

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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NAME OF INFORMANT Lawrence E. Edwards

ADDRESS Box 788 Mother Butler Center, Rapid City, SD

DATE OF INTERVIEW July 7, 1972

NAME OF RESEARCHER Stephen R. Ward

OTHERS PRESENT _____

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW Cathedral of Perpetual Help--5th & Oakland

ADDED NOTES: Pastor, Mother Butler Center, Society of Jesus--Mother Butler Church is an

Indian Mission of Pine Ridge Reservation in Rapid City. Father Collins, who also worked at
Mother Butler, died in flood.

SEQUENCE LISTING OF SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS INTERVIEW:

House torn away and flooded into bridge on West Boulevard; explanation of escape to bridge;
views on Indians after the flood; explanation of Fathers Collins' death

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON INFORMANT

AGE 65 SEX M COUNTY _____

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS _____

OCCUPATION Pastor

EDUCATION A.B., St. Louis University; M.A., Ph. L. (Licentiate)

RELIGION _____

DATE FAMILY ARRIVED IN SOUTH DAKOTA _____

WHERE? _____

FROM WHERE? _____

NUMBER OF MOVES IN SOUTH DAKOTA _____

REASONS FOR MOVES _____

- Q. This is Stephen Ward on July 7, 1972, talking with Father Lawrence Edwards, the Mother Butler Center at Rapid City; the subject, Black Hills flood. Well, Father Edwards, let's begin with, first of all, what was happening to you on, on June 9th? Where were you during that day?
- A. That's Friday.
- Q. Mm-hm.
- A. Friday. Well, I was at Mother Butler Center, it wasn't any different from any other day until in the evening. In the evening we were having Bingo. It was Friday night and we were having Bingo, and it was raining, and there were rumors of high water impending.
- Q. Okay, before we get, there's one thing I did forget to read in to all of this, and that is the location of Mother Butler Center. All right, now Mother Butler Center, to back up a second here, is in the, is on West Boulevard, just a few yards from the creek on the north.
- A. Yes, just north of the creek. On West Boulevard.
- Q. And for point of reference, it is in the southeast quarter of the, excuse me, the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 35, Range 7 East, Township 2 North. And it's a couple of yards, actually, from the creek on the north side.
- A. I'd say 40 or 50. The buildings.
- Q. Okay. Now how many buildings do you have there?
- A. We had, see, we had five, five buildings.
- Q. What did they consist of?
- A. Residence, a sort of a rummage store that appears to be essentially necessary

to all Indian missions, a church, then recreational center, and Madonna House, the residence of the sisters that worked at Mother Butler Center.

Q. And again, would you explain the purpose of Mother Butler Center?

A. Mother Butler Center is a mission of Holy Rosary Mission, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, a sub station of Holy Rosary Mission, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, that is located among the Indians of Rapid City rather than among the Indians of the reservation. And ambitions, doing or accomplishing the same kind of work in Rapid City that is accomplished by the mission stations of Holy Rosary down on the reservation. It, Mother Butler Center exists for, for the Indians, it's there for the Indians. It provides a religious center, a recreational center, a social center, we had a nurse, nurse there, so it was, in a sense it was a medical center also, for the Indians of Rapid City. Now, that does not mean that, that we exclude other people. Anyone who wished to come there was welcome. Anyone at all. Anyone who wanted to come in was welcome. But it's there for the Indians of Rapid City.

Q. And you had yourself, and Father Collins...

A. Yeah, there were two priests there.

Q. What was his first name?

A. Father Francis Collins.

Q. All right. And likewise a Jesuit?

A. Yes.

Q. All right. Now, you may proceed. I'm sorry I had to back you up on that. On the night then of June, June 9th on that Friday evening...

A. We were having that Bingo game, and while we were having the Bingo game it

was raining, it was raining very hard, and there were rumors of high water up the creek. So several times during the evening, I went down and checked the level of the water in the creek. I did that several times. And there were other people there who were watching the level of water in the creek. I went down about, oh, it would be about a quarter after 11:00, and looked at the water in the creek, and it was still about four feet, I estimated it was about four feet below the top of the bank. It would have to, it would have to go up a ways about four feet before it would start to flow out of its channel. Then I went up to my room, I was very tired, I went up to my room and my phone rang, Father Collins was over in the Center, he was still over in the Center, and he asked me how the creek was, how things were coming over at the house, and I told him I had just been down to the creek and the creek appeared to be four feet below the flood stage, and so I didn't think that we were in any serious danger that night. When they were talking about flood, I thought of maybe six inches of water and people having flooded basements. That's what the word flood at that time added up to as far as I was concerned. So after Father Collins' call I took a look out the window and it was still raining heavily, so I went to bed. Then it was a lot of thunder and lightning, but I was very tired, and I went to sleep.

Q. Had the Bingo game deceased and people...

A. Oh, yes, Bingo game was all over by that time. It was all over before I made that trip that last trip down to the creek. I, I went to sleep. Now, I have tried to figure out how long I had been sleeping. And as near as I can come to pinning it down definitely, I'd been asleep about 15 minutes.

About 15 minutes. And I woke up, and I woke up with the feeling that I was in a boat. It felt like I was in a boat. So I got out of bed and I looked out the window, and I was in a boat. The house was floating down the river.

Q. Down the river.

A. Down the river. The house was floating down the river. There were probably four feet of water or five feet of water right across the area where the house is situated. It had lifted the house off its foundation, and now it was floating down the river. Now, it's almost incredible that all of that could have happened in about 15 or 20 minutes, but it all did happen in about 15 or 20 minutes. Well, since then, I've learned the explanation. The dam went out at Canyon Lake. The dam went out. And so Canyon Lake came down on Rapid City. And this water was not a result of the rain, primarily, it was the result of the failure of the dam at Canyon Lake. So Canyon Lake just came right down the creek. So I looked out the window and...

Q. Can I ask you here, just a second, now you are on the north side of the creek.

A. Yes.

Q. Now, did you float into the, the creek bed itself, did you go across West Boulevard, I mean I can't quite visualize what, what was going on here. And secondly, is this a two story house?

A. Yes, two, I was up on the second floor.

Q. All right.

A. I was up on the second floor.

Q. Can you explain what...

A. Yes. Yes, I can. I looked out the window and the house was floating down

the river. And there were at least half a dozen trailers in sight floating down the river with the house. The sight was ridiculous, it was almost laughable. (Laughing)

Q. If you felt like it, yeah.

A. If a person felt like laughing. Because it felt like I was part of a fleet going down the river. Like the house were, say, the transport, and these half a dozen trailers were the destroyers, escorting the transport. So it went down the river. Now with regard to your question, how did we get to the river, we floated almost due east almost straight east, and then we spun to the right and went in the main channel of the river.

Q. All right, now can you retrace that for me? All right, here we were right here. Up on the spot where we, we located you in the first place.

A. Yes. Right there, see.

Q. Okay.

A. We floated towards the east. East.

Q. Would be this way.

A. Yes. Toward the, from west to east until we got around a batch of trees and there was sort of an eddy in the water there, and then we swung south into the creek.

Q. Now this, at no time then, did you cross the bridge.

A. No, we never crossed the bridge. Here's the bridge across the creek. I'll tell you about the bridge later.

Q. Okay, okay.

A. We floated toward the east and then swung toward the south, and we got into

the main channel of the river. And, and then we headed directly at the bridge.

Q. Okay. Now, when you speak of we, are you just speaking of yourself?

A. We, the convoy.

Q. Okay. (Laughter) But you're just by yourself as captain of the ship.

A. That is what I saw when I looked out the north window. That, that is what I saw. Now, funny as it looked, I knew it was extremely dangerous. I knew I was in very grave danger. I could see light through the east window. The east window of the house. On the second story. I could see light through the east window, the next room. So I ran to the east window, we were floating to the east, I ran to the east window, and kicked the east window completely out, glass and frame and screen completely out.

Q. Why?

A. Well, just...

Q. Okay.

A. I missed something there. I looked out the north window, we were floating. I am in the gravest danger. So, I'd been sleepin' in just a shirt, white shirt, and going to have to go out into this, so I put on a pair of Oxfords. I was afraid of galss and broken nails and such like. And my clothing rack had fallen over on the floor, and was just, my clothing was just a black mass on the floor. The lights were out, but I could just see that black mass, and I reached in and pulled out something black to cover my indecency. And the black garment that I grabbed was this topcoat, see. So I put the topcoat on and then I considered putting on shorts and trousers, and I deliberately rejected the notion of putting on shorts or trousers. It would

take too long and I, I thought I would have to swim. And if I had to swim I'd just peel this off and swim, see. I'm a reasonably good swimmer. Then I could see light through the east window. More light through the east window than I could any place else. So I ran to the east window, I kicked the east window completely out, the glass, the frame, the screen, everything, so that at the most opportune second, the strategic second, the most opportune second, that second when it would be most to my advantage to get out of the house, I could just jump out of the window without any struggle, see. I knew I was in a desperate situation. Now I said to myself, "Now, this is it, do not panic. Don't get scared, figure these things out. Just figure this thing out. Let's just figure this thing out, now, don't get excited. Make no false move. Figure this thing out." So I kicked out the east window and then my plan was to crawl out the window and jump off the porch. At, there's a porch that came out below the east window. Jump off the porch. See, the road was to the east of us, so I was conscious of east as a direction. I went out the east window, was gonna jump off that east porch because the road was, safety was to the east. Then I watched the trailers that were escorting me down the river, it was, it was a ridiculous scene. So calm and peaceful...

Q. What did you hear?

A. In a, in an obscure sense, grotesque sense, it was ridiculous. Except for that bridge across the creek, see, the bridge was across the creek. And as each of these six trailers in turn hit the bridge, they folded just like accordions up against the bridge. They turned to rubble instantly while up

against the bridge. And then we realized, those trailers are so fragile that they just folded up right against the bridge. They folded up against the rubble that had piled up against the bridge. See, there was about a foot and a half of water, what I found out later, the water going over the bridge was about a foot and a half deep, about a foot and a half of water going over the bridge. When, when the trailers hit the bridge they just folded like accordians and became a part of the pile of rubble accumulating on the west side of the bridge there. Then the house hit this rubble. And it knocked the porch off the house. Well, I had planned to get off, to go out the window and get, climb down on that porch and jump off the porch. Because I was on the second story, and that, that way I'd only be jumping about one story at a time, see. But the porch fell off. And worst of all, and this made it very bad for me, the porch fell off and then the, the porch floated in front of the house at about an angle of, oh, 45 degrees, something about like that, in front of this window here that I had to get out of. And was out away from me about four or five feet. And the edge of the porch up here, the only thing on the porch that I could grab was maybe two feet above me. Two feet above me and maybe four feet out, _____get that porch, the edge of it.

Q. The porch, which was below you, now was above you.

A. Yeah. One end was above me.

Q. One end was above you.

A. And the other end was in the river. That end that was in the river, a trailer had drifted up against it, and the trailer was moving up and down in the

current and it was chopping the bottom off that porch. And I looked down at that, now I had to jump, I had to jump out of there, and I had to get hold of the top where I could hang on, the top of the thing, hang on; and if I failed in that jump and just lit on the porch, I would slide and I'd slide down to where this trailer is chopping the bottom (off) of it. Which would, I would, I would not have lived 30 seconds there. I'd be pulp. But that was the only way I had of escaping. The only way of getting out. Now, I got there, that east porch and kicked out the window, and then the back end of the house started to sink. So that I had to hang onto the window to keep from falling down inside of the house. The house was no longer level. The west end had started to sink, and everything, everything in the house slid down toward the west end, and I had to hang on. I had to hang on and I had to get out the window and I had to jump. So I felt, I looked around, now, this may have saved my life. There were a bunch of people drove their cars down to the edge of the water, to the north and to the south, to the edge of the flood; to the north and to the south and put their headlights on the flood. And that is all the light I had. And, and I, I held here on the window frame and after I had kicked the window out and I looked out and there was a board down below the window that I think had once been a part of the support or connection with the porch. Well, I had to jump up and out, up and out, I had to jump up and out to, to get the edge of the porch. So I had to jump from something. So I (felt of) this board and it wasn't out quite far enough so that I could be sure that I could rest my foot on it. I reached inside the house and I felt around and I found a board on

something or other, I don't know what it was on. But I yanked it off, I just yanked it off, pulled it loose, and I got it outside and I pried this board on the wall, I pried it out, and I did that, I did that deliverately, I pried the thing out, I had to pry it out far enough so that it was far enough from the wall so that I could rest my foot on it. And I was very conscious that I don't, I must not pull it out too far, or it might not hold, the nails might not hold. Far enough so I could rest my foot on it, but not too far so that I'd pull the nails out, the nails wouldn't hold. So I pried it out to, it was just a compromise, far enough but not too far. I pried it out that far and then I got in the window and got my right foot on there, I tried to see if it would hold my right foot. And it did.

Q. The window ledge.

A. No, I was sitting, I was sitting in the window.

Q. Okay.

A. I was sitting in the window, I tried to see if that would hold my foot, and it would hold my right foot, and then I tried my left foot and it held, so then, see my body is now 3/4 of my body is outside the window and my feet are on that board that sticks out from the side of the house. I straightened up and I got completely on the outside of the house except my left hand, I was holding on the top, top inside of the frame. And this thing here the I had to jump for, it was going up and down like this. In the flood. And I watched it until I was sure that I knew the best time to jump and the best angle to jump from. I got down, I got down and I, I had one jump, I had to do it, see. I just got down and got into the best possible jumping position

and jumped. And reached out, and I got it with, with my fingers, like that. I got it. Then I got my left hand up there and got, then I had a hold of it with both hands and I pulled myself up and lay across it on my stomach. And then I looked the situation over and I discovered that if I, if I slide over maybe eight feet on this thing there was a relative hole in the rubble and there was what looked like a heavy timber down there that I could get on. So I slide along on this thing just on my belly. Slid along. About eight feet. And then there was a heavy timber right below me, so I, I got completely over on the other side of this roof and just hung on by my hands. I would like to have lowered myself and tested it with my foot. I couldn't reach it. So I, so I just had to drop. I dropped, and I lit on the thing and it held me, it held, and then for, then I was able to work my way a little further to the east and I jumped again and lit on that aluminum railing on the bridge and went on over and came down in about a foot and a half of water and that was the nicest water I ever lit in. It was about a foot and a half of water on top of the bridge. I lit in that.

