

The Teton Dam Disaster Collection

**Margaret Bake- Life During the  
Teton Dam Disaster**

By Margaret Bake

August 30, 1977

**Box 5 Folder 12**

Oral Interview conducted by Christina Sorensen

Transcript copied by Sarah McCorristin—April 2005

Brigham Young University – Idaho

Christina Sorenson: Margaret, will you spell your name, please?

Margaret Bake: Margret Bake.

CS: Thank you. Margaret, how old are you?

MB: 31.

CS: And where were you born?

LB: In Provo, Utah.

CS: How long have you lived in Rexburg?

MB: Since 1971.

CS: Now, prior to the flood, what was your address here?

MB: 60 East 2<sup>nd</sup> North.

CS: And, is that still your same address?

MB: Yes.

CS: Now, did you own your own home prior to the flood?

MB: Yes.

CS: Do you have a family?

MB: Yes.

CS: And how many people in your family were living at home at the time?

MB: There were eight people there. I have four children, and my husband. And at the time of the flood, my husband's parents were visiting us.

CS: Now, do you work for a living, or are you just home?

MB: I teach part time now. I wasn't during the flood.

CS: Prior to the construction of the dam, were you opposed it or in favor of it or had you not paid a whole lot of attention to the situation?

MB: I believe that when we first moved to Rexburg was about the time that they were starting to build the dam. I remember reading about some controversy, but because I wasn't a farmer, I just didn't pay much attention to it. I thought, "Surely, they know what they were doing," and I think if I had to say was I opposed or in favor, I would have to say I was in favor it.

CS: Now, did you or any of your family members have any premonition that day or prior to the dam breaking of any kind of a disaster or anything that was going to go wrong.

MB: I don't think so. It was too pretty a day for anything to go wrong.

CS: Now, do you remember where you were and what you were doing when you first heard and what was your initial reaction to the news?

MB: To back up a little, my husband and his parents had been in Salt Lake City doing genealogy research and they had come home at 1 o'clock Saturday morning. They came with all their dirty clothes and so I was busy doing washing and was just preparing to go downtown to get my husband's suit out of the cleaners and to get some groceries to feed all of us. I had really worked the day before cleaning the house. I had just finished painting the kitchen, as a surprise for my husband while he was gone and I remember I'd scrubbed all the floors upstairs and down, changed the beds, and just made it as clean as I could. And then, when I heard of the dam breaking (I think I heard it first on the radio) they first said the dam was leaking and then they announced if you live below the dam you should prepare to evacuate. Well, I thought they meant everyone who lived right underneath the dam. We had been up to visit the dam a couple of months ago and it was quite a drive and I thought, "My goodness it's far away. It wouldn't affect us." They repeated the announcement several times and I thought well, surely they would say specifically Rexburg if they meant Rexburg should evacuate. My neighbor was out working in her yard. They were getting ready to build a big fence and I asked her if she'd heard and she said, "Yes." And I said "Do you think that we ought to evacuate?" and she said, "Oh no, it's never flooded this high before." About that time one of my neighbors came in tears and in hysterics and said, "Have you heard? The dam's broken!" I thought "Oh my goodness, you silly girl. You're kind of overacting." So, my first thought was not to take it seriously. I think that I remember thinking that this is 1976; dams don't break.

CS: Now, was your husband at home at the time and his parents also, or were you alone at the house when you first heard the news?

MB: He was home at the time, but he had to go immediately. He was just getting ready to finish painting our house, which by the way is still not painted. He has worked for several years with the ambulance crew and was serving as coordinator of the ambulance service and so as soon as he heard the news, he took it seriously and he told me to take the children and his parents and go up to the office in the Ricks College Library. He said "Go right now. Don't pack anything, don't take anything. Go!" I thought "Oh Blaine, don't overreact." I remember one of my daughters didn't have her shoes on and he was

hurrying us to so fast we didn't even stop to find her shoes. Just as soon as we left, he left with the ambulance crew and they began to go up and down the valley warning people to evacuate. He went a long ways up past Sugar City up to Teton, I believe, evacuating people. I didn't see him again for a long time. Let's see, I guess I saw him briefly Saturday night and sporadically a few times in the next week. But he was immediately appointed medical coordinator for the county and almost lived in the command headquarters. I saw him now and then, but he wasn't home much until about Thursday after the flood.

