The Teton Dam Disaster Collection

Rama Drury Griffeth– Life During the Teton Flood

By Rama Drury Griffeth

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Box 6 Folder 27

Oral Interview conducted by Mary Ann Beck

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Brigham Young University – Idaho
MB: Mrs. Griffeth, where were you born?

RG: I was born in Fairview, Idaho, which is by Preston, 150 miles south of here.

MB: How long have you lived in Rexburg?

RG: Around 15 years.

MB: Mrs. Griffeth, would you spell your full name?

RG: Rama Drury Griffeth.

MB: How old are you?

RG: I’m 38 years old.

MB: Do you have a family?

RG: Yes, we have four daughters.

MB: How many were living in your home at the time of the flood?

RG: We were all living at home.

MB: What was your address at the time of the flood?

RG: Our address at the time of the flood was Route 1, Rexburg, which is two miles west of 88.

MB: What is your present address?

RG: Still the same, thank heavens.

MB: What do you do for a living?

RG: My husband teaches at Ricks College and I’m a piano teacher, a substitute school teacher, and most of all a wife and mother.

MB: How long have you lived in this area?

RG: Well, we’ve been out here at our present address for eight years.

MB: Did you own your own home and farm before the flood?

RG: Yes.
MB: Did you support or oppose the construction of the Teton Dam?

RG: Now you mean before when it was being built? I felt all right about it. I didn’t see any real danger. I guess I hadn’t studied it that much but it was fine with me.

MB: Did you or any member of your family have a premonition of the Teton disaster?

RG: No.

MB: Where were you and your family when the Teton Dam broke?

RG: We were not in Rexburg at the time. Our oldest daughter is in the high school rodeo and we were over at Salmon to her rodeo when we heard about it.

MB: What was your first reaction when you heard that the dam had failed?

RG: Well, we knew that we lived about a fourth of a mile from the Teton River which is just north of us and our first feeling was we wonder if our front room will get wet, and it did.

MB: Did you see the flood coming?

RG: No. Not being home, of course, we didn’t see it coming.

MB: When you heard that the Teton Dam had failed, did you try to get to Rexburg or to save your property?

RG: My husband’s brother lives here in town and so he went over, or came over to our place here and opened the gates to try to let our livestock out.

MB: Did you have any unusual or miraculous experiences connect with the flood?

RG: We had a collection of Book of Mormon story books with our young family and they were out in the garage in a box and box must have floated and those books didn’t get wet, and we feel like that was something really special that they would be saved.

MB: Did you see or hear of any animals trying to escape the floodwaters?

RG: Well, we had a big stallion horse out here at our place. We had the other horses with us. But we had a big stallion horse out here and when they opened the gate to let him out, we found him later, he was two miles south of our place, and he was beat up pretty bad. And by the time we got to him, which was, oh, the next night, he was as a stallion can be, kind of crazy, but he was really high. It was hard to describe how he must have felt.
MB: Where did you and your family stay during the first two or three days after the flood?

RG: We stayed with my husband’s brother, Bill, that lives in Thornton just below the overpass and they were not in the flood.

MB: Did you continue to stay there during the cleanup?

RG: We were there for about ten days until we could get water and electricity at our place again and then we moved back over here in our camper and a trailer with our family.

MB: How soon after the flood were you able to return to your property?

RG: Well, as the flood was on Saturday we came home from Salmon Saturday night and Sunday morning my husband rode in on horseback to see our home and my daughter, two older daughters, and I walked in about, oh, a mile I suppose as the roads were impossible to get through on, so it was the next day that we actually saw what had happened.

MB: What was your first reaction when you viewed the destruction of your property?

RG: I think I might have been a little prepared for it until we got in. We wondered what had happened although they told us the water was up to the eaves on our home. But as we were trying to get through on one road straight, oh, kind of southwest of our home, we were walking along the road and I saw a table and a rocking chair out of my front room and recognized them immediately so after I saw that my first reaction when I got to our home probably was not so bad because I realized that things were pretty bad.

MB: What was the damage you suffered as a result of the flood?

RG: Well, we lost everything in our home. We had five feet of water inside our home, so as far as personal belongings, I’d say probably 90 to 95 percent. We saved some dishes, a little bit of our clothing, but as far as furniture and personal belongings like that it was total, 100 percent gone.

