

The Teton Dam Disaster Collection

Sam F. Brewster – Life during the  
Teton Flood

By Sam F. Brewster

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Box 5 Folder 24

Oral Interview conducted by Mary Ann Beck

Transcript copied by Sarah McCorristin      May 2005

Brigham Young University – Idaho

MB: Mrs. Brewster, where were you born?

SB: Opelika, Alabama.

MB: How long have you lived in Rexburg?

SB: Two and a half years.

MB: Would you spell your full name?

SB: Sam F. Brewster

MB: How old are you?

SB: Thirty-seven.

MB: Do you have a family?

SB: Yes. I'm married and we have four children.

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

SB: My whole family was living here plus one college student who had an apartment in the basement.

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

SB: 330 Orchard Avenue, Rexburg, Idaho.

MB: What do you do for a living?

SB: I'm on the faculty at Ricks College. I'm in the Farm Crops Department and teach soil fertilizer, irrigation and ecology classes. I also do agricultural consulting in the areas of soil fertilizer and irrigation.

MB: How long have you lived in this area?

SB: I lived in Sugar City for three years prior to coming to Rexburg. I have completed six years at Ricks College.

MB: Do you own your own home?

SB: Yes, we bought this home two and one half years ago.

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

SB: I was neutral to it. I was in favor of the Teton Dam. I didn't oppose the environmental problems although am trained in environmental work. I have worked with the US Forest Service and have done a lot of governmental conservation work. I feel like it's an improvement of the environment according to the doctrine of the greatest good over the long run. The Teton Dam would have been environmentally beneficial. It would have improved the social environment of our area, our irrigation and our power.

It would have created a better fishing and recreation area. The water was going to back up through the canyon and destroy some of the wildlife, but it would have created ground for more wildlife. The wildlife that was living in the canyon, according to my view, is what we call pioneer species. Those species are always modified by environmental changes. There's no way to impact a piece of ground without causing some wildlife modification. Although it would have caused a wildlife modification, it would have been a beneficial one. Nature might have done it somewhat on her own anyway.

On the basis of social benefit, the dam looked good. When you have to make a cost benefit analysis of what it would cost versus what you would get out of it, it was a marginal dam. Most of us in the environment business knew that. It was an expensive dam. What nobody seemed to realize, I didn't at least, was that the dam was built on lava rock that was porous under the original fifty-five million dollar contract. None of us were wise enough to know that at the time. My feeling is that any opposition to the building of a dam was completely different from what actually caused the problem. This leads to a point that I would like to make in our interview and that is the complete unpreparedness of professional people in being able to handle or work with this disaster.

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

SB: No, we did not. My wife heard about it from a neighbor. I came home for the day and walked in the driveway and saw commotion around. It was a total surprise to us.

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

SB: When the dam literally broke, I was in Idaho Falls and my family was home. It was five minutes after twelve when I came in the driveway and met the family. Apparently the dam had broken before that and was being broadcast over radio. By that time everybody in our neighborhood know about it.

MB: What was your first reaction when you heard that the dam had failed? Did you try and save any household or personal belongings?

SB: My first reaction was that some mistake had been made and it was only a local flooding. I thought they were just letting a little more water through or some little thing was being amplified by the radio station many times over. As thirty or forty minutes went by, it became apparent that it wasn't some little mistake and that a great amount of water was coming down the river. At that time we probably over reacted. We thought if the dam's going to come through and wash the whole town out, isolate us form the

outside world, going without food and water for days, we'd better pack some clothes, get the car filled with gasoline, and get up to the hill at Ricks College. We ignored all of our personal items because they would all be washed away. We took enough survival things to last for awhile.

MB: Did you see the flood coming?

SB: My office is up on the hill at Ricks College. When we got up there we looked out across the valley and saw the flood coming. It has been described as a brown wave, blowing dust ahead of it, and that's just what we saw. We were there for about an hour before we saw anything. We watched it come and spread out over the whole valley. We watched the entire flooding.

