The Teton Dam Disaster Collection

Marvin Eld–Life During the Teton Flood

By Marvin Eld

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Box 6 Folder 4

Oral Interview conducted by Christina C. Sorensen

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Brigham Young University – Idaho

Christina Sorensen: Mr. Eld, will you spell your name please?

Marvin Eld: M-A-R-V-I-N E-L-D.

CS: Thank you. Would you please tell me how old you are?

ME: Forty-one.

CS: Where do you live?

ME: Here in Idaho Falls.

CS: Have you lived here all you life?

ME: No, about twenty years. I was born and raised in Minnesota.

CS: What is your position, your job?

ME: My present position is Director of Teton Interfaith Disaster Task Force.

CS: Could you explain briefly what that is?

ME: Yes, it's the non-denominational church response, or the all-church response to the disaster, the failure of the Teton Dam, and the coordination effort to put together each church's resources to meet the needs.

CS: How long have you been in operation? How long do you propose to be in operation?

ME: We were formed and officially started business on June 10th, 1976, five days after the dam broke. We've been in business until now, and we would expect to close next week. We have not quite completed the job, but rather that the support community is now able to take care of their neighbors and we don't need anymore. We don't want to be a crutch.

CS: Approximately how many churches have been involved in this?

ME: About thirty denominations, with the number of churches depending on how you break it down. Locally it's about fifty churches. Nationally, of course, it's talking about thousands of churches, and actually, we've had assistance from literally hundreds of churches.

CS: How have you gone about getting your volunteers?

ME: There are two types of volunteers. There are volunteers who do the kinds of work like cleanup, mechanical work, who are basically physical volunteers. Those can come from a different resource base and you obtain them differently than those who are

technical, or people counseling volunteers, because those who are technical, or people counseling also have to have special skills. We've had to do training and we've had to be rather selective in those people. We had, in some cases, large numbers of counseling type volunteers. Initially, we used two hundred trained advocates to reach each of the disaster victims, or try to touch each one of them physically, to get in touch with them, to see what they needed, where were they, what resources were they lacking to put it together? Then we could get a feel, not only for what could the churches do, but in many cases we became the voice back to agencies, as to what they should do, a disaster and mental health program. There were some initial feelings that we ought to have a massive mental health program, because this might be like Buffalo Creek. We didn't think that was true, but we didn't know, and neither did anyone else. From our advocates touching base we said, "no, but there are emotional problems. We really do have people who are going to have a difficult time coping. The loss is tremendous, so the right of mental help would be appropriate." In fact, the federal government funded about eight full-time social workers, rather than psychiatrists, to go out into the field to help people put together their family life again, and figure out where whey were, not so much from an analysis standpoint, but from a supportive standpoint. It worked overall really well.

CS: Where does most of your funding come from?

ME: Ninety-some percent of it is from churches, individually, or as a group. The denominations, the Episcopal Church sent $20,000, the Methodist Church, nationally, sent $20,000, but then the individual denominations with in the Methodist Church sent almost $20,000 more. We did receive about $150,000 in total donations from churches around the country.

CS: As far as your volunteers go, where have most of them come from?

ME: The physical type volunteers, over the long run have come from great distances, from Florida, Canada, Mexico, Washington, and of course, places in between. There are denomination like the Mennonites, who are part of what we're doing, who respond to disasters all over the world. They're professional volunteers. They really are tremendously beautiful people, and they have an immediate response program. You tell them how much you need in the way of physical helps and they send it in. The Christian Reformed Church is another church that is really dedicated to helping people after disasters. They have skilled people they send in, rather than physical workers. They send unskilled people who are counselors, trainers, and can run an office. The Christian Reformed Church donated all the facilities for this office so we could set it up, even though neither the Mennonites not the Christian Reform have a congregation in this area at all. They have no church members in the flood area. Last week we had a crew here from Oregon with the Congregational denomination; two weeks from now we've got a work crew coming in from California with the Presbyterian denomination. It comes from all sources.

