we were up there at 6:30 and we were going to wait for that. And it really rained unbelievably hard, and we got tired of waiting and for that reason alone decided to go home. There was no warning at 8:30 when we left. The only announcements they were making at 8:30 is that the movie would not be shown outside, but it would be shown up in the visiting center. So we decided it would be too much of a drag to wait even more, so we left at 8:30 and even. . .I had a relative from Massachusetts I was showing around, I even went to Grizzly Bear Park, just to show her that, which is just a half a mile off from the. . .it's a campsite right near, half a mile away from the bottom of the hill where the monument is. And there were a lot of campers there and still just really raining, but I could see. We went through Keystone and. . . .
- Q. The bridge wasn't washed out in Grizzly Bear Park then, was it?
- A. Did it wash out?
- Q. Yes it did. I, but, I just wondered whether it was. . . .
- A. No, no. It was, it was maybe a quarter of nine when we were there. We were there maybe two hours before it went. We went to Keystone, it looked all right going through town, but right where the railroad tracks are and then there's that great big sign on the left as you're coming into, kind of a combination

sign that all of the commercial people put up together, real nice looking sign, that water was rushing terribly there. It was unbelievable, we still had no fears, you know, we said, "Boy, look at that." You know, just watching it. And then we started up towards the interstate you know, and we went across about three spots where it was coming over the road, you know, just about two inches or so. A little bit scary, because we weren't quite sure how deep it was, and, you know, just maybe the first inkling that, gee, you know, Let's go home. But no real inkling of anything. And there's some rocks and boulders, some pretty good sized little rocks on the road, but we just went on. And we got on the interstate and that was an okay drive, we got to the bottom of the hill here in Rapid City and stopped at McDonald's, bought our supper, and we even ate our supper right in McDonald's, and then we, I guess it was around ten by then, because it was slow driving. And we got, we went across the creek here and _____ we got to my home which is right up here in North Rapid, up the hill.

Q. Let me _____ and get that. . .so you. . . .

A. So I got home with my niece about 10 or 10:30, I don't know. And I turned on the radio and I heard Major Medley talking to his wife about opening their church up.

Q. Now what, what kind of radio. . . ?

A. Citizen's band radio.

Q. Oh, okay.

A. So, you know what that is?

Q. Well, no, not really. Is it, is it, I. . . ?

A. It's CB radio. It's what's in the cars often and. . .there are many people

in town that have these units, and they have 23 channels and usually different (gangs) hang out on different channels all the time. And also there are a couple clubs in town called REACT, R-E-A-C-T, Radio Emergency Amateur Clubs, something like that. And the Black Hills REACT Club is on 13, the Rushmore REACT is on 11. And we are up on 15, which is where a bunch of us, about two dozen of us hang out. And they were, I heard Major Medley, Salvation Army, his gang hangs out 15. And I don't remember exactly how this happened, but then a buddy of mine called and said that over here at. . .out by the fairgrounds the creek was really high. Here's the fairgrounds and here's Candle Street. And he was watching the water right in here rise, he said, "Boy, it's really something to see," and that was the end of that. And the next thing I knew, they were calling for help on the radio. Because this is part of the reason of the radio. You know, we report accidents, and it's part of being in the club. So I called in and I said, "Do you need help?" And they said, "10-4," they said yes. I said, "Where do you want me to go?" They said, "Help get people out by Story Book Island." So I still didn't realize what we were in for, of course, good proof of that is that I took my niece with me, who's a 19 year old, or a 20 year old, senior at the University of Connecticut and she has a cast on from here down because she hurt herself in acrobatics. And just this heavy old thing, you know, she had no business being out there. But she and I went in my VW Bus and we drove regular way down Omaha, just raining real hard, of course. . . .

Q. But no flooding. . . .

A. No flooding, maybe 11 o'clock. And we went by Baken Park and then turned down Canyon Lake Road. And I came right in front of Sioux San, right here, and I

went down here, there was no homes or anything, so I radioed back, there's nothing happening here. And they said, "You're on the wrong side, it's on Sheridan Lake Road that we want you to go." _____ Jackson Boulevard. . . .

Q. Sheridan Lake. . . .

A. This is it, isn't it, what's this called? That's 23rd, no. (Tilford) Street, Maybe it's called (Tilford Street) now, but we call it Sheridan Road, that whole Highway 40, that's it. . . .

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah, it is called Sheridan Lake Road today, why is it. . .different here? That doesn't make any sense, it's Sheridan Lake Road on mine. Sioux San Drive, Sheridan Lake Road, there it is, Sheridan Lake Road, great big thing, same road we're looking at. . . .

Q. Going straight down. . . .

A. This one right here, you call it (Tilford).

Q. Well, the city calls it, this is just new in January, '72 map.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay.

A. So, oh, yeah, I came, after I came here, I tried to go in this way.

Q. You tried to go in. . . .

A. I tried to get over to here by going, I was looking for (Homestowe) as I came this way, and right about here I ran into flood water.

Q. That's on 32nd Street.

A. Yeah.

Q. 32nd and pinpoint that, that's in, that's in the section 4 in the south, southwest quarter of the southwest quarter. . . .

A. Southeast. . . .

Q. Southeast, southeast quarter of the southeast quarter of section 4.

A. I remember seeing the water getting too deep here for me. But still I had no concept of how fast water can rise. . .and it didn't really concern me too much. And I backed out of there, I almost stalled once, but I turned around and I came on out and I came back down here over this bridge and came back here down Jackson Boulevard to this (Tilford) Road. And I turned here then, right here it drops down. And I did ride it in here, it was up near my, middle of my wheels here. And. . . .

Q. This is near Woodland Drive and around Jane and Judy and Janet Streets.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. Now what time are we talking about?

A. Maybe at 11:15, 11:30, I don't know, I have no idea. But there was a unit 30 that found me. See, once an emergency comes up, we all go to channel 9, which is the emergency police channel and we, instead of going KQ 3443, we're given unit numbers just quickly. And I was, well, I didn't know that at this point, because I don't belong to channel 13 or channel 11, I'm just up on 15, so I just called myself VW Bus, didn't know any better. I thought you had to be in a REACT club in order to get a number. The next day I became number 94. But I was VW Bus. And they were calling me VW Bus, do this and that, you know. But I heard Unit 30 and I knew he was right in front of me and I finally yelled at Unit 30 and I said, "_____, there's no people here who'll come." You know, they were just standing on their porches. And this is what he told me, he said, "I think we better get out of here." So we began to reverse out. And it was close call in there for us because my car began to kind of buck and

the water was getting high and I began to feel it getting fast, faster then, it's hard to see all the time, always hard to see.

Q. Were people standing out on their porches there. . . ?

A. Well, there were people on their porches looking at this water, yeah.

Q. But they weren't moving.

A. Well, alot of them weren't, and this is what unit 30 said, there's no one who wants to leave, you know. And here, I know, subsequently, the water went up to the ceilings, because you're gonna interview _____, she's one of the _____ I gave you _____ right here. And she told me at (noon time) that it went as high as the ceiling. But _____ (get off of their). And the only thing that terrifies me about this whole thing, well (terrified) for my own life, but I had this beautiful niece with me with that cast on. What a fool. But anyhow, I got to high ground. I turned right there and I sat my car there.

Q. Right on June Court.

A. Right on June Court, and I went down in here and I (waited, waded) up _____, there's a pickup parked right here. And this pickup, the water was to its running board at one point, just as we got settled in here.

Q. Just north of June Court on Tilford Road.

A. Right. And then maybe seven minutes later, my niece says, between five and seven minutes later it was, it was to the windows of that truck. And it was a rise of three feet in five minutes which is _____, the wall of water hadn't arrived yet. This is just rising water. And the people were yelling here now, at this point, to get out. And were coming out, too. But often it was parents, you know, who had carried some children, but then there were

other children on, you know, crying on the porches. So, (a lot of us) were helping, and I was one of them, we just, we'd go waist high _____ and I, I put a little girl, ten year old on my shoulders, and we walked out of there.