MB: When you heard that the Teton Dam had failed, what preparation to save your property did you take?

SB: We didn't save much of anything. We packed for emergency, thinking we would be without food, water, clothing, and everything would be in total chaos for weeks. We prepared more for an emergency than we did trying to save anything. Our impression was that one of two things would happen. Either they were making a great mistake and only a small amount of water would come through town and we wouldn't get hit at all or else the disaster would be so bad that it wouldn't make any difference. What we didn't do was take the middle ground approach and realize that it would fill the basement, but not come into the top floor. If we had moved things out of the basement, we could have saved a lot and used out time effectively.

The only information we had regarding the dam was that which was being broadcast over the radio. The local radio announcer, Don Ellis, was up at the dam at that time giving on-site reports of what was happening. He is a fine man and did a great service to the community, but he's definitely not a technical expert. The word of Don Ellis didn't affect me like a professional engineer's word would have. When he was screaming get out of your home, over the radio, we didn't know whether to believe him or not. We didn't know what to do. There was frustration and confusion because of the total lack of anyone with the remotest degree of training, experience or professional know-how in trying to direct the activities at that time. There was only a local radio station man who had absolutely no knowledge of what he was telling us. The funny preparations that we made were based on a complete ignorance of what the real problems were going to be.

MB: Did you have any unusual experiences connected with the flood?

SB: One of the most interesting thing that happened was a man up on the hill with us at Ricks College. We were laughing and in somewhat of a holiday mood. He said "Do you see that trailer over there? That's my trailer floating down the river." The feeling among the people was that it was almost like we were detached form it. We were safe in another world. It was happening to someone else. When he saw his trailer go by, it still hadn't hit him that was his home going down the river. We thought one of the two things- it

would be hopeless without some kind of disaster relief to come in and take care of us or it wouldn't be serious enough to worry about. I don't think anybody realized the terrible mess it was going to leave behind. While we sat up on the Ricks College hill we could have saved a great deal of property and gotten a lot of things out of the water.

MB: Did you see animals trying to escape the floodwaters?

SB: Yes, there were a lot of cows walking through the streets of Rexburg. They would walk through the water, get within twenty yards of being out of the water, and become hopelessly confused that they'd turn around and walk back into the floodwaters. We couldn't imagine what must have been going through an animal's mind to cause them to be that close to safety and turn around and walk back into the water. We thought how dumb and foolish they were to do that. We didn't realize that we were doing the same thing only on a little more sophisticated level. We'd react, but could never understand exactly what was happening.

MB: Where did you and your family stay during the first two or three days after the flood? Did you continue to stay there during the cleanup?

SB: The flood came within an inch and a half of the top floor of my home. It completely filled the basement spoiling the ceiling. It did not on our main floor so we lived there. The children's bedrooms down-stairs were of course completely flooded. We had taken sleeping bags with us and some drinking water. We did have food we'd put up on our main floor. I slept in my bed that night as though nothing had happened. We stayed here all during the flood cleanup period and never did have to move out.

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

SB: We came back about 5:30 that afternoon. I waded in and the water was still three feet deep on the street. The flood hit our home about five minutes after three. Two and a half hours later I was able to come in. The water dropped down by 7:30 that night to approximately a foot deep. At that time we drove the car in and everybody came home.

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

SB: What a terrible mess! It was impossible to comprehend the mess. It was amazing what silt and water could do to the things we owned. We didn't mind losing it as bad as we hated the mess we were going to have to clean up. My reaction was not one of feeling sorry for what I'd lost, it was a feeling of sorrow for the amount of work, slop, and mess I was going to have to live with.

MB: What were the damages you suffered as a result of the flood? What was the most cherished item you lost in the flood?

SB: Everything in our basement was destroyed. The water was nine feet deep. I had an office in the basement that I used in my consulting business. It had a library of about

four hundred professional books. Personally, that was the thing that I valued the most. I had my reading notes from what I hoped and thought to be, a very fine library of consulting books and journals that I use in my business. I had many handwritten notes gained by telephone calls with experts and interviews with experts. It was a very valuable library to me and losing the entire thing was the most cherished thing that I lost.