MB: What was your most cherished item you lost in the flood?

RG: It’s hard to pinpoint down to one thing. I think probably a Book of Mormon that my husband had, well, a Triple Combination that he gave me on our tenth wedding anniversary with a really special inscription on he inside, that was hard to lose. I’m from a family of nine children and I had the piano that belonged in our home, kind of what do you call, hand-me-down item and that was in my home and that’s totally gone. And of course, many of our photographs, picture albums, and those kind of things.
MB: What did you think about and how did you feel when you heard that the floodwaters had rolled through the area?

RG: Well, like I say, our first thought was we wondered if our home would get wet. And then we called long distance and talked to our brother-in-law and he said it was up to the eaves of our home. We didn’t have our youngest daughter with us, she was still in Rexburg and our main concern was her. Was she okay? And at this time material things meant next to nothing. It was, “Was our family okay?” And we were so grateful to get back and find her and at that time everything in the world was right.

MB: How did you go about cleaning up your property?

RG: That was really kind of funny. You know, you have to get a little bit of comedy in this, too. We came in our home and, of course the furniture was still in here but it was just like a giant mixer had been in and mixed everything up. We’d take it out of the mud and take it outside and set it in some more mud. I mean it was really funny. You try to clean something, you don’t have water and it’s a sticky mud. But the first thing we did was we shoveled out the kitchen. My husband asked where I wanted to start and I said I’d like to go in the kitchen first. And so we shoveled that out and then, we had a live cow in our home that had come in and got in my husband’s office. In fact, you could see the snort marks on the ceiling where she had struggled to keep alive during the high water. And this was funny to us. It belonged to our neighbor down here and so we’ve had quite a bit of fun about that. But then we started to tear the walls apart and we tore right down to the 2x4’s. It was interesting to watch. We had eight men that tried to get our carpets out and that was, it was heavy because they were so wet.

MB: How long was the cow in your home?

RG: I think we probably got her out on Sunday. When we came into the home we didn’t know she was there and, like I say, she came in with the high water evidently because when the water went down the debris pushed the door shut and then pushed against it so we couldn’t even get the door open so we had to go to the window outside and break in the window and go in and clean up the debris away from the door before we could get her out. But it was Sunday night when we got her out.

MB: What were some of the problems which you were confronted, problems that gave you the most frustration?

RG: I think lack of clean water. Have you ever been anywhere and tried to clean up and it’s total mud and there’s no water? I think that’s one of the things that was most frustrating to begin with.
MB: Did you receive any help in cleaning up your property?

RG: Yes, we did. We have some very special friends, Ken and Lada Papenfuss, that came over and for four days straight all day every day, they shoveled mud with us. We have pictures of them and, of course, the mud is ankle deep. But that’s what I call really true friendship and, of course, they were not hurt in the flood so they could devote this time. There were people from the college that came out and helped. Lyle Lowder came out with this, oh, water force to try and clean up the motors of the washer and dryer and dishwasher and these kind of things. And other members of the college came out that were in my husband’s department. Of course, all the volunteer help that came. And then we had some people, we have 40 acres here, and we had some people from Burley that came over and donated all of their equipment to clean up all of our poles corrals and in some of our pole corrals out here we had a bathroom that, a full bathroom out of a trailer house that had just been imbedded in there so deep that we couldn’t even get it out. It just had to be loaded up and hauled away with the rest of it. So we had so many special people that helped. We really appreciate it.

MB: Have you had any unusual or uplifting experiences during the cleanup operations?

RG: I think all of it was uplifting as far as I can see. Something that really thrilled us was one day I had gone into town, this was after town was back to gathering up but there was a few places open, and I had gone in to get some cleaning supplies and my husband came in from outside and went in the garage and here were some men and women out there and he didn’t know what they were there for and I was gone. And so he asked them, he said, “What are you doing?” And they said, “Well, we’re here from Idaho Falls.” And it was a ward down there that had been assigned to our particular ward and that’s where I’d kept my food storage and they were out there cleaning my food storage. I mean, just, just without asking people would come in and do and it’s, to me that has been so, so special and that’s, that’s what has made me really appreciate the willingness of people.

MB: Did you lose all of your food storage?

