

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Library Cataloguing Service Data

Name of informant Mr. and Mrs. Harold Bruns

Address 2402 Northbrook, Rapid City, South Dakota

Date of interview June 29, 1972

Name of Researcher O. A. Rothlisberger

Others Present their daughter

Location of Interview 4117 Timothy, Rapid City, South Dakota

Added Notes They were caught in the flood waters and floated downstream on innertubes when their house was destroyed.

Subject Headings under which you feel this interview should be filed:  
Rapid City flood victims.

Demographic Information on Informant

Age 50 Sex Male, Female County Pennington

Socio-economic status Middle

Occupation Farmer's Feed and Seed

Education \_\_\_\_\_

Religion \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

Number of Moves in South Dakota \_\_\_\_\_ Reasons for moves: \_\_\_\_\_

Q. I'm talking this morning to Mr. and Mrs. Harold Bruns, Rapid City, South Dakota. Mr. Bruns, Mrs. Bruns, you were, at the time of the flood you were residing at 2402 Northbrook here in Rapid City, is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. And I believe that before we begin here, we identified that on the map as that property being located in the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter of section 9, township 1 north, range 7 east. Now at what time did, did you folks first have any indication that perhaps this was more than just a, another heavy rain? That perhaps flood conditions or a crisis situation was developing?

A. Well, as far as time is concerned, I suppose that it was around 10 o'clock when it started to flood around the house, I mean it started to come up so we knew that flood condiditons. . . .

Q. All right, well, let's go back to a little earlier then, you were both home early that evening or afternoon?

A<sub>2</sub> Yes.

Q. Uh-huh. And what time do you usually come home from work, Mr. Bruns? That was on a Friday.

A. Friday, I don't remember. . . I suppose it was in the neighborhood of 5:30, 6 o'clock.

Q. I see, and it had been raining then for. . . .

A. No, no. Huh-uh.

Q. What, it started raining then in the evening or was it at night?

A. Well, raining, started raining right after our daughter left, and I think, what time did you leave the house Mary Jo?

A<sub>3</sub> About eight.

Q. About 8 o'clock, okay. \_\_\_\_\_ very hard?

A. Not too hard to start with, no, it wasn't raining real hard to start with.

Q. Now, had you received, had you received any, any warnings or any indications that there was flooding up above your place, had anything come out on, something did come out on the television, people \_\_\_\_\_, were you watching, did you see this?

A<sub>2</sub> No, we didn't have our television on.

Q. Oh, I see, I see. So it was just another evening so far as you folks were concerned until about ten o'clock you say that water started to rise.

A. Well, water was coming up before that time, of course, we were, we have a stream going through our back yard and this stream had risen quite a little and we were watching the water come up on this small stream and hadn't been paying too much attention to the creek till about that time.

Q. Now, did the stream run on one side of your property and the creek on the other, then? That's Rapid, right?

A. Yeah, Rapid Creek was, oh, about half a block from us and then we had a small stream that comes down through Baken Park, run through our back yard.

Q. I see, I see, okay. Well, then when did you realize that this, that this was really a flood then? The water, did it rise very rapidly, very quickly. . . ?

A<sub>2</sub> I would say it was around ten o'clock when we watched our bridge across our little creek go.

Q. Yeah, uh-huh. And then the dam on Canyon Lake broke at some time that night. Is that when the water really inundated you out there?



- A. Well, we don't know exactly whether the main force of water come before the dam broke or whether, whether it happened in conjunction with the dam breaking. But it, after 10:30 it seemed like the water for, at a time the level of the flood was reduced, probably dropped, oh, five, six inches on our next door driveway, so we thought the crest was over at that time, but. . . .
- Q. Now, it was up into your yard at this time, it wasn't into the house?
- A. No, it wasn't into the house but it was up in the driveway and it was coming in some of the basement windows.
- Q. I see. And then subsequent to that it rose into the house. . . .
- A. Well, at that time we thought that possibly the crest had run by, and so we were trying to \_\_\_\_\_ or stuff the few basement windows and so forth to keep any further seepage from coming in.
- Q. Then, when, when did automobiles be displaced, and houses and that sort. . . and you were in the house at the time, right?
- A. Yes, we were in the house at the time and it seems as though time is, it's hard to recall just what time it was, but I know it wasn't too long after that that we didn't pay any attention to it, we did have the transistor radio going on at that time and were advised to evacuate or move to higher ground. And we were thinking about grabbing the few personal effects and moving when we noticed water coming in the front door. And about that time the Mercury, car which we had in the driveway, started moving out of the driveway and then we knew that we couldn't get out by car, so we just started trying to barricade doors and keep the water out.
- Q. Okay. All right. Then you realized when you saw the Mercury float out of the driveway that you couldn't get away by automobile. So what did, what did you



then, Mrs. Bruns? What are your recollections?

A<sub>2</sub> By this time I looked in the den and the water was \_\_\_\_\_ through our fireplace and coming in the patio door. About this time some of the furniture in the den was floating into our dining room. And this is when Harold said, "We've got to get out to the attic." And the door into the attic \_\_\_\_\_ down, and we went through this wall of water to get out that door, trying to climb on the hood of the car. And, of course, there were no lights, \_\_\_\_\_ we managed to get on the hood of the car, then the car started moving. We couldn't grab the \_\_\_\_\_ we got on the roof of the car, the car moved and we couldn't grab the rafters into the attic. Well, fortunately it moved back again and we were able to, my husband gave me a push and I grabbed a piece of the rafter. And we pulled at them and got him up to the attic, which was only a partial attic, and we decided we'd better get away from the bricks from the fireplace, so we inched our way over. Noticed two innertubes there, we put the innertubes around us.

Q. I see. these were inflated, the innertubes?

A<sub>2</sub> They were inflated, the kids had been using them to tube down the creek. \_\_\_\_\_ we had the inner tubes around us. The car was banging against the garage door and it was making terrific noises. And about that time the roof collapsed on us.

Q. Oh, yes, while you were. . . ?

A<sub>2</sub> In the attic the roof just collapsed on us, and we were pinned to the floor.

Q. Oh, my! And what. . . ?

A<sub>2</sub> We can't figure out how we ever got, neither one of us could move, we can't figure out how we ever moved the rafters. When we did, the innertubes popped

us out just like corks out of a bottle and Harold went one way and I went the other.

Q. You were out in the water, now.

A<sub>2</sub> Right.

Q. Going downstream.

A<sub>2</sub> Yes, tearing across the neighborhood.

Q. And, well, okay, what then, where did you come ashore, if that's the way I put it, I don't know. . . ?

A<sub>2</sub> Well, Harold's innertube broke immediately, I didn't know that, he went one way and I went the other. He maintains he can't remember anything right then.

Q. Now, when your innertube broke, then how did you . . . ?

A. Well, when my innertube broke I was hanging onto a piece of debris and I don't know, probably not very minutes elapsed between the time we came out of the attic until I was hanging on this debris, but I was hanging onto a large piece of lumber that was floating down, and I realized that the innertube was broke, but I was, I was floating downstream at a pretty rapid pace about that time.

Q. And when did you come, come to rest then? Come to shore where you could. . . ?

A. Well, I was riding this piece of timber down the stream and thought this was a real good way to ride out the creek under the circumstances, when I looked up, course, \_\_\_\_\_ lost my glasses and I can't see very well at a distance, I don't know just what happened, but anyhow, all of a sudden this timber disappeared, I think I hit a tree and knocked me loose from it. And then I was scrambling to find another piece of debris, and went by a house, tried to grab onto that, then it seemed as I went by this house it swirled around

in front of a tree, and I grabbed a tree next, on the other side of Dunbarton Street, right next to Jackson Boulevard. And that's where I got out of the water.