Q. How many would you say, people were, of those of you who were reacting to these calls and so on were down in here? How many vehicles. . .half dozen people?

A. You mean how many people were helping?

Q. Yeah.

A. Or how many people were stranded? Oh, there weren't that many, I mean the helpers were. . .a few neighbors here and this, a couple cars. There weren't a whole bunch of cars at all.

Q. So this is just sort of a local thing with a few extra people. . . .

A. Yeah, there was a couple, like I say, this CB radio men, they. . .by the second day they were using unit 230. And these, they were all being dispatched by, controlled by police headquarters and these boys saved a lot of lives, because I heard them, I heard them chattering later on, you know, these units saying, "We can't get into Canyon Lake anymore." "Okay, then come over this way." And a, a lot of them got killed, five of them got killed. Major Medley got killed, he was right in front of me, he's the one that I first heard talking to his wife, the Salvation Army major and then Herb and Phyllis Whiting drowned. And two other of the CBer's drowned. These fellas with antennas on their car who go out and, you know, obey these, the control. And we, I just carried out that one girl, and then the next house over had a boat. And they were loading her onto the boat. But by then the water was high, like here. And by then I experienced how fast it goes, you know, and how funny it is on the floor, you know, on the grass and everything, just because the mud was

kind of slick, you just didn't have good footing. And also, I'm a chicken anyway. I had brought six life preservers with me. So I must have known more than I thought, I guess, when I left, but for some reason I did bring life preservers, six of them. So after I got this one girl out, and these people on the boat, we yelled at them, "Get out of here, get out of here." And they gave us, gave me the impression that they couldn't get out. That they couldn't get the boat, or else someone next to me told me that or something, so with that I took off my shoes and I took off all my clothes except my underpants and I put on a life preserver and I went over there, and I just was glad I didn't have to go all the way, because I just got to the first house, and it wasn't really deep on me. It was like here on me.

Q. Up to your (neck, almost).

A. _____ water, yeah. And you know I, I, I don't want to die, so, anyhow, they slipped on behind the house, the water (phone ringing) _____ and they didn't die either, they, they went behind the house and they kind of drifted off this way. And we all come back this was about five of us, and we followed them down here and we met them right in here somewhere. So they made it all right. But, so those are my two adventures. Anyhow, by then, I was saying to people, "Get in the car," you know, because I, I learned on the radio that this is one of the things you do is haul people somewhere _____, listening to all the chatter on channel 9 at this point. What else, oh, by the way, to backtrack a little, this was just a lucky thing which helped save a family. Because Major Medley volunteered his church, I decided that was a good idea and I volunteered my church, because I heard them saying they had 35 in a motel over here by Beanbag Market, which is in this area right here, right by

Roosevelt Park, they got washed out here and they needed a place to stay, so I volunteered my church. Then I was asking my niece, "What do I do, do I go home and open the church, or do I. . .," _____ what I was doing. So I stopped at a motel right near Baken Park and told them to, I called up (Sheridan Crow), who happens to live on New York, little did I know New York was gonna get flooded, and I said, "Sheridan, would you, 35 are coming in from the flood, would you open the church?" He said, "Yes." And this. . .we're busy. We're interviewing. . . .

A? Okay.

A. On a tape recorder. This, he told me later that this saved his family, because he and his mother, Bertha (Crow) and he both lived next door and their houses were taken right away. But they went up to open up the church for me. And they, they all got out on that basis. It was real great. So that happened before I got over to this side. When I was coming back here I stopped at this motel, volunteered my church, and told the people to open it up. I volunteered the church by radio and then I told these people to open it up, for me, by phone _____. Then I came back and all these other things happened. Then I got a carload here and there's a gang of kids here and I said, "Can you get through?" Because I asked my gang where they want to go and they said this way, downtown, First Street and Cleveland, wherever they are, but anyhow it was in this downtown area.

Q. These were people that you picked up from June, June Court?

A. Yeah, these were all people we evacuated who wanted to get into a dry palce now.

Q. And they wanted to head back along the creek?

- A. Well, they, this wasn't what we'd call back along the creek, you see, that's five blocks.
- Q. Okay.
- A. But I mean we never dreamed. . . .
- Q. Yeah, I can _____ see that now.
- A. Hospital's here, you know, we just never dreamed. Never occurred to me yet that it would be any. . . unbelievable, you know, well, of course, we'd never been in a flood. So we, we stopped here and we did have enough sense to say, "Can you get through?" "Yes, you can." There's another group of kids here directing traffic, "Can you get through?" "Yes, you can." (Clarice Clarkson) stopped me here and said, "You can't get through."
- Q. _____ this is. . . .
- A. Somewhere in here, she saw my car, and. . . .
- Q. . . . the water treatment plant and south of. . . .
- A. Right near the Bennet-Clarkson Hospital And she said, "You can't get through." But there was this kid in my car who I just met today in the bank. And he says, "I gotta get through. I've got to get to my boat, I gotta get the key to my boat to help these people." He was telling me today that these, all these people died except one twelve year old. But anyhow, for that reason I think, plus these other groups saying I can get through and just a lady, you know, a young girl, (Clarice Clarkson), you know, saying I can't get through, you know, and what's a woman's judgement, so I rode on through, and this is St. Joseph here. Here's Bennet-Clarkson, and I got right to the intersection and the water was rushing with me.
- Q. Jackson Boulevard and St. Joseph?

A. Right. _____ West Main _____ (railroads) _____.

Q. Okay.

A. The water was rushing with me, you know, going this way, and about a foot deep, but only a foot deep. But when we got right to here, there was a counter-bubbling, boiling water coming at us which might be a foot or a foot and a half high, you know, just slowly gurgling in against the whole motion. The overflow business, you know, coming up this way, aside from this. And I saw that, and I said, "Boy, we can't go through, it can't be done." Everybody agreed just like that. I put it in reverse, I had nine in the car, and it wouldn't move. My wheels spun but I couldn't move. And we didn't know why. But by then the water was on us. Not over our heads or anything like that, but right there on us, and I said, I was cautious, and I said, "Let's get out of here, everybody out." We opened those sliding doors and we just all piled out, just left the doors open and the light on inside, the headlights on and everything. And I, the next thing I remember is I went on this side of the car and I met my niece on the other and two people were dragging her, by then it was just high. She was having a terrible time dragging that cased leg around. And then we encountered this, this swift moving planks stuff, this was the first time I'd run into that.

Q. Swift moving what?

A. Boards.

Q. Boards. Oh, yeah.

A. Junk coming at us. And hitting and banging, oh! If I'd ever known when I was carrying that girl back here that that kind of stuff was going by, I mean this stuff must have cut down people just a (waist high). And we just had,

you know, _____, we just were so lucky that nothing happened up in this way when we made those two runs for people in that deep water. But, and we did get hit up, but not knocked over, and everyone got back and we only had to go back about fifty yards and we were out of it. And we stood there. And watched the water come in on my car, and it came up about three feet on my car. And it just really splashed on the back and just, but the car didn't move. And I (just thought), you know, that thing was just like a balloon, would've just floated away, but it didn't. Well, _____ we just stayed there and then there was a big explosion right here, and that was a big gas station. Oh! On Omaha. West Omaha there's that great big, right across from (Rye Cycle) is this big gas station and the pumps went on them. And we were right here, so we just watched this big fire going. (Goes on an hour.) _____
Burned all night.

Q. This would be in the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter, of section 35, range 7 east.

A. Yeah.

Q. That went up about what time?

A. I don't know.

Q. After 11?

A. 12:30. . . .

Q. 12:30.

A. I don't know what time it was. And I never did experience the wall, you know, as such. You know, the dam breaking. Jerry, we're just doing a tape interview here.

A₃ Okay, I'll wait.