RG: No. Our food out there was on shelves and being in the garage it was, the first shelf was about even with the top of the car. Of course, there was stuff down below. But, some of the things were up a little bit higher that I was able to save, the canned things. And then, of course, I do my bottling of fruit and I had peaches and pears bottled together up on the top shelf and the professional looters got to us on that one night and they stole 98 quarts of fruit, and the only thing that made me feel bad was they didn’t return the bottles.

MB: Did you personally suffer any vandalism or other form of lawlessness?

RG: Well, as I mentioned the looters came in. We were told at one time that professional looters find out about these disasters and they do come in. And there
were many people that did lose things. But they came in and that’s all they took that I can think of, is the just took the bottles of fruit.

MB: What kind of government aid did you receive immediately after the flood?

RG: Well, the HUD people told us that they would have a trailer for us but we decided not to go ahead with that because it would mean digging a new septic tank and water lines and such, so that’s why we shoes to live in our camper. Red Cross did help us out and we, at this point, are paying it back. We feel like that it was a service and we appreciated it but we just don’t want to take advantage.

MB: Would you mention that?

RG: Mary Ann has asked me to mention how I, how we’re paying it back. When they come around for donation we just have decided and determined that we’re going to pay back what they gave to us. We’ve kept track of it and, and so when they come around we just give them a larger check ‘cause we appreciated it so.

MB: Did you receive any assistance from the LDS or other church groups immediately after the flood?

RG: Well, maybe one of the questions, did we move on campus which was part of the church? No, we did not, but we did live with my husband’s brother and his wife and they had four children at the time. So we didn’t need to require the services of the college. We did get two mattresses and two box springs from the bishop’s storehouse and which we really appreciated. But as far as having to go up there and eat with them and these kind of things, we were able to get help from our own family, so we did not.

MB: So you didn’t have any volunteers come out?

RG: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MB: Will you go into that?

RG: Oh, okay. We didn’t really realize or understand, of course, we had no radios, everything was taken in the flood, and we didn’t understand that there were volunteers that do come out, or that did come out from the church. A neighbor of ours told us about it and so we went up the one day and said that if they had any in particular areas, they’d say. “Tell which areas you need help in.” And of course, it would be everything. We had to replace every outlet in the house; of course, tearing down we would. Just everything, and in fact, it was really cute one day we needed someone to take off the siding on our, the outside of our home. And there were four gentlemen, I’m sure they must have been in their sixties every one of them, but they were just the most, if I may say, the cutest men we’ve ever seen. They came out with such willingness and hey laughed and
talked and joked and I really believe they enjoyed it. And then the other assistants from Idaho Falls and just many people from all over that did come through the church to help us.

MB: Did the MDS disaster come out and help you, the Mennonites?

RG: No.

MB: They didn’t help you? What government agency did you deal with during the recovery operations?

RG: We got a loan through the, is it SBA? We went immediately and got a loan through them so that we could start to build back. We depleted our saving in a short time and, of course, we got the loan through them so that we could go ahead and rebuild back and not have to wait.

MB: Did you have any dealings with the state or county authorities and law enforcement officers during the flood?

RG: The thing that really pleased me about this, and I’m sure people here appreciate it, was the help of all the State Police that came in. I understand that we must have had the biggest majority of the State Police here at the time. I was really thrilled with the National Guard that would be on the corners after curfew, after 10:00 or 10:30; I don’t recall which it was. But they were really trying to keep vandalism out and I really appreciate what, the efforts that they went to, and I know some men didn’t see their wives for two or three weeks and even longer because they would devote their time to us and I want them to know how special I feel that was.

MB: Did you have any dealings with the law enforcement on the way back from Salmon?

RG: When we got down to the place here on 88 where it joins with the freeway coming from Idaho Falls, of course, the man wouldn’t let us through down there and at one time we thought we’d maybe go to the “R” mountain, the butte out here, and see if the flood had reached that far yet. But I encouraged my husband to go to Idaho Falls where we found our youngest daughter was at the time because I just wanted to make sure that everything was okay. But the only, the only thing that they were there for, the main thing of course, was to protect the people because it would’ve been disaster if they had let them through and they’d have got caught in this.

MB: Do you feel that any who assisted in recovery operations took advantage of you or the government, especially in getting a lot of money without really earning it?

RG: No.
MB: Without divulging names, do you know of anyone who filed fraudulent flood claims?

RG: Oh, I think you hear things, but as far as myself knowing, I don’t.

