

The Teton Dam Disaster Collection

**Irma Camp – Life during the  
Teton Flood**

By Irma Camp

April 6, 1977

**Box 5 Folder 29**

Oral Interview conducted by Marlene Goodman

Transcript copied by Sarah McCorristin May 2005

Brigham Young University – Idaho

This is an oral history. I am Marlene Goodman. Today is April 6, 1977. I am going to interview Irma R. Camp. The general topic will be the Teton Dam Flood.

MG: Mrs. Camp, will you spell your name please?

IC: Irma Camp.

MG: Where were you born?

IC: Columbus, Ohio.

MG: How long have you lived in Rexburg?

IC: Two years.

MG: Where were your parents born?

IC: One was born in Columbus, Ohio and one was born in Landcaster, Ohio.

MG: What is your occupation?

IC: I manage to Hoby Center at Ricks College.

MG: What did you feel; when you heard that the Dam was going to break or had broken?

IC: Not really too much of anything, I didn't realize what they meant by the dam breaking. I rather thought, it was probably going to be somebody else, not us, get it.

MG: Where were you and your family at the time that the dam broke?

IC: We were at home, in the house. Most of us had just finished breakfast, and were getting dressed.

MG: How did you feel as you saw the water coming?

IC: Well, not too much of anything really, I watched and wondered, you know, how all that brown area, all of a sudden turned- well, it was green, then it turned brown, so suddenly and someone said, "That's the water."

MG: How was it like, when it hit the town, what did it do?

IC: Well, we were in the Manwaring Center, where you could really see all over the town. We were watching from the windows up there and you could just see trailers floating by and cars, once in a while you'd see a steer or animal floating, well swimming really not floating.

MG: What were some of the experiences that you had during the flood or that you heard happened to other people?

IC: We were standing at the Manwaring Center watching a lot of trailers go by and this one man has a pair of binoculars and he was looking out and he says brother so and so, I don't know what his name was, he says, "I believe that's your trailer going by down there." And he took the binoculars from the man and he says, "I believe you're right Brother; it sure is!" That's all he said. No one really got upset or worried about things that were happening, they just stood there and watched it all go by, there wasn't much they could do.

MG: How did others help you during the flood or what did you do to help others?

IC: Most of our problem, we had eight inches on the main floor of our home plus the basement was totally flooded and we pumped with a sump-pump to get all the water out of our basement. But we reached a point where something kept clogging it up. We figured it might have been the mud, so we got down there and there was about a foot and a half of water still in the basement and we had to get it out somehow. We formed a bucket brigade, we bucketed it out by the bucket. That was really a humble experience. There was about nine people besides my two boys and myself working on the basement getting the stuff out. They started about 9:00 in the morning and by 11:30 they had bucketed the entire basement out, and got all the mud on top of that out. So they really worked.

MG: What were some of the things that happened to other people around you?

IC: Well, a lot of people like I say, the house next door didn't get any water on their main floor, but their basement was flooded, they ended tearing the house totally down, it not longer exists. And yet the house on the other side of us was a real old, old house, fact it looks like one of the original homesteads practically left. And that's still standing. It's kind of hard to imagine why one house would go and the other still stand.

In our area, too, our ward building was hit pretty badly by the flood; of course, a lot of us went over and put in a lot of time on the ward buildings, cleaning it up, and working on it doing a lot of painting and fixing.

MG: After the flood, how long did it take before the waters went down?

IC: Well, it depended which area you were in really. I'd say about three hours after the flood hit, I would say that most of the water was down to whwere you could get around through it. Our area by about 6:00 I believe the water was gone. It hit about 3:30 by 6:00 it was down totally.

My boys did go to the house, because of the members of our ward said that he could get to his house by wading about waist deep in water. And my boys went down to see what damage had been done and how much water was still down there. They waded in about,

I guess it was about hip deep by then and checked the house out and see what was damaged and all that, I guess it was pretty bad when they came back up and told me. But we'd been very lucky; we didn't have a lot lost.

Oh yes, excellent, there were a lot of people who were caught and stranded by the flood. Many people didn't believe it was happening until they saw the wall of water hit, then they decided that this was it.

One experience we read about in the paper- were these two men in Sugar City decided they heard the dam had broke, but they thought it's not going to come down through there. And they looked out the window and saw this cloud of dust coming. They couldn't imagine what that was. And one of them said it must be the flood. And this one man said "Let's get up on this slide." They had bought a slide from the school or city somewhere, and the two of them climbed on top of this slide to watch and see what they could see because it was pretty high. And they were stranded on the slide for eight hours. And it's lucky; they said that they watched a house torn off its foundation. And the animals floating by all types of things still floating and yet that slide still held where it was at.