- Q. Were there people around watching you do this?
- A. There was no one in sight. I found out later there were people, but there was no one I could see at that time. See, there were, there were cars up to the north at the edge of the water and the south at the edge of the water. So when I got on the bridge, when I got there, then I was very conscious of that hole in the bridge there, I remembered that hole in the bridge, right in the middle of that bridge, that hole. So I located the hole so that I wouldn't walk into it. I thought, if I walk into that, I'm just gone, that's

all.

Q. And after all that it would have been rather anti-chimatic, wouldn't it?

A. Yes. So then I just, I walked up the road.

Q. North or south?

A. I walked up north past Mother Butler Center and the road, which meant I walked by Mother Butler Center's buildings. And Father Collins was in the Center. But I wasn't at all afraid for Father Collins, because the Center is a very solid building, it's set in concrete, it's anchored in concrete, then Father Collins had sort of a hide out on the second floor. The east end of second floor, he had a room up there where he did much of his book work and his correspondence, and now and then in the middle of the afternoon he might go up and lay down and sleep for three quarters of an hour or something like that. So I knew he would be up in that room. So I wasn't a bit worried about him, he was up in that room. And, and the Center was solid, so I, I walked on by and there was at, there was a river, I suppose, oh, it'd be ten or twelve feet deep between the road and the front of the Center there where the road is there, when you drive past the Center, that was a river there about, maybe then, twelve feet deep, something by that. There was no possibility of getting over to the Center. But I wasn't, I wasn't a bit worried about Father Collins, I knew he'd be up there in that room, see. Well, I'm a priest. I had to leave my rectory, so I thought, well, where's the next rectory. I thought of all the possible rectories in Rapid City. There are only two rectories in Rapid City north of Rapid Creek, north of the flood, and I wasn't gonna cross that flood. I was out of it, see.

The other one was St. John's. St. John's Church. Maybe 12, 10, 12 blocks or something like that from Mother Butler Center. Something like that. So I went up to St. John's and they let me in and I spent the night there. Then the next morning, since I had no clothing, see, all the clothing I had was a pair of shoes and a white shirt, and this topcoat. That's all, that was all the clothing I had. See, everything else that I had in the world, everything, just simply everything, went down the creek. Everything. Like my watch, my glasses, my keys, driver's license, just absolutely everything, I could go on endlessly. Everything I had went down the creek. I was left with one pair of shoes, one shirt, and this topcoat. And so the next morning the scrounged around there and they tried to find some clothing for me. The only thing they had there that I could get on was a pair of pajamas, and a bathrobe. So they gave me the pajamas and the bathrobe, and I put on my shoes; then I asked them for a blanket and they gave me a blanket, so I wrapped myself up in the blanket a la' Sitting Bull, and I walked down to Mother Butler Center. I walked down. I just walked down to Mother Butler Center. When I got down there there were a whole batch of our Indian people in front of the center and the scene, of course, was just one of utter desolation and dejection. Four buildings were there, those buildings were there except the residence, the residence was gone, the residence was gone. And, of course, Father Edwards and Father Collins would be in residence, and the residence was gone. I came walking up and one of the fellows turned around, they looked at me, Indians are inclined to be slightly superstitious, he just looked at me and looked at me and looked at me, and then he said, "My

God, I'm glad to see you. You are Father Edwards. I am glad to see you." He's a kid that I used to teach down at Holy Rosary. So I said, "Yes, well," I said, "I, I took the house, I took the house to the bridge and then I transferred at the bridge." And I said, "Now, why don't you go upstairs, you go upstairs up there and tell Father Collins that I'm down here and I'm reporting for duty, that I am not dead or drowned, I'm alive and well and reporting for duty. Just go up and tell him." And so he went upstairs, he came down, he said, "Father Collins is not upstairs. He is not upstairs." And I said, "Well, if he's not upstairs then I'm afraid he's downstairs." So we searched the downstairs and this same fellow, Basil Heart, found him in the kitchen, under a table or something that had fallen over, but he was under the table in the kitchen, dead, drowned. Now, we discovered that he had gone upstairs. His mail and stuff was up there, he had gone upstairs, and then something had happened, and I think I know what that was now, and he came downstairs and then he never got back upstairs. A half a dozen trailers and cars, a half a dozen trailers and two cars came floating along and they smashed into the back end of the Center and the church. And one of those trailers coasted up on the back end of the Center, the back end of the Center. There was a family in that trailer that coasted up onto the back end of the Center. It floated up on the back end of the Center with a family in it. And in the back end of the Center there is a window.

Q. Can I hold you there?

A. Okay.

Q. Okay.

A. A trailer had drifted up onto the back end of the Center, a trailer with a family in it. And in the back end of the Center there is a window. There are a couple rooms on the second story of the back end of the Center as well as the front end of the Center. There are a couple rooms on the second story on the front end and a couple rooms on the second story on the back end, but no connection between them. In between there's a basketball court. Now this trailer drifted up on top of the Center there, and a man got out of his trailer, got his trailer open, got out of his trailer somehow or other, and somehow or other he opened the window, he opened that window, and he got himself and his family out of the trailer into the back end of the Center. Somehow or other. And I think probably Father Collins heard that and went down with the intention of helping or trying to help. Now people told me that there was a lot of screaming and shrieking and so forth. Now, where I was, I didn't hear any screaming or shrieking.

Q. I wanted to ask you about that.

A. I didn't hear any, hear any screaming or shrieking where I was. But these, these, see, the trailers over in my area were in front of me. They drifted past the house, I think the house held to its foundation more firmly than the trailers did, and the trailers were in front of me. I saw the trailers hit the bridge and just fold. But the trailers piled up against the back of the church and the back of the Center. There were half a dozen of them there, I got up, I got up on top of the Center the next day and looked down, and there inside of that jumble of trailers there was a little yellow Volkswagen, and an Oldsmobile that drifted in there, they had a half a dozen

trailers piled on top of them up against the back end of the Center. I think Father Collins heard that and, and went down with some idea of trying to help those people. It would be very difficult to do so because they were outside and he was inside. But I suppose he had some such idea, that maybe there's some way he could help them. And he found him dead, we found him dead in the kitchen there, the water got him. See, that's just conjecture, what he was doing; we know he was upstairs and he came down. It's just conjecture why did he come down. If he had stayed up there, he would be perfectly safe.

Q. Were the news stories that were put out on him accurate in terms of what happened? I really forget now, myself...

A. I believe so. I believe so.

Q. So then you found Father Collins, of course. Did you ever find out what this family, whether they survived, the ones that had gotten out of the trailer and...

A. No, I knew nothing about that then. I knew nothing about that then. This Indian came down and said that Father Collins was not upstairs, so I said he's probably downstairs, he would have to be downstairs, and so we searched the downstairs and we found him. And we found him, and then that was reported to the police, an ambulance came out, and they sent a stretcher in and then they brought out his remains, and I was out there in front; and just almost immediately after that happened, after they'd taken Father Collins out, the Benedectines came in from Mt. Marty, this school out east of Rapid City, and they found me there in a pair of pajamas and wrapped up in a

blanket. And, of course, we had to wade around inside the Center, the water was, oh, almost knee deep, we had to wade around in there. And they said, "Father Edwards, you had better come with us out to, out to Mt. Marty, you had better come with us. And you'd better come out there and let us give you some breakfast and see if we can't find you some clothes and, and give you a place to stay, you have no place to stay here, you'd better come home with us and we'll provide for you until you find out what to do." So I went with them and they gave me a room out at the school, and I was out there for a couple of days, and they found some things for me although they had difficulty finding anything that would fit me and some things they haven't found yet, I haven't found a collar, anything that I can wear around here, that _____, I have clothing ordered, but it's not here yet, and I haven't been able to find anything in Rapid City that'll fit me. So I've been going around in this coat...

Q. Your black coat.

A. Yes, yes. The only thing I've got that'll fit me around the neck and, and look anything like a clerical collar. They got me some clothes and I was out there, and I got a chance to clean up and put on some clothes, you know, they gave me a good substantial breakfast, and I went to bed and slept for awhile and, and felt much better, then when I was out there for a couple of days...and I didn't hear anything, I knew nothing at that time of this family drifting in on top of the Center, I knew nothing at that time of this family drifting in on top of the center, I knew nothing about that at the time. I thought about, I found out about that later, people were telling me about

it. I knew nothing about it at that time. Then the bishop came out to see me, and I said that the residence at Mother Butler Center is gone, so where will I leave. "Well", he said, "I'm just going to find you quarters out at the Cathedral rectory. I'm just going to put you out there for the time being until we have provided otherwise. So you just go out to the Cathedral rectory and tell them I said that they're to give you a room and quarters out at the Cathedral rectory." So I live here, I have a room here and I have my meals here, and I work at Mother Butler Center.

- Q. What, waht was your rection, or, I wanted to finish up on, did you ever find out what this family that had come into the Mother Butler Center on the trailer, if they had survived?
- A. Yes, they did.
- Q. They did survive.
- A. Yes.
- Q. Do you know their names at all?
- A. No, I don't, I don't, I never had a conversation with them, but now the sisters in Madonna House may know their names. They talked to them across the flood. See, they were on the second story of Madonna House and they were talking to them out the window. Their trailer had drifted up there and they talked to them, now they may know their names. You see, once they got into, into the Center there on the second story, they're perfectly safe. The flood never got up to the second story, and the building held. Very strong building, the way it's made. And so they'd be safe there. Now, they may know the names. But I missed, see, I missed the first two or three days after the

flood, I was out at this Benedectine establishment out here west of town. They took me out there and I had not place to go, I had no clothing, I had no food, I had nothing. So they came along, picked me up and took me out there, that was very agreeable to me.

Q. I'm sure. What was, were there any other people at all injured or killed in that area, that you know of. Other than Father Collins?

A. He's the only one, the only one that I know of that's dead.

Q. Where, where do you go now with the Mother Butler Center, is it just a matter of picking up from where you left off?

A. Well, we are going to continue Mother Butler Center, but we hope that we can find a better location. We're going to continue the Center here for the Indians. The Indians in Rapid City are very anxious about that because they're very attached to the Center, it was a complete home for them in Rapid City. Everything. They're very much attached to it. They had all their weddings and all their funerals and their feeds and festivities and their Indian dances and basketball and men's basketball, children's basketball, ladies basketball, they lived their lives around the Center. To them it's essential. So we are going to rebuild the Center, but we hope, we hope to find a better situa, location for it. We hope to, and there are several prospects. I don't know yet, which deal we'll take. We'll find a better place.

Q. Would you mind commenting on, in the aftermath of the flood, on the allegation that perhaps Indians were not as well treated and taken care of as white people in, in the...post flood, after care and so on.

A. Yes, I will comment on that. I was in half a dozen different places that were taking care of people that were caught in the flood, and the people that were caught in the flood were white, Indian, colored, Asiatic, and all possible mixtures. All possible mixtures. I couldn't see the slightest difference in the treatment accorded to any of them. I couldn't see any difference in the treatment accorded to them by the Red Cross. I couldn't see any difference accorded to them by the Mennonites. I couldn't see any difference accorded to them by the Seventh Day Adventists. I couldn't see any difference in the treatment given to them by, under Catholic auspices. Now, you will always find, you'll always find among an element of the Indians, no matter what happens, and no matter how it happens, or what the sum total of circumstances are, there is an element among them that will always feel that they're discriminated against. Now, I was up where the Red Cross were giving out--now this was up in the Elk's building--the Red Cross were giving, they were giving out funds immediately. People, to people that had absolutely nothing. I had absolutely nothing, just simply nothing. Nothing. And someone told me that if I'd go up there, the Red Cross would give me enough money to buy my glasses, they'd certainly give me enough money to get glasses, and they'd give me enough money or give me a start, at least, in providing myself with clothing. So I went up as a refugee among refugees. Why not, I'm a bonafide refugee, I thought, I'm a bonafide refugee. If the Red Cross is doing this for all their other refugees, why won't the Red Cross do this for me, see? So I went up, I told them I'm Father Edwards, Mother Butler Center, caught in the flood, lost anything I had except a pair of shoes, a

white shirt and this black topcoat. I'm a refugee. If you're helping refugees, I'm a refugee. So they gave me enough money for glasses, and they gave me money for clothing. Now, then. When I was up there, and this scalds me, this sort of thing scalds me. I saw three drunken Indian women up there. And there were three of them, definitely Indian, definitely drunk. And they were going around asking for money. And you see, there is always the question, there's always the question that if you have money enough to buy liquor, your situation can't be extremely grave. But they're up there drunk, I know, now, it would seem to me that they would have brains enough when they are drunk, to at least stay out of a place like that. But they didn't do that. They had to go up there and cause difficulty. Those three drunken Indian women. They had to go up there and cause difficulty, and from incidents such as that comes this sort of hush-hush story that the Indians were not treated as well as other groups. Now I was up there, I saw Indians go through, there were Indians go through the line ahead of me and Indians behind me and whites ahead of me and whites behind me, and we were all treated the same. We were all treated the same. I was treated neither better nor worse because I'm a priest, I was just a refugee from the flood and they treated all refugees from the flood the same way. They called me Father and they were glad to hear that I was alive, but I was a refugee from the flood, see. But, now, these Indian women, I got so sore about it at the time, I just wanted to, I would just, would like to have gotten ahold of them privately and,.."You get out of here, just get out and don't come back until you're stone cold sober. Because you are going to cause trouble for all the

other Indians. You are gonna cause trouble." And that sort of thing happens forever here in Rapid City. I should tell you this, that in Rapid City, there are about 4000 Indians, 4000. And, and in large part, in large measure, they have disappeared into the life of Rapid City. They are acculturated. They live all over Rapid City and they're employed all over Rapid City. About 4000 of them. And you would walk right by them on the street without ever adverting to them because they conduct themselves as do the generality of people. They'll be clean and mannerly and well-behaved, industrious, and you don't advert to them. That type of Indian you do not advert to, you are not conscious of. But this drunken slob that comes up and puts the touch on you; they're always hungry, they never have had anything to eat. And that happens, you walk down Main Street in Rapid City, any day or any night and you are apt to have two or three or half a dozen of these drunken Indians put a touch on you. They haven't had anything to eat since the day before yesterday. But they're just, just able to walk. Just able to walk and they smell like a brewery or a distillery. And I always tell them, "Now, look here, look here. Why don't you try this for a while? Why don't you use your money to buy your food and your clothing? The things that you need and then go buy your drinks at the bars. Why don't you try that for a while? Just try it." They never like that very well. But, you see, it is that sort of Indian, that sort of, in that sort of situation, that's responsible for this rumor, I've heard it half a dozen places myself. But, you see, I went through the line myself in each one of these places. See, I, I went, I went over, the Seven Day Adventists helped clothe me. They found clothes, used clothing,

not black, but used clothing that comes in handy, some shirts, some underwear and socks and...comes in handy.