MB: Do you feel the dam should be rebuilt? If so, should it be built in the same place?

RG: After the articles I have read where they said that was the best place possible that it could be built and that one didn’t hold, I guess I’m not too much in favor of it.

MB: What did you think about the Appreciation Days?

RG: I was really thrilled that they decide to hold this. I felt bad that maybe more people couldn’t have come but, I think the intent of people to come up to help in the flood was, was not to get glory from it. I think they were just genuinely interested and really wanted to help. It was a busy time, of course, and most of the people, or a lot of the people that came too were farmers and to try to call them in the middle of the summer, the middle of a good spring to come and help was a little difficult for them to come. But I know there were some that helped us that were up here and it just meant so much to me to be able to tell them of our appreciation and for them to see how we’ve rebuilt back. We’ve tried to take pride in what we’ve done and I hope we’re like everybody else, that we’ve built back as good if not better as far as the way things look. I think if we don’t try to improve ourselves that our, the plan of out Father in heaven is to make ourselves better and if we went about doing things in kind of a haphazard junky way, I don’t think our Father in Heaven would be pleased with us. But I think Appreciation Days was well deserved for the people who came and helped.

MB: Something of the flood. Did your husband have different groups from the college come out and help him from the wards last spring?

RG: We didn’t ask for any of the help. There were some of the wards that came up to us and said, in fact my husband’s in the stake presidency in on of the stakes up these, one of the three, and someone from one of the other stakes came up to us and said, “We need something to do. Can you put us busy?” We had one group that came out and we have a lot of pole fences around our place, and they came out and varnished the fences for us. And so, the elder’s quorum came out and they said, “We’ll do it. And the Relief Society’s going to come out and bring our lunch.” This was one of the college branches, And we thought that was so special. But they didn’t get finished that day, there was a lot of pole fences. And so the said, “Well, can we some out tomorrow?” And I says, “If you do, I’ll fix your dinner.” And so I fixed barbecue and potato salad and just tried to fix a nice meal for them. And so it was fun to see that group of young men come out, college age boys, and really set to work again. They did things, there was a lot of
heavy lifting that had to be done, of course, and I couldn’t do it. And these young men just picked it up like it was a toothpick.

The thing we noticed was the people that would come in to help us, they’d come in with, all rested and ready to go again. We’d been in it for quite a long time, in the mess so to speak. And for the first three or four times that groups came in we tried to keep up with them, and then we found out that we couldn’t. We didn’t have the energy that they did because we were just getting, each day was, well, repeat from yesterday. And so we found that we had to let them work faster than us and they’d just keep going. They wouldn’t quit for anything. But we just couldn’t keep up to them. Their energy and their sweet spirits that they brought with them was so special.

MB: How many days did they come out, the elder’s quorum?

RG: Well, that particular group came out two days, then we had another group form the college that called and asked if they could come out. I think different branch presidents would kind of keep tabs on college people that were involved in the flood because that’s the only way I, they would know to give us a call. And they’d call and say, “Our ward, our branch wants to do something. What can we do?” And so to say how many days or how many groups of people offhand, I don’t know. But there could’ve been, oh, five or six groups at least that just came out and said, “Please, let us help.”

MB: How has the Teton disaster changed your life?

RG: Oh, my goodness. I would hope it’s made a better person of me. Like I mentioned, when the flood happened and when we didn’t have our youngest daughter, she was just seven at the time, when we didn’t have her with us, my only thought was, I don’t care what’s happened to anything of my own personal belongings as long as my family’s okay. And then when we got back and she was fine, of course we felt a loss in things ‘cause there’s a lot of things you don’t ever, ever replace. But it’s made me realize that, that the important things in life are you family, the church, your testimony of the gospel, and of course, like I mentioned too, we need to want to better ourselves. That’s, I’m sure, the plan of our Father in Heaven, too. But material things are not all that important. I think the may be a necessary thing, but we need to place a different value on them. This brings to mind something, of course, everything was totally ruined. I really couldn’t dry about the things that I lost. I mean, I think you were stunned and, and maybe shocked at it. As I remember the day that they brought a new washing machine and we got a telephone the same day and I sat there and cried and I thought, “Isn’t it funny that a telephone, I took it so much for granted, and a washing machine.” And that day they brought them really touched me that, that I would finally have these things.

MB: Did the BOR treat you fair?
RG: I think so.