A. We never did experience that, personally. And I just don't know when that happened. But, and then later on, like 3 or 4 a.m. Saturday morning, why, the water, that happened to be the peak right near my car, three feet, so it never did go away and it just gradually came down. Very slowly came down. And then maybe 3 or 4 a.m., a bunch of guys, police were there, and fire engines were there right on this corner, and they all came over, and. . .three or four of them lifted up _____ car and there were boards jammed in, all different angles. In fact, I had one on my front wheel over the rim of my car _____ to turn, jammed in this way. It just hung me up, it was just like stilts, you know, my car was like on stilts, and they had to really lift on that frame before these, that board would come out and then there were boards jammed up all through the back of it. So that's what, why I couldn't back up that time. And then they pushed me backwards and I spent the night here. About 10 a.m. I got towed home and I immediately got my little bug, I went way around on the interstate, and came back to the town through the water and the water was running about this deep all that time now, and I towed my bus home. And, like three days later I got it going again. I had to dry it out. (Space heater running). But immediately when I got back finally, to my church around Saturday noon, why, we had forty people, here. A lot of them were tourists. And there's nothing particularly organized, but somebody was cooking for them and they were eating. And in the process of the next few days, they were disappearing. There were a lot of Indian families came in. And the Red Cross came in and we became a (sleeping) center and a food distribution center and a clothing distribution center. AIM, American Indian Movement, brought us clothing, the auditorium brought us clothing, gave us

all the food we wanted, just everybody was more than helpful. I had a flat tire and about four people changed my tire. I just never had such service in my life. And this operation is just becoming, you know, a little bit more efficient all the time. Till at this point, it's beginning to die down a little bit. We still have fifteen sleeping here. But the Red Cross is trying to localize people now.

Q. Fifteen people still. . . ?

A. Yeah, still have fifteen here.

Q. Over two weeks after the flooding.

A. Yeah. They, they prefer to be here.

Q. Is it, at some point, is it going to be set up that they're going to go someplace else, or. . . ?

A. They're waiting for housing. The Red Cross told us today that they will stop feeding tomorrow. Tomorrow night will be the last meal. And I, I've hired a lady now to come in and cook for the, I've received a lot of help, I've received \$2,500 from churches around the country, and I've given about a hundred to everyone who was in the flood. And I still have money left over to pay a cook and to buy the groceries for these fifteen people for another few weeks. (Plus) more money. So that's the way we're gonna do it. But it's been it's been a busy center. Like Jerry's out in the hallway here and Jerry's works with a program, a big national program here, he'll explain it to you in a minute, just the different ones would explain their programs and bring in their different kinds of help, and, and it's just been, been a busy bee hive. An awful lot of requests for information on loved ones, you know, coming in from all over the place. And helping, you know, helping people with a missing list, and we had wakes,

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Library Cataloguing Service Data

Name of informant Donald S. Walch

Address 412 Adams, Rapid City, South Dakota

Date of Interview June 26, 1972

Name of Researcher Stephen R. Ward

Others Present _____

Location of Interview St. Mathew's Church

Added Notes St. Mathew's appears to minister to the Indian population of the area - also a disaster relief center

Subject Headings under which you feel this interview should be filed:
Activities on night of the flood; Attempts to rescue; Association with REACT and citizen bank radios; Observation of flood victims.

Biographical Information on Informant

Age 40 Sex Male County Pennington

Socio-economic status Middle

Occupation Episcopal Minister

Education _____

Religion _____

Date of Arrival of Family in South Dakota _____

Where? _____

From where? _____

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

- Q. All right, this is June 26th, 1972. I'm talking to Donald S. Welsh, Walch, excuse me, W-A-L-C-H, Rapid City, South Dakota, subject Black Hills flood. And you had some remarks you wanted to begin with, Father Walch, so perhaps we'll start there.
- A. Okay. The night of the flood I was up at Mr. Rushmore to begin with, and they have a movie at nine o'clock and then they turn on the lights of the monument at 9:30 and we were up there at 6:30 and we were going to wait for that. And it really rained unbelievably hard, and we got tired of waiting and for that reason alone decided to go home. There was no warning at 8:30 when we left. The only announcements they were making at 8:30 is that the movie would not be shown outside, but it would be shown up in the visiting center. So we decided it would be too much of a drag to wait even more, so we left at 8:30 and even. . . I had a relative from Massachusetts I was showing around, I even went to Grizzly Bear Park, just to show her that, which is just a half a mile off from the. . . it's a campsite right near, half a mile away from the bottom of the hill where the monument is. And there were a lot of campers there and still just really raining, but I could see. We went through Keystone and. . . .
- Q. The bridge wasn't washed out in Grizzly Bear Park then, was it?
- A. Did it wash out?
- Q. Yes it did. I, but, I just wondered whether it was. . . .
- A. No, no. It was, it was maybe a quarter of nine when we were there. We were there maybe two hours before it went. We went to Keystone, it looked all right going through town, but right where the railroad tracks are and then there's that great big sign on the left as you're coming into, kind of a combination

sign that all of the commercial people put up together, real nice looking sign, that water was rushing terribly there. It was unbelievable, we still had no fears, you know, we said, "Boy, look at that." You know, just watching it. And then we started up towards the interstate you know, and we went across about three spots where it was coming over the road, you know, just about two inches or so. A little bit scary, because we weren't quite sure how deep it was, and, you know, just maybe the first inkling that, gee, you know, Let's go home. But no real inkling of anything. And there's some rocks and boulders, some pretty good sized little rocks on the road, but we just went on. And we got on the interstate and that was an okay drive, we got to the bottom of the hill here in Rapid City and stopped at McDonald's, bought our supper, and we even ate our supper right in McDonald's, and then we, I guess it was around ten by then, because it was slow driving. And we got, we went across the creek here and _____ we got to my home which is right up here in North Rapid, up the hill.

- Q. Let me _____ and get that. . .so you. . . .
- A. So I got home with my niece about 10 or 10:30, I don't know. And I turned on the radio and I heard Major Medley talking to his wife about opening their church up.
- Q. Now what, what kind of radio. . . ?
- A. Citizen's band radio.
- Q. Oh, okay.
- A. So, you know what that is?
- Q. Well, no, not really. Is it, is it, I. . . ?
- A. It's CB radio. It's what's in the cars often and. . .there are many people

in town that have these units, and they have 23 channels and usually different (gangs) hang out on different channels all the time. And also there are a couple clubs in town called REACT, R-E-A-C-T, Radio Emergency Amateur Clubs, something like that. And the Black Hills REACT Club is on 13, the Rushmore REACT is on 11. And we are up on 15, which is where a bunch of us, about two dozen of us hang out. And they were, I heard Major Medley, Salvation Army, his gang hangs out 15. And I don't remember exactly how this happened, but then a buddy of mine called and said that over here at. . .out by the fairgrounds the creek was really high. Here's the fairgrounds and here's Candle Street. And he was watching the water right in here rise, he said, "Boy, it's really something to see," and that was the end of that. And the next thing I knew, they were calling for help on the radio. Because this is part of the reason of the radio. You know, we report accidents, and it's part of being in the club. So I called in and I said, "Do you need help?" And they said, "10-4," they said yes. I said, "Where do you want me to go?" They said, "Help get people out by Story Book Island." So I still didn't realize what we were in for, of course, good proof of that is that I took my niece with me, who's a 19 year old, or a 20 year old, senior at the University of Connecticut and she has a cast on from here down because she hurt herself in acrobatics. And just this heavy old thing, you know, she had no business being out there. But she and I went in my VW Bus and we drove regular way down Omaha, just raining real hard, of course. . . .

Q. But no flooding. . . .

A. No flooding, maybe 11 o'clock. And we went by Baken Park and then turned down Canyon Lake Road. And I came right in front of Sioux San, right here, and I

went down here, there was no homes or anything, so I radioed back, there's nothing happening here. And they said, "You're on the wrong side, it's on Sheridan Lake Road that we want you to go." _____ Jackson Boulevard. . . .