MG: Do you feel that the government helped you a lot during the flood or was it the church?

IC: I think so, well, I'd say probably the Church helped more than anything else because they came in right away. That night there were trucks rolling into Rexburg from Salt Lake. We went up the they physical plant and walked and talked to quite a few of the people who were involved because my husband was in one of the Elders Quorum presidencies and, of course, they called in all of the leaders in anyone in any of the presidencies to come in and help out. So we went up to see what was available so we could tell our people what they could get and what was available for them. And they just had semi after semi pulling in with things on it.

MG: Where did the refugees that were brought out of Sugar City stay?

IC: Every one came out to the college. All the refugees were flown in. The Army came in, of course, with helicopters. They were evacuating people back and forth and reuniting families. Many people didn't know where their families were, we were one. My husband was out hunting and fishing at that time. And I didn't know what happened they didn't have a radio with them, or anything. They decided what happened they didn't have a radio with them, or anything. They decided to come back early Saturday. They got to Ashton, and the police, the highway patrol were stopping everyone. They were quite concerned because they didn't know what happening. Finally asked one guy what was happening, he said, "Oh, Rexburg has just had a flood hit. The whole city is under water." Oh they panicked they just really got very upset. They had to come home through the dry farm areas along the back roads dirt roads and everything to get home. They didn't get home till about 5:30. I was going frantic because I didn't know where he was at, I thought what if he was on the road between St. Anthony and Rexburg when the

flood hit. I could just see them being washed away, so I didn't know where he was at for several hours like I say, it was about five or six hours before I found him. The thing was they had us all registered at the Manwaring Center, so they we would have an accounting each ward they could come in and say okay, I've got all my people of I've got this and this person mission. And this was, my husband's brother works on a police department in a small town in Ohio, of course, when he heard the dam broke he called, Red Cross through his police channels to find out how we were. They just picked it up that the kids were okay no word of him, and they really panicked him and his brother they both flew his father out here to check on him. The paper back home ran a big story on how he was missing, might have been presumed dead and how they were so concerned it was a really big thing about two or four day they had a play by play description on what was going on.

MG: How was radio communication?

IC: The radio was fine.

MG: Were there a lot of stories or rumors going around about the flood or different things?

IC: I don't there was so many rumors, it was just fact, that the dam had broken. I think a lot of how much damage had been done. There were planes up flying around, trying to get an assessment of the damage, especially helicopters, to see if there was anyone stranded, anywhere, and trying to find different people.

I think it was well covered as far as rescue operations go. One thing I think that was surprising to everyone was the number of people who died as a result of the flood. It was very low considering the number of people who were directly involved in the flood you know. There were just thousands of people. And a total of eleven lost their lives. Not directly in the flood but as a result of the flood. There were four drownings. The rest of them were heart attacks and other related instances.

MG: Why do you feel this happened, when other places have hundreds or more deaths?

IC: Well, I think a lot of it is a people were in the middle of daytime, it was on a Saturday when there were a lot of people around. I think the communication system you know, the radio and all that when it broke, you k now really devoted total coverage to it. They were warning people and telling people to leave, just constantly. I think another thing too is people. I'd say 99% of them believed this happened and took the warnings and left when they should. There were some that didn't believe it that did stay.

MG: One woman for instance, I guess didn't believe it, her husband heard it broke and he decided to go into town and he left her out there on the farm by herself without a car. She didn't believe it at first. And she looked up and saw the cloud of dust and then saw the water. And she decided that it was true and she took off running and she ran I guess about close to ten miles and this woman weighed I'd say in excess of three hundred

pounds. She said she lost twenty pounds just running, and she said I never knew I could run so fast in my life, but she got to the one crossroads. Her husband had heard it had broke and believed it, came back to get her and met her there at the crossroads. So she did get out.

There were many, many stories on people's experiences of the flood. People found strange things in their homes when they went home, if they ad a house left standing. One man found a dead cow and a dead deer in his basement.

Some of the funny things that happened, you just couldn't believe. There was a dummy from a department store, setting in a tree, how it ever got there it just seems improbable it was parked up in the tree. Then we saw a car in the tree and that was even funnier yet. Another car was picked up and set on the top of a back a flat bed truck; neither the owner of the truck or car k new about this until after the flood. They had pictures taken of this.