The most cherished things our children lost were their toys. The toy box and everything down in the basement was destroyed. We lost a brand new TV set, couches and other things that went in our family room and game room. Some of our recreation things were destroyed. We were lucky because all of our genealogy, family records, and tax records were upstairs and were not destroyed in the flood.

MB: What did you think about and how did you feel as you watched the floodwaters roll through the area?

SB: It was as though we were detached from it. I couldn't comprehend the kind of mess it was going to make. I figured I was going to lose some things, but it never dawned on me what it was going to look like when it was over. I wasn't crying or upset; just waiting for it to get over so I could go back and find out what had happened.

MB: How did you go about cleaning your home and property?

SB: As soon as we got home, Saturday night, we assessed the problem. We saw the water in the basement and realized it would never go down because the sewers and drains were plugged up. That much water can't drain out of a basement. I got in the car and drove down to Ririe to the nearest telephone I could find and put in a call to my wife's brother-in-law who lives in Syracuse, Utah. He runs a business down there in renting home equipment. He brought a sump pump up with him that very night. He went into town. Finally, he got a policeman to lead him to our home and arrived at 3:00 Sunday morning. We got the sump pump up with him that very night. He went through four roadblocks and I don't know how he managed to talk his way into town. Finally, he got a policeman to lead him to our home and arrived at 3:00 Sunday morning. We got the sump pump going and started pumping.

Sunday morning we got up and started cleaning. We worked as hard as we could and it seemed we were getting nowhere. Around 2:30 Sunday afternoon we were exhausted and were about to give up. We were totally worn out and discouraged. We didn't care about a thing. We realized that the mess was overwhelming and we'd never have the strength to clean up such a horrible mess. The sump pump, even though it was working, was only lowering the water level at the rate of an inch every two or three hours. We realized it was going to be a long time getting that basement cleaned out.

MB: How many feet of water was in your basement?

SB: The water was nine feet deep up into the rafters above the ceiling.

MB: What were some of the problems you were confronted with?

SB: Getting the water out and the fact that everything weighed so much because it was full of water. A little stool that a small child could carry around before the flood would weigh hundreds of pounds and take three men straining to get out of the basement. Thinking about the amount of physical labor that was going to have to go into the cleanup is what got me down. My wife and I did not have the physical strength clean up that much mess in a reasonable amount of time. By Sunday afternoon, the magnitude of the problem was weighing us down. We were exhausted and were ready to lay down and quit. Somehow my wife's brothers and brother-in-laws got through the roadblocks with a camper and a pickup truck. Four of them came up and brought food, two more sump pumps and more equipment. That gave us a new shot of life to have four more able-bodied men up here. I had one boy renting from me so there were seven able-bodied men in my home exactly twenty-four hours after the flood hit.

I've never seen seven people work harder. We worked until 11:00 that night which was eight hours of backbreaking labor. At the end of that time I've never seen people so dirty and so completely exhausted and yet almost nothing had been accomplished. You could tell the enormity of the problems ahead of us.

MB: Did you receive any help in cleaning up your property and home like the volunteers?

SB: These family members came by on Sunday and worked all day. I did have this boy that was working for me for the summer in my consulting business. He continued to work and a college girl that lives in Roberts came up to help. She was working for me that summer so she came up and worked on a pay basis. One other boy came through town working on a pay basis and he came in and worked for three days for me. We did have some volunteers come by one day with a front end loader and haul some trash off as they were working for the city and were coming down the street to haul trash away.

MB: Have you had any unusual experiences during the cleanup operation?

SB: The most uplifting thing that happened to us was having our family come up and help us that Sunday when we were totally worn out and dejected and probably couldn't have gone on.

MB: Did you personally suffer any robbery or other forms of lawlessness?