CS: Now, before you left your home, did you make any preparations in moving anything or did you take anything? What, if anything, did you do.

MB: Well, I say, he was urging us to right now and so we just jumped in the car and left. And then we got up to the library where his office is, up on the third floor, I soon realized that I didn't have any diapers or a bottle for my baby and I didn't have any food if we were going to have to stay here all day. So my father-in-law and I drove back down to the house and I packed pajamas and a change of clothes for all my children and I packed some food that we could eat kind of picnic style and got diapers and bottles. I took our family pictures and baby books and my wedding book. I grabbed all (I thought it was all, but it turned out it wasn't) of our important papers. It turned out I missed several of the most important ones. And while I was doing this my father-in-law moved my husband's genealogy from the basement up into the attic. My husband is a genealogist by profession. That's what he teaches here at Ricks. If he'd lost his genealogy, it would have been a tragedy for him. And then, I took the precaution to put my little girl's shoes up on their dresser. Their bedroom, mind you, was downstairs in the basement. I fully intended to be back sleeping in our home again that night. I did grab all the blankets and pillows I could carry through, in case we did have to camp out somewhere. But, I never expected that we wouldn't be home that night.

CS: Now, from where you were, up on campus, were you able to see the water come into town and what did it look like and how did you feel when you saw that.

MB: I'm embarrassed to say I didn't see the water when it first hit town. I was chasing four children in the top floor of the library and my father-in-law, who was watching the window, came and said, "Look, you can see the water." And so I did go and look, but at first it just looked like dust. I couldn't realize it was water at first. It was very brown and it wasn't a big roaring tidal wave. I missed that part, I guess. But, after I watched it awhile, I could see trailers and cars and houses floating down, and then I could realize that it really was water. But it looked far away and I would come and watch for a minute and it would always be a little closer and a little closer until it came as close as it did. We watched a little garage float out in the middle of the football field, turn around a little garage float out in the middle of the football field, turn around a few times and then stop. That impressed my children.

CS: Now, where did you stay for the next few days? And when were you personally first able to go back to your home? What did you find there, and how did you feel about that?

MB: Maybe before I answer that question, I should go back to the other one. About watching the flood water. I couldn't see my home from the library, but I could see the saw mill's big towers where they burn their sawdust and they keep fires going all the time. I could tell when the water hit those towers, because instead of smoke, it was steam and it was obvious that the water had reached there. The sawmill's very near my home and I knew the water had come to my home. I didn't think I could stand to look after that. I didn't go back and look very many times. When we first went up to the library, I was just beginning to get a little bit of the urgency that this was really a serious situation and even though I kept telling myself that we'd be home tonight, there was still a voice in my mind that said, "Well, maybe we won't. Maybe this is serious." My family and my in-laws all gathered together in one of the classrooms and asked a family prayer. After that it seemed like it was a little easier to cope with. The children were my biggest concern. I felt like I just had to get them out when it was obvious that there was a flood and that it was serious and our house had been hit. I knew that the children just needed to be away from it if I could get them out. And so, we packed things and got in the car and were going to try and drive down to Soda Springs where we had some other relatives. We went up to the hospital and found my husband, who was monitoring messages on the ambulance and told him what we were going to do and he said, "Fine," and suggested a route we could follow out through the spud patches. We got out a little ways and realized that we were out of gas. They had just brought the car in from Salt Lake and hadn't gassed up and we were very low. We couldn't have made it even to a gas station. So we turned around and came back and unpacked again and prepared to go to bed down that night in the library on the floor. I took some cushions off of some of the chairs. We were fairly comfortable. We had enough blankets and things. And then at about 1:00 that morning, the biggest miracle of the flood for me occurred. That was that my husband's sister and brother-in-law and his brother found us. They had driven up from Soda Springs and somehow found us. They didn't know where we were or what was going on, but they walked into the library and so my husband's mother, sister and brother (who had to leave to get back to work) took all the children at one in the morning and packed them into their tiny little car and took them down to Soda Springs, and left my husband's father and brother-in-law with me to help me. Blaine had also found us a place to stay in the dorms and so we slept the second half of the night there in the dorms. Just knowing that my children were safe and that they were going to be taken care of...well, it made a big difference to my peace of mind. They were also saying that everyone needed to have a typhoid shot and I had had those when I was a teenager and it hurt terribly and so I was doubly glad that I wouldn't have to inflict my children to that misery. I couldn't sleep very well that first night. I was either imagining the flood coming at night and coming into my girls' bedroom and drowning them before we'd even know what was happening or else I was mentally taking a tour of my house, noticing all the things that were there and wondering what condition they were in. So early the next morning (Sunday) my father-in-law and my brother-in-law and I walked from the dorms down to my house. It's about five blocks, I guess. It was then that we first got an inkling of the destruction.