Houses sitting off their foundations or picked up and set back down on the foundation. I think, the thing that got me was driving out toward the golf course and seeing all those homes, parked along the golf course, and the houses in Porter Park and Smith Park that were washed down through there. It just seemed strange seeing a big house lifted up and set down in the middle of a park.

Another thing that I thought was rather strange too. We drove out toward Sugar City, and the flood had taken the railroad tracks and tuned them up on end and made a picket-fence out of them.

They were all sitting up really crooked and bent. Then, of course, the pavement looked like someone had peeled the pavement off in little strips and picked it up and set it in a field and made a little road in the field, which looked like it had naturally belonged there.

MG: How did the people react as a group to the flood?

IC: I think they were all very, very calm, which was surprising. It was just as though they were to the fair or to the circus, just watching, walking around and talking. But as far as people being upset and there being mass hysteria, there was none of that.

MG: Mrs. Camp, you mentioned that your house was hit. How bad was it hit and what was the damage like?

IC: We had our basement flooded totally full and eight inches on the main floor. But as far as our personal things we lost, I'd say, very little, considering some of other people's losses. Our basement bedroom of course was totally lost.

I lost about half of my wheat storage. That was a funny incident too. We went down there, oh, about three or four days after, we had most of the stuff out of the basement, the wheat was lying all over and had begun to sprout. One of my sons made the comment that he didn't know whether we should harvest the wheat or clean up the basement.

We had to reupholster our living room furniture, we were lucky that we could reupholster it. Many people had theirs so soaked that the wood would have split. But we were quite lucky that it didn't do damage to it. My organ was totally lost, my piano was damaged, of course, my living room furniture, I think, took the worst beating. The beds upstairs, we were lucky that they were up high enough that the flood didn't touch them. It came very close. My bedroom furniture, I guess it must be made out of pretty good wood, because months afterwards we've checked it out, it hasn't cracked or warped, the drawers all pull easily. As far as the damage I lost, I lost a few ceramic pieces I made, that were down in the lower cupboards; most of our flood was in the lower part of the cupboards. So the things I lost were very negligible as far as damages go.

There were many, many people we talked to, I'd say "how deep did the flood come?" They'd say, "Well, clear up to the counter tops." They would have to replace their stoves, refrigerators and quite a few things.

In fact we were lucky, because we had a freezer upstairs; we had debated on putting it in the basement and decided not to. The water stayed underneath the motors and everything of that freezer, not a thing was touched in the freezer. Well my refrigerator, we had an old, old refrigerator, and that I did throw out quite a bit of stuff because it did come in. It seeped in underneath the door, got into the crisper part of it. I was afraid it might have had contamination, all throughout, so we threw everything out there. But that's the only thing I really had to replace in my kitchen.

MG: How was the damage to the business, district of Rexburg?

IC: Oh, that was something else. My husband has been in the Vietnam, he said that he had never seen damage like that in a war zone, even with bombs and total destruction, like that. He says, "It was the worst he had ever seen." He said it looked like someone had taken and exploded ever store downtown, there was not one business with the exception of Safeways that was not damaged very much at all. Many, many of them were totally gutted out. You'd go in there and the floors were missing in the buildings.

I can remember going down College Avenue, all those old buildings along there I thought for sure were going to be torn down, but they've pretty well put them back together. The businesses were recouping. I made the comment the other day, when we were driving downtown, that it seemed as though Rexburg was just as it used to be. A few stores have changed locations, but everything had looked as normal- you would have known the flood came along there. Then we said, "Well you can look on the safe side of Blocks and Kinds and a few other stores, you can see the waterline, that's left from the damage of the flood." There are marks and available if you look close enough. We said, "If a person was driving through town, they would have never of known a flood had hit this area."

MG: How long did it take the first store to open after the flood?

IC: Well, I'd say, the first store to open really was Safeways, but that's because they had very little damage. But oh, I'm trying to think when the first store that was damaged by the flood directly, opened. I would say, probably, Pennies did but that's because they didn't go back in the same building, they moved out to the R-skating Rink, instead of the same building they were in. And of course, the skating rink, they just cleaned it all out, cleaned it up. They were I think probably the first store that opened up in the area.

The other stores, like I say, it took some of them, I think it seemed like every week there was another one opening up. In fact, there is still to this day, stores are having "Grand Openings" because they rebuilt, relocated, its just a continuous process for them.