Q. Sheridan Lake. . . .

A. This is it, isn't it, what's this called? That's 23rd, no. (Tilford) Street, Maybe it's called (Tilford Street) now, but we call it Sheridan Road, that whole Highway 40, that's it. . . .

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah, it is called Sheridan Lake Road today, why is it. . .different here? That doesn't make any sense, it's Sheridan Lake Road on mine. Sioux San Drive, Sheridan Lake Road, there it is, Sheridan Lake Road, great big thing, same road we're looking at. . . .

Q. Going straight down. . . .

A. This one right here, you call it (Tilford).

Q. Well, the city calls it, this is just new in January, '72 map.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay.

A. So, oh, yeah, I came, after I came here, I tried to go in this way.

Q. You tried to go in. . . .

A. I tried to get over to here by going, I was looking for (Homestowe) as I came this way, and right about here I ran into flood water.

Q. That's on 32nd Street.

A. Yeah.

Q. 32nd and pinpoint that, that's in, that's in the section 4 in the south, southwest quarter of the southwest quarter. . . .

A. Southeast. . . .

Q. Southeast, southeast quarter of the southeast quarter of section 4.

A. I remember seeing the water getting too deep here for me. But still I had no concept of how fast water can rise. . .and it didn't really concern me too much. And I backed out of there, I almost stalled once, but I turned around and I came on out and I came back down here over this bridge and came back here down Jackson Boulevard to this (Tilford) Road. And I turned here then, right here it drops down. And I did ride it in here, it was up near my, middle of my wheels here. And. . . .

Q. This is near Woodland Drive and around Jane and Judy and Janet Streets.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. Now what time are we talking about?

A. Maybe at 11:15, 11:30, I don't know, I have no idea. But there was a unit 30 that found me. See, once an emergency comes up, we all go to channel 9, which is the emergency police channel and we, instead of going KQ 3443, we're given unit numbers just quickly. And I was, well, I didn't know that at this point, because I don't belong to channel 13 or channel 11, I'm just up on 15, so I just called myself VW Bus, didn't know any better. I thought you had to be in a REACT club in order to get a number. The next day I became number 94. But I was VW Bus. And they were calling me VW Bus, do this and that, you know. But I heard Unit 30 and I knew he was right in front of me and I finally yelled at Unit 30 and I said, "_____, there's no people here who'll come." You know, they were just standing on their porches. And this is what he told me, he said, "I think we better get out of here." So we began to reverse out. And it was close call in there for us because my car began to kind of buck and

the water was getting high and I began to feel it getting fast, faster then, it's hard to see all the time, always hard to see.

Q. Were people standing out on their porches there. . . ?

A. Well, there were people on their porches looking at this water, yeah.

Q. But they weren't moving.

A. Well, alot of them weren't, and this is what unit 30 said, there's no one who wants to leave, you know. And here, I know, subsequently, the water went up to the ceilings, because you're gonna interview _____, she's one of the _____ I gave you _____ right here. And she told me at (noon time) that it went as high as the ceiling. But _____ (get off of their). And the only thing that terrifies me about this whole thing, well (terrified) for my own life, but I had this beautiful niece with me with that cast on. What a fool. But anyhow, I got to high ground. I turned right there and I sat my car there.

Q. Right on June Court.

A. Right on June Court, and I went down in here and I (waited, waded) up _____, there's a pickup parked right here. And this pickup, the water was to its running board at one point, just as we got settled in here.

Q. Just north of June Court on Tilford Road.

A. Right. And then maybe seven minutes later, my niece says, between five and seven minutes later it was, it was to the windows of that truck. And it was a rise of three feet in five minutes which is _____, the wall of water hadn't arrived yet. This is just rising water. And the people were yelling here now, at this point, to get out. And were coming out, too. But often it was parents, you know, who had carried some children, but then there were

other children on, you know, crying on the porches. So, (a lot of us) were helping, and I was one of them, we just, we'd go waist high _____ and I, I put a little girl, ten year old on my shoulders, and we walked out of there.

Q. How many would you say, people were, of those of you who were reacting to these calls and so on were down in here? How many vehicles. . .half dozen people?

A. You mean how many people were helping?

Q. Yeah.

A. Or how many people were stranded? Oh, there weren't that many, I mean the helpers were. . .a few neighbors here and this, a couple cars. There weren't a whole bunch of cars at all.

Q. So this is just sort of a local thing with a few extra people. . . .

A. Yeah, there was a couple, like I say, this CB radio men, they. . .by the second day they were using unit 230. And these, they were all being dispatched by, controlled by police headquarters and these boys saved a lot of lives, because I heard them, I heard them chattering later on, you know, these units saying, "We can't get into Canyon Lake anymore." "Okay, then come over this way." And a, a lot of them got killed, five of them got killed. Major Medley got killed, he was right in front of me, he's the one that I first heard talking to his wife, the Salvation Army major and then Herb and Phyllis Whiting drowned. And two other of the CBer's drowned. These fellas with antennas on their car who go out and, you know, obey these, the control. And we, I just carried out that one girl, and then the next house over had a boat. And they were loading her onto the boat. But by then the water was high, like here. And by then I experienced how fast it goes, you know, and how funny it is on the floor, you know, on the grass and everything, just because the mud was

kind of slick, you just didn't have good footing. And also, I'm a chicken anyway. I had brought six life preservers with me. So I must have known more than I thought, I guess, when I left, but for some reason I did bring life preservers, six of them. So after I got this one girl out, and these people on the boat, we yelled at them, "Get out of here, get out of here." And they gave us, gave me the impression that they couldn't get out. That they couldn't get the boat, or else someone next to me told me that or something, so with that I took off my shoes and I took off all my clothes except my underpants and I put on a life preserver and I went over there, and I just was glad I didn't have to go all the way, because I just got to the first house, and it wasn't really deep on me. It was like here on me.

Q. Up to your (neck, almost).

A. _____ water, yeah. And you know I, I, I don't want to die, so, anyhow, they slipped on behind the house, the water (phone ringing) _____ and they didn't die either, they, they went behind the house and they kind of drifted off this way. And we all come back this was about five of us, and we followed them down here and we met them right in here somewhere. So they made it all right. But, so those are my two adventures. Anyhow, by then, I was saying to people, "Get in the car," you know, because I, I learned on the radio that this is one of the things you do is haul people somewhere _____, listening to all the chatter on channel 9 at this point. What else, oh, by the way, to backtrack a little, this was just a lucky thing which helped save a family. Because Major Medley volunteered his church, I decided that was a good idea and I volunteered my church, because I heard them saying they had 35 in a motel over here by Beanbag Market, which is in this area right here, right by

Roosevelt Park, they got washed out here and they needed a place to stay, so I volunteered my church. Then I was asking my niece, "What do I do, do I go home and open the church, or do I . . . ," _____ what I was doing. So I stopped at a motel right near Baken Park and told them to, I called up (Sheridan Crow), who happens to live on New York, little did I know New York was gonna get flooded, and I said, "Sheridan, would you, 35 are coming in from the flood, would you open the church?" He said, "Yes." And this. . .we're busy. We're interviewing. . . .

A? Okay.

A. On a tape recorder. This, he told me later that this saved his family, because he and his mother, Bertha (Crow) and he both lived next door and their houses were taken right away. But they went up to open up the church for me. And they, they all got out on that basis. It was real great. So that happened before I got over to this side. When I was coming back here I stopped at this motel, volunteered my church, and told the people to open it up. I volunteered the church by radio and then I told these people to open it up, for me, by phone _____. Then I came back and all these other things happened. Then I got a carload here and there's a gang of kids here and I said, "Can you get through?" Because I asked my gang where they want to go and they said this way, downtown, First Street and Cleveland, wherever they are, but anyhow it was in this downtown area.