When we tried to leave the night before we had seen a little bit, but of course, then the water hadn't gone down yet and we couldn't drive down very far. I saw a few people in my neighborhood and I'd keep asking them if they knew anything of my house. The only word I could get was somebody told Blaine that it was still there, which was a little comforting. It's funny now, but as I was walking up to my front door, I still had the hope in my heart that I could open the door and see my house like it was when I left it. I still couldn't quite believe what had happened. But, of course, it wasn't like I left it. It was quite a mess. Do you want me to describe what it was like?

CS: If you can. As much as you're able to.

MB: Well, I think that we were really fortunate. I know we were fortunate. It could have been much worse. We had about two feet of water in our upstairs, but the water must have filled the basement and then come up the stairwell. Some also came under the front door. It didn't break the doors down and it didn't break any upstairs windows. It wasn't even that high. So the water didn't come into the upstairs with enough force to do a lot of damage by stirring things around. It just came in, left the mud and went down again. There were some funny things: One of the drawers floated out of the kitchen into the living room. The shoes in my closet had floated out into the hallway. Some of the furniture was tipped over, but it looked like it had been a fairly gentle force. Most of my furniture floated and it wasn't wet all the way. We were able to salvage most of it. There was probably between a half an inch to an inch of mud on the upstairs. And in the garage, my freezer had not turned over and the mat was still frozen, so the first priority that I felt like I needed to do was find somebody up on the hill who had a freezer that could take my meat so it wouldn't all be spoiled. We did have quite a bit. Part of Sunday was spend begging for freezer space from people that I hardly even knew up on the hill who were so gracious to help me. In fact, I left the meat in their freezer for probably about four months and they never did once ask me when I was going to take it out. The downstairs looked like it'd been stirred with an eggbeater. I'm sure everybody who has talked to you have given he same description. Just everything stirred up. The acoustical tile on the ceiling in my children's bedroom had fallen down on top of all the rest of the mess and I remember the garden hose had washed into the window and was wedged under so much debris that I couldn't find the end of it. I was curious to know where my sewing machine was and I found the cord and followed it as far as I could, but I couldn't find it for awhile- it was too buried. The downstairs was quite different. However, there was only about two feet of water in the downstairs Sunday and I think that I must have drained out the drain because it couldn't have gone anywhere else. Through the toilet and the shower and the sinks and then drains in the floor. So we only had to pump out that much. The rest probably would have drained out too if there hadn't been so much junk in there. My father-in-law and my brother-in-law were just great. They seemed to know what to do and I was just in a state of shock. I just kind of wandered. I couldn't even stay with the job. I'd work for awhile and then...and then I'd just wander. I couldn't make myself stay. I'd find that I wanted to go see my neighbors and see how they were doing, and look around. There was a dead sheep in the back yard and a couple of freezers and washing machines and things. So, if the men hadn't been there and kind of taken charge and put some order into the chaos I don't know what I would have done.

I kind of wonder if I might have just shut the door and....I guess not, but hey helped me really get started. While I was up beggin for freezer space they moved out all or most of the furniture and were starting to scrape the mud off the carpets so we could tear up the carpet. It was funny, when my father-in-law said that he needed to tear up the carpet, my first reaction was, "Oh surely we can save them." He convinced me that we couldn't. The pad underneath was foam rubber and I thought, "Well, can't we wash that off?" He assured me that that was foolish. I can see not it was, but at the time I just couldn't comprehend that everything was ruined. And then, too, I thought more was ruined than it was. I thought everything was going to be lost. I didn't know we would be able to salvage anything. We really turned out to be able to salvage an awful lot.

CS: Now, in the process of the cleanup over the next few weeks did mostly your family do the work or did you have any of the outside volunteers help you?

MB: Mostly my family helped me. But, we did have some volunteers. In the neighborhood I lived in, there was quite a few places that were a lot worse off than I was. And so, they would get the help first. And then I did have family. My brother and father-in-law stayed until Tuesday and then they had to leave. But Monday afternoon, my parents arrived.