MG: What happened to the price of things, did the flood affect the cost of living here?

IC: Well, right after the flood hit, they issued a statement, that prices would remain the same, because of the people being directly involved. Many of them were totally wiped out, had no income, no home to go to, no place to live and of course, that was the main concern of the people, finding a place to stay, like I say, there were no places to rent.

So when it came to the flood prices and things like that, they decided to hold prices down. Not allow them to be advanced at all. But since then, I'd say,, since the summer is over and the fall has begun, they have gone up somewhat. We made a comment that it probably would have normally happened anyhow. That the flood didn't directly cause the prices to go up. But I do appreciate, I think everyone does, the people who did open up, who did keep their prices down, because they could have made a very big killing off of things. Some did.

MG: How were the conditions of the farms during the flood or after it hit?

IC: Well, I think, the majority of them faired pretty fair. But there were some that the flood took the top soil, clear down to the lava rock. Many of the farmers lost totally a large area of their farms. Many have lost their entire farms. The government has promised these people, though the last we knew, that hey would replace their farmlands. They would be granted government land in exchange for the farms they lost and the last I heard there was very few of them that had to do this. The majority of them might have lost a certain area but the majority was airable, you know, and that they could use it.

I think that the hardest thing the farmers experienced were the loss of their livestock. Because as they commented in the paper, a farmer just doesn't go out and buy a herd of cows, they have to build up, through breeding and all this. Many of the dairy farmers, especially, lost a lot there, because they lost their entire herds.

They have an estimate of; I believe twenty-seven thousand head of cattle, being lost in this flood. Where they're at, none has found them yet. Of course, a lot of them are buried, that was another interesting thing too. We walked one block over, in fact, on South 1 West, there was a dead cow laying right in the middle of the street, the kids were



all having fun throwing rocks at it. You know, how they got a kick out of things like that. like I say, there were dead animals all over.

MG: What did they do with the dead animals, how did they get rid of them?

IC: Well, the army went along with big trucks and picked them up, or in some areas where it was real remote, they would take a helicopter in and tie up to them and haul them out.

They had certain disposal points. I imagine, they used quick lime to dispose of it.

They were really quite fearful of disease after the flood, especially the waters themselves. One of the biggest things were the chemicals, that a lot of these places, a lot of the farmers, had chemicals on their farms. Even to this day there are still a lot missing, that their hoping to find soon. But I imagine that a lot of it has been buried under just lots of mud.

MG: Where did the people that lost their homes go, or what happened to them?

IC: Most of us right after the flood of course, came up to the college. The college during the summer, of course, only has about five hundred students. Consequently, the dorms were pretty well vacant at the time. We were all assigned one of the dorms to stay in. we moved five times during this flood. The first place they sent us to was Harris Hall. We had no electricity, we had running water and that was it. No, I take that back, we did not have running water. They didn't have any of the utilities on.

So we said "Well, we can't stay here, unless they turn the utilities on." So they said, "Well, if you can't stay there, you'll have to go up to Ensign Hall and they gave us three rooms, because we have a large family. That was something else, because we were on the third floor. Everything we wanted, we had to go down the stairs to get.

Well, we have one child with heart problems, so we said that this will never do either. So they said, "Well, the only thing that we can do, is send you over to one of the girls dorms." So we ended up in the third dorm, on the second floor, which was better than the third floor. But it was really crowded and we couldn't do any cooking in it. They said, "No, you can't do any cooking in it, we tried." So they said, "Well, we could put you in one of the cooking dorms." So, we moved down to the first dorm. They put us on the first floor, which was a lot better, we were there, I believe, two weeks living in the dorms.

We were trying to get the mud out of the house mostly. On top of that HUD decided to bring in, this is the housing urban development group,, they brought in those trailers. That's all we saw, was this steady stream of trailers coming in for people to live in. Because they knew that many, many people would be in them for a long period of time.

We were quite lucky, we took one trailer, which we said, what we needed most was hot water, because when the water came back on, it was clear and they checked it for any

poisoning or anything, finally the city water came on. And we could get back in our house. So we said that we would like to go back in our house or be as close to it as possible so we could work on it. They put a trailer in right next to our house. We were quite lucky there.

Trailer life was a little crowded and it was a little hectic. We finally got the main floor cleaned off upstairs; a few of us went back and slept in the house.

MG: What kind of trailers were they good trailer that HUD sent?

IC: I'd say most of them were. There were some that were in pretty sad shape. Ours wasn't all that great.