Q. Well, now, are you a fairly strong swimmer, Mr. Bruns, or did the water just carry you along?

A. No, I can't swim any further than across this room, but under the circumstances, it wasn't a question of being able to swim, it was just a question of being able to hang on to some debris to float down the creek, and there was all kinds of debris in the creek, it's just a question of being able to hang onto something.

Q. Now you say that you were able to, that you came ashore somewhere then, where, Jackson Boulevard?

A. Well, it was close to the intersection of Jackson Boulevard and Dunbarton Street.

Q. I see. I see. All right, now, in the meantime, your innertube. . . .

A<sub>2</sub> I hung onto my innertube until I got to Evergreen Drive and then it slipped out from under me, and I was tearing across the golf course by this time, neither one of us were in the course of the creek at all. Houses and cars and so forth were going by us and you'd see these trees come up at you so fast you'd be afraid you'd hit those and be mashed, but, and of course, it was pitch dark and I was swirled around between some houses, and there was a huge pile of debris about two stories high and a car was there, so I grabbed the handle as I whizzed by and was able to hang onto the handle, crawled over the hood of that car and it was tilted, and I hung onto that as the debris and the car kept swirling around these houses were going by me, and I would



assume in an hour or so, why, it started to ease out, and I knew I was safe then, sitting on this pile of debris. And there was a light on in a house and I yelled, but they said they could not get to me, of course, it was just, I was in an island. . . .

Q. \_\_\_\_\_ debris and water all around.

A<sub>2</sub> Water all around and cars and houses, and another man heard me and he put a flashlight out the window, and I thought maybe I could get to his backyard, and he said, "Don't try it, there's six feet of water in my backyard." So periodically he'd put his flashlight out to make sure I was still sitting on the debris.

Q. Now, Mr. Bruns, you, was there anywhere in the vicinity where you came to rest, then, were any people around or were you isolated on an island of debris as well?

A. No, I was on the, I was in this tree that was just in the front yard of this house on Dunbarton Stree, and after we surveyed the area when the flood was over, why, we found out that we were only about a half a block apart.

Q. I see, you and your wife.

A. Mm-hm. And so, but, at the time I didn't know for sure where I was, because as I say, I lost my glasses and it was just dark and raining, and you just didn't know for sure where you were.

Q. And you, you stayed in the tree there then, until. . . .

A. Until the water receded until you could get down out of the tree.

Q. That was morning then, I suppose.

A. Oh, I would say that, oh, time's a little hard to tell, but I would guess it would probably be around three or four o'clock in the morning.

Q. It wasn't quite light then.

A. Oh, no.

Q. And did you have to stay on your. . . ?

A<sub>2</sub> I stayed on mine until it was light out and I noticed some people at daylight, and I yelled to them, and in about half an hour a man started across what I thought was the river. And we started in this man's backyard, I had to go, we had to go over another river, and we ran into silt up to our hips and got out of there right away, so then we went up the river and to his front door and it was barricaded, of course, with trees and debris and he pushed me under, the man was in the house, threw me on the davenport and went after somebody else. We were so cold we were just shaking. . . .

Q. Oh, I suppose.

A<sub>2</sub> And he said he would call for some heavy machinery to try to get through the creek and bring a stretcher, and in about an hour it did arrive and they took me to St. John's Hospital for X-rays. And then I was released. And we didn't see each other and know each other was alive before about 10:30 in the morning.

Q. Now, how did you get in contact with each other then?

A. Well we were, 'course I did, as soon as daylight was there, why we. . . let's see, how did this go, as soon as daylight come, why the fire truck was going down Dunbarton Street and I was able to wade out and get into the truck. They took me to Sioux San and from there I contacted my daughter and she started taking us around to these various places where we thought people were being picked up to see whether I could locate my wife. And on the way down to the courthouse we did hear on the radio that she was picked up and

at the St. John's nursing home and that's how we made contact.

Q. I see. Now you say you contacted your daughter, is that the young lady next. . . ?

A<sub>3</sub> Yes.

Q. Where were you that. . . ?

A<sub>3</sub> Well, that night I had taken my car and gone with a girl friend to get a coke. And I had hit in the deep water, so I went to a friends house and called Mom and Dad to see if they were okay and tell them, you know, that they'd better not try to come and get me 'cause it was too deep. And that was about 10 o'clock. And then I figured they had gotten out and got to a friends house, so I was too awfully worried about it, till the next morning about seven I got a call from Dad saying to come and get him.

Q. I see. I see.

A<sub>3</sub> (Inaudible)

Q. Well, you, you sort of assumed that, that they were all right?

A<sub>3</sub> Yes, they said they were going to some friends house in Canyon Lake (Heights) which was higher, so I figured they'd be fine.

Q. That's where you intended to go, I suppose, when you found the Mercury floating away and couldn't, couldn't get there.

A. That's where we hoped to go, yes. Is. . .but water just come up too fast, we just couldn't get away, I guess we should have started fifteen minutes sooner.

Q. But you had no, you had no real warning that, I suppose no one expected that dam to break, did you? Did you even think about that possibility, the dam breaking up there?



- A. We thought of that possibility, but we just felt that the crest had already come and wasn't paying too much attention to it right at the moment when that wall of water hit us, where it hit us with such a bang that we just couldn't do anything.
- Q. Well, perhaps it sounded like a silly question, but I, I think that I would feel that way, you know, you expect a dam to hold and I don't think. . . .
- A<sub>2</sub> It never entered my mind about the dam actually and I'm sure that we perhaps would have been safe in our attic had not another house hit our house to make it explode.
- Q. Now, that's you, you were in the house when it exploded.
- A<sub>2</sub> We were, yes, we were in the attic and apparently that's when the roof fell on our heads.
- Q. The roof fell on you, I see, I see. And the house was destroyed.
- A<sub>2</sub> We've never seen a stick of it.
- Q. Is that right? Is that right? Now there was extensive destruction of other houses around your there, I believe, was there?
- A<sub>2</sub> Yes.
- Q. There were casualties in that area?
- A<sub>2</sub> Three.
- A. On our block.
- Q. I see, I see, in your, in your block. But you, Mr. Bruns, you were able to contact your daughter in the morning so she picked you up and you had been taken to, you had been taken to the hospital.
- A<sub>2</sub> St. John's.
- Q. Well, I suppose that many patients or cases had been moved to the hospital at

this time?

A<sub>2</sub> Yes, I had to wait for about ten minutes for an X-ray on my arm, they found it wasn't broken, and they didn't, couldn't take time to clean me up, so they moved me immediately to where the nurses live, nurses home, so. . . . And a nurse sat with myself and another lady in the same room for hours it seem like, she tried to clean us off, but we were so full of debris and all and full of splinters that she did the best she could.

Q. This, this was in the morning, I suppose they were bringing cases in from all, all over the area.

A<sub>2</sub> Yes, I was one of the earlier ones, I'm quite sure, because it wasn't quite that packed when I got there.

Q. Now, I, you probably didn't notice at the time, but, the rescue workers, what agencies or groups were bringing these people in, National Guard, Civil Defense, police, fire department?

A<sub>2</sub> Mm-hm. Mine was a volunteer, he was a wonderful fellow, little blond-haired boy that came after me.