Boy, they had a hard time coming, too! They live down in Tempe, Arizona and they'd heard of the flood on the radio and immediately just packed the truck and took off with everything they could think of to bring. And, of course, by the time they were coming, the freeway in Blackfoot had been washed over and they couldn't come that way and everyone told them, "You can't get in, you can't get in. There's no way." But they were persistent. My parents are persistent people and they found some maps that showed some little tiny roads that would by-pass the flooded part, and they got as far as the road block right into Rexburg and then the policemen just were not going to let them in and they begged and they pleaded and my father said he was a doctor....he isn't actually a medical doctor, he has a Ph.D., but he thought it might help, but no, the doctor didn't help. But, you know what the magic word was? He said "We've got some pumps" and they said, "Oh, all right we need pumps, go on in." So they were able to come in, but they'd had a long trip. I guess they took off early Sunday morning and got there Monday afternoon late, 5:00 maybe. And they couldn't have come at a better time. That was the second miracle for me, because that was my lowest time. I'd been working in the basement where my two oldest girls' bedrooms are. They were five and seven at the time, and I was trying to find their clothes in the mud, fishin' around and squishin' around pulling out their clothes. I started getting more and more depressed thinking that they had lost everything, everything that was precious to them had been ruined because it was all downstairs. I pulled out a muddy rag and looked at it and I discovered that it was one of the bridesmaids dresses that my children had worn just two months before at my sister's wedding and that was the last straw. I just cracked up. I cried down there for a long time, then I came upstairs and cried some more. Then I thought "Oh I need my husband." So I got in the car (I was in mud clear to my eyebrows it seemed like) and went up to the command post and I didn't even care what funny looks they gave me. I saw my husband and I just started bawlin' again. And so he took time off to comfort me a little. And

then- now this seems a funny way to comfort your wife- but he took me up to the hospital and got me a tetanus shot. I think, though, that it was just and that expression of concern that helped, because I kind of pulled myself back together again and then he brought me home and there were my folks. And why, that was great. I could cope a lot better after that. They were terrific. My dad is really great at fixing things. Everything that a motor he took apart and hosed it off and put it back together and a lot of them are still running. My sewing machine that was a buried block of mud. It's still running, and so are quite a few other small appliances that he fixed. He tried to fix some of the big ones too. He tried to fix the furnace and the washer and drier but they didn't stay fixed. My freezer didn't stay fixed. But, he got a lot of other things running, which was great. We worked together for two weeks, until we felt like the house was cleaned enough that I could leave it and go down and get the kids, who were, by this time, down in Arizona.

CS: Now, I imagine you had come dealings, then, with the Red Cross and of course the LDS Church, and the government eventually. What did you think of the efforts that they put forth and in your dealings with them, were you satisfied and with your treatment?

MB: I really was. They were so good to us. The only trouble was, we needed it yesterday. They'd come in with a truck load of boots as fast as they could get em, but we'd already been sloggin' in our tennis shoes for three days before they came. Or, they'd come with all these shovels after we'd already made do with squeegees and For Sale sign to shovel mud. So, they did the very best they could, but, it seemed like I was always a day ahead of what they were bringing in...maybe if I'd worked a little slower... But, they were oh, so kind to us and gave us anything we wanted. I went up to the Bishop's Storehouse once to get oh, just one little thing, I can't even remember what it was. But the ladies there said, "Well surely you need this and surely you need that and surely you need this, and I came back with boxes full of stuff that they thought I surely must need. The Red Cross came around with all their sandwiches and they wouldn't let you just take one. You'd have to take five or six and three cans of pop. And I ended up with so many plastic buckets because they'd come around and say "You can use another bucket can't you? Surely you'd like another shovel or another mop?" So, they were just great. Sometimes my attitude wasn't too great at the time. Looking back, I can see I was...sometimes I was kind of cynical or discouraged or not too appreciative. I wish now that I had tried a little harder to be more appreciative. But, they were sure good to us.

CS: Did you ever feel at all in those days and weeks following the flood that you ever approached anything that you might call despair or hopelessness or was that time in the basement with your children's clothes worst?