The only thing that was frantic was, we could cook in the house, because we had electricity. But it took them two months to get the trailer hooked up for gas and we only lived in it for two months. So we were cooking in the house and we were eating in the trailer. And half the time the things I wanted were in the house, if I were in the trailer or in the trailer if I was in the house.

One thing about the trailers is, I'm sure everyone was really grateful for them, but when they realized that winter was coming it really wasn't the most ideal thing to be faced with. But they finally came around and started to put the tape around, the pipes, so that they could winterize the trailers. Many people said they were alright, others said no, theirs was cold and drafty

Christmas came, and I think that when people really missed their homes. Because it just wasn't the same. How could you put a eight foot tree in a trailer?

IC: Well, everyone was out by the end of August, I would say, because they realized that the semester would start. In fact, I believe, by the first part of August they tried to get as many as possible. The students would be back and they needed the dorms for the students.

So they thought about some canceling school during the summer. But then they talked it over and said that there were so many of them, like my husband, who receive VA benefits to go to school on. If they canceled school, they would cancel their checks. And many, like us would have been in a bind financially, so they decided to go ahead and hold school. That was our problem, my husband had to attend the classes and consequently, it took us longer, I think to clean up, then it normally would have, because he had to be there. And trying to get the kids organized, I was trying to help, there were so many things that I couldn't do.

MG: How did your kids feel about the flood or what was their general feelings?

IC: Well, I think they were excited about it, I mean it was an unusual even. But I think that they held up really well. I know that there were times when they would be working

all day long, and get very tired, then they would start getting cross with each other. I think everyone did that in that situation. You'd just have stop, take time out, relax and enjoy yourself. You just can't work all day long and not take time to enjoy something. I think the college, helped out a lot there too, because they showed movies there constantly, for the kids, day and night. Entertainment came in, of course, when the President of the Church came, that was very exciting for the kids.

It was so strange, we'd had beautiful weather until the dam broke, it was so nice and warm, like it is today. The weekend that the President came turned so cold. It had rained two or three days and everyone kept saying, "Oh, why did it rain?" it was so dusty, after the waters left that the rain was welcome. But the day that the President came, it snowed. It was really quite miserable, of course, it didn't stay on the ground. But it didn't stay.

But I think everyone was really uplifted, when they saw the President come. He was really mindful of the people's needs; I think he was really surprised to see how well the people held up. As he said, it was a real test, of the church's organizations and auxiliaries. He says, "It showed us just how well the church would really function, in the event of a crisis." I think that all in all, if all the members would react as the people in Rexburg did, I don't think we would have anything to worry about.

MG: How did you feel this showed the church in the public eye, as it was broadcasted over the radio?

IC: Oh, well, I'll tell you one thing. There were many, many nonmembers, living in Rexburg, Rexburg is not 100% LDS, you know, all those people who were in the area of a ward, of course, were checked by the Bishop, even though they were not members of the church. The Bishop went over there, or the Presidency of the Elders Quorum, and checked on every individual who lived within the ward boundary. If they needed any help whatever, they got it, from the church whether they were a member or not. I think this impressed a lot of people, to know that the church would step in. Other organizations in, such as the Red Cross, and started giving people aids, of course, food, clothing and all of that. They had food stamps available.

The one thing about the church is that, they didn't ask for anything back or anything in return. It wasn't "well, did you pay your tithing?" or "Have you done this for the church?" they came and just gave it to the people freely.

MG: Was it easier to get aid from the church or through the Red Cross and other Charity organizations?

IC: Well, the thing was, at first it was hard for them to get through, because they set up road-blocks all around the area because they were trying to keep sightseers out, after all, here we are trying to clean up our mess. That's all you need, is a lot of people going by looking and gawking. So when help did come they were stopping all the busses and all the people coming in, saying "Well, you can go through."

So the Church stepped in and started organizing bus loads of people to come in. Some of the people came from Southern Utah. I'd ask each group that would come in to help us, where they came from and I'd say, "What time did you get up in the morning?" Someone said, "Three o'clock."

They packed their own lunches, that was another thing that was surprising, they brought their own water too, because they said, they heard the water up there might not have been very good. So they brought everything with them. They brought their own cleaning stuff, their own mops, brooms and everything and cleaned up.

MG: How was the protection for the homes, during the flood that had been evacuated?