Q. When it came to clothes you were ecumenical.

A. Yes, yes. The Seven Day Adventists were very nice, and the Mennonites were very nice. And I saw not the least sign of discrimination in any reasonable situation. But now suppose some drunken slob comes to you. Be he white, be he black or be he of whatever color, he's in a terrible situation and needs money very badly. And it's perfectly evident that he is just put down about three dollars worth of liquor. Well, what do you tell him? There's that. No, my observation is that all refugees of the flood were treated alike. Or maybe I should say all reasonable refugees of the flood were treated alike. Now, I ran across this also. There were Indians going through these places who do not live in Rapid City. People that have moved down on the reservation, they live down on the reservation.

Q. I heard that when I was up to Civil Assistance.

A. Yeah, well, yeah, I saw them. People that I know live down on the reservation up here going through the line as food victims getting help. They were not Rapid City, they don't live in Rapid City. They lost nothing, they weren't here. They live a hundred miles from here. Now, there was that, and I suppose that since some of the people, some of the officials that were handing things out were Indian, they would catch onto these people and tell them "Beat it, Joe. You don't live in Rapid City, you weren't in the flood. You live down on the reservation. Blow. Get lost. Take off. You don't belong here, Joe." See. Now, I have no doubt that that happened. Because a good number

of the people that were working for the Seven Day Adventists or the Mennonites or the Red Cross were local Indians.

Q. There were?

A. Yes, a good number of them were knowledgeable, local Indians. That were sitting at the desk and getting data and making decisions and stuff like that, but you see, this type of Indian spots the Indian phony a mile and a half away against a wind. The phony Indian doesn't pull anything on this type of Indian. He pulls something on the white man, but he doesn't pull anything on the Indian, see. The Indian recognizes it, can sniff him a mile and a half against the wind.

Q. Well, that's good.

A. No, I would say that that is false. And it's a libel, it's a libel, and I think it's a rather a vicious libel on the charity of a very large group of people. I'd say it's, I feel that is a vicious libel, and I know because I went to all of these different places, and I stood in line, and I went through with the rest of the refugees. I was a little curious about how it was going to be handled. So I just went through with all the rest of the refugees. Now, no place did I find any preferential treatment. They never called me out of line, "Father Edwards, come here." They never called me out of line. I stood in line with all the rest and went on through. I was given no preferential treatment, no, anyplace.

Q. And you never witnessed preferential treatment.

A. No.

Q. Yeah,

A. No, the bishop gave me preferential treatment, putting me here, but I'm one of the priests of the diocese, I suppose he feels he's responsible for me.

Q. Well, is there anything else, any other observations or comments you can think of with regards to the flood?

A. Well, there's this. Any person can walk along that creek bank there for a mile and he can know by observation that say, a hundred and fifty yards on either side of the creek bank is the primary flood plain of that creek. And since it is the primary flood plain of that creek created by previous floods down through the ages, that is not a place to build. No one should ever build there. On that primary flood plain. Now at Mother Butler Center, you can see the edge of the primary flood plain is perfectly distinct. You go just about 20 feet past our northern-most building, Madonna Hall, and there's a tree, first tree in a row of trees. That first tree is right on the edge of the flood plain. The flood plain starts just, just south of that tree and comes down. Mother Butler Center is built here. Now, I tell you this. A day or so after the flood I was walking down near East Boulevard. And an old man that I never saw before in my life stopped me, stopped me on the street. I didn't know him, I don't know what his name was, he just stopped me. And he said, "The people here in Rapid City are damn fools." He said, he said, "I can remember the flood of 1907, when those houses were washed down the creek." And he enumerated a half a dozen different floods. He said, "I remember this flood of 1907 that washed the houses out, so what did they do, flood's over, they come back and rebuild the houses." Then,

such and such a year along comes a flood and washes the houses out, what do they do? They come back and rebuild the houses. They're fools. He said, "That...floods always go through there, every time there's a flood, it goes through there and it washes out the houses. They're fools. Damn fools. I've seen that all my life." He was quite excited about it. He had seen that so many times in the history of Rapid City. Apparently he was a native who grew up here. And he said 1907, and that rang a gong with me, because that's the year I was born. The year I was born there was a heavy flood through Rapid City that took out the houses along the creek. And half a dozen in the intervening years. So the flood's over and it dries out, and people forget about it, and they move back in, put up their houses. And then 10 years, 15, 20 years later, 5 years later, 2 years later, along comes the next flood and washes them out again. So I am in complete agreement with this plan that the city council has. Move all homes out of this primary flood plain and make a park out of it. It'll be a long, narrow park on both banks of the creek, nice park. All they way through the middle of the town. And nobody lives there, nobody has a house in there. It's a park. And we have some facilities in the park, but not facilities for people to live in. And this park will be sort of a unique park because it will go from east to west all they way through the town. And half the town will be north of the park, and half the town will be south of the park and in the middle will be the park. A long, narrow park. I'm in complete agreement and sympathy with that plan. I think that's the thing to do. I think that there should be legislation, no one will be allowed to build on this

flood plain near the river.

- Q. Now some have suggested--now, particularly speaking of people of lower economic means that I have talked with--that they feel like this is the cheaper property and that the city, by doing such a thing, by condemning all this flood plain area, is, is really discriminating against them. And...
- A. Well, now, see that is true, it's cheaper property, and people on the lower economic level lived on the flood plain in the east end of Rapid City, but out on the west end of Rapid City the big-wigs, the big-wigs bought land right down along the creek. And had their very swanky homes there. And those, the flood was very democratic.
- Q. Yes, it was.
- A. It took there palatial homes and the lowest hovels down the creek at the same velocity. I've heard that before, that those people said the city is discriminating against them. The city is not discriminating against them. Because what the city enacts with regard to the flood plain holds for these people out in the west end of town as well as it does for the poor people towards the east end of town. Now, I've been in a number of those homes that people have built in the west end of town down along the creek. Very swanky. I would never build there. Because, well, the first time I ever saw the site for Mother Butler Center, the proposed site for Mother Bulter Center, I walked along there. And I could see the flood plain of that creek. I was born and raised in Minnesota. I could see the flood plain of that creek. And I mentioned that, "that's the flood plain of the creek there, you can see it. Starts right there, you can see it. Perfectly clearly.

And extends down to the creek, that's the flood plain." And the answer was, "Well, now, of course they have so many dams and so many sewers and so many dikes, and the city uses so much water and there's so much drainage, etc., etc., etc., etc., that there's really no danger of floods now, the way they have dams up all over and all this and that, see." Yeah, there's no danger of floods. When Mother Nature goes on rampage, there is danger of all the dams in creation notwithstanding.

Q. That's right.

A. So I'm entirely in favor of that plan on the part of the city council to condemn all of that land, all of it from the east end lear through the town, all the way out to the west end, that no homes shall ever be built there. Never again permit the building of a home on that flood plain. Never again. Now, that should be clear now, because to the best of my information, they've found 235 bodies now. Two hundred thirty five died in this flood. And that place will flood again. It's been flooding through the ages, it flooded five times, if I counted correctly, in the life of this old gentleman that was commenting on the intelligence of the people of Rapid City. Five times in his lifetime he had seen that. So it's idiotic to build in a place like that. So fine, let's make it a long, narrow park. All the way through town. Rapid City is a peculiar, is peculiar in its layout because of local geography anyway, anyway. So let the whole center of the town be a park. No buildings. And then let people live south of the park or north of the park. But not in the park. I'm in complete sympathy with that.

Q. Well, we are just out of, out of tape right on the dot.

A. Okay, okay.

Q. Thank you very much.

A. Well, did that give you anything?

Q. A lot.

(END OF INTERVIEW)

SOUTH DAKOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Library Cataloging Service Data

NAME OF INFORMANT Lawrence E. Edwards
ADDRESS Box 788 Mother Butler Center, Rapid City, SD
DATE OF INTERVIEW July 7, 1972
NAME OF RESEARCHER Stephen R. Ward
OTHERS PRESENT _____
LOCATION OF INTERVIEW Cathedral of Perpetual Help--5th & Oakland

ADDED NOTES: Pastor, Mother Butler Center, Society of Jesus--Mother Butler Church is an Indian Mission of Pine Ridge Reservation in Rapid City. Father Collins, who also worked at Mother Butler, died in flood.

SEQUENCE LISTING OF SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS INTERVIEW:
House torn away and flooded into bridge on West Boulevard; explanation of escape to bridge; views on Indians after the flood; explanation of Fathers Collins' death

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON INFORMANT

AGE 65 SEX M COUNTY _____
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS _____
OCCUPATION Pastor
EDUCATION A.B., St. Louis University; M.A., Ph. L. (Licentiate)
RELIGION _____
DATE FAMILY ARRIVED IN SOUTH DAKOTA _____
MILITARY _____
FROM WHERE? _____
NUMBER OF MOVES IN SOUTH DAKOTA _____
REASONS FOR MOVES _____

- Q. This is Stephen Ward on July 7, 1972, talking with Father Lawrence Edwards, the Mother Butler Center at Rapid City; the subject, Black Hills flood. Well, Father Edwards, let's begin with, first of all, what was happening to you on, on June 9th? Where were you during that day?
- A. That's Friday.
- Q. Mm-hm.
- A. Friday. Well, I was at Mother Butler Center, it wasn't any different from any other day until in the evening. In the evening we were having Bingo. It was Friday night and we were having Bingo, and it was raining, and there were rumors of high water impending.
- Q. Okay, before we get, there's one thing I did forget to read in to all of this, and that is the location of Mother Butler Center. All right, now Mother Butler Center, to back up a second here, is in the, is on West Boulevard, just a few yards from the creek on the north.
- A. Yes, just north of the creek. On West Boulevard.
- Q. And for point of reference, it is in the southeast quarter of the, excuse me, the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 35, Range 7 East, Township 2 North. And it's a couple of yards, actually, from the creek on the north side.
- A. I'd say 40 or 50. The buildings.
- Q. Okay. Now how many buildings do you have there?
- A. We had, see, we had five, five buildings.
- Q. What did they consist of?
- A. Residence, a sort of a rummage store that appears to be essentially necessary

to all Indian missions, a church, then recreational center, and Madonna House, the residence of the sisters that worked at Mother Butler Center.

Q. And again, would you explain the purpose of Mother Butler Center?

A. Mother Butler Center is a mission of Holy Rosary Mission, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, a sub station of Holy Rosary Mission, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, that is located among the Indians of Rapid City rather than among the Indians of the reservation. And ambitions, doing or accomplishing the same kind of work in Rapid City that is accomplished by the mission stations of Holy Rosary down on the reservation. It, Mother Butler Center exists for, for the Indians, it's there for the Indians. It provides a religious center, a recreational center, a social center, we had a nurse, nurse there, so it was, in a sense it was a medical center also, for the Indians of Rapid City. Now, that does not mean that, that we exclude other people. Anyone who wished to come there was welcome. Anyone at all. Anyone who wanted to come in was welcome. But it's there for the Indians of Rapid City.

Q. And you had yourself, and Father Collins...

A. Yeah, there were two priests there.

Q. What was his first name?

A. Father Francis Collins.

Q. All right. And likewise a Jesuit?

A. Yes.

Q. All right. Now, you may proceed. I'm sorry I had to back you up on that. On the night then of June, June 9th on that Friday evening...

A. We were having that Bingo game, and while we were having the Bingo game it

was raining, it was raining very hard, and there were rumors of high water up the creek. So several times during the evening, I went down and checked the level of the water in the creek. I did that several times. And there were other people there who were watching the level of water in the creek. I went down about, oh, it would be about a quarter after 11:00, and looked at the water in the creek, and it was still about four feet, I estimated it was about four feet below the top of the bank. It would have to, it would have to go up a ways about four feet before it would start to flow out of its channel. Then I went up to my room, I was very tired, I went up to my room and my phone rang, Father Collins was over in the Center, he was still over in the Center, and he asked me how the creek was, how things were coming over at the house, and I told him I had just been down to the creek and the creek appeared to be four feet below the flood stage, and so I didn't think that we were in any serious danger that night. When they were talking about flood, I thought of maybe six inches of water and people having flooded basements. That's what the word flood at that time added up to as far as I was concerned. So after Father Collins' call I took a look out the window and it was still raining heavily, so I went to bed. Then it was a lot of thunder and lightning, but I was very tired, and I went to sleep.

Q. Had the Bingo game deceased and people...

A. Oh, yes, Bingo game was all over by that time. It was all over before I made that trip that last trip down to the creek. I, I went to sleep. Now, I have tried to figure out how long I had been sleeping. And as near as I can come to pinning it down definitely, I'd been asleep about 15 minutes.

About 15 minutes. And I woke up, and I woke up with the feeling that I was in a boat. It felt like I was in a boat. So I got out of bed and I looked out the window, and I was in a boat. The house was floating down the river.