MB: That was my very worst time. And then on Sunday, when President Kimball came, they had asked us not to do any work that day and so I wrote some letters to my children and to my family. That was another depressing time, I guess because I couldn't be working and there was all this work to do and then I was reliving in through the letters. It was depressing. I think that probably the most difficult long period for me was about six months after the flood or later. About Christmas time and last January and February



when it seemed like our hose would never be back to normal again and nothing was being done on it and we hadn't received our settlement and I was quite depressed that we wouldn't receive a fair settlement, although we did, I think. And that was probably the longest period of time of despondency or depression. But, I wouldn't say despair.

CS: Now, you repaired your home then, you didn't have to rebuild?

MB: Yes. It's not done yet, but it's getting close.

CS: Now, have you done some things, I imagine, with contractors and subcontractors on this work? You've probably heard some of the tales about people coming in from outside and taking advantage of the situation and doing either shabby work or else taking people's money and not doing the work. Have you had any experiences such as this or are you aware of any families who have had experiences?

MB: Yes, there was a lady in our ward whose contractor has gone with her money and she thought for awhile she'd have to sell her home in order to pay the bill. But, somehow it worked out. I'm not sure of the details. We hired a carpenter in our basement who was the brother of a friend of ours so we asked the friend if he would vouch for this guy and his work and they assured us he did good work. But I was not at all pleased with the work he did. I felt like he really did a lousy job. He came up looking for work after the flood and he wasn't here very long and I think it was because he just didn't do very good work. He was a real good carpenter if you just wanted it studded up, but if you wanted to finish work he didn't seem to know how to do it. He laid some Formica for us that was just a mess. But, there were a few cases that I'm aware of and probably many more that I'm not aware of, of people getting taken advantage of. They were all telling us to be so careful.

CS: Now, your husband's a bishop.

MB: Yes.

CS: Was he a bishop at that time?

MB: No, he wasn't. He was made bishop in September after the flood.

CS: Now, being LDS, and I realize this would just be your personal opinion, did it ever occur to you or did you ever think that there was any kind of difference in response to the flood between people who were active members of the Church and those who were either non-members or perhaps inactive members as far as relating to things such as bitterness or frustrations?

MB: It's kind of hard to answer because I don't have a great deal of contact with non-LDS people. I have heard that some of the non-LDS were reluctant to accept help from the Church not knowing that they were eligible for it. I think that the biggest difference that I saw in reaction to the flood was the young people just starting out or the people

who had been married for just a little while like us and the older people. Oh, my heart just went out to them. I overheard two ladies in our ward talking one time, a month or so after the flood. They were both elderly ladies. And they said, "Oh, I wish we'd just stayed in our hose and been drowned, it would have been better than going through all this." And I know that it was very, very difficult for many of the older people. In our ward there's lots of widows and lots of older people and I know it was really hard for them to see their homes destroyed where they had raised all their children. Maybe they were widows and had all the memories of people who were no longer living. That was really hard for them. And then, I have another neighbor who is... not old, but most of her family is raised now and they and they've accumulated lots of really nice furniture. It was mostly destroyed and that was a lot harder for her than to see all my junk that came from DI anyway. I had very little nice stuff. I had a lot of stuff, but not too much that you'd call nice furniture. So, I think that the biggest difference for me was just the difference between the young people and the old people.

CS: Now, having young children, did you ever notice that any time over the next few weeks and months into even, you know, this whole last year, any impact on them and any changes in them, any particular difficulties that they had that you would attribute to the flood?

MB: Most definitely. I have a baby who at the time was seven months old and in the two weeks that she was separated from me, she completely forgot who I was. She didn't know me when I went down to get her. Oh, she was upset. She had been staying at my mother-in-law's in Arizona and I picked her up and took her down to my mother's house, which is another part of Arizona. She didn't know me, she didn't even know her surroundings, the only thing she knew was her blanket and she clung to her blanket and cried. Bless her heart she had a hard time. After about a day, she decided that she would accept me, but no one could else. If she was lying on the floor with me sitting right there and somebody else would walk in the room, she'd start to scream. I feel like it's taken her a year to be able to relax completely. Right now she'll be two in October and she's pretty good now with strangers. She doesn't get too upset when I leave and she'll go to other people, and she's what I would consider a normal child, now. But I really feel that the flood coming at that crucial point in her developing attachment to mother, that it really was difficult for her. So I've seen a big change in her. But, I think she's worked it out and I don't feel like she's going to have lasting psychological problems from it. My next older child, who was about 2 ½ at the time of the flood, seems to be a little less secure. She talks a lot about it. For a long time she would ask me whether our house was going to be wrecked down. That's her words. "Are they going to wreck down our house?" And she watched the demolition of some of her friends' houses in the neighborhood. It really concerned her. And she likes to play flood, like all the other children in Rexburg. In fact, some of my older girls like to play flood, or they did. They don't do it too much anymore. And if she can't find anything she'll tell me it was lost in the flood. Oh, I don't think that's it's been particularly damaging to her, except that she has been a little less secure. And I think she's coming out of it now. I don't think it's going to be a permanent damage. But I could see a change in her. She just wasn't quite sure about home anymore, or what to expect. Because we got our children out so soon,