IC: Well, that was it. There had been a lot of looting going on. In fact, the police were really having a job trying to go around and stop people from looting. They said a lot of the looters were Rexburg people, but I think a lot of them were those who first got in from outside and were probably criminals or people who were known for their unholy activities. So the police just threw up those road blocks, I mean they were stopping every car and checking every car. If they looked like a known criminal then they would definitely stop the car. Someone robbed the jewelry store up town. After the flood they caught the two men who did that. I estimate they stole over ten thousand dollars in jewelry. I think that most of the homes, like I say, people were back down trying to clean them up. But they had curfews out. People couldn't be out after a certain hour on the street. The police were trying their best to ride through town and cover every area with protection.

We had one couple in our ward, this is what was strange, they had rented a storage shed out north of town here. Because they had moved her and couldn't find a place to move to, so they rented one of the trailers of the college up there. And turns out that they had their stuff, half of it, destroyed in the flood. So they picked out what they could and had it in a trailer on the back of the car, and had it parked up there I guess on the hill somewhere up there at the college. And someone came along and stole everything else that was left. So they had a total loss of everything.

They were building a home at the time, it was hit by the flood but they were at a stage that it didn't damage the house and they could clean it up easily. Most of the people that lost their goods, I would say a lot of them have replaced most of the things they lost. We replaced most of the things we lost, there's a few things we didn't bother replacing because they just weren't on a high priority on our list, or thing we really needed or wanted. But we did replace quite a few things. Got most of the things put back.

MG: As far as the communication goes, how long was it before you called out and let people know that you were alright?

IC: This is what was strange; there was no phone services available at all for about a week and a half. Then when our phone did work, it worked part of time part of the time it didn't. My folks had tried to call us time after time. We did get messages through.

We had a friend who had a ham radio outfit. We sent ham radio messages back to our folks to let them know how things were and how we were doing, that we were okay and all that. But the phone service was bad for quite awhile. Even all summer, it seemed like that half of the time, you would call a person up, one minute they would answer and if you called them back an hour later, you couldn't get through, they had a recorded message. "This number is no longer in working or in service at this time." And you would say, well, I know the people live there, they haven't moved. It was really hard.

We finally found out what was wrong with our phone. The ground wire was broken off, down in the basement, from the flood. We couldn't figure it out, people would say, "Well, we called you, we knew that you would be there at the house, and we called you and there was no answer." I said, "It never rang, but we were here." So we called the phone company and they came out and checked out our phone and found out, the wire was off. We've had good communications since then.

The funny thing was I guess, the phone company had a real to get all the phones back in. The thing was trying to locate all these people in the trailers and where they were at. Some people have their trailers parked on their own property, which wasn't too difficult. But those that were out in "Hudville" as we call it, they had to locate everybody and try to get their phones hooked up. It was really quite a task.

MG: As the flood left Rexburg, and moved down the river, how did or what were the stories you heard about it or did you listen to any of the reports?

IC: Well we were of course, I think everybody was watching television up at the Manwaring Center or listening to the radios and trying to find out the extent of the flood and where it was going to end up.

Someone said, "Well it looks like it's going to go down directly to American Falls Reservoir," then there was a big panic. They said that the dam down there is old, supposed to be replaced. It will never hold it.

Well, when they heard word that the dam up here had broken, they opened the flood waters and lowered the dam, up until the time the flood came so that when the water did come, it did absorb the water and take off the flow of it, without any problem. They said that it didn't even bother the dam, down there. But everybody down below the valley was just panicking because they said, well if that dam goes the next one will go. There was two or three of them in a line. The way they talked it would have gone all the way to the coast. People were really quite concerned. But it did absorb the overflow, the extra water easily.

I was really concerned, like everyone, to at least hope that no one else would get hurt in the flood or killed. We knew that the water was going to hit more homes, we just felt sorry for other people, who were involved in it too.

MG: How did you feel about the radio and television coverage; was it complete or could it have been better?

IC: I think it was really excellent. I would say they gave accurate stories as to what was happening.

You often wonder when you see a disaster in other areas. Is that really what's happening? Or is that just the worst of it. In other words, they'll take pictures of one area and maybe another area is not even bothered by it. Or it just might be in a small area.

But they took aerial photos, of the towns as the water was at its peak. There were photos of everything.

The lucky thing was, the man who witnessed, and photographed the breaking of the dam. That was really quite an experience. He wrote about his experience, I read it in two or three different places. He did have an article in the Readers Digest, on two of his experiences. I guess, they couldn't believe what was happening, it just seemed unreal.