Q. Down the river.

A. Down the river. The house was floating down the river. There were probably four feet of water or five feet of water right across the area where the house is situated. It had lifted the house off its foundation, and now it was floating down the river. Now, it's almost incredible that all of that could have happened in about 15 or 20 minutes, but it all did happen in about 15 or 20 minutes. Well, since then, I've learned the explanation. The dam went out at Canyon Lake. The dam went out. And so Canyon Lake came down on Rapid City. And this water was not a result of the rain, primarily, it was the result of the failure of the dam at Canyon Lake. So Canyon Lake just came right down the creek. So I looked out the window and...

Q. Can I ask you here, just a second, now you are on the north side of the creek.

A. Yes.

Q. Now, did you float into the, the creek bed itself, did you go across West Boulevard, I mean I can't quite visualize what, what was going on here. And secondly, is this a two story house?

A. Yes, two, I was up on the second floor.

Q. All right.

A. I was up on the second floor.

Q. Can you explain what...

A. Yes. Yes, I can. I looked out the window and the house was floating down

the river. And there were at least half a dozen trailers in sight floating down the river with the house. The sight was ridiculous, it was almost laughable. (Laughing)

Q. If you felt like it, yeah.

A. If a person felt like laughing. Because it felt like I was part of a fleet going down the river. Like the house were, say, the transport, and these half a dozen trailers were the destroyers, escorting the transport. So it went down the river. Now with regard to your question, how did we get to the river, we floated almost due east almost straight east, and then we spun to the right and went in the main channel of the river.

Q. All right, now can you retrace that for me? All right, here we were right here. Up on the spot where we, we located you in the first place.

A. Yes. Right there, see.

Q. Okay.

A. We floated towards the east. East.

Q. Would be this way.

A. Yes. Toward the, from west to east until we got around a batch of trees and there was sort of an eddy in the water there, and then we swung south into the creek.

Q. Now this, at no time then, did you cross the bridge.

A. No, we never crossed the bridge. Here's the bridge across the creek. I'll tell you about the bridge later.

Q. Okay, okay.

A. We floated toward the east and then swung toward the south, and we got into

the main channel of the river. And, and then we headed directly at the bridge.

Q. Okay. Now, when you speak of we, are you just speaking of yourself?

A. We, the convoy.

Q. Okay. (Laughter) But you're just by yourself as captain of the ship.

A. That is what I saw when I looked out the north window. That, that is what I saw. Now, funny as it looked, I knew it was extremely dangerous. I knew I was in very grave danger. I could see light through the east window. The east window of the house. On the second story. I could see light through the east window, the next room. So I ran to the east window, we were floating to the east, I ran to the east window, and kicked the east window completely out, glass and frame and screen completely out.

Q. Why?

A. Well, just...

Q. Okay.

A. I missed something there. I looked out the north window, we were floating. I am in the gravest danger. So, I'd been sleepin' in just a shirt, white shirt, and going to have to go out into this, so I put on a pair of Oxfords. I was afraid of galss and broken nails and such like. And my clothing rach had fallen over on the floor, and was just, my clothing was just a black mass on the floor. The lights were out, but I could just see that black mass, and I reached in and pulled out something black to cover my indecency. And the black garment that I grabbed was this topcoat, see. So I put the topcoat on and then I considered putting on shorts and trousers, and I deliberately rejected the notion of putting on shorts or trousers. It would

take too long and I, I thought I would have to swim. And if I had to swim I'd just peel this off and swim, see. I'm a reasonably good swimmer. Then I could see light through the east window. More light through the east window than I could any place else. So I ran to the east window, I kicked the east window completely out, the glass, the frame, the screen, everything, so that at the most opportune second, the strategic second, the most opportune second, that second when it would be most to my advantage to get out of the house, I could just jump out of the window without any struggle, see. I knew I was in a desperate situation. Now I said to myself, "Now, this is it, do not panic. Don't get scared, figure these things out. Just figure this thing out. Let's just figure this thing out, now, don't get excited. Make no false move. Figure this thing out." So I kicked out the east window and then my plan was to crawl out the window and jump off the porch. At, there's a porch that came out below the east window. Jump off the porch. See, the road was to the east of us, so I was conscious of east as a direction. I went out the east window, was gonna jump off that east porch because the road was, safety was to the east. Then I watched the trailers that were escorting me down the river, it was, it was a ridiculous scene. So calm and peaceful...

Q. What did you hear?

A. In a, in an obscure sense, grotesque sense, it was ridiculous. Except for that bridge across the creek, see, the bridge was across the creek. And as each of these six trailers in turn hit the bridge, they folded just like accordions up against the bridge. They turned to rubble instantly while up

against the bridge. And then we realized, those trailers are so fragile that they just folded up right against the bridge. They folded up against the rubble that had piled up against the bridge. See, there was about a foot and a half of water, what I found out later, the water going over the bridge was about a foot and a half deep, about a foot and a half of water going over the bridge. When, when the trailers hit the bridge they just folded like accordians and became a part of the pile of rubble accumulating on the west side of the bridge there. Then the house hit this rubble. And it knocked the porch off the house. Well, I had planned to get off, to go out the window and get, climb down on that porch and jump off the porch. Because I was on the second story, and that, that way I'd only be jumping about one story at a time, see. But the porch fell off. And worst of all, and this made it very bad for me, the porch fell off and then the, the porch floated in front of the house at about an angle of, oh, 45 degrees, something about like that, in front of this window here that I had to get out of. And was out away from me about four or five feet. And the edge of the porch up here, the only thing on the porch that I could grab was maybe two feet above me. Two feet above me and maybe four feet out, _____ get that porch, the edge of it.

Q. The porch, which was below you, now was above you.

A. Yeah. One end was above me.

Q. One end was above you.

A. And the other end was in the river. That end that was in the river, a trailer had drifted up against it, and the trailer was moving up and down in the

current and it was chopping the bottom off that porch. And I looked down at that, now I had to jump, I had to jump out of there, and I had to get hold of the top where I could hang on, the top of the thing, hang on; and if I failed in that jump and just lit on the porch, I would slide and I'd slide down to where this trailer is chopping the bottom (off) of it. Which would, I would, I would not have lived 30 seconds there. I'd be pulp. But that was the only way I had of escaping. The only way of getting out. Now, I got there, that east porch and kicked out the window, and then the back end of the house started to sink. So that I had to hang onto the window to keep from falling down inside of the house. The house was no longer level. The west end had started to sink, and everything, everything in the house slid down toward the west end, and I had to hang on. I had to hang on and I had to get out the window and I had to jump. So I felt, I looked around, now, this may have saved my life. There were a bunch of people drove their cars down to the edge of the water, to the north and to the south, to the edge of the flood; to the north and to the south and put their headlights on the flood. And that is all the light I had. And, and I, I held here on the window frame and after I had kicked the window out and I looked out and there was a board down below the window that I think had once been a part of the support or connection with the porch. Well, I had to jump up and out, up and out, I had to jump up and out to, to get the edge of the porch. So I had to jump from something. So I (felt of) this board and it wasn't out quite far enough so that I could be sure that I could rest my foot on it. I reached inside the house and I felt around and I found a board on

something or other, I don't know what it was on. But I yanked it off, I just yanked it off, pulled it loose, and I got it outside and I pried this board on the wall, I pried it out, and I did that, I did that deliverately, I pried the thing out, I had to pry it out far enough so that it was far enough from the wall so that I could rest my foot on it. And I was very conscious that I don't, I must not pull it out too far, or it might not hold, the nails might not hold. Far enough so I could rest my foot on it, but not too far so that I'd pull the nails out, the nails wouldn't hold. So I pried it out to, it was just a compromise, far enough but not too far. I pried it out that far and then I got in the window and got my right foot on there, I tried to see if it would hold my right foot. And it did.

Q. The window ledge.

A. No, I was sitting, I was sitting in the window.

Q. Okay.

A. I was sitting in the window, I tried to see if that would hold my foot, and it would hold my right foot, and then I tried my left foot and it held, so then, see my body is now 3/4 of my body is outside the window and my feet are on that board that sticks out from the side of the house. I straightened up and I got completely on the outside of the house except my left hand, I was holding on the top, top inside of the frame. And this thing here the I had to jump for, it was going up and down like this. In the flood. And I watched it until I was sure that I knew the best time to jump and the best angle to jump from. I got down, I got down and I, I had one jump, I had to do it, see. I just got down and got into the best possible jumping position

and jumped. And reached out, and I got it with, with my fingers, like that. I got it. Then I got my left hand up there and got, then I had a hold of it with both hands and I pulled myself up and lay across it on my stomach. And then I looked the situation over and I discovered that if I, if I slide over maybe eight feet on this thing there was a relative hole in the rubble and there was what looked like a heavy timber down there that I could get on. So I slide along on this thing just on my belly. Slid along. About eight feet. And then there was a heavy timber right below me, so I, I got completely over on the other side of this roof and just hung on by my hands. I would like to have lowered myself and tested it with my foot. I couldn't reach it. So I, so I just had to drop. I dropped, and I lit on the thing and it held me, it held, and then for, then I was able to work my way a little further to the east and I jumped again and lit on that aluminum railing on the bridge and went on over and came down in about a foot and a half of water and that was the nicest water I ever lit in. It was about a foot and a half of water on top of the bridge. I lit in that.

Q. Were there people around watching you do this?

A. There was no one in sight. I found out later there were people, but there was no one I could see at that time. See, there were, there were cars up to the north at the edge of the water and the south at the edge of the water. So when I got on the bridge, when I got there, then I was very conscious of that hole in the bridge there, I remembered that hole in the bridge, right in the middle of that bridge, that hole. So I located the hole so that I wouldn't walk into it. I thought, if I walk into that, I'm just gone, that's

The other one was St. John's. St. John's Church. Maybe 12, 10, 12 blocks

all.

Q. And after all that it would have been rather anti-chimatic, wouldn't it?

A. Yes. So then I just, I walked up the road.

Q. North or south?

A. I walked up north past Mother Butler Center and the road, which meant I walked by Mother Butler Center's buildings. And Father Collins was in the Center. But I wasn't at all afraid for Father Collins, because the Center is a very solid building, it's set in concrete, it's anchored in concrete, then Father Collins had sort of a hide out on the second floor. The east end of second floor, he had a room up there where he did much of his book work and his correspondence, and now and then in the middle of the afternoon he might go up and lay down and sleep for three quarters of an hour or something like that. So I knew he would be up in that room. So I wasn't a bit worried about him, he was up in that room. And, and the Center was solid, so I, I walked on by and there was at, there was a river, I suppose, oh, it'd be ten or twelve feet deep between the road and the front of the Center there where the road is there, when you drive past the Center, that was a river there about, maybe then, twelve feet deep, something by that. There was no possibility of getting over to the Center. But I wasn't, I wasn't a bit worried about Father Collins, I knew he'd be up there in that room, see. Well, I'm a priest. I had to leave my rectory, so I thought, well, where's the next rectory. I thought of all the possible rectories in Rapid City. There are only two rectories in Rapid City north of Rapid Creek, north of the flood, and I wasn't gonna cross that flood. I was out of it, see.

The other one was St. John's. St. John's Church. Maybe 12, 10, 12 blocks or something like that from Mother Butler Center. Something like that. So I went up to St. John's and they let me in and I spent the night there. Then the next morning, since I had no clothing, see, all the clothing I had was a pair of shoes and a white shirt, and this topcoat. That's all, that was all the clothing I had. See, everything else that I had in the world, everything, just simply everything, went down the creek. Everything. Like my watch, my glasses, my keys, driver's license, just absolutely everything, I could go on endlessly. Everything I had went down the creek. I was left with one pair of shoes, one shirt, and this topcoat. And so the next morning the scrounged around there and they tried to find some clothing for me. The only thing they had there that I could get on was a pair of pajamas, and a bathrobe. So they gave me the pajamas and the bathrobe, and I put on my shoes; then I asked them for a blanket and they gave me a blanket, so I wrapped myself up in the blanket a la' Sitting Bull, and I walked down to Mother Butler Center. I walked down. I just walked down to Mother Butler Center. When I got down there there were a whole batch of our Indian people in front of the center and the scene, of course, was just one of utter desolation and dejection. Four buildings were there, those buildings were there except the residence, the residence was gone, the residence was gone. And, of course, Father Edwards and Father Collins would be in residence, and the residence was gone. I came walking up and one of the fellows turned around, they looked at me, Indians are inclined to be slightly superstitious, he just looked at me and looked at me and looked at me, and then he said, "My

A. A trailer had drifted up onto the back end of the Center, a trailer with

God, I'm glad to see you. You are Father Edwards. I am glad to see you." He's a kid that I used to teach down at Holy Rosary. So I said, "Yes, well," I said, "I, I took the house, I took the house to the bridge and then I transferred at the bridge." And I said, "Now, why don't you go upstairs, you go upstairs up there and tell Father Collins that I'm down here and I'm reporting for duty, that I am not dead or drowned, I'm alive and well and reporting for duty. Just go up and tell him." And so he went upstairs, he came down, he said, "Father Collins is not upstairs. He is not upstairs." And I said, "Well, if he's not upstairs then I'm afraid he's downstairs." So we searched the downstairs and this same fellow, Basil Heart, found him in the kitchen, under a table or something that had fallen over, but he was under the table in the kitchen, dead, drowned. Now, we discovered that he had gone upstairs. His mail and stuff was up there, he had gone upstairs, and then something had happened, and I think I know what that was now, and he came downstairs and then he never got back upstairs. A half a dozen trailers and cars, a half a dozen trailers and two cars came floating along and they smashed into the back end of the Center and the church. And one of those trailers coasted up on the back end of the Center, the back end of the Center. There was a family in that trailer that coasted up onto the back end of the Center. It floated up on the back end of the Center with a family in it. And in the back end of the Center there is a window.