they really didn't see the damage. It had the mud out and it was clean. Although the floors were bare, it was not all that different, except for the basement. The basement was just studs, but they didn't see it as its worst, so I don't think they really understood exactly what was happening. I kind of worried about my older girls to have to come back and find everything that they'd had had been destroyed and not really be able to see what had happened. But they seemed to have adjusted without any problems.

CS: Now, as you watch the community building over the last year and seen all the different types of changes that Rexburg been undergoing, what sort of positive things do you see that have come out of the flood experience for Rexburg, and what, if any, negative things do you think have happened to the community?

MB: Well, positive things is that things sure do look better. The downtown area really looks nice now. We took a trip back east this summer and were in a couple of little towns that look like they'd stopped growing and been just sitting there for the last 50 years and maybe this doesn't sound too charitable, but my first thought was, "This town needs a flood." (Laughs) Just to clean it up a little. That has been a positive thing. It has brought in some good people into the areas and people who have come in to help. I can think right off the bat of the two very negative things that the flood has done. One has been the high inflation rate. It's just incredible to me how much building materials and supplies and things like this cost. And it makes me angry, but, there's not too much I can do about it. And then the second is a little more personal, and that is, in our ward we've probably lost 50 families I think. A lot of our ward is zoned commercial, and so the people who had had houses on that land sold it for commercial property for a much better price. Our ward is the smallest ward in the stake and it's really had to struggle since the flood. There wasn't one house in the ward that wasn't affected and 70% of the houses were destroyed I believe my husband said. So, our ward was one of the most heavily affected wards in Rexburg (of course the Sugar City wards were worse). But, it has been really hard and because my husband's bishop I'm aware of the turmoil and constant struggle that it is for him to try to keep the ward staffed and to try to keep the programs going as they should.

CS: Now, most of these people, have they left Rexburg and this area entirely or did they just decide to relocate in other areas of town?

MB: A few have left. Some of the older ones especially some of our older widows and older couples have gone to live with children in other places. Some of them have found jobs in other area. But most of them have just relocated up on the hill or out in the country or someplace else. There just is no land available in our ward to build and so even they might have wanted to stay in our ward, there's just no place to grow.

CS: Now, there's been some talk about the causes of the dam breaking and most people have accepted the idea that it was a manmade disaster of one kind or another because of the building of the dam. A few people have mentioned the idea that perhaps it was some kind of divine punishment for the people's sins. Now, how do you feel about an idea such as that?

MB: Well, I think that it was definitely a man-made disaster, but I think the Lord was in on it from the beginning. I really feel that the Lord used this flood for His own purposes, and I also feel that the Lord was holding dam together until Saturday afternoon because it started leaking Thursday and it became apparent, at least to some people, that it was going to break. And if it had been broken any other time, it would have been much worse. I don't think that He could have picked a better time than 12:00 noon on Saturday afternoon. I feel that the Lord had some very definite purposes in this flood and that He's used it for His own work. Number one, it has been a great practice for the welfare system of the Church. They've learned some things from this flood that they wouldn't have learned any other time. Number two, I think it's been a good publicity for the Church. I think it's been good to be able to say to the world, "Look what we can do. This is how we take care of our people and this is what the Latter-day Saints can do and when there's problems, this is the way we react." So, I really feel like the Lord had a great purpose in allowing the dam to break, but I don't think He broke it. I think He just let some mistakes be made and some poor judgment be carried on and people to exercise their free agency and then He used the consequences to His good. I don't feel that the dam broke as punishment to us. If it had, I think it would have gone at night or in the winter. I don't think that it was even supposed to be a trial for us, because compared to other floods it just really wasn't all that bad. We had all this warning and we had all this help. And then we had all this reimbursement from the government. And so I don't feel like it was such a great trial as it could have been. This summer, we were in West Virginia where the Johnstown flood occurred and I couldn't help comparing what a great contrast there was between our situation and those poor people. Or later last summer when the Big Thompson Canyon in Colorado was flooded. That was a much worse disaster. I think it may have been sort of a testing period for us and I don't feel like I came through the test as well as I should have, mainly because I spent all my time taking care of me and my problems and my house and I didn't help other people very much. I feel badly about that, that I didn't help some of my neighbors who didn't have a family to help them or didn't have as much help as I did. I wish that I had done more. I know many people who did, who sacrificed a lot more than I did, and used their time to help other people. I was just cleaning house, taking care of my own stuff.