MB: Did you have any other experiences that you would like to tell?

RG: We joked a little about how hard we must be on our neighbors. A couple of our neighbors that live just down a fourth of a mile from us, down on Highway 88, the one home was completely taken off it foundation and deposited over on the road a mile away west in two spots just completely crumbled. And then another neighbor, his home brought right through the field, losing the bricks as it went along, and deposited over up on a hill a little ways further. We lost those two neighbors but we also got in two more neighbors, we had two trailed houses that floated in, into the field across from us, and then another one that almost landed up on our front yard, from a trailer court two miles away. We had a hangar from the airport that came out here and was out in our field. Like I say, we’re a little hard on neighbors but we got two more so I guess you can’t say one way or the other.

MB: Was there a lot of debris in your fields, cars and trucks and that?

RG: We didn’t have a lot of debris like cars and trucks, this type of thing. We had a lot of things out of houses. We live quite close to Del Klingler, the County Commissioner, and we were laughing one day. We found if we could joke about things that it didn’t make them seem near as bad as they really were. But my husband talked to him and he says, “Just tell me one thing,” he said. “Is the stuff that’s on my property now my property, or is what used to be on my property and is on somebody else’s now, is that my property?” Then they sat there and just laughed about it because you know everybody had somebody else’s, everybody’s but your own.

Then it was interesting, oh, about three weeks later when we were in church I had a man who must live four, five, six miles from us come up to me and he said, “Say, do you want your barn back?” I said, “How do you know that’s mine?” Maybe I could go back a little bit. We had a barn and eight box stalls were covered over. And in my box stalls out there I had a ton of wheat, a year’s supply of wood and coal, I mean we had it all cut and stacked and ready to go. A lot of my food storage was out there and they just completely floated away. We never found those again. But I asked this gentleman. I said, “Now how do you know that’s my barn?” And he said, well, when it ended up at his place, and his home was not hurt in the flood but it must have been on his property, he said, “I went out there and there was a piece of a phone hanging on the wall.” And he said the number was still on it so he looked up in the phone, he went through the whole phone book ‘til he found whose telephone that was and it was our telephone. And we had a phone out in the barn because my husband was called so many times to the phone that we just put one out there. And it was our barn that was clear over to his place.

MB: How many miles away?
RG: Well, it must have been. I’ve never stopped to figure it out. It would probably be five or six miles that that part of our barn ended up.

MB: Do you know the name of the man?

RG: Yes, it was Grant Jensen. He lives here in the Burton Ward with us. And so it was fascinating to me that that part would end up that far away. My husband also at the time of the flood had three other brothers living here in Rexburg. One of them that we stayed with lived at Thornton, one of them in Hibbard, and the other in Salem. And we were really grateful that none of them were hit by the flood. The one in Hibbard, his farm ground of course, got messed up in a number of places but it didn’t get in their home at all. And the one in Salem, may be he got two or three inches of water in the basement but not the mud that came with it. So we felt really lucky that, that they weren’t involved in it, too. However, they couldn’t get to their homes for three or four days because of the roads were not open, there wasn’t any way to get there. But we were grateful that we were the only ones in the family because all of those had little babies, little children, and I would, I feel bad for the elderly people and the people with tiny children because it was so hard to cope with so many things as it was and we were able to just go right on. Our families both live in Preston and they came up and gave their support with us too, but they also took our two younger girls back. You know, they told us at the time of the flood the mud was so contaminate and I know we’d be throwing things out and the two younger girls thought it was real fascinating and they’d go out and gather it up and want to play with it and we just had to tell them it was, it was no good for them and to try to explain to them that why should my doll be thrown out if we could find them, the ones that we could find. Because they were just in such a mess and in such an uproar that you just couldn’t imagine and so I was grateful that our families took the two younger girls. They got in on enough of it to see it and they came back with enough left to do, but they were not here all the time.

MB: How was the mud contaminated?

RG: Well, the main thing, by the time that the flood got here it had gone through that fertilizer plant that’s just north of town a little bit and all that nitrogen in it. And then, of course, by the time got though here it had been through Meyers Brothers feed lot where they, what they’d had is six to eight thousand head of cattle and so there was, it went through all their corrals and deposited all of that plus all this nitrogen everywhere. And I’ve heard of people who have since tried to prove that they mud wasn’t contaminated by eating it, but I, it just, it was not a good idea for the little ones to be around here and pick things up and then not be careful about washing their hand with it.