Q. Can I hold you there?

A. Okay.

Q. Okay.

A. A trailer had drifted up onto the back end of the Center, a trailer with a family in it. And in the back end of the Center there is a window. There are a couple rooms on the second story of the back end of the Center as well as the front end of the Center. There are a couple rooms on the second story on the front end and a couple rooms on the second story on the back end, but no connection between them. In between there's a basketball court. Now this trailer drifted up on top of the Center there, and a man got out of his trailer, got his trailer open, got out of his trailer somehow or other, and somehow or other he opened the window, he opened that window, and he got himself and his family out of the trailer into the back end of the Center. Somehow or other. And I think probably Father Collins heard that and went down with the intention of helping or trying to help. Now people told me that there was a lot of screaming and shrieking and so forth. Now, where I was, I didn't hear any screaming or shrieking.

Q. I wanted to ask you about that.

A. I didn't hear any, hear any screaming or shrieking where I was. But these, these, see, the trailers over in my area were in front of me. They drifted past the house, I think the house held to its foundation more firmly than the trailers did, and the trailers were in front of me. I saw the trailers hit the bridge and just fold. But the trailers piled up against the back of the church and the back of the Center. There were half a dozen of them there, I got up, I got up on top of the Center the next day and looked down, and there inside of that jumble of trailers there was a little yellow Volkswagen, and an Oldsmobile that drifted in there, they had a half a dozen

trailers piled on top of them up against the back end of the Center. I think Father Collins heard that and, and went down with some idea of trying to help those people. It would be very difficult to do so because they were outside and he was inside. But I suppose he had some such idea, that maybe there's some way he could help them. And he found him dead, we found him dead in the kitchen there, the water got him. See, that's just conjecture, what he was doing; we know he was upstairs and he came down. It's just conjecture why did he come down. If he had stayed up there, he would be perfectly safe.

Q. Were the news stories that were put out on him accurate in terms of what happened? I really forget now, myself...

A. I believe so. I believe so.

Q. So then you found Father Collins, of course. Did you ever find out what this family, whether they survived, the ones that had gotten out of the trailer and...

A. No, I knew nothing about that then. I knew nothing about that then. This Indian came down and said that Father Collins was not upstairs, so I said he's probably downstairs, he would have to be downstairs, and so we searched the downstairs and we found him. And we found him, and then that was reported to the police, an ambulance came out, and they sent a stretcher in and then they brought out his remains, and I was out there in front; and just almost immediately after that happened, after they'd taken Father Collins out, the Benedictines came in from Mt. Marty, this school out east of Rapid City, and they found me there in a pair of pajamas and wrapped up in a

blanket. And, of course, we had to wade around inside the Center, the water was, oh, almost knee deep, we had to wade around in there. And they said, "Father Edwards, you had better come with us out to, out to Mt. Marty, you had better come with us. And you'd better come out there and let us give you some breakfast and see if we can't find you some clothes and, and give you a place to stay, you have no place to stay here, you'd better come home with us and we'll provide for you until you find out waht to do." So I went with them and they gave me a room out at the school, and I was out there for a couple of days, and they found some things for me although they ahd difficulty finding anything that would fit me and some things they haven't found yet, I haven't found a collar, anything that I can wear around here, that _____, I have clothing ordered, but it's not here yet, and I haven't been able to find anything in Rapid City that'll fit me. So I've been going around in this coat...

Q. Your black coat.

A. Yes, yes. The only thing I've got that'll fit me around the neck and, and look anything like a clerical collar. They got me some clothes and I was out there, and I got a chance to clean up and put on some clothes, you know, they gave me a good substantial breakfast, and I went to bed and slept for awhile and, and felt much better, then when I was out there for a couple of days...and I didn't hear anything, I knew nothing at that time of this family drifting in on top of the Center, I knew nothing at that time of this family drifting in on top of the center, I knew nothing about that at the time. I thought about, I found out about that later, people were telling me about

it. I knew nothing about it at that time. Then the bishop came out to see me, and I said that the residence at Mother Butler Center is gone, so where will I leave. "Well", he said, "I'm just going to find you quarters out at the Cathedral rectory. I'm just going to put you out there for the time being until we have provided otherwise. So you just go out to the Cathedral rectory and tell them I said that they're to give you a room and quarters out at the Cathedral rectory." So I live here, I have a room here and I have my meals here, and I work at Mother Butler Center.

Q. What, waht was your rection, or, I wanted to finish up on, did you ever find out what this family that had come into the Mother Butler Center on the trailer, if they had survived?

A. Yes, they did.

Q. They did survive.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know their names at all?

A. No, I don't, I don't, I never had a conversation with them, but now the sisters in Madonna House may know their names. They talked to them across the flood. See, they were on the second story of Madonna House and they were talking to them out the window. Their trailer had drifted up there and they talked to them, now they may know their names. You see, once they got into, into the Center there on the second story, they're perfectly safe. The flood never got up to the second story, and the building held. Very strong building, the way it's made. And so they'd be safe there. Now, they may know the names. But I missed, see, I missed the first two or three days after the

flood, I was out at this Benedectine establishment out here west of town. They took me out there and I had not place to go, I had no clothing, I had no food, I had nothing. So they came along, picked me up and took me out there, that was very agreeable to me.

Q. I'm sure. What was, were there any other people at all injured or killed in that area, that you know of. Other than Father Collins?

A. He's the only one, the only one that I know of that's dead.

Q. Where, where do you go now with the Mother Butler Center, is it just a matter of picking up from where you left off?

A. Well, we are going to continue Mother Butler Center, but we hope that we can find a better location. We're going to continue the Center here for the Indians. The Indians in Rapid City are very anxious about that because they're very attached to the Center, it was a complete home for them in Rapid City. Everything. They're very much attached to it. They had all their weddings and all their funerals and their feeds and festivities and their Indian dances and basketball and men's basketball, children's basketball, ladies basketball, they lived their lives around the Center. To them it's essential. So we are going to rebuild the Center, but we hope, we hope to find a better situa, location for it. We hope to, and there are several prospects. I don't know yet, which deal we'll take. We'll find a better place.

Q. Would you mind commenting on, in the aftermath of the flood, on the allegation that perhaps Indians were not as well treated and taken care of as white people in, in the...post flood, after care and so on.

- A. Yes, I will comment on that. I was in half a dozen different places that were taking care of people that were caught in the flood, and the people that were caught in the flood were white, Indian, colored, Asiatic, and all possible mixtures. All possible mixtures. I couldn't see the slightest difference in the treatment accorded to any of them. I couldn't see any difference in the treatment accorded to them by the Red Cross. I couldn't see any difference accorded to them by the Mennonites. I couldn't see any difference accorded to them by the Seventh Day Adventists. I couldn't see any difference in the treatment given to them by, under Catholic auspices. Now, you will always find, you'll always find among an element of the Indians, no matter what happens, and no matter how it happens, or what the sum total of circumstances are, there is an element among them that will always feel that they're discriminated against. Now, I was up where the Red Cross were giving out--now this was up in the Elk's building--the Red Cross were giving, they were giving out funds immediately. People, to people that had absolutely nothing. I had absolutely nothing, just simply nothing. Nothing. And someone told me that if I'd go up there, the Red Cross would give me enough money to buy my glasses, they'd certainly give me enough money to get glasses, and they'd give me enough money or give me a start, at least, in providing myself with clothing. So I went up as a refugee among refugees. Why not, I'm a bonafide refugee, I thought, I'm a bonafide refugee. If the Red Cross is doing this for all their other refugees, why won't the Red Cross do this for me, see? So I went up, I told them I'm Father Edwards, Mother Butler Center, caught in the flood, lost anything I had except a pair of shoes, a

white shirt and this black topcoat. I'm a refugee. If you're helping refugees, I'm a refugee. So they gave me enough money for glasses, and they gave me money for clothing. Now, then. When I was up there, and this scalds me, this sort of thing scalds me. I saw three drunken Indian women up there. And there were three of them, definitely Indian, definitely drunk. And they were going around asking for money. And you see, there is always the question, there's always the question that if you have money enough to buy liquor, your situation can't be extremely grave. But they're up there drunk, I know, now, it would seem to me that they would have brains enough when they are drunk, to at least stay out of a place like that. But they didn't do that. They had to go up there and cause difficulty. Those three drunken Indian women. They had to go up there and cause difficulty, and from incidents such as that comes this sort of hush-hush story that the Indians were not treated as well as other groups. Now I was up there, I saw Indians go through, there were Indians go through the line ahead of me and Indians behind me and whites ahead of me and whites behind me, and we were all treated the same. We were all treated the same. I was treated neither better nor worse because I'm a priest, I was just a refugee from the flood and they treated all refugees from the flood the same way. They called me Father and they were glad to hear that I was alive, but I was a refugee from the flood, see. But, now, these Indian women, I got so sore about it at the time, I just wanted to, I would just, would like to have gotten ahold of them privately and... "You get out of here, just get out and don't come back until you're stone cold sober. Because you are going to cause trouble for all the

other Indians. You are gonna cause trouble." And that sort of thing happens forever here in Rapid City. I should tell you this, that in Rapid City, there are about 4000 Indians, 4000. And, and in large part, in large measure, they have disappeared into the life of Rapid City. They are acculturated. They live all over Rapid City and they're employed all over Rapid City. About 4000 of them. And you would walk right by them on the street without ever adverting to them because they conduct themselves as do the generality of people. They'll be clean and mannerly and well-behaved, industrious, and you don't advert to them. That type of Indian you do not advert to, you are not conscious of. But this drunken slob that comes up and puts the touch on you; they're always hungry, they never have had anything to eat. And that happens, you walk down Main Street in Rapid City, any day or any night and you are apt to have two or three or half a dozen of these drunken Indians put a touch on you. They haven't had anything to eat since the day before yesterday. But they're just, just able to walk. Just able to walk and they smell like a brewery or a distillery. And I always tell them, "Now, look here, look here. Why don't you try this for a while? Why don't you use your money to buy your food and your clothing? The things that you need and then go buy your drinks at the bars. Why don't you try that for a while? Just try it." They never like that very well. But, you see, it is that sort of Indian, that sort of, in that sort of situation, that's responsible for this rumor, I've heard it half a dozen places myself. But, you see, I went through the line myself in each one of these places. See, I, I went, I went over, the Seven Day Adventists helped collect for me. They found clothes, used clothing,

not black, but used clothing that comes in handy, some shirts, some underwear and socks and...comes in handy.

Q. When it came to clothes you were ecumenical.

A. Yes, yes. The Seven Day Adventists were very nice, and the Mennonites were very nice. And I saw not the least sign of discrimination in any reasonable situation. But now suppose some drunken slob comes to you. Be he white, be he black or be he of whatever color, he's in a terrible situation and needs money very badly. And it's perfectly evident that he is just put down about three dollars worth of liquor. Well, what do you tell him? There's that. No, my observation is that all refugees of the flood were treated alike. Or maybe I should say all reasonable refugees of the flood were treated alike. Now, I ran across this also. There were Indians going through these places who do not live in Rapid City. People that have moved down on the reservation, they live down on the reservation.

Q. I heard that when I was up to Civil Assistance.

A. Yeah, well, yeah, I saw them. People that I know live down on the reservation up here going through the line as food victims getting help. They were not Rapid City, they don't live in Rapid City. They lost nothing, they weren't here. They live a hundred miles from here. Now, there was that, and I suppose that since some of the people, some of the officials that were handing things out were Indian, they would catch onto these people and tell them "Beat it, Joe. You don't live in Rapid City, you weren't in the flood. You live down on the reservation. Blow. Get lost. Take off. You don't belong here, Joe." See, Now, I have no doubt that that happened. Because a good number

of the people that were working for the Seven Day Adventists or the Mennonites or the Red Cross were local Indians.

Q. There were?

A. Yes, a good number of them were knowledgable, local Indians. That were sitting at the desk and getting data and making decisions and stuff like that, but you see, this type of Indian spots the Indian phony a mile and a half away against a wind. The phony Indian doesn't pull anything on this type of Indian. He pulls something on the white man, but he doesn't pull anything on the Indian, see. The Indian recognizes it, can sniff him a mile and a half against the wind.

Q. Well, that's good.

A. No, I would say that that is false. And it's a libel, it's a libel, and I think it's a rather a vicious libel on the charity of a very large group of people. I'd say it's, I feel that is a vicious libel, and I know because I went to all of these different places, and I stood in line, and I went through with the rest of the refugees. I was a little curious about how it was going to be handled. So I just went through with all the rest of the refugees. Now, no place did I find any preferential treatment. They never called me out of line, "Father Edwards, come here." They never called me out of line. I stood in line with all the rest and went on through. I was given no preferential treatment, no, anyplace.

Q. And you never witnessed preferential treatment.

A. No.

Q. Yeah.

- A. No, the bishop gave me preferential treatment, putting me here, but I'm one of the priests of the diocese, I suppose he feels he's responsible for me.
- Q. Well, is there anything else, any other observations or comeents you can think of with regards to the flood?
- A. Well, there's this. Any person can walk along that creek bank there for a mile and he can know by observation that say, a hundred and fifty yards on either side of the creek bank is the primary flood plain of that creek. And since it is the primary flood plain of that creek created by previous floods down through the ages, that is not a place to build. No one should ever build there. On that primary flood plain. Now at Mother Butler Center, you can see the edge of the primary flood plain is perfectly distinct. You go just about 20 feet past our northern-most building, Madonna Hall, and there's a tree, firt tree in a row of trees. That first tree is right on the edge of the flood plain. The flood plain starts just, just south of that tree and comes down. Mother Butler Center is built here. Now, I tell you this. A day or so after the flood I was walking down near East Boulevard. And an old man that I never saw before in my life stopped me, stopped me on the street. I didn't know him, I don't know what his name was, he just stopped me. And he said, "The people here in Rapid City are damn fools." He said, he said, "I can remember the flood of 1907, when those houses were washed down the creek." And he enumerated a half a dozen different floods. He said, "I remember this flood of 1907 that washed the houses out, so what did they do, flood's over, they come back and rebuild the houses." Then,

such and such a year along comes a flood and washes the houses out, what do they do? They come back and rebuild the houses. They're fools. He said, "That...floods always go through there, every time there's a flood, it goes through there and it washes out the houses. They're fools. Damn fools. I've seen that all my life." He was quite excited about it. He had seen that so many times in the history of Rapid City. Apparently he was a native who grew up here. And he said 1907, and that rang a gong with me, because that's the year I was born. The year I was born there was a heavy flood through Rapid City that took out the houses along the creek. And half a dozen in the intervening years. So the flood's over and it dries out, and people forget about it, and they move back in, put up their houses. And then 10 years, 15, 20 years later, 5 years later, 2 years later, along comes the next flood and washes them out again. So I am in complete agreement with this plan that the city council has. Move all homes out of this primary flood plain and make a park out of it. It'll be a long, narrow park on both banks of the creek, nice park. All they way through the middle of the town. And nobody lives there, nobody has a house in there. It's a park. And we have some facilities in the park, but not facilities for people to live in. And this park will be sort of a unique park because it will go from east to west all they way through the town. And half the town will be north of the park, and half the town will be south of the park and in the middle will be the park. A long, narrow park. I'm in complete agreement and sympathy with that plan. I think that's the thing to do. I think that there should be legislation, no one will be allowed to build on this

flood plain near the river.