Q. Mm-hm. Yes. Okay, you've given us a quite interesting account here of what, I'm sure it must have been quite a harrowing experience, I, I suppose that, did this happen so fast that you didn't have much, I suppose you had plenty of time to think when you were out there on that debris and when you were in that tree. . . .

A<sub>2</sub> We were, I was so cold I couldn't think. And it rained of course, I had shorts on, no shoes and stocking, Harold had just a raincoat on, it was so cold.

Q. Did, did either of you become ill from any exposure? You apparently are hale

and hearty now.

A<sub>2</sub> We were awfully banged up, it's taken us two weeks to take the battering down, but as far as getting sick, Harold got dysentary, of course, from swallowing, he had swallowed much more water than I did. And they gave him his tetanus shot immediately. I got mine and the typhoid, we got our typhoid the next day, I think. But we had no infections, we were very fortunate that way, but I think he swallowed too much of that dirty water.

Q. Well, do either of you have anything else that you can think of now that you would like to add, if not, we have a very good account here, I think, of \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Bruns?

A. Oh, well, the only thing I would add is that sometimes the circumstances come about where these innertubes were in the attic and used for recreational purposes. And I think those innertubes being left there saved our lives, at least they brought us to the top of the water so we could cling onto something and to. . . sometimes circumstances are such that you can't account for them, but as long as you survived such an ordeal, why, you're real fortunate.

A<sub>2</sub> I do not recommend tubing in the middle of the night. (Laughter.)

Q. Okay. All right, thank you, thank you both very much.



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Others Present their daughter  
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Demographic Information on Informant

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Date of Arrival of Family in South Dakota  
Where?  
From Where?  
Number of Moves in South Dakota Reasons for moves:

- Q. I'm talking this morning to Mr. and Mrs. Harold Bruns, Rapid City, South Dakota. Mr. Bruns, Mrs. Bruns, you were, at the time of the flood you were residing at 2402 Northbrook here in Rapid City, is that correct?
- A. Yes.
- Q. And I believe that before we begin here, we identified that on the map as that property being located in the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter of section 9, township 1 north, range 7 east. Now at what time did, did you folks first have any indication that perhaps this was more than just a, another heavy rain? That perhaps flood conditions or a crisis situation was developing?
- A. Well, as far as time is concerned, I suppose that it was around 10 o'clock when it started to flood around the house, I mean it started to come up so we knew that flood condiditons. . . .
- Q. All right, well, let's go back to a little earlier then, you were both home early that evening or afternoon?
- A<sub>2</sub> Yes.
- Q. Uh-huh. And what time do you usually come home from work, Mr. Bruns? That was on a Friday.
- A. Friday, I don't remember. . . I suppose it was in the neighborhood of 5:30, 6 o'clock.
- Q. I see, and it had been raining then for. . . .
- A. No, no. Huh-uh.
- Q. What, it started raining then in the evening or was it at night?
- A. Well, raining, started raining right after our daughter left, and I think, what time did you leave the house Mary Jo?

A<sub>3</sub> About eight.

Q. About 8 o'clock, okay. \_\_\_\_\_ very hard?

A. Not too hard to start with, no, it wasn't raining real hard to start with.

Q. Now, had you received, had you received any, any warnings or any indications that there was flooding up above your place, had anything come out on, something did come out on the television, people \_\_\_\_\_, were you watching, did you see this?

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Q. Oh, I see, I see. So it was just another evening so far as you folks were concerned until about ten o'clock you say that water started to rise.

A. Well, water was coming up before that time, of course, we were, we have a stream going through our back yard and this stream had risen quite a little and we were watching the water come up on this small stream and hadn't been paying too much attention to the creek till about that time.

Q. Now, did the stream run on one side of your property and the creek on the other, then? That's Rapid, right?

A. Yeah, Rapid Creek was, oh, about half a block from us and then we had a small stream that comes down through Baken Park, run through our back yard.

Q. I see, I see, okay. Well, then when did you realize that this, that this was really a flood then? The water, did it rise very rapidly, very quickly. . . ?

A<sub>2</sub> I would say it was around ten o'clock when we watched our bridge across our little creek go.

Q. Yeah, uh-huh. And then the dam on Canyon Lake broke at some time that night. Is that when the water really inundated you out there?



- A. Well, we don't know exactly whether the main force of water come before the dam broke or whether, whether it happened in conjunction with the dam breaking. But it, after 10:30 it seemed like the water for, at a time the level of the flood was reduced, probably dropped, oh, five, six inches on our next door driveway, so we thought the crest was over at that time, but. . . .
- Q. Now, it was up into your yard at this time, it wasn't into the house?
- A. No, it wasn't into the house but it was up in the driveway and it was coming in some of the basement windows.
- Q. I see. And then subsequent to that it rose into the house. . . .
- A. Well, at that time we thought that possibly the crest had run by, and so we were trying to \_\_\_\_\_ or stuff the few basement windows and so forth to keep any further seepage from coming in.
- Q. Then, when, when did automobiles be displaced, and houses and that sort. . . and you were in the house at the time, right?
- A. Yes, we were in the house at the time and it seems as though time is, it's hard to recall just what time it was, but I know it wasn't too long after that that we didn't pay any attention to it, we did have the transistor radio going on at that time and were advised to evacuate or move to higher ground. And we were thinking about grabbing the few personal effects and moving when we noticed water coming in the front door. And about that time the Mercury, car which we had in the driveway, started moving out of the driveway and then we knew that we couldn't get out by car, so we just started trying to barricade doors and keep the water out.
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then, Mrs. Bruns? What are your recollections?

A<sub>2</sub> By this time I looked in the den and the water was \_\_\_\_\_ through our fireplace and coming in the patio door. About this time some of the furniture in the den was floating into our dining room. And this is when Harold said, "We've got to get out to the attic." And the door into the attic \_\_\_\_\_ down, and we went through this wall of water to get out that door, trying to climb on the hood of the car. And, of course, there were no lights, \_\_\_\_\_ we managed to get on the hood of the car, then the car started moving. We couldn't grab the \_\_\_\_\_ we got on the roof of the car, the car moved and we couldn't grab the rafters into the attic. Well, fortunately it moved back again and we were able to, my husband gave me a push and I grabbed a piece of the rafter. And we pulled at them and got him up to the attic, which was only a partial attic, and we decided we'd better get away from the bricks from the fireplace, so we inched our way over. Noticed two innertubes there, we put the innertubes around us.

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Q. Oh, yes, while you were. . . ?

A<sub>2</sub> In the attic the roof just collapsed on us, and we were pinned to the floor.

Q. Oh, my! And what. . . ?

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us out just like corks out of a bottle and Harold went one way and I went the other.

Q. You were out in the water, now.

A<sub>2</sub> Right.

Q. Going downstream.

A<sub>2</sub> Yes, tearing across the neighborhood.

Q. And, well, okay, what then, where did you come ashore, if that's the way I put it, I don't know. . . ?

A<sub>2</sub> Well, Harold's innertube broke immediately, I didn't know that, he went one way and I went the other. He maintains he can't remember anything right then.

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in front of a tree, and I grabbed a tree next, on the other side of Dunbarton Street, right next to Jackson Boulevard. And that's where I got out of the water.

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A. No, I can't swim any further than across this room, but under the circumstances, it wasn't a question of being able to swim, it was just a question of being able to hang on to some debris to float down the creek, and there was all kinds of debris in the creek, it's just a question of being able to hang onto something.