Q. These were people that you picked up from June, June Court?

A. Yeah, these were all people we evacuated who wanted to get into a dry palce now.

Q. And they wanted to head back along the creek?

- A. Well, they, this wasn't what we'd call back along the creek, you see, that's five blocks.
- Q. Okay.
- A. But I mean we never dreamed. . . .
- Q. Yeah, I can _____ see that now.
- A. Hospital's here, you know, we just never dreamed. Never occurred to me yet that it would be any. . . unbelievable, you know, well, of course, we'd never been in a flood. So we, we stopped here and we did have enough sense to say, "Can you get through?" "Yes, you can." There's another group of kids here directing traffic, "Can you get through?" "Yes, you can." (Clarice Clarkson) stopped me here and said, "You can't get through."
- Q. _____ this is. . . .
- A. Somewhere in here, she saw my car, and. . . .
- Q. . . . the water treatment plant and south of. . . .
- A. Right near the Bennet-Clarkson Hospital And she said, "You can't get through." But there was this kid in my car who I just met today in the bank. And he says, "I gotta get through. I've got to get to my boat, I gotta get the key to my boat to help these people." He was telling me today that these, all these people died except one twelve year old. But anyhow, for that reason I think, plus these other groups saying I can get through and just a lady, you know, a young girl, (Clarice Clarkson), you know, saying I can't get through, you know, and what's a woman's judgement, so I rode on through, and this is St. Joseph here. Here's Bennet-Clarkson, and I got right to the intersection and the water was rushing with me.
- Q. Jackson Boulevard and St. Joseph?

A. Right. _____ West Main _____ (railroads) _____.

Q. Okay.

A. The water was rushing with me, you know, going this way, and about a foot deep, but only a foot deep. But when we got right to here, there was a counter-bubbling, boiling water coming at us which might be a foot or a foot and a half high, you know, just slowly gurgling in against the whole motion. The overflow business, you know, coming up this way, aside from this. And I saw that, and I said, "Boy, we can't go through, it can't be done." Everybody agreed just like that. I put it in reverse, I had nine in the car, and it wouldn't move. My wheels spun but I couldn't move. And we didn't know why. But by then the water was on us. Not over our heads or anything like that, but right there on us, and I said, I was cautious, and I said, "Let's get out of here, everybody out." We opened those sliding doors and we just all piled out, just left the doors open and the light on inside, the headlights on and everything. And I, the next thing I remember is I went on this side of the car and I met my niece on the other and two people were dragging her, by then it was just high. She was having a terrible time dragging that casted leg around. And then we encountered this, this swift moving planks stuff, this was the first time I'd run into that.

Q. Swift moving what?

A. Boards.

Q. Boards. Oh, yeah.

A. Junk coming at us. And hitting and banging, oh! If I'd ever known when I was carrying that girl back here that that kind of stuff was going by, I mean this stuff must have cut down people just a (waist high). And we just had,

you know, _____, we just were so lucky that nothing happened up in this way when we made those two runs for people in that deep water. But, and we did get hit up, but not knocked over, and everyone got back and we only had to go back about fifty yards and we were out of it. And we stood there. And watched the water come in on my car, and it came up about three feet on my car. And it just really splashed on the back and just, but the car didn't move. And I (just thought), you know, that thing was just like a balloon, would've just floated away, but it didn't. Well, _____ we just stayed there and then there was a big explosion right here, and that was a big gas station. Oh! On Omaha. West Omaha there's that great big, right across from (Rye Cycle) is this big gas station and the pumps went on them. And we were right here, so we just watched this big fire going. (Goes on an hour.) _____
Burned all night.

Q. This would be in the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter, of section 35, range 7 east.

A. Yeah.

Q. That went up about what time?

A. I don't know.

Q. After 11?

A. 12:30. . . .

Q. 12:30.

A. I don't know what time it was. And I never did experience the wall, you know, as such. You know, the dam breaking. Jerry, we're just doing a tape interview here.

A₃ Okay, I'll wait.

A. We never did experience that, personally. And I just don't know when that happened. But, and then later on, like 3 or 4 a.m. Saturday morning, why, the water, that happened to be the peak right near my car, three feet, so it never did go away and it just gradually came down. Very slowly came down. And then maybe 3 or 4 a.m., a bunch of guys, police were there, and fire engines were there right on this corner, and they all came over, and. . .three or four of them lifted up _____ car and there were boards jammed in, all different angles. In fact, I had one on my front wheel over the rim of my car _____ to turn, jammed in this way. It just hung me up, it was just like stilts, you know, my car was like on stilts, and they had to really lift on that frame before these, that board would come out and then there were boards jammed up all through the back of it. So that's what, why I couldn't back up that time. And then they pushed me backwards and I spent the night here. About 10 a.m. I got towed home and I immediately got my little bug, I went way around on the interstate, and came back to the town through the water and the water was running about this deep all that time now, and I towed my bus home. And, like three days later I got it going again. I had to dry it out. (Space heater running). But immediately when I got back finally, to my church around Saturday noon, why, we had forty people, here. A lot of them were tourists. And there's nothing particularly organized, but somebody was cooking for them and they were eating. And in the process of the next few days, they were disappearing. There were a lot of Indian families came in. And the Red Cross came in and we became a (sleeping) center and a food distribution center and a clothing distribution center. AIM, American Indian Movement, brought us clothing, the auditorium brought us clothing, gave us

all the food we wanted, just everybody was more than helpful. I had a flat tire and about four people changed my tire. I just never had such service in my life. And this operation is just becoming, you know, a little bit more efficient all the time. Till at this point, it's beginning to die down a little bit. We still have fifteen sleeping here. But the Red Cross is trying to localize poeple now.

Q. Fifteen people still. . . ?

A. Yeah, still have fifteen here.

Q. Over two weeks after the flooding.

A. Yeah. They, they prefer to be here.

Q. Is it, at some point, is it going to be set up that they're going to go someplace else, or. . . ?

A. They're waiting for housing. The Red Cross told us today that they will stop feeding tomorrow. Tomorrow night will be the last meal. And I, I've hired a lady now to come in and cook for the, I've received a lot of help, I've received \$2,500 from churches around the country, and I've given about a hundred to everyone who was in the flood. And I still have money left over to pay a cook and to buy the groceries for these fifteen people for another few weeks. (Plus) more money. So that's the way we're gonna do it. But it's been it's been a busy center. Like Jerry's out in the hallway here and Jerry's works with a program, a big national program here, he'll explain it to you in a minute, just the different ones would explain their programs and bring in their different kinds of help, and, and it's just been, been a busy bee hive. An awful lot of requests for information on loved ones, you know, coming in from all over the place. And helping, you know, helping people with a missing list, and we had wakes,

we buried six from here, we lost nine from here and six of them are buried here and three are buried on a reservation. And twenty-two families lost their homes, so _____ busy. Lot of people who weren't just living here, would come here for meals, just to talk and see old friends and _____. We had services here and wakes. It's been kind of a madhouse.

Q. But you find it's settled down, _____ settled down now.

A. Oh, yes. It's still busy. _____ I should do as far as work goes, but, you know, it's like everybody else. I just, I owe fifty letters _____ that I've gotta do some day, to say nothing of all my personal bills and all this stuff is just piling up everywhere and I haven't done anything. There's just always something to do. _____ been wonderful.

Q. That's what other people have said.

A. Really beautiful. Everybody's been beautiful.

Q. Well, good.

A. But I want to push the CBer's. They saved a lot of lives. I don't just mean our channel, but all these channels and five of them gave their lives. But this is a wonderful thing. And I think, I've heard they're trying to find out why Rapid City reacted so fast to this thing. I thing that this private Citizen's Band radio, especially with these organized REACT clubs in town really had an awful lot to do with saving poeple. And getting, I mean, they weren't just saving people, but all, you could harly get on that channel for the next five days, because they were, whether big construction companies needed a great big (Pumper) like they, they stationed their units at the hospitals and at critical points in town and you name it. The police used this, these big bulldozers used this, everybody, and if somebody wanted five bulldozers, the CBer's got

it to them. Because we were the only guys, you know, who could. . .because we had our central office right in the courthouse there. I mean we, I mean the CBer's. But the real ones were the REACTs, these roganized clubs. But they're in every town, too. I'm not saying _____ more of them, they are all over the country.