SB: Not during the time of the flood. We did about a month ago. We still haven't got the front room of our home sealed down below where the flood cracked through and opened some drainage through our wall. Even though the home had been put back together we knew we needed to go in and put a sealant through there. We were waiting to get our claim settled in order to get the money to do the final repairs. Some vandals came by and took our water hose, put the door mat down on top of it on the porch, and turned the water on so the door mat held the hose there and squirted water right down the

crack in the wall. This happened about 2:00 Sunday morning and when we went down in the basement at 7:00 the next morning, the basement was flooded again.

MB: How did you clean it out?

SB: By that time we'd had a little experience. We had the police come by and their report was totally conclusive that it was vandals. It happened to two other families in the neighborhood that same night. The insurance company was good about paying for that and they hired Mr. George Messick, who owns a janitorial service here in town, to clean the home up for us.

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

SB: We didn't receive any help at all until about six weeks after the flood. We applied to HUD to come in and do a little bit of restoration. We completely tore the basement out ourselves down to the two by fours. Every last thing that could possibly be moved out of the basement without it falling down we took out. We let it dry for months. We came back to live there. At that time we applied to HUD for the disaster package they had and bought a hot water heater and did a few minor things in the basement. They brought us some furniture on a loan basis so we were able to move back into the basement. That was the only government help we received.

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

SB: They served dinners up at the Manwaring Center and for several days we ate up there. We got a few things from church welfare, but we didn't have any volunteers come by to help us. We didn't have any help from our home teachers or the bishop. I am independent and was determined to get back together with my own capability without have to be indebted to anyone. I managed to take care of my own needs.

MB: Did you receive any assistance from the Red Cross or any other private or independent organization?

SB: We received a broom, a squeegee, a couple of mop buckets and some sponges from the Red Cross. That was all.

MB: Could you have gotten more help if you had wanted it?

SB: Yes, we could have gotten help from the church and from the government and from others but we wouldn't do it until we were absolutely down and out. I wouldn't have asked for help or let it be given to me unless I was truly desperate.

MB: What government agency did you deal with during the recovery operation?



SB: I didn't deal with them at all. It wasn't much later that I took a little bit of HUD's assistance.

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

SB: I didn't have any direct dealings with any of them. The opinion I have was that the law enforcement officials did a fine job of establishing law enforcement around here, directing traffic, keeping out the tourists and pilferers, and not letting our town be overrun by outsiders that would have been destructive to us. My impression is that they did a fine job and should be tremendously commended for it. In terms of state and local government, they were not trained in disaster. I feel they did what you would expect them to do, that is stumble around quite a bit.

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?

SB: No, I do not. I didn't see this problem occurring at all. Everybody was bending over backwards to do their own thing and they were fiercely independent about it. They took pride in the fact that nobody was going to have to give them anything.

MB: Without divulging names, do you know of anyone who filed fraudulent flood claims?

SB: No, I do not. I don't know the details of anyone's claim. Today in a Priesthood meeting I had a lesson on honesty regarding financing. They were surprised that we were bringing up such a thing in a lesson because we're not aware of it. I would say that if there are fraudulent claims it's because of the magnitude of problems and not an error of the heart. It's when you go through the accounting, what the condition of things was before and after the flood, and what it cost you originally, what its replacement value is, and what percent of it was damaged. There are so many things you've got to weigh in your mind. If you're not an engineer, you don't know how to make evaluations like that. There're so many problems we're dealing with and we really don't have training for it. Was a TV destroyed or not? What percent of a farm was destroyed? Without being an expert in everything from electronics to structural engineering, you may not know all the facts and may do something wrong. People may be turning in some fraudulent things out of ignorance or the sheer complexity of the problem, but not deliberately.

MB: Do you feel that the flood was a divine punishment, a natural disaster or a man-made disaster?

SB: It was between a natural and a man-made disaster. There was a porous lava rock problem that was a technical problem. The engineers didn't deliberately try to create disaster. They did the best designing they knew how. Even though they had their design budget cut short for the lack of funds, if the amount of grouting wasn't put in, and if they

ran into more complex problems than their original surveys had indicated, I wouldn't know who to lay blame on.