Q. Now you say that you were able to, that you came ashore somewhere then, where, Jackson Boulevard?

A. Well, it was close to the intersection of Jackson Boulevard and Dunbarton Street.

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A<sub>2</sub> I hung onto my innertube until I got to Evergreen Drive and then it slipped out from under me, and I was tearing across the golf course by this time, neither one of us were in the course of the creek at all. Houses and cars and so forth were going by us and you'd see these trees come up at you so fast you'd be afraid you'd hit those and be mashed, but, and of course, it was pitch dark and I was swirled around between some houses, and there was a huge pile of debris about two stories high and a car was there, so I grabbed the handle as I whizzed by and was able to hang onto the handle, crawled over the hood of that car and it was tilted, and I hung onto that as the debris and the car kept swirling around these houses were going by me, and I would

assume in an hour or so, why, it started to ease out, and I knew I was safe then, sitting on this pile of debris. And there was a light on in a house and I yelled, but they said they could not get to me, of course, it was just, I was in an island. . . .

Q. \_\_\_\_\_ debris and water all around.

A<sub>2</sub> Water all around and cars and houses, and another man heard me and he put a flashlight out the window, and I thought maybe I could get to his backyard, and he said, "Don't try it, there's six feet of water in my backyard." So periodically he'd put his flashlight out to make sure I was still sitting on the debris.

Q. Now, Mr. Bruns, you, was there anywhere in the vicinity where you came to rest, then, were any people around or were you isolated on an island of debris as well?

A. No, I was on the, I was in this tree that was just in the front yard of this house on Dunbarton Stree, and after we surveyed the area when the flood was over, why, we found out that we were only about a half a block apart.

Q. I see, you and your wife.

A. Mm-hm. And so, but, at the time I didn't know for sure where I was, because as I say, I lost my glasses and it was just dark and raining, and you just didn't know for sure where you were.

Q. And you, you stayed in the tree there then, until. . . .

A. Until the water receded until you could get down out of the tree.

Q. That was morning then, I suppose.

A. Oh, I would say that, oh, time's a little hard to tell, but I would guess it would probably be around three or four o'clock in the morning.

Q. It wasn't quite light then.

A. Oh, no.

Q. And did you have to stay on your. . . ?

A<sub>2</sub> I stayed on mine until it was light out and I noticed some people at daylight, and I yelled to them, and in about half an hour a man started across what I thought was the river. And we started in this man's backyard, I had to go, we had to go over another river, and we ran into silt up to our hips and got out of there right away, so then we went up the river and to his front door and it was barricaded, of course, with trees and debris and he pushed me under, the man was in the house, threw me on the davenport and went after somebody else. We were so cold we were just shaking. . . .

Q. Oh, I suppose.

A<sub>2</sub> And he said he would call for some heavy machinery to try to get through the creek and bring a stretcher, and in about an hour it did arrive and they took me to St. John's Hospital for X-rays. And then I was released. And we didn't see each other and know each other was alive before about 10:30 in the morning.

Q. Now, how did you get in contact with each other then?

A. Well we were, 'course I did, as soon as daylight was there, why we. . . let's see, how did this go, as soon as daylight come, why the fire truck was going down Dunbarton Street and I was able to wade out and get into the truck. They took me to Sioux San and from there I contacted my daughter and she started taking us around to these various places where we thought people were being picked up to see whether I could locate my wife. And on the way down to the courthouse we did hear on the radio that she was picked up and



at the St. John's nursing home and that's how we made contact.

Q. I see. Now you say you contacted your daughter, is that the young lady next. . . ?

A<sub>3</sub> Yes.

Q. Where were you that. . . ?

A<sub>3</sub> Well, that night I had taken my car and gone with a girl friend to get a coke. And I had hit in the deep water, so I went to a friends house and called Mom and Dad to see if they were okay and tell them, you know, that they'd better not try to come and get me 'cause it was too deep. And that was about 10 o'clock. And then I figured they had gotten out and got to a friends house, so I was too awfully worried about it, till the next morning about seven I got a call from Dad saying to come and get him.

Q. I see. I see.

A<sub>3</sub> (Inaudible)

Q. Well, you, you sort of assumed that, that they were all right?

A<sub>3</sub> Yes, they said they were going to some friends house in Canyon Lake (Heights) which was higher, so I figured they'd be fine.

Q. That's where you intended to go, I suppose, when you found the Mercury floating away and couldn't, couldn't get there.

A. That's where we hoped to go, yes. Is. . .but water just come up too fast, we just couldn't get away, I guess we should have started fifteen minutes sooner.

Q. But you had no, you had no real warning that, I suppose no one expected that dam to break, did you? Did you even think about that possibility, the dam breaking up there?

A. We thought of that possibility, but we just felt that the crest had already come and wasn't paying too much attention to it right at the moment when that wall of water hit us, where it hit us with such a bang that we just couldn't do anything.

Q. Well, perhaps it sounded like a silly question, but I, I think that I would feel that way, you know, you expect a dam to hold and I don't think. . . .

A<sub>2</sub> It never entered my mind about the dam actually and I'm sure that we perhaps would have been safe in our attic had not another house hit our house to make it explode.

Q. Now, that's you, you were in the house when it exploded.

A<sub>2</sub> We were, yes, we were in the attic and apparently that's when the roof fell on our heads.

Q. The roof fell on you, I see, I see. And the house was destroyed.

A<sub>2</sub> We've never seen a stick of it.

Q. Is that right? Is that right? Now there was extensive destruction of other houses around your there, I believe, was there?

A<sub>2</sub> Yes.

Q. There were casualties in that area?

A<sub>2</sub> Three.

A. On our block.

Q. I see, I see, in your, in your block. But you, Mr. Bruns, you were able to contact your daughter in the morning so she picked you up and you had been taken to, you had been taken to the hospital.

A<sub>2</sub> St. John's.

Q. Well, I suppose that many patients or cases had been moved to the hospital at

this time?

A<sub>2</sub> Yes, I had to wait for about ten minutes for an X-ray on my arm, they found it wasn't broken, and they didn't, couldn't take time to clean me up, so they moved me immediately to where the nurses live, nurses home, so. . . . And a nurse sat with myself and another lady in the same room for hours it seem like, she tried to clean us off, but we were so full of debris and all and full of splinters that she did the best she could.

Q. This, this was in the morning, I suppose they were bringing cases in from all, all over the area.

A<sub>2</sub> Yes, I was one of the earlier ones, I'm quite sure, because it wasn't quite that packed when I got there.

Q. Now, I, you probably didn't notice at the time, but, the rescue workers, what agencies or groups were bringing these people in, National Guard, Civil Defense, police, fire department?

A<sub>2</sub> Mm-hm. Mine was a volunteer, he was a wonderful fellow, little blond-haired boy that came after me.

Q. Mm-hm. Yes. Okay, you've given us a quite interesting account here of what, I'm sure it must have been quite a harrowing experience, I, I suppose that, did this happen so fast that you didn't have much, I suppose you had plenty of time to think when you were out there on that debris and when you were in that tree. . . .

A<sub>2</sub> We were, I was so cold I couldn't think. And it rained of course, I had shorts on, no shoes and stocking, Harold had just a raincoat on, it was so cold.

Q. Did, did either of you become ill from any exposure? You apparently are hale



and hearty now.

A<sub>2</sub> We were awfully banged up, it's taken us two weeks to take the battering down, but as far as getting sick, Harold got dysentary, of course, from swallowing, he had swallowed much more water than I did. And they gave him his tetanus shot immediately. I got mine and the typhoid, we got our typhoid the next day, I think. But we had no infections, we were very fortunate that way, but I think he swallowed too much of that dirty water.