Q. Well, I _____ know too much about them, I suppose they're one group we ought to. . .like yourself and others.

A. Well, yeah. . .Joe, I think there's another Joe Dudley. Didn't he march. . . ? Yeah, it was a Joe Dudley in town who's head of the REACTs. And another one is Bob Williamson. And. . . .

SW All right, this is June 26th, 1972, I'm taking to Donald S. Welsh, Walch, excuse me, W-a-l-c-h, Rapid City, South Dakota, subject Black Hills flood. And you had some remarks you wanted to begin with, Father Walch, so ~~was~~ perhaps we'll start there.

DW ~~OK~~Okay. The night of the flood I was up at Mt. Rushmore to begin with, and they have a movie at nine o'clock, and then they turn on the lights of the monument at 9:30 and we were up there at 6:30 and we were going to wait for that. And it really rained unbelievably hard, and we got tired of waiting and for that reason alone decided to go home. There was no warning at 8:30, when we left. The only announcements they were making at 8:30 is that the movie would not be shown outside, but it would be shown up in the visiting center. So we decided it would be too much of a drag to wait even more, so we left at 8:30 and even, I had a relative from Massachusetts I was showing around, I even went to Grizzly Bear Park just to show her that, which is just a half a mile off from the, it's a campsite right near, half a mile away from the bottom of the hill where the monument is. And there were a lot of campers there and still just really raining, but I could see. We went through Keystone and...

SW The bridge wasn't washed out in Grizzly Bear park then, was it?

DW Did it wash out ?

SW Yes it did. I, but, I just wondered whether it was...

DW No, no, it was, it was maybe a quarter of nine when we were there. We were there maybe two hours before it went. We went to Keystone, it looked all right going through town, but right where the railroad tracks are and then there's that great big sign on the left as you're coming into, kind of a combination sign that all of the commercial people put up together, real nice looking sign, that water was rushing terribly there. It was unbelievable, we still had no fears, you know, we said, "Boy, look at that." you know, just watchin)g it. And then we started up towards the interstate you know, and we went across about three spots where it was coming over the road, you know, just about two inches or so. A little bit scary, because we weren't quite sure how deep it was, and, you know, just maybe the first inkling that, gee, you know, let's go home. But no real inkling of anything. And there's some rocks and boulder,s some pretty

DW good sized little rocks on the road, but we just went on. And we got on the interstate and that was an okay drive, we got to the bottom of the hill here in Rapid City and stopped at McDonald's, bought our supper, and we even ate our supper ~~right~~^s in McDonald's, and then we, I guess it was around ten by then, because it was slow driving. And we got, we went across the creek here ~~xxxx~~ and = we got to my home which is right up here in North Rapid, up the hill.

SW Let me and get that..so you..

DW So I got home with my neive about ten or ten^{thirty}, I don't know. And I turned on the radio and I heard Major Medley talking to his wife about opening their church up.

SW Now what, what kind of radio..

DW Citizen's Band radio.

SW Oh, okay.

DW So, you know wht that is?

SW Well, no, not really, is it, is it, i..

DW It's CB radio, it 's what's in the cars often and... there are many people in town that have these units, and they have 23 channels and usually different (gangs) hang out on different channels all the time. And also there are a couple clubs in town called REACT, R-E-A-C-T. Radio Emergency Amatuear Clubs, something like that. And the Black Hills REACT Club is on 13, the Rushmore REACT ~~Club~~ is on 11. And we are up on 15, which is where a bunch of us, about two dozen of us hang out. And they were, I heard Major Medley, Salvation Army, his gang hangs out 15. And I don't remember exactly how this happened, but then a buddy of mine called and said that over here at ...out by the fairgrounds the creek was really high. Here's the fairgrounds and here's Candle Street. And he was watching the water right in here rise, he said, "Boy, it's really something to see " and that was the end of that. And the next thing I knew, they were calling for help on the radio. Because this is part of the reason of the radio. You know, we report accidents, and it's part of being in the club. So I called in and I said, "Do you need help?" And they said, "Ten-four" , they said yes. I said, "Where do you want me to go?" They said, "Help get people out by Story Hook Island." So I still didn't reali ze what we were in ~~the~~for , of course, good proof

DW of that is that I took my neice with me, who's a 19 year old, or a twenty year old, senior at the University of Connecticut and she has a cast on from here down because she hurt herself in acrobatics. And just this heavy old thing, you know, she had no business being out there. But she and I went in my VW Bus and we drove regular way down Omaha, just raining real hard, of course...

SW But no flooding..

DW No flooding, maybe 11 o'clock. And we went by Baken Park and then turned down Canyon Lake Road. And I came right in front of Sioux San right here and I went down here, there was no homes or anything, so I radioed back, there's nothing happening here. And they said "You're on the wrong side, it's on Sheridan Lake Road that we want you to go."

Jackson Boulevard..

SW Sheridan Lake..

DW This is it, isn't it, what's this called? That's 23rd, no. (Tilford) Street, maybe
D it's called (Tilford Street) now, but we call it Sheridan ~~XXXX~~Road, that whole highway 40 , that's it..

SW Okay.

DW Yeah, it is called Sheridan Lake Road today, why is it...different here? That doesn't make any sense, it's Sheridan Lake Raod on mine. Sioux San Drive, Sheridan Lake Road, there it is, Sheridan Lake Road, great big thing, same road we're looking at...

SW Going straight down....

DW This one right here, you call it (Tilford).

SW Well, the city calls it, this is just new in January. 72 map.

DW Yeah.

SW Okay.

DW So, oh, yeah, I came , after I came here, I tried to go in this way.

SW You tried to go in...

DW I tried to get over to here by going, I was looking for (Homestowe) as I came this way, and right about here I ran into flood water.

SW That's on 32nd Street.

DW Yeah.

SW 32nd and pinpoint that, that's in, that's in the section 4 in the south, southwest quarter of the southwest quarter...

DW Southeast..

SW Southeast, southeast quarter of the southeast quarter of section 4.

DW I remember seeing the water ~~ganga~~ getting too deep here for me. But still I had no concept of how fast water can rise...and it didn't really concern me too much. And I backed out of there, I almost stalled once, but I turned around and I came ~~out~~ on out and I came back down here over this bridge and came back ~~down~~ here down Jackson Boulevard to this (Tilford) Road. And I turned here then, right here it ~~turns~~ drops down. And I did ride it in here, it was up near my , middle of my wheels here. And..

SW This is near Woodland Drive and around Jane and Judy and Janet Streets.

DW Yeah.

SW Okay. Now what time are we talking about?

DW Maybe at 11:15, 11:30, I don't know, I have no idea. But there was a unit 30 that found me. See, once an emergency comes up, we all go to channel 9 which is the emergency police channel and we, instead of going K03443, we're given unit numbers just quickly. And I was, well, I didn't know that at this point, because I don't belong to channel 13 or channel 11, I'm just up on 15, so I just called myself VW Bus, didn't know any better. I thought you had to be in a REACT Club ~~xxx~~ in order to get a number. The next day I became number 94. But I was VW bus. And they were calling me VW bus, do this and that, you know. But I heard Unit 30 and I knew he was right in front of me and I finally yelled at Unit 30 and I said, "there's no people here who'll come." You know, they were just standing on their porches. And this is what he told me, he said, "I think we better get out of here!" So we began to reverse out. And it was close call in there for us because my car began to kind of buck and the water was getting high and I began to feel it getting ~~faster~~ fast, faster than, it's hard to see all the time, always hard to see.

SW Were people standing out on their porches there...

DW Well, there were people on their porches looking at this water, yeah.

SW But they weren't moving.