Q. Now some have suggested--now, particularly speaking of people of lower economic means that I have talked with--that they feel like this is the cheaper property and that the city, by doing such a thing, by condemning all this flood plain area, is, is really discriminating against them. And...

A. Well, now, see that is true, it's cheaper property, and people on the lower economic level lived on the flood plain in the east end of Rapid City, but out on the west end of Rapid City the big-wigs, the big-wigs bought land right down along the creek. And had their very swanky homes there. And those, the flood was very democratic.

Q. Yes, it was.

A. It took there palatial homes and the lowest hovels down the creek at the same velocity. I've heard that before, that those people said the city is discriminating against them. The city is not discriminating against them. Because what the city enacts with regard to the flood plain holds for these people out in the west end of town as well as it does for the poor people towards the east end of town. Now, I've been in a number of those homes that people have built in the west end of town down along the creek. Very swanky. I would never build there. Because, well, the first time I ever saw the site for Mother Butler Center, the proposed site for Mother Butler Center, I walked along there. And I could see the flood plain of that creek. I was born and raised in Minnesota. I could see the flood plain of that creek. And I mentioned that, "that's the flood plain of the creek there, you can see it. Starts right there, you can see it. Perfectly clearly.

And extends down to the creek, that's the flood plain." And the answer was, "Well, now, of course they have so many dams and so many sewers and so many dikes, and the city uses so much water and there's so much drainage, etc., etc., etc., etc., that there's really no danger of floods now, the way they have dams up all over and all this and that, see." Yeah, there's no danger of floods. When Mother Nature goes on rampage, there is danger of all the dams in creation notwithstanding.

Q. That's right.

A. So I'm entirely in favor of that plan on the part of the city council to condemn all of that land, all of it from the east end lear through the town, all the way out to the west end, that no homes shall ever be built there. Never again permit the building of a home on that flood plain. Never again. Now, that should be clear now, because to the best of my information, they've found 235 bodies now. Two hundred thirty five died in this flood. And that place will flood again. It's been flooding through the ages, it flooded five times, if I counted correctly, in the life of this old gentleman that was commenting on the intelligence of the people of Rapid City. Five times in his lifetime he had seen that. So it's idiotic to build in a place like that. So fine, let's make it a long, narrow park. All the way through town. Rapid City is a peculiar, is peculiar in its layout because of local geography anyway, anyway. So let the whole center of the town be a park. No buildings. And then let people live south of the park or north of the park. But not in the park. I'm in complete sympathy with that.

Q. Well, we are just out of, out of tape right on the dot.

A. Okay, okay.

Q. Thank you very much.

A. Well, did that give you anything?

Q. A lot.

(END OF INTERVIEW)

SW This is Stephen Ward on July 7, 1972, talking with Father Laurence Edwards, the Mother Butler Center at Rapid City, the subject, Black Hills flood. Well, Father Edwards, let's begin with, first of all, what was happening to you on, on June 9th? Where were you ^{during} doing that day?

LE That's Friday.

SW Mm-hm.

LE Friday. Well, I was at Mother Butler ^{C.} Center, it wasn't any different from any other day until in the evening. In the evening we were having Bingo. It was Friday night and we were having Bingo, and it was raining, and there were rumors of high water impending.

SW Okay, before we get, there's one thing I did forget to read in to all of this, and that is the location of Mother Butler Center. All right, now Mother Butler Center, to back up a second here, is in the ⁰¹ West Boulevard, just a few yards from the creek on the north..

LE Yes, just north of the creek. On West Boulevard.

SW And for point of reference, it is in the southeast quarter of the , excuse me, the north east quarter of the southeast quarter of section 35, range 7 east, township 2 north. And it's a couple of yards, actually, from the creek on the north side.

LE I'd say 40 or 50. The buildings.

SW Okay. Now how many buildings do you have there?

LE We had , see, we had five, five buildings.

SW What did they consist of?

LE Residence, sort of a rummage store that appears to be essentially necessary to all Indian missions, a church, then recreation ~~center~~ center, and Madonna House, the residence of the sisters that worked at Mother Butler Center.

SW And again, would you explain the purpose of Mother Butler Center?

LE Mother Butler Center is a mission of Holy Rosary mission, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, a sub station of Holy Rosary Mission, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, that is located among the Indians of Rapid City rather than among the Indians of the reservation. And ambitions,

LE doing or accomplishing the same kind of work in Rapid City that is accomplished by the mission stations of Holy Rosary down on the reservation. It, Mother Butler Center exists for, for the Indians, it's there for the Indians. It provides a religious center, a recreational center, a social center, we had a nurse, nurse there, ~~what~~ ^{so it was, a} in ~~the~~ sense it was a medical center also, for the Indians of Rapid City. Now, that does not mean that, that we exclude other people. Anyone who wished to come there was welcome. Any one at all. Anyone who wanted to come in was welcome. But it's there for the Indians of Rapid City.

SW And you had yourself, and Father Collins..

LE Yeah, there were two priests there.

SW What was his first name?

LE Father Francis Collins.

SW All right. And likewise ~~a~~ a Jesuit?

LE Yes.

SW All right. Now, you may proceed. I'm sorry I ~~be~~ ^{made to} back you up on that. On the night then off June, June 9th on that Friday evening..

LE We were having that bingo game, and while we were having that Bingo game it was raining, it was raining very hard, and there were rumors of high water up the creek. So several times during the evening, I went down and checked the level of the water in the creek. I did that several times. And there were other people there who were watching the level of water in the creek. I went down about, oh, it would be about a quarter after 11, and looked at the water in the creek, and it was still about four feet, I estimated it was about four feet below the top of the bank. It would have to, it would have to go up a ways about four feet before it would start to flow out of ~~xxxxx~~ its ^(channel). Then I went up to my room, I was very tired, I went up to my room and my phone rang, Father Collins was over in the Center, he was still over in the Center, and he asked me how the creek was, how things were coming over at the house, and I told him I had just been down to the creek and the creek appeared to be four feet below the flood stage, and so I didn't think that we were in any serious danger that night. When they were talking about flood, I thought of maybe six inches of water and people having flooded basements.

LE That's what the word flood at that time added up to as far as I was concerned. So after Father Collins' call I took a look out the window and it was still raining heavily, so I went to bed. Then it was a lot of thunder and lightning, but I was very tired, and I went to sleep.

SW Had the bingo game ^{he} ceased and people...

LE Oh yes, bingo game was all over by that time. It was all over before I made that trip that last trip ~~off~~ ^{down to} of the creek. I, I went to sleep. Now, I ~~have~~ ^{try} tried to figure out how long I had been sleeping. And as near as I can come to pinning it down definitely, I 'd been asleep about fifteen minutes. About fifteen minutes. And I woke up, and I woke up with the feeling that I was in a boat. It felt like I was in a boat. So I got out of bed and I looked out the window, and I was in a boat. The house was floating down the river.

SW Down the river.

LE Down the river. Teh house was floating down the~~x~~ river. There were probably four feet of water or five ~~feet~~ feet of water right across the area where the house ~~wa~~ is situated. It had lifed the house off its foundation, and now it was floating down the river. Now, its almost incredible that all of that could have happened in about fifteen or twenty minutes, but it all did happen in about fifteen or twenty minutes. Well, since then, I've learned the explanation. The dam went out at Canyon Lake. The dam went out. And so Canyon Lake came down on Rapid City. And this water was not a result of the rain, primarily, it was the result of the failure of the dam at Canyon Lake. So Canyon Lake just came right down the creek. So I looked out the window and..

SW Can I ask you here, just a second, now you are on the north side of the creek.

LE Yes.

SW Now, did you float into the , the creek bed itself, did you go across West Boulevard, I mean I can't quite visualize what, what was going on here.'And secondly , is this a two story house?

LE Yes, two , I was up on the second floor. ^{Q: Allright.} I was up on the second floor.

SW Can you explain what..

LE Yes. YES, I can. I lookedout the window and the house was floating down the river.

LE And there were at least half a dozen trailers in sight floating down the river with the house. The sight was ridiculous, it was almost laughable. (laughing)

SW If you felt like it, yeah.

LE IF a person felt like laughing. Because it felt like I was part of a fleet going down the river. Like the house were, say, the transport, and these half a dozen trailers were the destroyers, escorting the transport. So ~~we~~^{it} went down the river. Now ~~as we~~ with regard to your question, how did we get to the river, we floated almost due east almost straight east, and then we ~~(spun)~~ to the right and went in the ~~mak~~ main channel of the river.

SW All right, now can you retrace that for me? All right, ~~here~~ here we were right here. Up on the spot where we, we located you in the first place.

LE Yes. Right there, see.

SW Okay.

LE We floated towards the east. East.

SW Would be this way.

LE Yes. Toward the, from west to east until we got around a batch of trees and there was sort of an eddy in the water there, and then we swung south into the creek.

SW Now this, at no time ^{then} ~~now~~, did you ~~ever~~ ~~cross~~ cross the bridge.

LE No, we never crossed the bridge. Here's the bridge across the creek. I'll tell you about the bridge later.

SW Okay, okay.

LE We floated toward the east and then swung toward the south, and we got into the main channel of the river. And- and then we headed directly at the bridge.

SW Okay. Now, when you speak of ~~we~~, are you just speaking of yourself?

LE ~~We~~, the convoy.

SW Okay. (laughter) But you're just by yourself as captain of the ship.

LE That is what I saw when I looked out the north window. That. That is what I saw. Now, funny as it looked, I knew it was extremely dangerous. I knew I was in very grave danger. I could see light through the east window. The east window fo the house. On the second story. I could see light through the east window. the next room. So I

LE ran to the east window, we were floating to the east, I ran to the east window, and kicked the east window completely out, glass and frame and screen completely out.

SW Why?

LE Well, just..

SW Okay.

LE I missed something there. [I looked out the north window, we were floating. I am in the gravest danger. So, I'd been sleepin in just a shirt, white shirt, and going to have to go out into this, so I ~~was~~ put on a pair of Oxfords. I was afraid of glass and broken nails and such like. And my clothing rack had fallen over on the floor, and was just, my clothing was just a black mass on the floor. The lights were out, but I could just see that black mass, and I reached in and pulled out something black to cover my indecency. And the black garment that I grabbed was this topcoat, ^{see.} ~~it's a~~. so I put the top coat on and then I considered putting on shorts and trousers, and I deliberately rejected the notion of putting on ~~my~~ shorts or trousers. It would take too long and I, I thought I would have to swim. And if I had to swim I'd just peel this off and swim, see. I'm a reasonably good swimmer. Then I could see light through the east window. ~~XXXX~~ More light through the east window than I could anywhere else. So I ran to the east window, I kicked the east window completely out, the glass, the frame, the screen, everything, so that at the most opportune second, the strategic second, the most opportune second, that second when it would be most to my advantage to get out of the house, I could just jump out of the window without any struggle, see. I knew I was in a desperate situation. Now I said to myself, "Now, this is it, do not panic. Don't get scared, figure these things out. Just figure this thing out. Let's just figure this thing out, now, don't get excited. Make no false move. Figure this thing out." So I kicked out the east window and then my plan was to crawl out the window and jump off the porch. At, there's a porch that came out below the east window. Jump off the porch. ^{see} ₉ the road was to the east of us, so I was conscious of east as a direction. I went out the east window, was gonna jump off that east porch because the road was, safety was to the east. Then I watched the trailers that were escorting me ^{down the river}, it was, it was a ridiculous

LE scene. So calm and peaceful..

SW What did you hear?

LE In a, in an obscure sense, grotesque sense, it was ridiculous. Except for that bridge across the creek, see, the bridge was across the creek. And as each of these six trailers in turn hit the bridge, they folded just like accordians up against the bridge. They turned to rubble instantly while up against the bridge. And then we realized, those trailers are so fragile that they just folded up right against the bridge. They folded up against the rubble that had piled up against the bridge. See, there was about a foot and a half of water, what I found out later, the water going over the bridge was about a foot and a half deep, about a foot and a half of water going over the bridge. When, when the trailers hit the bridge they just folded like accordians and became a part of the pile of rubble accumulated on the west side of the bridge there. Then the house hit this rubble. And it knocked the porch off the house. Well, I had planned to get off, to go out the window and get, climb down on that porch and jump off the porch. Because I was on the second story, and that, that way I'd only be jumping about one story at a time, see. But the porch fell off. And worst of all, and this made it very bad for me, the porch fell off and then the, the porch floated in front of the house at about an angle of, oh, 45 degrees, something about like that, in front of this window here that I had to get out of. And was out away from me about 4 or 5 feet. And the edge of the porch up here, the only thing on the porch I could grab was maybe ^{two} 2 feet above me. ^{Two} 2 feet above me and maybe 4 feet out, ~~get~~ ^{get} that porch, the edge of it.

SW The porch, which was below you, now was above you.

LE Yeah. One end was above me.