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

SB: That would be a complex problem to answer from human relations, sociological, or political point-of-view. It will be difficult to sell the dam to anyone again. The congressmen have already shelled out a lot of money to pay for this disaster and I don't think they'd want to have to explain to their constituency that they had to do it a second time. They'd be pretty cautious about doing it.

The thing that would hold back getting it built the second time is the extensive environmental impact study that would have to be done before it was built again. There would have to be an enormous cost benefit study, environmental impact studies. A great deal of study would need to be put into it and I don't mean just a few thousand dollars. I mean a very in depth study involving a lot of research and a lot of different disciplines.

MB: How has the Teton Dam changed your life?

SB: It's a little early to pick up a lot of new terms, refugee, disaster, relief organization, HUD, BOR, claim, and a lot more. They now are experts in using words like grout and porous lava rock formation.

We have put our life and our home back together. It wasn't a personal disaster to our life. I lost a library which hurt my business considerably. We lost toys which could be replaced. We lost clothing which could be replaced. We didn't really lose cherished items. Our home has been rebuilt. We've had to live with a lot of mess and muck for a year. I guess what will be imprinted in our mind is the terrible mess that was made.

We have been somewhat sick this year. The flood has brought a lot of silt and presumably bacteria in with it and there's an enormous amount of respiratory disease going around with stomach problems and flu problems coming with sanitation and bad air. In terms of sickness, mess and problems we've perhaps had a new learning experience.

We certainly came to appreciate the fact that our government, even though it may sometimes seem like it moves slow, does move. We are getting a fair equitable settlement out of the BOR. Federal officials haven't been here long and don't understand the problems and are tied by their red tape, rules, regulations and guidelines that they have which are frustrating. Sometimes it's hard to have regulations match reality and that's frustrating. Nevertheless, our government is responsive in trying to do what's right.

MB: How did your children act when they saw the floodwaters coming?

SB: They didn't cry. It was somewhat of a grim day. I wouldn't exactly say a holiday spirit, but it was a beautiful day. It wasn't a day that gendered sad feelings. I think it was one of waiting to see what the problem would be, suspended animation. We didn't know whether to cry or be happy. We didn't know what was going to happen. It was a mood of apprehension, but at that time we didn't understand what it was going to be like. As soon as they came home and saw the flood in the basement and saw all their toys, clothes, room and everything wiped out, they felt badly. I don't think there was any crying, but I think it had a psychological impact on them to see that mess. Nobody could live with that much mess and that much mud without having some serious impact psychologically.

MB: Did you consider it a good learning experience of your whole family?

SB: I sure hope I don't have to learn anything else this way. I wouldn't say it was a learning experience to justify what we went through.

MB: During the cleanup afterwards, did your children help?

SB: We took the children down to Utah to their aunt and uncle's. We didn't have the time, clothing, food or anything to take care of them and we were working sixteen to eighteen hours a day. We kept my oldest boy who was nine, and he helped a lot in the cleanup. The rest of them went to Utah.

MB: How was his reaction to helping?

SB: He was very good about helping. Things were heavy. They were waterlogged and there was a lot he couldn't do. He was good about trying to help and about not being selfish and asking for a lot of personal things that he would normally have asked his mother to do. I think he figured we had to get the job done.

The book entitled, That Day in June, published by the Ricks College Press through the Relief Societies of this region is full of stories from women in this area, including one by my wife. She describes that around noon our neighbor came running over and said the dam was breaking. I wondered how she could make up something like that so I told the nine children to turn on the radio. Sure enough, the dam had broken and Rexburg was going to get wet.

I had gotten through early that day and decided to come home and play with the boys instead of going down to the farm to do consulting work. I suppose if there was anything that could be said that was unusual it was that I came home at noon on Saturday. During the summers I keep farmer hours in my consulting work and my idea of a major vacation is to quit at 8:00 Saturday night. For some reason I had come home at noon that day or I wouldn't have been there during the flood. That was a little unusual.

MB: You had a premonition of it?