DW Well, a lot of them weren't, and this is what unit 30 said, there's no one who wants to leave, you know. And here, I know, subsequently, the water went up to the ceilings, because you're gonna interview she's one of the I gave you right here. And she told me at (noon time) that it went as high as the ceiling. But

(get of of there). And the only thing that terrifies me about this whole thing, wãal (terrified) for my own life), but I had this beautiful neice with me with that cast on. What a fool. But anyhow, I got to high ground. I turned right there and ã sat my car there.

SW Right on June Court.

DW Right on June Court, and I went down in here and I(waited, waded) up , there's a pickup parked right here. And this pickup, the water was toæ its running board at one point, just as we got settled in here.

SW Just north of June Court on Tilford Road.

DW Right. And then maybe seven mminutes later, my neice says,between five and seven minutes later it was, it was to the windows of that truck. And it was a rise of three feet in five minutes which is , the wall of water hadn't arrived yet. This is just rising water. And the people were yãlling here now, at this point, to get out. And were coming out, too. But often it was parents , you know, who had carried some children, but then there were other children on, you know, crying on the proches. So, (a lot of us) were helping, and I was one of them, we just, we'd go waist high and I, I put a little girl ten year old on my shoulders, and we walked out of there.

SW How many would you say , people were, of those of you who were reacting to these calls and so on were down in here. How many vehicles ..half dozen people?

DW You mean how many people were helping ~~or how many people were stranded.~~

SW Yeah.

DW Or how many people were stranded...Oh, there weren't that many, I mean the helpers were..a few neighbors here and this, a couple cars. There weren't a whole bunch of cars at all.

SW So this is just sort of a local thing with a few extra people...

DW Yeah, there was a couple, like I way , this CB radio men , they...by the second~~ay~~ day they were using unft 230. And these, they were all being dispatched by , controleld by police headquarters and these boys saved a lot of lives , because I heard them, I heard them chattering later on, you know, these units saying^{we} we can't get into Canyon Lake any more![!] "Okay, then come over this way." And a, a lot of them got killed, five of them got killed , Major Medley got killed, he was right in front of me, he's the one that I first heard talking to his wife, the Salvation Army major and then Herb and Phyllis Whiting drowned. And two other of the CBer's drowned. These fellas with antennas on their car who go out and you know, obey these, the control. And we , I just carried out that one girl, and then the next house over had a boat. And they were loading her onto the boat. But by then the water was high, like ~~xx~~ here. And by then I experienced how fast it goes, you know, and how funny it is on the floor, you know, on the grass and everything, just because the mud was kind of slick, you just didn't have good footing. And also , I'm a chicken anyway, I had brought six life preservers with me. So I must have known more than I thought, I guess, when I left, but for some reason I did bring life preservers, six of them. So after I got this one girl out, and these people on the boat, we yelled at them "Get out of there, get off of there." And they gave us, gaveme the impression that they couldn't get out. That they couldn't get the boat, or else someone next to me told me that or something, so with that I took off my shoes and I took off all my ~~xx~~ clothes except my underpants and I put on a life preserver and I went over there, and I ~~guess~~ just was glad I didn't have to go all the way, because I just got ~~xx~~ into the first house, and it wasn't really deep on me. It was like here on me.

SW Up to your (neck, almost).

DW water, yeah. And you know I, I , I don't want to die, so , anyhow, they slipped on behind the house, the water (phone ringing) ~~XXXXXXXX~~ and they didn't die either, they, they went behind the house and they kind of drifted off this way. And we all come back this way about five of us, and we followed them down here and we met them right in here somewhere. So they made it all right. But, so those are my two adventures. Anyhow, by then, I was saying go people, "Get in the car," you

DW know, because I, I learned on the radio that this ^{of the} is one thing^s you do is haul people somewhere, listening to all the chatter on channel #9 at this point. What else, oh, by the way, to backtrack a little, this was just a lucky thing which helped save a family. Because Major Medley volunteere dhis church, I decided that was a good idea and I volunteered my church, because I heard them saying they had 35 in a motel over here by Beanbag Market, which is in this area right here, right by Roosevelt Park, they got washed out here and they needed a place to stay, so I volunteered my church. Then I was asking my neice ; what do I do, do I go home and open the church, or do I.."

what I was doing. So I stopped at a motel right near Baken Park and told them to, I called up (Sheridan Crow) who happens to live on New York, little did I know New York was gonna get flooded, and I said, "Sheridan, would you, #35 are coming in from the flood, would you open the church." He said, "Yes." And this..w'ere busy. We're interviewing.

?? Okay.

DW On a tape recorder. This, he told me later that this saved his family, because he and his mother, Bertha (Crow) and he both lived next door ^{we} to their houses were taken right away. But they went up to open up the church for me. And they, they all got out on that basis. It was real great. So that happened before I got over to this side. When I was comeing back here I stopped at this motel, volunteered my church, and told the people to open it up. I volunteered the church by radio and then I told these people to open i t up.for me by phone. Then I came back and all these other things happened. Then I got a carload here and there's a gang of kids here and I said "Can you get through?", because I asked my gang ~~where~~ where they want to go and they said this way, downtown, First Street and Cleveland, wherever they are, but any-how it was in this downtown area.

SW These were people that you picked up from June, June Court?

DW Yeah, these were all people we evacuated who wanted to get into a dry place now.

SW And they wanted to head back along the creek?

DW Well, they, this wasn't what we'd call back along the creek, you see, that's five blocks.

SW Okay.

DW But I mean we never dreamed..

SW Yeah, I can see that now.

DW Hospitals here, you know, we just never dreamed. Never occurred to me yet that it would be any..unbelievable, you know, well, of course we'd never been in a flood,. So we, we stopped here and we did have enough sense to say "Can you get through?" "Yes, you can." There's another group of kids here directing traffic, "Can you get through?" "Yes, you can." (Clarice Clarkson) (Clark) stopped me here and said, "You can't get through."

SW this is..

DW Somewherein here, she saw my car, and..

SW ..the water treatment plant and south of..

DW Right near the Bennet-Clarkson hospital. And she said , "You can't get through." But there was this kid in my car who I just met today in the bank. And he says, "I gotta get through. I've got to get to my boat, I gotta get the key to my boat to help these people." He was telling me today that these, all these people died except one twelve year old. But anyhow, for that reason I think, plus these other groups saying I can get through and just a lady, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ you know, a young girl (Clarice Clarkson) you know, saying I can't get through, you know, and what's a woman's judgment, so I rode on through, and this is St. Joseph here. Here's Bennet-Clarkson, and I got right to the intersection and the water was rushing with me.

SW Jackson Boulevard and St. Joseph?

DW Right. West Main (railroads)n .

SW Okay.

DW The water was rushing with me, you know, going this way, and about a foot deep, but only a foot deep. But when we got right to here , there was a counter -bubbling, boiling water coming at us which might be a foot or a foot and a half high, you know, just slowly gurgling in against the whole motion. The overflow business, you know, coming up this way, aside from this. And I saw that, and I said, "Boy, we can't go through, it can't be done." Everybody agreed just like that. I put it in reverse, I had nine in the car, and it wouldn't move. My wheels spun but I couldn't move. And we didn't

DW know why. But by then the water was on us. Not over our heads or anything like that, but right there on us, and I said, I was ~~xxxx~~ cautious, and I said, "Let's get out of here, everybody out." We opened those sliding doors and we just all piled out, just left the doors open and the light on inside, the headlights on and everything. And I, the next thing I remember is I went on this side of the car and I met my niece on the ~~xxxx~~ other and two people were dragging her, by then it was just high. She was having a terrible time dragging that casted leg around. And then we encountered this, this swift moving planks stuff, this was the first time I'd run into that.

SW Swift moving what?

DW Boards.

SW Boards. Oh, yeah.