SW One end was above you.

LE And the other end was in the river. That end that was in the river, at trailer had drifted up against it, and the trailer was moving up and down in the current and it was chopping the bottom off that porch. ^{And} I looked down at that, now I had to jump, I had to jump out of there, and I had to get hold of the top where I could hang on, ^{the} top of the thing, hang on; and if I failed in that jump and just lit on the porch, I would

LE slide and I'd slide down to where this trailer is chopping the bottom ^(off) of it. Which would, I would, I would not have lived 30 seconds ^{there}. I'd be pulp. But that was the only way I had of escaping. The only way of getting out. Now, I got there, that east porch and kicked out the window, and then the back end of the house started to sink. So that I had to hang onto the window to keep from falling down inside of the house. The house was no longer level. The west end had started to sink, and everything, everything in the house slid down toward the west end, and I had to hang on. I had to hang on and I had to get out the window and I had to jump. So I felt, I looked around, now, this may have saved my life. There were a bunch of people drove their car down to the edge of the water, ~~to~~ to the north and to the south, ~~to~~ to the edge of the flood; to the north and to the south and put their headlights on the flood. And that is all the light I had. And, and I, I held here on the window frame and after I had kicked the window out and I looked out and there was a board down below the window that I think had once been a part of the support or connection with the porch. Well, I ~~was~~ had to jump up and out, up and out, I had to jump up and out to, to get the edge of the porch. So I had to jump from something. So I ^(felt of) this board and it wasn't out quite far enough so that I could be sure that I could rest my foot on it. I reached inside the house and I felt around and I found a board on something or other ~~is~~, I don't know what it was on. But I yanked, ^{it off} I just yanked it ~~it~~, pulled it loose, and I got it outside and I pried this board on the wall, I pried it out, and I did that, I did that deliberately, I pried the thing out, I had to pry it out for enough so that it was far enough from the wall so that I could rest my foot on it. And I was very conscious that I don't, I must not pull it out too far, or it might not hold, the nails might not hold. ^{Far} ~~Not~~ enough so I could rest my foot on it, but not too far so that I'd pull the nails out, the nails wouldn't hold. So I pried it out to, it was just ^{a compromise,} far enough but not too far. I ~~prided~~ pried it out that far and then I got in the window and got my right foot on there, I tried to see if it would hold my right foot. And it did.

SW The window ledge. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

LE No, I was sitting, I was sitting in the window.

SW Okay.

LE I was sitting in the window, I tried to see if that would hold my foot, and it would hold my right foot, and then I tried my left foot and it held, so then, see my body is now 3/4 of my body is outside the window and my feet are on that board, that sticks out from the side of the house. I straightened up and I got completely on the outside of the house except my left hand, I was holding on the top, top inside of the frame. And this thing here that I ^{had to} jumped for, it was going up and down like this. In the flood. And I watched it until I was sure that I knew the best time to jump and the best angle to jump from. I got down, I got down and I, I had one jump, I had to do it, see. I just got down and got into the best possible jumping position and jumped. And reached out, and I got it with, with my fingers, like that. I got it. Then I got my left hand ~~up~~ up there and got, then I had a hold ^{ok it} with both hands and I pulled myself up and lay across it on my stomach. And then I looked the situation over and I discovered that if I, if I slid over maybe 8 feet on this thing there was a relative hole in the rubble and there was what looked like a heavy timber down there that I could get on. So I slid along on this thing just on my belly. Slid along. About 8 feet. And then there was a heavy timber right below me, so I, I got completely over on the other side of this roof and just hung on by my hands. I would like to have lowered myself and tested it with my foot. I couldn't reach it. So I, so I just had to drop. I dropped, ^{and I lit} ~~Right in~~ on the thing and it held me, it held, and then for, then I was able to work my way a little further to the east and I jumped again and lit on that aluminum railing on the bridge and went on over and came down ⁱⁿ about a foot and a half of water and that was the nicest water I ever ^{lit} went in. It was about a foot and a half of water on top of the bridge. I lit in that.] ^{SN} Were there people around watching you do this?

EL There was no one in sight. I found out later there were people, but there was no one I could see at that time. See, there were, there were cars up to the north at the edge of the water and the south at the edge of the water. So when I got on the bridge, when I got there, then I was very conscious of ^{that hole in} the bridge there, I remembered that hold in the bridge, right in the middle of that bridge, that hole. So I located the hole so that I wouldn't walk into it. I thought, if I walk into that, I'm just gone, that's all.

SW And after all that it would have been rather *anti-climactic, wouldn't it?* ~~(both talk at once)~~

EL *Yes* So then I just, I walked up the road.

SW North ~~or~~ south?

EL I walked up north past Mother Butler Center and the road, which meant I walked by Mother Butler' Center's buildings. And Father Collins was in the Center. But I wasn't at all afraid for Father Collins, because the Center is a very solid building, it's set in concrete, it's ^{and} anchored in concrete, then Father Collins had sort of a hide out on the second floor. The east end of second floor, he had a room up there where he did much of his bookwork and his correspondence, and now and then in the middle of the afternoon he might go up and lay down and sleep for three quarters of an hour or something like that. So I knew he would be up in that room. So I wasn't a bit worried about him, he was up in that room. And, and the Center was solid, so I, I walked on by and there was, at, there was a river, I suppose, oh, it'd be ten or twelve feet deep between the road and the front of the Center there where the road is there, when you drive past the Center, that was a river there, ^{about} maybe ten, twelve feet deep, something by that. There was no possibility of getting over to the Center. But I wasn't, I wasn't a bit worried about Father Collins, I knew he'd be up there in that room, see. Well, I'm a priest. I had *to leave* my rectory, so I thought, well, ~~was~~ where's the next rectory. I thought of all the possible rectories in Rapid City. There are only two rectories in Rapid City north of Rapid Creek, *with* of the flood, ~~that~~ ^{and} I wasn't gonna cross that flood. I was out of it, see. The other one was St. John's. St. John's Church. Maybe 12, 10 12 blocks or something like that from Mother Butler ~~Center~~. Something like that. So I went up to St. John's and they let me in and I spent the night there. Then the next morning, since I had no clothing, see, ^{all} the ~~only~~ clothing I had was ~~the only~~ a pair of shoes and a white shirt, and this topcoat. That's all, that was all the clothes ^{ing} that I had. See, everything else that I had in the world, everything, just simply everything, went down the ^{Creek} ~~drain~~. Everything. Like my watch, my glasses, my keys, drivers license, just absolutely everything, I could go on endlessly. Everything I had went down the creek. I was left with one pair of shoes, one shirt, and this topcoat. And so the next morning

EL they scrounged around there and they tried to find some clothing for me. The only thing they had there that I could get on was a pair of pajamas, and a bathrobe. So they gave me the pajamas and ^{the} bathrobe, and I put on my shoes; then I asked them for a blanket and they gave me a blanket, so I wrapped myself up in the blanket ~~at~~ ^{with} Sitting Bull, and I walked down to Mother Butler Center. I walked down. I just walked down to Mother Butler Center. When I got down there there were a whole batch of our Indian people in front of the center and the scene, of, course was just one of utter desolation and dejection. Four buildings were there, those buildings were there except the residence, the residence was gone, the residence was gone. And, of course, Father Edwards and Father Collins would be in residence, and the residence was gone. I came walking up and one of the fellows turned around, they looked at me, Indians ^{are} inclined ^d to be slightly superstitious, he just looked at me and looked at me and looked at me, and then he said, "My God, I'm glad to see you," you are Father Edwards. I am glad to see you." He's a kid that I used to teach, ^{down at Holy Rosary} ~~(Donald Leroyer)~~. So I said "Yes, well, I said, "I, I took the house, I took the house to the bridge and then I transferred at the bridge." And I said, ^{Now} ~~Donald~~, why don't you go upstairs, you go upstairs up there and tell Father Collins that I'm down here and I'm reporting for duty, that I am not dead or drowned, I'm alive and well and reporting for duty. Just go up and tell him." And so he went upstairs, he came down, he said, "Father Collins is not upstairs. He is not upstairs." And I said, "Well, if he's not upstairs then I'm afraid he's downstairs." So we searched the downstairs and this same fellow, Basil Heart, found him in the kitchen, under a table or something that ^{had fallen over}, but he was under the table in the kitchen, dead, drowned. Now, we discovered that he had gone upstairs. His mail and stuff was ~~up~~ there, he had gone upstairs, ^{and} then something had happened, and I think I know what that was now, and he came downstairs and ^{then} he never got back upstairs. A half a dozen trailers and cars, a half a dozen trailers

EL LE and two cars came floating along and they smashed into the back end of the center and the church. And one of ~~the~~^{those} trailers coasted up on the backend of the center, the back end of the center. There was a family in that trailer that coasted up ~~under~~^{onto} the back end of the center. It floated up on the back end of the center with a family in it. And in the back end of the center there is a window.

SW Can I hold you there?

LE Okay. (~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~)

(END OF SIDE ONE)

SW Okay.

LE A trailer had drifted up onto the back end of the center, a trailer with a family in it. And in the back end of the Center there is a window. There are a couple rooms on the second story of the back end of the Center as well as the front end of the Center. There are a couple rooms on the second story on the front end and a couple rooms on the second story on the back end, but no connection between them. In between there's a basketball court. Now this trailer drifted up on top of the Center there, and a man got out of ~~this~~^{the} trailer, got ~~out~~^{of} the trailer open, got out of his trailer somehow or other, and somehow or other he opened the window, he opened that window, and he got himself and his family out of the trailer into the back end of the center. Somehow or other. AND I think probably Father Collins heard that and went down with the intention of helping or trying to help. Now people told me that there was a lot of screaming and shrieking and so forth. Now, where I was, I didn't hear any screaming or shrieking.

SW I wanted to ask you about that.

LE I didn't hear any hear any screaming or shrieking where I was. But these, these, see, the trailers over in my area were in front of me. They drifted past the house, I think the house held to its foundation more firmly than

LE the trailers did, and the trailers were in front of me. I saw the trailers hit the bridge and just fold. But the trailers piled up against the back of the church and the back of the Center. There were half a dozen of them there, I got up, I got up on top of the center the next day and looked down, and there inside of that jumble of trailers there was a little yellow Volkswagen, and and ~~XXXX~~ Oldsmobile that drifted in there, they had a half a dozen trailers piled on top of them, up against the back end of the Center. I think Father Collins heard that and, and went down with some idea of trying to help those people. It would be very difficult to do so because he was ⁱⁿ outside and they were ^{out} inside. But I suppose he had some such idea, that maybe there's some way he could help them. And we found him dead, we found him dead in the kitchen, ^{there} the water got him. See, that's just conjecture, what he was ^{doing} we know he was upstairs and he came down. It's just conjecture, why did he come down. If he had stayed up there, he would be perfectly safe.

SW Were the news stories that were put out on him accurate in terms of what happened? I really forget now, myself..

LE I believe so. I believe so.

SW So then you found Father Collins, of ~~xxx~~ course. Did you ever find out what this family, whether they survived, the ones that ^{had} gotten out of the trailer and..

LE No, I knew nothing about that then. I knew nothing about that then. This Indian came down and said that Father Collins was not upstairs, so I said he's probably downstairs, he would have to be downstairs, and so we searched the downstairs and we found him. And we found him, and then that was reported to the police, an ambulance came out, and they sent a stretcher in and then they brought out his remains, and I was out there in front, and just almost immediately after that happened, after they'd taken Father Collins out, the Benedictines came in from Mt. Marty, this school out east of Rapid City, and they found me there in a pair of pajamas and

LE wrapped up in a blanket, and, of course, we had to ~~walk~~ ^{wade} around in side the Center, the water was oh, almost knee deep, we had to wade around in there. And they said, "Father Edwards, you had better come with us out to, out to Mt. Marty, you had better come with us. And you'd better come out there and let us give you some breakfast and see if we can't find you some clothes and, and give you a place to stay, you have no place to stay here, you'd better come home with us and we'll provide for you. Until you find out what to do." So I went with them and they gave me a room out at the school, and I was out there for a couple of days, and they found some things for me although they had difficulty finding anything that would fit me and some things they haven't found yet, I haven't ~~find~~ ^{found} a collar, anything ^{that} I can wear ~~walk~~ around here, ^{that} _____, I have clothing ordered, but it's not here yet, and I haven't been able to find anything in Rapid City that'll fit me. So I've been going around in this coat...

SW ^{your} black coat.

LE Yes, yes. The only thing I've got that'll fit me around the neck and, and look anything like a clerical collar. They got me some clothes and I was out there, and I got a chance to clean up and put on some clothes, you know, they gave me a good substantial breakfast, and I went to bed and slept for a while and, and felt much better, then when I was out there for a couple of days, and I didn't hear anything, I knew nothing ~~of~~ at that time of this family drifting in on top of the center, I knew nothing about that at the time. I thought about, I found out about that later, people were telling me about it. I knew nothing about it at that time. Then the bishop came out to see me, and I said that the ~~KXXXXXXX~~ residence at Mother Butler ^{center} is gone, so where will I leave, Well, he said "I'm just going to find you quarters out at the Cathedral rectory. I'm ^{just} going to put you out there for the time being until we have provided otherwise." So you just go out to the Cathedral rectory and tell them I said that they're to give you ~~an~~ room and quarters out at the Cathedral

LE rectory." So I live here, I have a room here and I have my meals here, and I work at Mother Butler center.

SW What, what was your reaction, or, I wanted to finish up on, did you ever find out what this family that had come into the Mother Butler Center on the trailer, if they had survived?

LE Yes, they did.

SW they did survive.

LE Yes.

SW Do you know their names at all?

LE No I don't, I don't, I never had a conversation with them, but ^{now} the sisters in Madonna House ^{many} would know their names. They talked to them across the flood. See, they were on the second story ~~xxxxxx~~ of Madonna house and they were talking to them out the window. Their trailer had drifted up there and they talked to them, ^{now they may} know their names. You see, once they got into, into the center there on the second story, ~~the xxxxxx~~ they're perfectly safe. The flood never got up ^{to} on the second story, and the building held. Very strong building, the way it's made. And so they'd be safe there. Now, they may know the names. But I missed, see, I missed the first two or three days after the flood, I was out at this Benedictine establishment out here west of town. They took me out there and I had no place to go, I had no clothing, I had no food, I had nothing. So they came along, picked me up and took me out there, that was very agreeable to me.