Over the news and that we heard a lot of talk about the people's feelings towards the constructors and the builders of the dam and the government, how do you feel about those?

IC: Well, the majority of the people, I believe, were quite upset, because from what I have learned, I never paid much attention because I've only lived here two years. There was a lot of hard feelings in the first place to build it. They even had tried to get injunctions against building it. At one time they did have one stopping the construction of the dam for a period of time. But the Bureau of Reclamation went in there, they said "Well, we're right" so they went ahead and built it. Most of the people, I believe, felt it was being built well enough that is that it would withstand the flood, that at least it would hold. But the thing was, I think that they should have had more warning on it. They told us later after the flood that it was to take two years for that the dam didn't have time to settle and to pack in tight enough and that's what caused lead to the breakage of it. They say there's many, many causes, but this was one that really was on everybody's mind. They just put it in the wrong place and too much water behind it. The spill way wasn't completed to where they could open up the spill way and have the excess flow off. I think that they will rebuild it. I think there will be a need for it, eventually, but whether it will be back in the same spot, that's another thing.

MG: How would you feel about them building it in the same spot?

IC: I'm like everyone else; I think I would be against it in the same spot. But I think that if they built it in a different spot, one that's more geologically sound as far as rock formation and things like that go, I think that most of us would be for it. Most of us would like a concrete dam instead of earth, because that mud was something else to clean up.

MG: What did some of the people do to protect themselves from the flood?

IC: Well, a lot of them that did hear of it, we had several couples who lived in Rexburg has been flooded. This one couple said that he time before, they sandbagged their house, he said, "It came all around their house but didn't come anywhere near into the home." So this time they went out there and started to sandbag their house. They got it pretty well set up and everything. The flood came along, picked up every sandbag and floated it right off, and went into their house.

The problem was that, their home was one of the older homes in Rexburg and was built on the sandstone foundations. I went over to see this couple because I was involved as the women's home teacher, visiting teacher. My husband was at one time their home teacher. We stopped to see them and we went in that morning and the floor were sagging quite badly. We had to go back later that afternoon and she couldn't close one door in that house. None of the cupboards door would close they we all hanging crooked and everything. We were quite fearful for their life because I said what if this collapses on them in the night? They were sleeping in the house. We finally convinced them to move out of the house. A few days later they had to have the house torn down.

Since then they've had a new home built on the property, they're back into it, they seem very happy. She says, "I still miss my old house, so many things happened in it." I says, "Well, that's true you have a lot of memories but when you consider what happened in the past in the flood and all, you can really count yourself lucky, being able to have your home put back together." There's many, many people still who do not have their homes built, back to where they can even live in them.

I think everyday, we turn around we see people's homes torn down; most of them have been torn down. There's a few that still have the letters on them to be torn down or to be moved. I think most of them will be moved, that are left now.

Surprising how some of the old, old homes stood, and some of the new ones, like the Boise Cascade homes were picked up floated off and tore into pieces.

MG: How did they determine what houses were kept, and what houses were to be torn down?

IC: Well, they had building inspectors come around and every home was I checked, that was left standing for any damage. We had the inspectors in three or four times to determine if our basement was going to hold up, because the house we live in is an older home and the people built it but they didn't put any more basement to it.

The basement that was there was the original basement, to the original house. So they went in and checked everywhere for cracks, with flashlights, all kinds of lights, trying to see if there were any cracks or damages. Where they saw cracks or crumbling of the

concrete at all, then they determined that the house would be torn down, because it was unsafe. We were lucky, that they found no cracks in ours, that it was sound.

I think we were really lucky being where we were at. In fact, most of ours was water damage. But there were many homes on the north end of town there, who were struck with the big logs from the lumber mill. The flood hit those and picked up those big sixty foot timbers, as though they were match sticks and started them down the stream, anything that was in their way, was totally destroyed.

It is hard to imagine the force of the water. But when you see it picking up cars and homes, you know that its got to be strong.

MG: About how fast was the water going when it hit Rexburg?

IC: All I can say is that, it just seemed like it was minutes before you'd see it in our area, the next thing you'd look around and see it coming down another area. I think, when I finally realized that Rexburg was under water, was when I looked down the bottom of the hill, I believe, I believe it was, Pineview Apartments, there was a car sitting there and it was floating, that was only a block or two away from the college, you could see it. I looked down towards the Viking Motel and saw the water down there, and thought, well, the water is in our neighborhood, then we estimated, well we have a brick wall in our backyard and the waters came through there and just missed within two inches of the top of the wall. The wall is close to five feet high, so that's how high the flood waters came through when it did go through our area there.

