

The Teton Dam Disaster Collection

Andrea Congdon – Life during the Teton Flood

By Andrea Congdon

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Box 6 Folder 1

Oral Interview conducted by Doris Shirley

Transcript copied by Sarah McCorristin and Alina Mower

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Doris Shirley: Would you please spell your name for me?

Andrea Congdon: Andrea Congdon.

DS: Where were you born?

AC: Germany.

DS: How old are you?

AC: Eight.

DS: Do you remember what you were doing Saturday morning, June 5th, just before the flood?

AC: We had gone to Grandma's and were on our way home. We went to Lyman to this little restaurant and were eating when this guy came in and said, "Have you heard about the Teton Dam flood? The dam broke above Idaho Falls!" Everybody said, "No, we haven't heard." My grandma said, "Is St. Anthony to Idaho Falls going to get flooded? Let's go!" We got in Grandma's car and took off. We got to the Sage Junction Bridge and they stopped us right there. They wouldn't let us go any farther. We turned back and went past Island Park, into Ashton to visit my Aunt Polly, then to St. Anthony to see my cousins, then St. Anthony to see my cousins. St. Anthony didn't get flooded, so we went to my Aunt Jessie's and stayed there about two nights.

I was having a whole bunch of nightmares and kept crying out, "Mom, Mom!" I was scared because we were separated. About three days afterward we went to my uncle's house in Idaho Falls and we got to see our parents there. My sister and I went up to Montana to my other grandma's. We stayed there until Dad got an apartment for us to live in. We stayed there until we got our HUD trailer. We put it on Grandma's property because we didn't have any place else to put it. We stayed there for a long time. The thing I liked about it was that it wasn't far from school and I could walk. It was only a block or two away. Grandma had a dog and we would go over there and visit every day.

It was hard to eat in the HUD trailer because the table was for three or four people. Most of us didn't get much food, unless we took some other chairs and set the food on them. The drinks would have to stand on the floor or they would spill in the food that Mom cooked for us.

After we got out of the HUD trailer we felt good because we got a new house. When we went to our old house, it was really messy. It was so messy you couldn't believe it. Every time you'd try to walk in it your feet would stick to the mud and you couldn't walk. Some people helped us clean out our house. We got some of the knick-knacks that we got in Germany. We had about three or four wooden dolls, but only one of them was left. In Japan they make every single doll different, even if you wanted them the same.

DS: What did you lose that you missed the most?

AC: The Dr. Sues books that got lost. We enjoyed those a lot. They were fun to read.

DS: Any special toys?

AC: No, because we had our room upstairs, so I didn't lose any toys.

DS: You were a little more lucky than some. Can you think of anything else you'd like to tell us?

AC: I had a clown and I named him "Clownie." I got him when I was one and we went to see if we could find him along with the other stuff. Mom came out and she had all the other stuff, but she couldn't find my clown. I started crying because he was seven years old now. I got him when I was only one so I started crying. Finally, Dad was going through these boxes and found him. I started dancing with him because I was so happy.

DS: Tell us about Christmas in your HUD trailer.

AC: We had a dinkie tree.

DS: Tell us where you got the tree and the ornaments for the tree.

AC: WE made our ornaments. This one guy was selling little play trees out in the country. One day Mom got the Christmas tree and we decorated it. We put lights on it and Christmas morning we were so happy. We stacked everything in our room. We had to take little steps to get to our room because there was stuff stacked all over.

DS: Where would have lived if it hadn't been for the HUD trailer?

AC: In a tent.

DS; Thank you, Andrea Congdon.