SB: No, I didn't have a premonition that anything was wrong. I just did a thing that was unusual for me. I didn't realize anything would be wrong.

One thing we learned from the flood was how important our families are. I learned that if we can work together as a family we can survive. In spite of the overwhelming, unbelievable magnitude of mess and the amount of work that we were going to have to put in to clean up this thing, we did it as a family. It was not the church that did it, it was not the Elders Quorum Presidency. I spent a lot of time helping other people clean up. The reason my home got cleaned up is because my family did it, my wife, my boy, the people we could hire, and the family that came from Utah. We cleaned it up. We realized that we would lose an awful lot of things. We could lose our toys, our furniture, our books, and everything, but the family was still together. Working together, as a family, could get an unbelievable amount done. I think that's the biggest thing we learned from the flood.

MB: Did you help in placing the volunteers in different homes to help?

SB: Yes, I did. I went over to our church house and spent several days talking volunteers around and working. In fact, I think I spent three or four days doing that kind of work even when I had to go off and leave my own home messed up.

MB: Was Rexburg prepared to meet a disaster?

SB: No, we were not. The thing that constantly amazed me through this was the lack of professional information that came out. At the time the dam broke, the only man up there saying anything whatsoever about how it was going to be was Don Ellis, the local radio man, who had absolutely no training in any form of technical information. He missed his judgment by over two and a half hours when the flood would hit, and over a foot as to how deep the water would be. Nevertheless, that was the only judgment that was being made. There was no engineer doing it.

The Bureau of Reclamation engineers that were responsible seemed to have vanished during that period of time. We found out later they were on the phone consulting with Salt Lake, Denver and Washington and covering themselves and doing all the things bureaucrats do. The one thing they were not doing was giving any kind of help or information to help anybody get prepared. The thing that comes out of it now is that the Bureau built the dam without knowing it was going to fail, without knowing what kind of lava rock they were building in, and without knowing how much grouting they needed. When the dam broke, their engineers didn't have any premonition that it was about to go. They didn't know how to tell us what the impact was going to be when it happened. Days later they couldn't tell us anything whatsoever about how to clean the mess up; there was no professional help. They came in and tried to adjudicate the claims. The level of people coming in, even though well meaning, were unqualified to judge the damage.

It needs to be on the record, the complete and total lack of professional information and help that was available in the town of Rexburg before, during, and after the flood and even up to the moment. I submitted a document to the Chief Claims Officer of the BOR. It was a technical way in which you could evaluate the soil problems because that's what I'm trained in, to make a technical evaluation of the damage in that area. His feeling was that no one working for him would understand it and the local people around here couldn't be sold on it anyway. There was no way anything of a technical rationale or any meaningful basis behind which to clean this thing up could be available to anyone. This is the highest level of cynicism to me, to make a statement, "We have no basis behind what we're doing. We don't know what we're doing."

The thing that struck me during the disaster was the state and local law enforcement officials who had some prior experience at disasters moved in and did a fantastic job. One outfit, that did a better job than anyone, was the Utah Power and Light Company. Within a matter of hours they had people coming in from Utah, men that understood what to do with equipment and the experience with trucks. They took a lot of professional thought, training, and background to have it available in the first place. The Utah Power and Light company came in and restored power to this area at almost a miraculous rate. Men were at our home on Monday following the flood that had come all the way from Blanding, Utah, which is down in southern Utah. They had mobilized that fast. The men came in and knew exactly what to do, how to move, and they had the equipment and experience to do it.

Some law enforcement officials were that way. Some had been trained, but the vast majority knew nothing of what to do.

I was struck by the difference between being prepared and being unprepared. The tremendous difference it is in dealing with Utah Power and Light and the Bureau of Reclamation. One man knows what he's doing, the other doesn't. It's not because one man's stupid and one man's smart; it's one man's prepared and the other's not. One man had some schooling and some professional training on the subject. It's not that we don't have the information available to us, it's just hasn't been out and disseminated and put out in the hands of the people. When the Red Cross moved in, they had a few disaster officials that knew what to do and they moved in effectively. When the general of the Idaho National Guard moved his lieutenant colonel in that was in charge of the Engineering Battalion that had been in Vietnam and had experience, they did a great job. The telephone company moved some men in that really knew how to handle a disaster and did a great job. There were some bishops around the local area that had been dealing with disaster problems around their wards and they did a great job.