DW Junk coming at us. And hitting and banging, oh! If I'd ever known when I was carrying that girl back here that that kind of stuff was going by, I mean, this stuff must have cut down people just at (waist-high). And we just had, you know, we just were so lucky that nothing happened up in this way when we made those two runs for people in that deep water. But, and we did get hit up, but not knocked over, and everyone got back and we only had to go back about fifty yards and we were out of it. And we stood there. And watched the water come in on my car, and it came up about three feet on my car. And it just really splashed on the back and just, but the car didn't move. And I (just thought) you know, that thing was just like a balloon would've just floated away, but it didn't. Well, we just stayed there and then there was a big explosion right here, and that was a big gas station. Oh. On Omaha. West Omaha there's that great big, right across from (Rye Cycle) is this big gas station and the pumps went on them. And we were right here, so we just watched this big fire going.

(Goes on an hour.) burned all night.

SW This would be in the southeast quarter of southwest quarter, of section 35, range 7 east.

DW Yeah.

SW That wetn up about what time?

DW I don't know.

SW After 11?

DW 12;30..

SW 12:30.

DW I don't know what time it was. And I never did experience the wall, you know, as such. You know, the dam breaking. Jerry, we're just doing a ~~type~~ interview here.

J Okay, I'll wait.

DW We never did experience that, personally. And I just don't know when that happened. But, and then later on, like 3 or 4 a. m. Saturday morning, why, the water, that ~~a~~ happened to be the peak right near my car, three feet, so it never did go away and it just gradually came down. Very slowly came down. And tehn maybe 3 or 4 a.m., a bunch of guys, p~~o~~lice were there, and fire engins were there right on this ~~corner~~, and they all came over, and...three or four of them lifted up car and there were boards jammed in, all different angles. In fact, I had one on my front wheel over the rim of my car to turn, jammed in this way. It ~~wa~~ just hung me up, it was just like stilts, you know, my car was like on stilts, and they had to really lift on that frame before these, that board would come out and then there were boards jammed up all through the back of it, so that's what, why I couldn't back up that time. And then they pushed me backwards and I spent the night here. About 10 a.m. I got towed home and I immediately got my little bug, I went waxy around on the interstate, and came back to the ~~XXXX~~ town through the water and the water was running about this deep all that time now, and I towed my bus home. And, like three dayslater I got it going again. I had to dry it out. (Space heater running). But immediately when I got back finally, to my church around Saturday noon, why, we had forty people, here. A lot of them were tourists. And there's nothing particularly organiz~~ized~~, but somebody was cooking for them and they were eating. And in the process of the next few days, they were disappearing. There were a ~~lost~~ of Indian families came in. And the Red Cross came in and we became a 'sleeping' center and a food distribution center and a clothing distribution center. ~~XXXX~~AIM. American Indian Movement, brought us clothing, the auditorium brought us clothing, gave us all the food we wanted, jsut everybody was more than helpful. I had a flat tire and about four people changed my tire. I just never had

DW such service in my life. And this operation is just becoming, you ~~ink~~ know, a little bit more efficient all the time. Till at this ~~point~~ point, it's beginning to die down a little bit. We still have fifteen sleeping here. But the Red Cross is trying to localize people now.

SW Fifteen people still...

DW Yeah, still have fifteen here.

SW Over two weeks after the flooding.

DW Yeah. They, they prefer to be here.

SW Is it, at some point, is it going to be set up that they're going to go someplace else, or...?

DW They're waiting for housing. The Red Cross told us today that they will ~~start~~ stop feeding tomorrow. Tomorrow night will be the last meal. And I, I've hired a lady now to come in and cook for the, I've received a lot of help, I've received \$2500 from churches around the country, and I've given about a hundred to everyone who was in the flood. And I still have money left over to pay ~~for~~ ^{for} ~~cook~~ ^{cook} and ~~buy~~ ^{buy} the groceries for these fifteen people for another few weeks. ~~R~~ (Plus) more money. So that's the way we're gonna do it. But it's been, it's been a busy center. Like Jerry's out in the hallway here and Jerry's works with a program, a big national program here, he'll explain it to you in a minute, just the different groups, whether it's the Red Cross or the HUD people, the housing people, you know, they, they knew we had people here and they'd all come up and the different ones would explain their programs and bring in their different kinds of help, and, and it's just been a, been a busy bee hive. An awful lot of requests for information on loved ones, you know, coming in from all over the place. And helping, you know, helping people with a missing list, and we had wakes, we buried six from here, we lost nine from here and six of them are buried here and three are buried on a reservation. And twenty-two families lost their homes, so busy. Lot of people who weren't just living here, ~~just~~ ^{would} ~~come~~ ^{be} coming her for meals, just to talk and see old friends and . We had services here and wakes ; it's been kind of a madhouse.

SW But you find it's settled down, settled down now.

DW Oh, yes. It's still busy. I should do as far as work goes,
s but, you know, it's like everybody else. I just, I ^{owe} fifty letters

that I've gotta do some day, to say nothing of all my personal bills and all this stuff is just piling up everywhere and I haven't done anything. There's just always something to do. been wonderful.

SW That's what other people have said.

DW Really beautiful. Everybody's been beautiful/

SW Well, good,

DW But I want to push the CBER's. They saved a lot of lives. I don't just mean our channel, but all these channels and five of them gave their lives. But this is a wonderful thing. And I think, I've heard they're trying to find out why Rapid City reacted so fast to this thing, I think that this Private Citizen's Band radio, especially with these organized REACT clubs in town really had an awful lot to do with saving people. And getting, I mean, they weren't just saving people, but all, you could hardly get on that channel for the next five days, because they were, whether big construction companies needed a great big (pumper) like they, they stationed their units at the hospitals and at critical points in town and you name it, the police used this, these big bulldozers used this, everybody, and if somebody wanted five bulldozers, the CBER's got it for them. Because we were the only guys, you know, who could..because we had our central office right in the courthouse there. I mean we, I mean the CBER's. But the real ones were the REACTs, these organized clubs. But they're in every town, too. I'm not saying more of them, they are all over the country.

SW Well, I know too much about them, I suppose they're one group we ought to..like yourself and others.

DW Well, yeah..Joe, I think there's another Joe Dudley. Didn't he march..? Yeah, it was a Joe Dudley in town who's head of the REACTs. And another one is Bob Williamson. And...

(End of Interview)

we buried six from here, we lost nine from here and six of them are buried here and three are buried on a reservation. And twenty-two families lost their homes, so _____ busy. Lot of people who weren't just living here, would come here for meals, just to talk and see old friends and _____. We had services here and wakes. It's been kind of a madhouse.

Q. But you find it's settled down, _____ settled down now.

A. Oh, yes. It's still busy. _____ I should do as far as work goes, but, you know, it's like everybody else. I just, I owe fifty letters _____ that I've gotta do some day, to say nothing of all my personal bills and all this stuff is just piling up everywhere and I haven't done anything. There's just always something to do. _____ been wonderful.

Q. That's what other people have said.

A. Really beautiful. Everybody's been beautiful.

Q. Well, good.

A. But I want to push the CBer's. They saved a lot of lives. I don't just mean our channel, but all these channels and five of them gave their lives. But this is a wonderful thing. And I think, I've heard they're trying to find out why Rapid City reacted so fast to this thing. I thing that this private Citizen's Band radio, especially with these organized REACT clubs in town really had an awful lot to do with saving poeple. And getting, I mean, they weren't just saving people, but all, you could harly get on that channel for the next five days, because they were, whether big construction companies needed a great big (Pumper) like they, they stationed their units at the hospitals and at critical points in town and you name it. The police used this, these big bulldozers. used this, everybody, and if somebody wanted five bulldozers, the CBer's got

it to them. Because we were the only guys, you know, who could. . .because we had our central office right in the courthouse there. I mean we, I mean the CBer's. But the real ones were the REACTs, these roganized clubs. But they're in every town, too. I'm not saying _____ more of them, they are all over the country.

Q. Well, I _____ know too much about them, I suppose they're one group we ought to. . .like yourself and others.

A. Well, yeah. . .Joe, I think there's another Joe Dudley. Didn't he march. . . ? Yeah, it was a Joe Dudley in town who's head of the REACTs. And another one is Bob Williamson. And. . . .