

The Teton Dam Disaster Collection

Jeff Christensen– Life during the
Teton Flood

By Jeff Christensen

June 1, 1977

Box 5 Folder 33

Oral Interview conducted by Doris Shirley

Transcript copied by Sarah McCorristin May 2005

Brigham Young University – Idaho

DS: Where were you born Jeff?

JC: In a trailer house.

DS: Where?

JC: Rexburg.

DS: How old are you?

JC: Eight.

DS: What grade are you in?

JC: Second grade.

DS: Who is your teacher?

JC: Mrs. Shirley.

DS: What were you doing the morning of the flood?

JC: We were outside playing. Scott and I decided to come in. Our mom was outside mowing the lawn. Dad called Mom and told her to turn on the radio. After she turned on the radio a man came and pounded on our door and told her to get her kids and bring them up on the hill. Before we went up on the hill, we grabbed Scott's pills and went over to my dad's. Mom followed us up onto the hill with another car.

My cousin came over and told us to come over to her friend's house. We went over to her friend's house, got on the grass and watched. We couldn't see the water. My brother and I went in and got a sandwich. We came out and there was a big cloud of dust.

Dad had enough time to go down and turn off the electricity and get our things. He took all our movies that were downstairs and put them up on the fridge. He took our TV and stacked it up on the couch and put our stereo on top of the TV. He took the sewing machine and put it on the bed. He threw two drawers up on the bed, too.

He saw the water coming and called to my cousin, "You'd better get out of here." We went down and saw some houses floating around. We stayed in the vacant house.

The next morning we went down to see our house and the store was all broken, half the street was torn up. We saw our house. We went by The Food Center and there was lots of cattle around. The food was piled up around the wall of the Food Center. When we were going to Grandma's, the river had the floodwater coming by the temple.

We went to grandma's and stayed there. Dad went back, but we stayed at Grandma's for three weeks. The last three days, Mom stayed with us and then Dad called us and said that we could come down to our house.

When we got into our house, there were lots of tin cans, dirt and junk all around. We went inside our house and we only had a stereo and TV for furniture. That's the only two pieces we had. We had lawn chairs to sit on. We had two feet of water in our house. They had to tear two feet of walls out of our house and replace them. Our downstairs was all ruined. The bedroom downstairs, where my grandma and grandpa used to sleep, is now our room. It took ten months to get our house clean.

DS: What is your dad's name?

JC: Leon Christensen.

DS: What does your dad do?

JC: He works at Christensen Body Shop.

DS: Does he own his own business?

JC: Yes.

DS: Thank you, Jeff Christensen.