SW I'm sure. What was, were there any other people at all injured or killed in that area, that you know of. ^{Other than} Father Collins?

LE He's the only one, the only one that I know of that's dead.

SW Where, ^{where} do you go now with the Mother Butler Center, ^{is it just} a matter of picking up ^{from} where you left off..?

LE Well, we are going to continue Mother Butler Center, but we hope that we can find a better location. We're going to continue the center ^{here} For the Indians, the Indians in Rapid City are very anxious about that because

LE they're very attached to the Center, ^{it was} a complete home for them in Rapid City,. Everything. They're very much attached to it. They had all their weddings and all their funerals and their feeds and festivities and their Indian dances and basketball and men's basketball, children's basketball, ladies basketball, they lived their lives around the Center. To them it's essential. So we~~re~~ are going to re~~bu~~ild the center, but we hope, we hope to find a better situa~~..~~, location for ^{it.} us. We hope to, and there are several prospects. I don't know ~~wh~~ yet, which deal we'll take. ~~W~~
We'll find a better place.

SW Would you mind commenting on , in the aftermath of the flood, on the allegation that perhaps Indians were not as well treated and taken care of as white people in, in the ...post flood , after care and so on.

LE Yes, I will comment on that. I was in half a dozen different places that were taking care of people that were caught in the flood, and the people that were caught in the flood were white , Indian, colored, Asiatic, and all possible mixtures. All possible mixtures. I couldn't see the slightest difference in the treatment ~~ac~~corded to any of them. I couldn't see any difference in the treatment accorded to them by the Red Cross. I couldn't see any difference accorded to them by the Mennonites. I couldn't see any difference accorded to them by the Seventh Day Adventists. I couldn't see any difference in the treatment given to them by, under Catholic auspices. Now, you will always find, you'll always find among an element of the Indians, no matter what happens, and no matter how it happens, or what the sum total of circumstances are, there is an element ~~of~~ among them that will always feel that they're discriminated ~~ag~~ainst. Now, I was up where the Red Cross were giving out, ^{= was up} ~~it~~ was up in the Elk's building, the Red Cross were giving, they were giving out funds immediately. People, to people that had absolutely nothing . I had absolutely nothing, just simply nothing. Nothing. And someone told me that if I'd go up there, the Red Cross would

LE give me enough money to buy my glasses, they'd certainly give me enough money to get glasses, and they'd give me enough money or give me a start, at least, in providing myself with clothing. So I went up as a refugee among refugees. Why not, I'm a bonafide refugee, I thought, I'm a bonafide refugee. If the Red Cross is ~~giving~~ doing this for all their other refugees, why won't the Red Cross do this for me, see? So I went up, I told them I'm Father Edwards, Mother Butler Center, caught in the flood, lost anything I had except a pair of shoes, a white shirt and this black topcoat. I'm a refugee. If you're helping refugees, I'm a refugee. So they gave me enough money for glasses, and they gave me money for clothing. Now, then. When I was up there, and this scalds me, this sort of thing scalds me. I saw three drunken Indian women up there. *And there were* three of them, definitely Indian, definitely drunk. And they were going around asking for money. And you see, there is always the question, there's always the question that if you have money enough to buy liquor, your situation can't be extremely grave. But they're up there drunk, I know, now, it would seem to me that they would have brains enough when they are drunk, to at least stay out of a place like that. But they didn't do that. They had to go up there and cause difficulty. Those three drunken Indian women. They had to go up there and cause difficulty, and from incidents such as that comes this sort of hush-hush story that the Indians were not treated as well as other groups. Now I was up there, I saw Indians go through, there were Indians go through the line ahead of me and Indians behind me and whites ahead of me and whites behind me, and we were all treated the same. We were all treated the same. I was treated neither better nor worse because I'm a priest, I was just a refugee from the flood and they treated all refugees from the flood the same way. They called me Father and they were glad to hear that I was alive, but I was a refugee from the flood, see. But, now, these Indian women, I got so sore about it at the time, I just wanted to, I would just, would like to have gotten ahold of them privately and,.."You, get out of here, just get out and don't come back until you're stone cold sober. Because you are going to cause trouble for all the other Indians. You are gonna cause trouble." And that sort of thing happens forever here in Rapid City. I should tell you this, that in Rapid City, there are about 4000 Indians. 4000.

LE And, and in large part, in large measure, they have disappeared into the life of Rapid City. They are ~~re~~culturated. They live all over Rapid City and they're employed all over Rapid City. About 4000 of them. And you would walk right by them on the street without ever adverting to them because they conduct themselves as do the generality of people. They'll be clean and mannerly and well behaved, industrious, and you don't advert to them. That type of Indian you do not advert to, you are not ~~son~~conscious of. But this drunken slob that comes up and puts the touch on you; they're always hungry, they never have had anything to eat. And that happens, you walk down Main Street in Rapid City, any day or any night and you are apt to have two or three or ~~ax~~ half a dozen of these drunken Indians put a touch on you. They haven't had anything to eat since the day before yesterday. But they're just, just able to walk. Just able to walk and they smell like a brewery ~~and~~ ^{and} a distillery. And I always tell them, "Now, look here, look here. Why don't you try this for awhile? Why don't you use your money to buy your food and your clothing? The things that you need, and then go bum your drinks at the bars. Why don't you try that for awhile? Just try it. " They never like that very well. But, you see, it is that sort of Indian, that sort of, in that sort of situation, that's responsible for this rumor, I've heard it half a dozen places myself. But, you see, I went through the line myself in each one of these places. See, I, I went, I went over, the Seven Day Adventists helped clothe me. They found clothes, used clothing, not black, but used clothing that comes in handy, some shirts, some underwear and socks and.. comes in handy.

SW When it came to clothes you were ecumanical.

LE Yes, yes. the Seven Day Adventists were very nice, and the Mennonites were very nice. And I saw not the least sign of discrimination in any reasonable situation. But now suppose some drunken slob comes to you. Be he white, be he black or be he of whatever color, he's in a terrible situation and needs money very badly. And it's perfectly evident that he ^{is} just put down about three dollars worth of liquor. Well, what do you tell him? There's that. No, my observation is that all refugees of the flood were treated alike. Or maybe I should say all reasonable refugees of the flood were treated alike. Now, I ran across this also. There were Indians going through these places who

LE do not live in Rapid City. People that have moved down on the reservation, they live down on the reservation.

SW I heard that when I was up to Civil Assistance.

LE Yeah, wall, yeah, I saw them. People that I know live down on the reservation up here going through the lines as flood victims getting help. They were not in Rapid City, they don't live in Rapid City. They lost nothing, they weren't here. They live a hundred miles from here. Now, there was that, and I suppose that since some of the people, some of the officials that were handing things out were Indian, they would catch onto these people and tell them "Beat it, Joe. You don't live in Rapid City, you weren't in the flood. You live down on the reservation. Blow. Get lost. Take off. You don't belong here, Joe,". See. Now, I have no doubt that that happened. Because a good number of the people that were working for the Seven Day Adventists or the Mennonites or the Red Cross were local Indians.

SW They were.

LE Yes, a good number of them were knowledgeable, local Indians. That were sitting at the desk and getting data and making decisions and stuff like that, but you see, this type of Indian spots the Indian phon y a mile and a half away against a wind. The phon y Indian doesn't pull anything on this type of Indian. He pulls something on the white man, but he doesn't pull anything on the Indian, see. The Indian recognizes it, can sniff him a mile and a half against the wind.

SW Well, that's good.

LE No, I would say that that is false. And it's a libel, it's a libel, and I think it's a rather a vicious libel on the (charity) of a very large group of people. I'd say it's, I feel that is a vicious libel, and I know because I went to all of these different places, and I stood in line, and I went ~~xxx~~ through with the best of the refugees. I was a little curious about how it was going to be handled. So I just went through with all the rest of the refugees. Now, no place did I find any preferential treatment. They never called me out of line, "Father Edwards, come here." They never called me out of line.. I stood in line with all the rest and went on through. I was given no preferential treatment, no, anyplace.

XXSW And you never witnessed preferential treatment.

LE No.

SW Yeah.

LE No, the bishop gave me preferential treatment, putting me here, but I'm ^{one} of the priests of the diocese, I suppose he feels he's responsible for me.

SW Well, is there anything else, any other observations or comments you can think of with regards to the flood?

LE Well, there's this. Any person can walk along that creek bank there for a mile and he can know by observation that say, a hundred and ~~sixty~~ fifty yards on either side of the creek ~~bed~~ ^{bank} is the primary flood plain of that creek. And since it is the primary flood plain of that creek created by previous floods down through the ages, ~~That~~ that is not a place to build. No one should ever build there. On that primary flood plain. Now ~~at~~ at Mother Butler Center, you can see the edge of the primary flood plain is perfectly distinct. You go just about twenty feet past our northernmost building, ~~down the creek~~ Madonna Hall, and there's a tree, first tree in a row of trees. That first tree is right on the edge of the flood plain. The flood plain starts just, just south of that tree and comes down. Mother Butler Center is built here. Now, I tell you this. A day or so after the flood I was walking down ^h near East Boulevard. And an old man that I never saw before in my life stopped me, stopped me on the street. I didn't know him, I don't know what his name was, he just stopped me. And he said, "The people here in Rapid City are damn fools." He said, he said, "I can remember the flood of 1907, when those houses were washed down the creek." And he enumerated a half a dozen different floods. He said, "I remember this flood of 1907 that washed the houses out, so what did they do, flood's over, they come back and rebuild the houses." Then, such and such a year along comes a flood and washes the houses out, what do they do? They come back and rebuild the houses. They're fools." he said, "That's floods always go through there, everytime there's a flood, it goes through there and it washes out the houses. They're fools. Damn fools. I've seen that all my life." He was quite excited about it. He had seen that so many times in the history of Rapid City. Apparently he was a native

And

LE who grew up here. ~~When~~ he said 1907, and that rang a gong with me, because that's the year I was born. The year I was born there was a heavy flood through Rapid City that took out the houses along the creek. And half a dozen ^{in the} intervening years. So the flood ^g over and it dries out, and people forget about it, and they move back in, put up their houses. And then ten years, fifteen, twenty years later, five years later, two years later, along comes the next flood and washes them out again. So I ~~was~~ am in complete agreement with this plan that the city council has. Move all homes out of this primary flood plain and make a park out of it. It'll be a long, narrow park on both banks of the creek, nice park. All the way through the middle of the town. And nobody lives there, nobody has a house in there. It's a park. And we have some facilities in the park, but not facilities for people to live in. And this park will be sort of a unique park because it will go from east to west all the way through the town. And half the town will be north of the park, and half the town will be south of the park and in the middle will be the park. A long, narrow park. I'm in complete agreement and sympathy with that plan. I think that's the thing to do. I think that there should be legislation, no one will be allowed to build on this flood plain near the river.

SW Now some have suggested ~~now~~, particularly ~~on~~ speaking of people of lower economic means that I ^{have} talked with ~~that~~ that they feel like this is the cheaper property and that the city, by doing such a thing, by condemning all this flood plain area, is, is really discriminating against them. And..

LE Well, now, ~~see~~ that is true, it's ~~cheaper~~ cheaper property, and people on the lower economic level lived on the flood plain in the east end of Rapid City, but out on the west end of Rapid City the big-wigs, the big-wigs bought land right down along the creek. And had their very swanky homes there. And those, the flood was very democratic.

SW Yes, it was.

LE It took there palatial homes and the lowest hovels down the creek at the same ~~(velocity)~~ ^{velocity}. I've heard that before, that those people said the city is discriminating against them. The city is not discriminating against them. Because what the city enacts with regard to the flood plain holds for these people out in the west end of town as well as it ~~does~~ ^{does} for the poor people towards the east end of town. Now, I've been in a number of those

LE homes that people have built in the west end of town down along the creek. Very swanky. I would never build there. Because, well, the first time I ever saw the site for Mother Butler Center, the proposed site for Mother Butler Center, I *walked along* there. And I could see the flood plain of that creek. I was born and raised in Minnesota. ~~XXX~~ I could see the flood plain of that creek. And I mentioned that, "that's the flood plain of the creek there, you can see it. Starts right ~~there~~, you can see it. Perfectly clearly. And extends down to the creek, ^{that's} the flood plain." And the answer was, "Well, now, of course they have so many dams and so many sewers and so many dikes, and the city uses so much water and there's so much drainage, etc., etc., etc., etc., that there's really no danger of floods now, the way they have dams up all over and all this *and that*, see." Yeah, there's no danger of floods. When Mother Nature goes on rampage, there is danger of all the dams in creation notwithstanding.

SW That's right.

LE So I'm entirely in favor of that ^{on the part} ~~plan and the plan~~ of the city council to condemn all of that land, all of it from the east end clear through the town, all the way out to the west end, that no homes shall ever be built there. Never again permit the building of a home on that flood plain. Never again. Now, that should be clear now, because *to* the best of my information, they've found 235 bodies now. 235 ^{died} ~~rights~~ in this flood. And that place will flood again. It's been flooding through the ages, it flooded five times, if I counted ~~correctly~~, in the life of this old gentleman that was commenting on the intelligence of the people of Rapid City. Five times in his lifetime he had seen that. So ~~it's~~ it's idiotic to build in a place like that. So fine, let's make it a long, narrow park. All the way through town. Rapid City is a peculiar, is peculiar in its layout because of local geography anyway, anyway. So let the whole center of the town be a park. No buildings. And then let people live south of the park or north of the park. But not in the park. I'm in complete sympathy with that.

SW Well, we are just out of, out of tape right on the dot.

LE Okay, okay.

SW Thank you very much.

LE Well, did that give you anything?

SW A lot. (End of tape)

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