Q. Well, do either of you have anything else that you can think of now that you would like to add, if not, we have a very good account here, I think, of \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Bruns?

A. Oh, well, the only thing I would add is that sometimes the circumstances come about where these innertubes were in the attic and used for recreational purposes. And I think those innertubes being left there saved our lives, at least they brought us to the top of the water so we could cling onto something and to. . . sometimes circumstances are such that you can't account for them, but as long as you survived such an ordeal, why, you're real fortunate.

A<sub>2</sub> I do not recommend tubing in the middle of the night. (Laughter.)

Q. Okay. All right, thank you, thank you both very much.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Tape Number

505

[illegible]

~~OR tape. Thank you sir.~~

OR I'm talking this morning to Mr. and Mrs. Harold Bruns, Rapid City, South Dakota. Mr. Bruns, Mrs. Bruns, you were, at the time of the flood you were residing at 2402 Northbrook here in Rapid City, is that correct?

HB yes.

OR And I believe that before we begin here, we identified that on the map as that property being located in the southwest quarter of the north<sup>e</sup>ast quarter of section 9, township 1 north, range 7 east. Now at what time did , did you folks first have any indication that perhaps this was more than just a, another heavy rain. That perhaps flood conditions or a crisis situation was developing?

HB Well, as far as time is concerned, I suppose that it was around 10 o'clock when it started to flood around the house, I mean it started to come up so we knew that flood conditions...

OR All right, well, let's go back to a little earlier then, you were both home early that evening or afternoon?

MB Yes.

OR Uh-huh. And what time do you usually come home from work, Mr. Bruns? That was on a ~~WA~~ Friday.

HB Friday I don't remember I suppose it was in the neighborhood of 5:30, 6 o'clock.

OR I see, and it had been raining then for..

HB No, no. Huh-uh.

OR What, it started raining then in the evening ~~for~~ or was it at night .



HB Well, raining, started raining right after our daughter left, and I think, what time  
ddid you leave the house ~~MAKXX~~ Mary Jo?

MJB About eight.

Or About eight o'clock, okay. very hard.

HB Not too hard to start with, no, it wasn't raining ~~very~~<sup>real</sup> hard to start with.

Or Now, had you received, had you received any, any warnings or any indications that there  
was flood ing up above your place, had anything come out on, something did come out on  
the television, people , were=you watching, did you see this?

MB No, we didn't have our television on.

OR Oh, ~~is~~I see, I see. So it was just another evening so far as you folks were concerned  
until about ten o'clock you say that water started to rise.

HB Well, water was coming up before that time, of course we were, we had<sup>2</sup> a stream going  
through our back yard and this stream had risen quite a little and we were watching the  
water come up on this small stream and hadn't been paying too much attention to the  
creek t~~ill~~ about that time.

OR Now did the ~~stream~~ stream run on one side of yourproperty and the creek on the other, then?  
That's Rapid , right?

HB Yeah, Rapid Creek was, oh, about half a block from us and then we had a small stream  
that comes down through Baken Park, run through our back yard.

OR I see, I see, okay. Well, then, when did you realize that this , that this was really  
a flood then? The water, did it rise very rapidly, v ery quickly...?

MB I would say it was around ten o'clock when we watched ~~xxxxx~~ our bridge across our little  
creek go.

OR Yeah, uh-huh. And then the dam on Canyon Lake broke at some time that night. Is that  
when the water really inundated you out there?

HB Well, we don't know exactly wh~~ether~~ the mainforce of water come before ~~the~~ dam broke  
or whether, whether it happened in conjunction with the dam breaking. But it, after  
ten:thirty it seemed like the water for, at a time the level of the flood was reduced,  
probably dropped, oh, five , six inches on our next door driveway, so we thought the  
crest was over at that time, but...

OR Now it was up into your yard at this time, it wasn't into the house.

HB No, it wasn't into the house but it was up in the driveway and it was coming in some of the basement windows.

HB  
~~XX~~ I see. And then subsequent to that it rose into the house ..

OR Well , at that time we thought that possibly the crest had run by, and so we were trying to or stuff the few basement windows and so forth to keep any further seepage from coming in.

OR Then when , when did automobiles be displaced, and houses and that sort...and you were in the house at the time, right?

HB Yes, we were in the house at the time and ~~xx~~ it seems as though time is, it's hard to recall just what time it was, but I know it wasn't too long after that that we didn't pay any attention to it, we did have the transistor radio going on at ~~xx~~ that time and were advised to evacuate or move to higher ground. And we were thinking about grabbing the few personal effects and moving when we noticed water coming in the front door. And about that time the Mercury, car which we ~~xx~~ had in the driveway, started moving out of the driveway and then we knew that we couldn't get out by car, so we just started trying to barricade doors and keep the water out.

OR Okay. All right. Then you realized when you saw the Mercury float out of the driveway that you couldn't get away by automobile. So what did, what did you then, Mrs. Bruns? What are your recollections?

MB By this time I looked in the den and the water was through our fireplace and coming in the patio door. About this time some of the furniture in the den was floating in to our dining room. And this is when Harold said "We've got to get out to the attic." And the door into the attic down, and we went through this wall of water to get out that door , trying to climb on the hood of the car. And of course there were no lights, we managed to get on the hood of the car, then the car started moving. We couldn't grab the we got on the roof of the car, the car moved and we ~~xx~~ couldn't grab the rafters into the attic. Well, fortunately it moved back again and we were able to, my husband gave me a push and I grabbed a piece of the rafter. And we pulled at him and got him up to the attic, which was only a partial attic, and we decided we'd better



MB away from the bricks from the fireplace, so we inched our way over. Noticed two inner tubes there, we put the innertubes around us.

OR I see. These were inflated, the innertubes?

MB They were inflated, the kids had been using them to tube down the creek. we had the inner tubes around us. The car was ~~was~~ banging against the garage door and it was terrific noises. And about that time the roof collapsed on us.

OR Oh yes, while you were..

MB In the attic the roof just collapsed on us, and we were pinned to the floor.

OR Oh, my, and what...

MB We can't figure out how we ever got, neither one of us could move, we can't figure out how we ever moved the rafters. When we did, the inner tubes popped us out just like corks out of a bottle and Harold went one way and I went the other.

OR You were out in the water, now.

MB Right.

OR Going downstream.

MB Yes, tearing across the neighborhood.

OR And, well, okay, what then, where did you come ashore, if that's the way I put it, I don't know..

MB Well, Harold's innertube broke immediately, I didn't know that, he went one way and I went the other. He maintains he can't remember anything right then.

OR Now, when your innertube broke, then how did you..

HB Well, when my innertube broke I was hanging onto a piece of debris and I don't know, probably not very minutes elapsed between the time we came out of the attic until I was hanging on this debris, but I was hanging onto a large piece of lumber that was floating down, and I realized that the innertube was broke, but I was, I was floating downstream at a pretty rapid pace about that time..

OR And when did you come, come to rest then, come to shore where you could...

HB Well, I was riding this piece of timber down the stream and thought this was a real good way to ride out the creek under the circumstances, when I looked up, course, lost my ~~kg~~glasses and I can't see very well at a distance, I don't know just



HB what happened, but anyhow, all of a sudden this timber disappeared, I think I hit a tree and knocked me loose from it. And then I was scrambling to find another piece of debris, and went by a house, tried to grab onto that, then it seemed as I went by this house it swirled around in front of a tree, and I grabbed a tree next, on the other side of Dunbarton street, right next to Jackson Boulevard. And that's where I got out of the water.