MB: Do you think it was a good learning experience?
RG: Oh, yes, I think so. I think we’ve, like I said, learned a lot about what’s really important to us. We’ve learned how people are willing to help, how the church, the Mormon church, the Mennonites, any of those who came in and helped us, the government, they were willing and anxious to help us out as best they could. We’ve all learned a lot by it.

MB: Do you think it was a good missionary tool to the world?

RG: I know of one person, personally and, of course, I won’t divulge any names, that was a little antagonistic towards the church before this, to the point that this person just wasn’t active. Then after the flood and all the help was given, this person was heard to say how special the church was and how much appreciative their family was of the help that was given. And you know if it affected people in our own area this much, how it must have affected many that came in or people that heard about it and see what was happening in the church. They just couldn’t get over the people that would come in and you’d hear about the floods that were back in the eastern part of the United States and they just, they got no help at all because it was just the river flooding over. And I’ve stopped and thought, there’s no way we could have rebuilt back like the whole community has done without help from the church.

MB: Do you think Rexburg’s better than it was before?

RG: I think they’ve made many beautiful improvements, I really do. I don’t know, like I said too, I’m glad to see them doing things nice while they’re doing it. I’m glad they didn’t just put up a little bit of this and a little bit of that and make it a one horse shay town. I think we have a town to be proud of and a community that people have really put forth an effort to make it really special.

MB: Do you have any poems or stories about the flood?

RG: Our daughter who is sixteen, is very creative in a lot of things that she does. Thriftway Drug here in town announced that they would to inspire people to write stories about what had happened to their places, they said they would give a TV to the most interesting flood story. And so my daughter one night with this inspiration wrote this little story and, as I mentioned before, we had this cow, live cow that came inside our home. And so she wrote this:

Griffeth Cow Palace

‘Twas the day after the flood
And all through the house
There’s six inches of mud
Said my dad to his spouse.
He rode in on horseback that bright early morn
To find the house standing but looking forlorn.
He climbed over logs, equipment and junk,
Furniture, papers, slick floors, whoops, kerplunk.
He slid through the halls which had a definite smell
And looked at our rooms and said, “Oh my heck.”
The office door was closed and wouldn’t budge
Like some stubborn person holding a grudge.
He pushed and he shoved and he strained his back
‘Til finally the door opened just a crack.
And what to his wondering eyes should appear,
But Bob Powell’s milk cow full of fear.
Then to the outside window he slid and he sloshed
And broke in the window to get there, by gosh.
He shoveled the mud away from the door
And beat the cow out but she didn’t go far.
She wheeled back around, through her palace she went
And struggled against Dad ‘til their strength was all spent.
Our generosity was overwhelming, I’d say,
We didn’t charge Bob Powell rent for his cow that day.

And that’s written by our daughter, Melanie Griffith. And she did, she was announced as the first place winner of the best flood story and we were able to get a TV in our home because of her efforts and we are really proud of her.

MB: Is that the only TV you have now?

RG: Well, it was, and then, we are acquaintance with a person who used to live in another town and he called us up one day and said, “We know a family who is completely redoing their home down in southern Idaho and they’d like to give you all their furniture.” And so he said, “I’ve told them that you’d come down and get it and when you’d be there.” And so we were as, needless to say, quite overwhelmed by it. But we had some, in fact I guess it was a class reunion that was down in our home town so we just went over the hill to this place and got the stuff. A loot of it was some things, well not a lot, some of it was things we couldn’t use, like bunk beds and so we ended and so we ended up giving bunk beds and a washer and dryer since we already had ours, we gave them to other people. But you asked if we had another TV. They had a color TV that they were just changing, they had means that they could do their home again. And so they just donated all this furniture. They gave away a bedroom set and we in turn gave that to someone else. Like I say, we tried to pass things around rather than keep everything. But we did keep the TV and it’s a big beautiful cabinet, color TV and we’ve certainly enjoyed that. But this is something that pleased me too, that they would think enough of people up in this area to just give what they had. Of course, they were redoing their home but nevertheless that was, that was really thoughtful I felt for them.