By and large, the vast majority of people were like the cattle walking back and forth in the water not knowing which way to go. The University of Idaho came up with some information that was somewhat useful. Most of what was done was done by sheer brute strength of people and many of the million man hours of volunteer labor. We had it within our technical capability, even in spite of it all, to have saved a lot of things that were destroyed. We would have known to throw out a lot of things we spent hours trying

to save only to find out we couldn't. There were people that had experience with disasters that were trying to tell us things, but their voice was lost in the wilderness. Some terrible messes were being made. To disaster people it looked obvious what to do, but we had so few of them around.

Prepare for disaster. Get the professional knowledge it takes to be able to handle this kind of stuff. The Mormon Church brought in a handful of welfare people that deal with this kind of stuff on a routine basis and they set up a mass kitchen and did a fantastic job, but again this was so limited compared to the total scope of the thing.

MB: When did the volunteers come it?

SB: there was approximately a week before they came in and three weeks after the flood before the large numbers came in. They would come in on buses and come to church house about 8:00 in the morning. Perhaps they got up at 3:00 to get on the bus to drive up here. They would work all day, get on the bus and go home. Somebody would take them around during the day. By the time the volunteers got here, I had my home pretty well cleaned up. The town of Rexburg greatly appreciated the volunteers and they're having a Volunteer Appreciation Day this weekend, June 4.

The problem was the lack of information that led to so much damage being caused in the first place. There was no need for that flood to have created that much damage. Somebody with the Bureau of Reclamation should have had the sense to get on the radio and tell us how bad it was going to be. The Bureau totally abandoned us to our fate and that created all the problems and the need to have to bring in so many volunteers to clean up the mess. There was no need for them to abandon us like that. It is hard to forgive them for it. There should be contingencies made for this in our federal government. I should become established in our government that should work create a disaster don't abandon the people. Get in and work with them. I wish that could be passed into law and some good could come out of Rexburg in getting that kind of attitude established in our government agencies.

The people that had preparations for disasters did a great job; other people lacked information, training, professional know-how and did a miserable job. I can't overemphasize that. Anytime we do something that there's likely to be an impact, we can't say, "I won't do it if I create a problem." The problem is recognizing that there's likelihood of causing a problem if we do something like build a dam.

You do the best you can. We can forgive a design engineer for dealing with a complex problem and making a mistake. What is hard to forgive was the fact that they didn't come in and try to help. They abandoned us. They should have made some contingencies ahead that said if the dam failed here was the plan to be put in effect. Here's how much water is going to be backed up, here's the kind of flood plain it's apt to flood over, here's how deep it's going to be, and so on. Those kinds of preparedness plans could have been made quite cheaply. It might have cost five million dollars to have figured out all the different problems and underground grouting a thousand feet down under and some

complex geology, but it wouldn't have cost another thousand dollars to have had preparedness plan for what would happen if something went wrong.

All I'm asking is that instead of knocking ourselves out in environmental impact statements, if we see what we are doing could create some problem, we should decide how to handle it. Don't walk blindly into the thing. I sat in my office at Ricks College waiting for the flood to come to go home to see how bad it was. I lost three good hours sitting there when I could have been working and moving things up. Having to strong arm your way through in a blind way was a lack of any contingency plan or the lack of any kind of forewarning.

The amazing thing is what a little bit of fore training was able to do in the hands of the people like the power company. It is possible to train people to be able to handle these kinds of things and it would have been possible for the Bureau to have done that. A little information would have gone a long way. A little information with the power company allowed them to get in and do a tremendous job in a hurry.

MB: Thank you, Mr. Brewster.