Its funny,, the wall, we have a wall on three sides, the two side walls stood straight up and the back wall was totally wiped out, and it was made out of concrete blocks.

We still have not had that replaced. We don't know if they are going to replace it or who's responsible, or when we are going to get the damage on it replaced. But it seems strange; I just didn't realize how deep the water got.

The strange thing was, I had thirty tomato plants, sitting in cans on our barbeque, out in the backyard, we have one built in concrete, the water just came up to the very bottoms of the cans, they all stayed. But our neighbor, had a big, big empty, I guess its a hundred gallon tank. It picked that tank up and moved it clear around our wall into our backyard, on the other side, it floated in a big, long. We had three or four bails of hay, from where we don't know, in our backyard. And my patio chairs which were made of aluminum were still sitting on the patio, when we went back.

MG: What did the people do with the animals that had floated down the river, that were alive or how did they reclaim theirs?

IC: Well, a lot of farmers went looking for the livestock and find it...



We had some friends who had a horse. Their horse floated out of the corral, they looked and looked for it and never found it. Some friends, a couple of miles away, found their hoarse on their farm and called them and returned with the horse.

There was a whole herd of livestock up in Island Park that were not claimed. I guess, some of them weren't branded or had no way of telling who they belonged to.

They said that, if they weren't claimed by October, they were going to sell them in an auction.

MG: How were they cared for until they were claimed?

IC: The government did pay for the care. They were put on government range-land; up there the still had plenty of feed for them to eat.

MG: How long did it take you to determine your damages to your house, and go about getting money for it?

IC: Well, I took us about four or five months to get everything together for the claim.

MG: What were some of the things you had to make a claim?

IC: Well, we had to verify that we lost it all, for one thing. So each thing was beyond saving, we wrote down, made a list of each thing we threw out, that was no longer usable.

Then, like my couch, we had a bill from the company who reupholstered it, put down that it as flood damaged and that they had to repair it and the cost.

So, we had to wait till, we got all those estimates in. We also had to go through the catalogs and figure out how much it would cost us to replace the items. That took us a long time to do. We had to turn them all over to the Bureau of Reclamation.

It took us a month and a half to two months before we even got our reumbercements back.

MG: How did you prove your home was affected or did you have to keep records of that?

IC: Well, some of the things we had friends, who know us, verify that we had it. That's one way we had to do it.

We took pictures and then discovered that he camera was broken, all of the pictures were no good, they all came out black. So we were at a loss as to what to do. We told them what happened, they said to take pictures of everything. So were trying to find out what we could do, because some of the stuff, we had already thrown out. We were depending on the pictures to prove it. So they did take our word for it.

MG: How has this experience of the flood, helped you in your daily life?

IC: Well, I think it makes everyone more appreciative of just being alive. Because of everyone, after the flood kept saying, I wonder how many were drowned.

We felt gee, we were lucky, because it could have happened in the middle of the night. We think, what would our chances have been then.

I think its made everyone grateful that they were alive. I think its brought our family closer together, not that thyme were far apart before, but it seems like they realize that everyone has to help pitch in. Not that they were far apart before, but it seems like they realize that everyone had to help and pitch in, not just each person o their own thing or whatever they wanted when they pleased. Everyone was untied for a common cause. I really helped them to realize that if the Lord really needed to pitch in and help us as a group that we would do it. We would know from experience how to do it willingly. I think its helped me to understand, how the church works, especially the organizations and axillaries. I think it made us all appreciative that we have something to fall back on in a crisis. Also a place to go

Everyone said that hey were sure glad that Ricks College was here on the hill and not down in the lower end of town.

I think from experience of the flood, I sure know a lot of things I can do, a lot of things that I wouldn't do. Many people I've hard said they grabbed certain things and then realized it was dumb to have hat. My first reaction to save, was our genealogy because we have very little of it. What I have would be hard for me to replace it. Many of the people I have gotten my genealogy from has long since passed away. I would definitely have to go back to records and with our family the records are very difficult to find. I really thought more of the genealogy. One too I think, I would probably think about in case of another flood would be family pictures, because once they are taken and especially if the negatives are ruined. There is now ay you can replace them.

As far as temporal things, I think that most of us were wiling to sacrifice or loose our household effects our goods and all that. even our homes because we realize that they weren't important.