I think one of the things that’s been kind of strange is because we had quite a collection of records, stereo records and these kind of things. And of course we’ve never found our stereo, it floated right out the door. Our two big
front doors broke, crashed through, and then the water came in and filled up the house then it broke through our sliding glass doors in the kitchen and so it just made it a regular freeway for everything that was in the house. We found the TV that we had before. It was, oh, about a mile west of us, kind of southwest, in the neighbor’s field down in the irrigation ditch and we knew it was ours because it was a, it has a strange name on it, a strange brand name. So we knew it was ours. But I think of the records that I had, like when I was down in Salt Lake singing in June Conference and a lot of things you can’t ever duplicate. But, like I say, we’re grateful that the rest of the family was okay. They, these material things you think about them but not too much.

MB: Do you have anything else you would like to add?

RG: Oh, I’ll probably think of a million things later, but I’ve tried to write down or think of most of them. I believe that pretty much takes care of this. It’s been really fun to talk about it. We find we can talk about it without any hard feelings and I think this is important. I just hope that I can maybe someday be of some help to other people like they have been to us at the time of the flood. I think this is something that we of this community ought to really watch ourselves for. If others need us like we needed help, that we will rally and give them the help and the support that they needed to let them know; we can never repay the people that came up unless we help someone else in return, so I hope that we can keep this always in our hearts to help somebody like we were helped and let them know of the love that we have for them.

MB: Do you think this was a dry run for something bigger in our lives?

RG: Well, that’s hard to answer, too, because we don’t know what’s in store for us. There’s many things that are bound to take place. We’ve always been told that our Father in Heaven will give us no greater challenges than what He will prepare a way for us to overcome them. And so I think this is the test of all of us that we can’t give into things. I mean we could’ve all been discouraged and given up and said, “I just can’t do it.” But this isn’t the plan of salvation and if it is for something more to come we better be big enough to take it because I think that in the first place when they sounded the alarm, although we weren’t here, the people heeded the alarm, they got out of their homes. So many people said, “Oh, if I could have just known I had that one or two hours that I could have gone home and saved things.” But maybe what they don’t think about is if everybody had waited that long there would have been a traffic jam and many lives lost and so I think where we’ve heeded the alarm, if we’ll just keep our ears open to the sayings of our Father in Heaven and the promptings that we will be guided. Maybe there’ll be harder times but we’ve overcome this. I think we can overcome anything if we want to.

Maybe one more thing that I could mention, too, is I really appreciate the hard working family that we have here. My husband is a real hard worker. He immediately went to work. We didn’t, I don’t’ think we even waited a half an
hour to decide what to do. He just said, “Where should we start?” And that’s where we started. Our oldest daughter worked at Safeway throughout the summer so she was really busy there and, of course, Safeway was the only store that was open in town. People would work all night there in shifts in order to keep things going for our community here. So she was really busy with that. Our sixteen-year-old daughter completely took charge of the out-of-doors when we got to the point where we could start putting back fences. She had complete charge of that. We hired young men to come and help us and she knew where to go to get supplies, how to put it together, and how to, just how to rebuild it back. We had a lot of fun times doing it. When we tore down to the 2x4’s the out, we didn’t move off the foundation at all so we just tore to the 2x4’s and worked from the inside out. And when we had it all torn down to the 2x4’s the kids would write things on the 2x4’s like “These are my 2x4’s” and “This is my closet” and like in the room where the cow was where they wrote “Griffeth Cow Palace.” We tried to put funny things because you know if you could keep laughing and keep a sense of humor you could get a lot more done than if you let yourself get down. So I would at this time like to really commend our family for the support that they gave us and for my husband for his determination and hard work to really build back and do it in a way that we could be proud of it again and to get it done. We were in our home, oh before school, started, not completely finished, of course, no carpets and drapes and these kind of things. But as of today, I think maybe we have a few more curtains to put up. But other than that, that my husband was the type of person that he was to say, “We’ll do it.” And we did it. And we did it as a family, and this was what was important. We had to hire some of the work done to get the wallboard on and our cabinets but other than that it has been a family project. This is what makes families stay together and play together and can enjoy it and really have a family project because then you all take pride in it.

I would also like to thank Mary Ann for coming out. This is, when she first talked to me about it I though, “Oh dear, I don’t know what I have to say.” And here I’ve talked this much, but this has been a choice experience and I’d like to thank her and her class for letting us take part of this.

MB: Thank you, Mrs. Griffeth.