OR Well, now, are you a fairly strong swimmer, Mr. Bruns, or did the water just carry you along?

HB No, I can't swim any further than across this room, but under the circumstances, it wasn't a question of being able to swim, it was just a question of being able to hang on to some debris to float down the creek, and there was all kinds of debris in the creek, it's just a question of being able to hang onto something.

OR Now you say that you were able to, that you came ashore somewhere then, where, Jackson Boulevard?

HB Well, it was close to the intersection of Jackson Boulevard and Dunbarton Street.

OR I see. I see. All right, now, in the meantime, your innertube..

MB I hung on to my innertube until I got to Evergreen Drive and then it slipped out from under me, and I was tearing across the golf course by this time, neither one of us were in the course of the creek at all. Houses and cars and so forth were going by us and you'd see these trees come up at you so fast ~~you'd~~ you'd afraid you'd hit those and be mashed, but, and of course it was pitch dark and I was swirled around between some houses, and there was a huge pile of debris about two stories high and a car was there, so I grabbed the handle as I whizzed by and was able to hang onto the handle, crawled over the hood of that car and it was tilted, and I hung onto that as the debris and the car kept swirling around these houses were going by me, and I would assume in an hour or so, why, it started to ease out, and I knew I was safe then, sitting on this pile of debris. And there was a light on in a house and I ~~yelled~~ yelled, but they said they could not get to me of course, it was just, I was in an island..

OR debris and water all around.

MB Water all around and cars and houses, and another man heard me and he put a flashlight out the window, and I thought maybe I could get to his backyard, and he said, "Don't try it, there's six feet of water in my back yard." So periodically he'd put his ~~xx~~flashlight out to make sure I was still sitting on the debris.

OR Now, Mr. Bruns, you, ~~wer~~ was there anywhere in the vicinity where you came to rest, then, were any people around or were you isolated on an island of debris as well?

HB No, I was on the , I was in this tree that was just in the front yard of this house on Dunbarton Street, and after we surveyed the area when the flood was over, why, we found out that we were only ~~about~~ about a half a block apart.

OR I see, you and your wife.

HB Mm-hm. And so, but, at the time I didn't know for sure where I was, because as I say, I lost my glasses and it was just dark and raining , and you just didn't know for sure where you ~~were~~,

OR And you, you stayed in the tree there then, until ..

HB Until the water receded until you could get down out of the tree;

OR That was morning then, I suppose.

HB Oh, I would say that , oh, time's a little hard to tell, but I would guess it would probably be around three or four o'clock in the morning.

OR It wasn't quite light then.

HB Oh, no.

OR And did you have to stay on your..

~~MEMB~~ I stayed on mine until it was light out and I noticed some people at daylight, and I yelled to them, and in about half an hour a man started across what I thought was the river. And we started in this man's backyard, I had to go, we had to go over another river, and we ran into silt up to our hips and got out of there right away, so then we went up the river and to his front door and it was barricaded of course with trees and debris and he pushed me under, the man was in the house, threw me on the davenport and went after somebody else. We were so cold we were just shaking..

OR Oh, I suppose.



MB And he said he would call for some heavy machinery to ~~get~~ try to get through the creek and bring a ~~s~~tretcher, and in about an hour it did arrive and they took me to St. Johns' hospital for X-rays. And then I was released. And we didn't see each other and know each other was alive <sup>before</sup> ~~from~~ about 10 "30 in the morning. ~~XXX~~

OR Now how did you get in contact with each other then?

HB Well we were, course I, did, as soon as daylight was there, why we...let's see, how did this go, as soon as daylight dome, why the fire truck was going down Dunbarton Street and I was ~~a~~ able to wade out and get into the truck. They took me to Sioux San and from there I contacted my daughter and she started taking us around to these various places where we thought people were being picked up to see whether I could locate my wife. And on the way down to the courthouse we did hear on the radio that she was picked up and at the St. John's nursing home and that's how we made contact.

OR I see. Now you say you contacted your daughter, is that the young lady next..

MJB Yes.

Or Where were you that ...

MJB Well, that night I had taken my car and gone with a girl friend to get a coke. And I had hit in the deep water, so I went to a friends house and called Mom and Dad to see if they were okay and tell them, you know, that they'd better not try <sup>to</sup> ~~and~~ come and get me cause it was too deep. And ~~that~~ that was about 10 o'clock. And then I figured they had gotten out and got to a friends house, so I was too awfully worried about it, till the next morning about 7 I got a call from Dad saying to come and get him.

OR I see. I see.

MJB

OR Well, you, you sort of assumed that, that they were all right?

MJB Yes, they said they were going to some friends house in Canyon Lake (Heights) which was higher, so I figured they'd be fine.

OR ~~That's where~~ That's where you intended to go, I suppose, when you found ~~that~~ the Mercury floating away and couldn't, couldn't get there.

HB That's where we hoped to go, yes, is...but water just come up too fast, we just couldn't get away, I guess we should have started fifteen minutes sooner.



OR But you had no, you had no real warning that, I suppose no one expected thzt dam to break, did you, did you even thing about that possibility, the dam breaking up there?

HB We thought of that possiblility, but we just felt that the crest had already come and wasn't paying too much attention to it right at the moment when that wall of water hit us, where it hit us with such a bang that we just couldn't do anything.

OR Well, ~~xxxxxxxx~~ perhaps it sounded like a silly question, but I, I think that I would feel that way, you know, you expect a dam to hold and I don't think...

MB It never entered my mind about the dam actually and I'm sure that we perhaps would have been safe in our attic had not another house hit our house to make it explode.

OR Now, that's you, you were in the house when it exploded.

MB We were, yes, we were in the attic and apparently that's when the roof fell on our heads.

OR The roof fell on you, I see, I see. And the house was destroyed.

MB We've never seen a stick of it.

OR Is that right? Is that right.? Now there was extensive destruction of other houses around yours there, I believe , was there?

MB Yes.

OR Where were casulaties in that area?

MB Three.

HB On our block.

OR I see, Isee, in your, in your ~~xx~~block. But you, Mr. Bruns, you were able to contact your daughter in the morning so she picked you up and you had been taken to, you had been taken to the hospital.

~~MEMB WXXXXXX~~ St. John's.

OR Well, I suppose that many ~~xx~~patients or cases had been moved to the hospital at this time?

MB Yes, I had to wait for about ten minutes for an X-ray on my arm, <sup>they found</sup> it wasn't broken, and they didn't, couldn't take time to clean me up, so they moved me immediately to where the nurses live, nurses home, so.. And a nurse sat with myself and another lady in the same room for hours it seemed like, she tried to clean us off, but we were so full of debris and all and full of splinters that she did the best she could.

HB that you can't account for them, but as long as you survived such an ordeal, why, you're real fortunate.

MB I do not recommend tubing in the middle of the night. (Laughter)

OR Okay. Allright, thank you. Thank you both very much.

End of Interview

## SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

## Library Cataloguing Service Data

Name of informant Mr. and Mrs. Harold Bruns

Address 2402 Northbrook, Rapid City, South Dakota

Date of Interview June 29, 1972

Name of Researcher O. A. Rothlisberger

Others Present their daughter

Location of Interview 4117 Timothy, Rapid City, South Dakota

Added Notes They were caught in the flood water and floated downstream  
on innertubes when their house was destroyed.

Subject Headings under which you feel this interview should be filed:  
Rapid City flood victims.