CS: Margaret, now that there's talk about the dam being rebuilt, are you in favor or it, would you mind if it were in the same place?

MB: Well, number one, I don't think it ever will be. It was kind of a marginally economic proposition in the beginning. It cost so much and then they just weren't sure, as I understand it, that they could justify the expense with the benefit gained. So, I really don't think it would be. But, if it was, I guess I'd have to say I'd be opposed to it because I don't believe that they could build it in a safe place. I just believe that that site, in fact the whole canyon, is probably typical of that site: full of the kinds of holes that seem to have leaked the water into the dam and eroded it away. I don't think they could find a safe place to build it. I think if they ever tried to build it, they would have to prove that it would be safe and I don't think they could do it. So I guess I really don't believe it'll happen, but if it did I guess I'd be very much against it.

CS: Now, as you look back again over this last year and the impact that this has had on you personally, and of course your family too, what changes, if any have you found in your own personal values, attitudes, beliefs, perhaps even your personality, that you would attribute directly to the flood experience.

MB: I've found out what's more important. It was interesting, when we were cleaning up that I just didn't care about all these things that had gotten ruined that I knew could be replaced. My furniture, the clothing, this kind of stuff. It didn't hurt to see that, but it hurt to throw away the scrapbooks and the pictures that I'd been saving and the little things my children had made, such as my daughter's first report card that was absolutely perfect. She'd gotten straight ones or whatever it is and it had gotten ruined. I found out what was really important. And, above all, I guess I'd have to put my family because once I knew my children were safe I didn't really care too much. I knew they were okay. Maybe I'm coming out of it now. I had a hard time, as I mentioned, around Christmas time of being very depressed and discouraged and feeling like my house would never get done and would never be any better, but I think I've got a better appreciation for my family and what they would do for us and the desire to help them too if they ever need it. And I certainly got a better appreciation for the flood victims. Every time I hear of a flood, I know just how they're feeling and what they've gone through.

CS: Margaret, I don't have any more specific questions. Is there anything else that you'd like to say at this point, or any other thoughts or feelings about the whole event that you'd like to express?

MB: Better turn off the tape, I have to think for a minute.

Well one of the most frustrating things about the flood was that everything had to be done first. Everything you wanted to save, you could save it if you'd get it right now. The Red Cross was handing us out bulletins and it would tell you how to...how to save your refrigerator or how to save your stove or your furnace or your lawn mower or various things and you'd read it and think, oh, that had to be done last week or at least yesterday. It was really frustrating that there just wasn't enough time to do all those things. It seemed like it took us so long to just get the mud out. And you know, we're still getting mud out. We were doing some pounding downstairs and the mud came trickling down. We have washed and washed and then we'd put up the ceiling and painted and everything and still the mud comes through. I guess we'll grind it for the rest of our lives.

CS: Margaret, of the things that you lost in your home, what were the items that you felt the worst about, that was irreplaceable to you?

MB: There are two things, one was the scrapbooks that I'd kept all through elementary school and high school and college. They were full of lost memories that I hated to lose. Then the second thing that I lost was not completely due to the flood, but due to the jealousy of one of the volunteers who was helping me. I had found the book of my children's papers that they had wanted to save. It had been in the basement, but it

was still fairly intact. It was muddy, but I knew I could sort through and save alto of it, and I had it outside. One of our good ol' volunteers was cleaning up the year and dumped them all in the trash and I didn't catch it. So that probably made me feel worse than anything cause it could have been saved if I'd been a little bit more on the ball. I felt bad about that.