Demographic Information on Informant

Age 50 Sex Male, Female County Pennington

Socio-economic status Middle

Occupation Farmers' Feed and Seed

Education \_\_\_\_\_

Religion \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

Number of Moves in South Dakota \_\_\_\_\_ Reasons for moves: \_\_\_\_\_



pp. 8-10

OR tape . Thank you sir.

OR I'm talking this morning to Mr. and Mrs. Harold Bruns, Rapid City, South Dakota. Mr. Bruns, Mrs. Bruns, you were, at the time of the flood you were residing at 2402 Northbrook here in Rapid City, is that correct?

HB yes.

OR And I believe that before we begin here, we identified that on the map as that property being located in the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter of section 9, township 1 north, range 7 east. Now at what time did , did you folks first have any indication that perhaps this was more than just a, another heavy rain. That perhaps flood condition or a crisis situation was devleoping?

HB Well, as fire as time is concerned, I suppose that it was around 10 o'clock when it started to flood around the house, I mean it started to come up so we knew that flood conditions...

OR All right, well, let's go back to a little earlier then, you were both home early that evening or afternoon?

MB Yes.

OR Uh-huh. And what time do you usually come home from work, Mr. Bruns? That was on a Friday.

HB Friday I don't remember I suppose it was in the neighborhood of 5:30, 6 o'clock.

OR I see, and it had been raining then for..

HB No, no. Huh-uh.

OR What, it started raining then in the evening fw or was it at night

HB Well, raining, started raining right after our daughter left, and I think, what time  
ddid you leave the house ~~XXXXX~~ Mary Jo?

MB About eight.

OR About eight o'clock, okay. very hard.

HB Not too hard to start with, no, it wasn't raining ~~XXXX~~ <sup>real</sup> hard to start with.

OR Now, had you received, had you received any, any warnings or any indications that there  
was flood ing up above your place, had anything come out on, something did come out on  
the television, people , ~~were~~=you watching, did you see this?

MB No, we didn't have our television on.

OR Oh, ~~is~~I see, I see. So it was just another evening so far as you folks were concerned  
until about ten o'clock you say that water started to rise.

HB Well, water was coming up before that time, of course we were, we had<sup>e</sup> a stream going  
through our back yard and this stream had risen quite a little and we were watching the  
water come up on this small stream and hadn't been paying too much attention to the  
creek till about that time.

OR Now did the ~~stream~~ stream run on one side of your property and the creek on the other, then  
That's Rapid , right?

HB Yeah, Rapid Creek was, oh, about half a block from us and then we had a small stream  
that comes down through Baken Park, run through our back yard.

OR I see, I see, okay. Well, then, when did you realize that this , that this was really  
a flood then? The water, did it rise very rapidly, v ery quickly...?

MB I would say it was around ten o'clock when we watched ~~xxxx~~ our bridge across our little  
creek go.

OR Yeah, uh-huh. And then the dam on Canyon Lake broke at some time that night. Is that  
when the water really inundated you out there?

HB Well, we don't know exactly whether the mainforce of water come before the dam broke  
or whether, whether it happened in conjunction with the dam breaking. But it, after  
ten:thirty it seemed like the water for, at a time the level of the flood was reduced,  
probably dropped, oh, five , six inches on our next door driveway, so we thought the  
crest was over at that time, but...

OR Now it was up into your yard at this time, it wasn't into the house.

HB No, it wasn't into the house but it was up in the driveway and it was coming in some of the basement windows.

HB I see. And then subsequent to that it rose into the house ..

OR Well , at that time we thought that possibly the crest had run by, and so we were trying to or stuff the few basement windows and so forth to keep any further seepage from coming in.

OR Then when , when did automobiles be displaced, and houses and that sort...and you were in the house at the time, right?

HB Yes, we were in the house at the time and it seems as though time is, it's hard to recall just what time it was, but I know it wasn't too long after that that we didn't pay any attention to it, we did have the transistor radio going on at that time and were advised to evacuate or move to higher ground. And we were thinking about grabbing the few personal effects and moving when we noticed water coming in the front door. And about that time the Mercury, car which was had in the driveway, started moving out of the driveway and then we knew that we couldn't get out by car, so we just started trying to barricade doors and keep the water out.

OR Okay. All right. Then you realized when you saw the Mercury float out of the driveway that you couldn't get away by automobile. So what did, what did you then, Mrs. Bruns? What are your recollections?

[MB By this time I looked in the den and the water was through our fireplace and coming in the patio door. About this time some of the furniture in the den was floating in to our dining room. And this is when Harold said "We've got to get out to the attic." And the door into the attic down, and we went through this wall of water to get out that door , trying to climb on the hood of the car. And of course there were no lights, we managed to get on the hood of the car, then the car started moving. We couldn't grab the we got on the roof of the car, the car moved and we ~~was~~ couldn't grab the rafters into the attic. Well, fortunately it moved back again and we were able to, my husband gave me a push and I grabbed a piece of the rafter. And we pulled at him and got him up to the attic, which was only a partial attic, and we decided we'd better



MB away from the bricks from the fireplace, so we inched our way over. Noticed two inner tubes there, we put the innertubes around us.

OR I see. These were inflated, the innertubes?

MB They were inflated, the kids had been using them to tube down the creek. we had the inner tubes around us. The car was ~~was~~ banging against the garage door and it was terrific noises. And about that time the roof collapsed on us.

OR Oh yes, while you were..

MB In the attic the roof just collapsed on us, and we were pinned to the floor.

OR Oh, my, and what...

MB We can't figure out how we ever got, neither one of us could move, we can't figure out how we ever moved the rafters. When we did, the inner tubes popped us out just like corks out of a bottle and Harold went one way and I went the other.

OR You were out in the water, now.

MB Right.

OR Going downstream.

MB Yes, tearing across the neighborhood.

OR And, well, okay, what then, where did you come ashore, if that's the way I put it, I don't know..

MB Well, Harold's innertube broke immediately, I didn't know that, he went one way and I went the other. He maintains he can't remember anything right then.

OR Now, when your innertube broke, then how did you..

HB Well, when my innertube broke I was hanging onto a piece of debris and I don't know, probably not very minutes elapsed between the time we came out of the attic until I was hanging on this debris, but I was hanging onto a large piece of lumber that was floating down, and I realized that the innertube was broke, but I was, I was floating downstream at a pretty rapid pace about that time..

OR And when did you come, come to rest then, come to shore where you could...

HB Well, I was riding this piece of timber down the stream and thought this was a real good way to ride out the creek under the circumstances, when I looked up, course, lost my ~~egg~~glasses and I can't see very well at a distance, I don't know just

HB what happened, but anyhow, all of a sudden this timber disappeared, I think I hit a tree and knocked me loose from it. And then I was scrambling to find another piece of debris, and went by a house, tried to grab onto that, then it seemed as I went by this house it swirled around in front of a tree, and I grabbed a tree next, on the other side of Dunbarton street, right next to Jackson Boulevard. And that's where I got out of the water.

OR Well, now, are you a fairly strong swimmer, Mr. Bruns, or did the water just carry you along?

HB No, I can't swim any further than across this room, but under the circumstances, it wasn't a question of being able to swim, it was just a question of being able to hang on to some debris to float down the creek, and there was all kinds of debris in the creek, it's just a question of being able to hang onto something.

OR Now you say that you were able to, that you came ashore somewhere then, where, Jackson Boulevard?

HB Well, it was close to the intersection of Jackson Boulevard and Dunbarton Street.

OR I see. I see. All right, now, in the meantime, your innertube..

MB I hung on to my innertube until I got to Evergreen Drive and then it slipped out from under me, and I was tearing across the golf course by this time, neither one of us were in the course of the creek at all. Houses and cars and so forth were going by us and you'd see these trees come up at you so fast ~~xxxxxx~~ you'd afraid you'd hit those and be mashed, but, and of course it was pitch dark and I was swirled around between some houses, and there was a huge pile of debris about two stories high and a car was there, so I grabbed the handle as I whizzed by and was able to hang onto the handle, crawled over the hood of that car and it was tilted, and I hung onto that as the debris and the car kept swirling around these houses were going by me, and I would assume in an hour or so, why, it started to ease out, and I knew I was safe then, sitting on this pile of debris. And there was a light on in a house and I ~~xxxxxx~~ yelled, but they said they could not get to me of course, it was just, I was in an island..

OR debris and water all around.

MB Water all around and cars and houses, and another man heard me and he put a flashlight

out the window, and I thought maybe I could get to his backyard, and he said, "Don't try it, there's six feet of water in my back yard." So periodically he'd put his

flashlight out to make sure I was still sitting on the debris.

OR Now, Mr. Burns, you, was there anywhere in the vicinity where you came to rest, then, were any people around or were you isolated on an island of debris as well?

HB No, I was on the, I was in this tree that was just in the front yard of this house on Dumbarton Street, and after we surveyed the area when the flood was over, why, we

found out that we were only about a half a block apart.

OR I see, you and your wife.

HB Mm-hm. And so, but, at the time I didn't know for sure where I was, because as I say,

I lost my glasses and it was just dark and raining, and you just didn't know for sure where you were,

OR And you, you stayed in the tree there then, until ..

HB Until the water receded until you could get down out of the tree;

OR That was morning then, I suppose.

HB Oh, I would say that, oh, time's a little hard to tell, but I would guess it would probably be around three or four o'clock in the morning.

OR It wasn't quite light then.

HB Oh, no.

OR And did you have to stay on your..

MB I stayed on mine until it was light out and I noticed some people at daylight, and I yelled to them, and in about half an hour a man started across what I thought was the river. And we started in this man's backyard, I had to go, we had to go over another river, and we ran into silt up to our hips and got out of there right away, so then

we went up the river and to his front door and it was barricaded of course with trees and debris and he pushed me under, the man was in the house, threw me on the davenport and went after somebody else. We were so cold we were just shaking..

OR Oh, I suppose.



MB And he said he would call for some heavy machinery to gstry to get through the creek and bring a stretcher, and in about an hour it did arrive and they took me to St. Johns' hospital for X-rays. And then I was released. And we didn't see each other and know each other was alive <sup>before</sup> ~~until~~ about 10 "30 in the morning. XMEW

OR Now how did you get in contact with each other then?

HB Well we were, course I, did, as soon as daylight was there, why we...let's see, how did this go, as soon as daylight dome, why the fire truck was going down Dunbarton Street and I was able to wade out and get into the truck. They took me to Sioux San and from there I contacted my daughter and she started taking us around to these various places where we thought people were being picked up to see whether I could locate my wife. And on the way down to the courthouse we did hear on the radio that she was picked up and at the St. John's nursing home and that's how we made contact.

OR I see. Now you say you contacted your daughter, is that the young lady next..

MJB Yes.

Or Where were you that ...

MJB Well, that night I had taken my car and gone with a girl friend to get a coke. And I had hit in the deep water, so I went to a friends house and called Mom and Dad to see if they were okay and tell them, you know, that they'd better not try <sup>to</sup> ~~and~~ come and get me cause it was too deep. And ~~thaxx~~ that was about 10 o'clock. And then I figured they had gotten out and got to a friends house, so I was too awfully worried about it, till the next morning about 7 I got a call from Dad saying to come and get him.

OR I see. I see.

MJB

OR Well, you, you sort of assumed that, that they were all right?

MJB Yes, they said they were going to some friends house in Canyon Lake (Weights) which was higher, so I figured they'd be fine.

OR ~~xThaxx~~ That's where you intended to go, I suppose, when you found ~~thax~~ the Mercury floating away and couldn't, couldn't get there.

HB That's where we hoped to go, yes, is...but water just come up too fast, we just couldn't get away, I guess we should have started fifteen minutes sooner.

OR But you had no, you had no real warning that, I suppose no one expected that dam to break, did you, did you even think about that possibility, the dam breaking up there?

HB We thought of that possibility, but we just felt that the crest had already come and wasn't paying too much attention to it right at the moment when that wall of water hit us, where it hit us with such a bang that we just couldn't do anything.

OR Well, ~~xxxxxx~~ perhaps it sounded like a silly question, but I, I think that I would feel that way, you know, you expect a dam to hold and I don't think...

MB It never entered my mind about the dam actually and I'm sure that we perhaps would have been safe in our attic had not another house hit our house to make it explode.

OR Now, that's you, you were in the house when it exploded.

MB We were, yes, we were in the attic and apparently that's when the roof fell on our heads.

OR The roof fell on you, I see, I see. And the house was destroyed..

MB We've never seen a stick of it.

OR Is that right? Is that right.? Now there was extensive destruction of other houses around yours there, I believe , was there?

MB Yes.

OR Where were casualties in that area?

MB Three.

HB On our block.

OR I see, I see, in your, in your ~~xx~~block. But you, Mr. Bruns, you were able to contact your daughter in the morning so she picked you up and you had been taken to, you had been taken to the hospital.

MEMB ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ St. John's.

OR Well, I suppose that many ~~xx~~patients or cases had been moved to the hospital at this time?

MB Yes, I had to wait for about ten minutes for an X-ray on my arm, it wasn't broken, and they didn't, couldn't take time to clean me up, so they moved me immediately to where the nurses live, nurses home, so.. And a nurse sat with myself and another lady in the same room for hours it seemed like, she tried to clean us off, but we were so full of debris and all and full of splinters that she did the best she could.



OR This, this was in the morning, I suppose they were bringing cases in from all, all over the area.

MB Yes, I was one of the ~~earlier~~ ones, I'm quite sure, because it wasn't quite that packed when I got there.

OR Now, I, you probably didn't notice at the time, but, the rescue workers, what agencies or groups were bringing these people in, National Guard, Civil Defense, police Fire Department.

MB Mm-hm. Mine was a volunteer, he was a wonderful fellow, little blond-haired boy that came after me.

OR Mm-hm. yes. ~~X~~Okay, you've given us a quite interesting account here of what, I'm sure it must have been quite a harrowing experience, I, I suppose that, did this happen so fast that you didn't have much, I suppose you had plenty of time to think when you were out there on that debris and when you were in that tree...

MB We were, I was so cold I couldn't think. And it rained of course, I had shorts on, no shoes and stockings, Harold had just a raincoat on, it was so cold.

OR Did, did either of you become ill from any exposure...? You apparently are hale and hearty now.

MB We were awfully banged up, it's taken us two weeks to take the battering down, but as far as ~~xxx~~ getting sick, Harold got dysentery, of course from swallowing, he had swallowed much more water than I did. And they gave him his tetanus shot immediately. I got mine and the typhoid, we got our typhoid the next day, I think. But we had no infections, we were very fortunate that way, but I think he swallowed too much of that dirty water.

OR Well, do either of you have anything else that you can think of now that you would like to add, if not, we have a very good account here, I think, of Mr. Bruns?

HB OH, well, the only thing I would add is that sometimes the circumstances come about where these innertubes were in the attic and used for recreational purposes. And I think those innertubes being left there saved our lives, at least they brought us to the top of the water so we could cling onto something and to...sometimes circumstances are such