Workers can come as a work crew, and not be a problem. We can use them for a week, or two weeks, or three weeks, whatever they're willing to donate. A lot of people came and took their vacations. Many other were retired and could come for a month or

six weeks. The physical workers came from a broad base. Initially, for the cleanup, we used the physical workers here, the local physical work would have worn out our own people. They just can't keep responding. Plus, we tended to turn to turn to our local people for skilled work, like counseling or doing income tax which became a whole problem we ought to talk about, a very serious problem. We used the local people for those things where we would need to give them special training. We would need to select them. We would need to have an opportunity to interview, to determine who would be capable of meeting that need and responding to it.

CS: Could you give any estimate at all as to the number of volunteers who helped overall, ones that came and ones including the full-time worker?

ME: About a month ago we determined that we had reached the point of a million man-hours of volunteers through Interfaith. At one time we had a constant work crew of Mennonites alone, of over fifty people every day as physical type workers and then there were, up until Christmas time, at least a hundred advocates, not daily, but contacting people several times a week. They were working probably twenty hours a week, on the average. Those were local people. Since Christmas, things quieted down. We've been able to sort out who had it together, and who still had problems. Even at this point there are about twenty-five advocates still in touch with the disaster victims, keeping rack of those who are having problems putting it together.

CS: Could you, beginning with the first day that you went into operation on June 10th, give a brief sketch of where you began, what were the first tasks you undertook, and how that has progressed up until this point?

ME: Yes, even at the beginning, we did not see ourselves as relief responding people. We were concerned about the long-run recovery. The Red Cross was here. The LDS organization was doing a beautiful job, immediately about relief response. We did get involved with some areas of relief response right from the beginning. We did set up an official non-profit organization so we could do things correctly. Then we started trying to se what were the long-range needs, even though we were helping with cleanup, with work crews, with electricians, with laundry, (we had a laundry truck running to Rexburg and bringing things back) that kind of relief. But our goal was to look and see what it's going to take to put it together.

I think from that standpoint, it was a very necessary decision, because by mid-July, early August, we found out that the relief agencies were gone, or going to be leaving soon. The Red Cross was only here for a short time. The Salvation Army was very small. Significant yes, but they were limited, limited in funds. They're here for the great crisis perhaps sometimes even for the publicized needs, then they tend to leave. The federal agencies started reducing their programs by august. The SBA said the loan program was over and we had to get an extension. WE found out that relief is very short. The heroic phase of a disaster is really very short.

If you want to really fulfill a role of Christian stewardship, then you need to look at who's going to take it down the road, step by step and day by day, to hold their hands and take them to the agencies, help fill out BOR claims, which even in August we began

to see was going to be a horrendous problem. Over 2,000 of the disaster victims are considered senior citizens, according to the senior citizens' statistics. They are not the kind of people who find it comfortable to prepare forms for the Government and do reams of paper work. So we could see right away that we were going to need to try to help people prepare clams and, in fact, we estimate that we've prepared over 2.500 claims for people. The average, the easiest clam, is going to take you six or eight hours if somebody will help you. Many of them took two, three, or four days. That's still going on. We're still doing claims today. We're still helping people prepare.

That also got us in the middle of what are some of the other problems that happen? People will need financial assistance perhaps. We put together a lot of cases of helping someone where the federal programs didn't help. Federal government doesn't buy contact lenses, they'll buy you glasses in an emergency, but they won't buy contact lenses. We had a fellow that needed contact lenses. Not a big thin, but if you've spent your money surviving, you can't wait if you don't have any funds. Several families sent their children away at the time of the flood. Then when they started to get back together and they found housing, they didn't have the money to get them back, couldn't get the bus fare and they couldn't go get them. So we got involved with transportation to bring families back. In some cases, HUD could work out housing problems, but it might be a week. So we found families in the community that would let another family stay in their house for a few days, even in October or November, after the heroics were over, but when problem still came up.

CS: You mentioned income tax?

ME: I wanted to back up as we went along. We identified that there were needs that were in group situation. By August, most of the children had really pitched in and helped their parents, and had been in the flood working and hadn't a chance to get away, and the stress could rea-ly be a problem. So we went to the YMCA, the Girl Scouts, the scouting programs and said, "We'll put up some funds if we can come up with a community camp program to get every child out of the disaster for one week." That was a goal, and we accomplished every child having an opportunity. We were extremely surprised at the response of older youth. We kind of thought we really need to do this for five, six, eight, ten, twelve-year olds. But we included the program for sixteen through eighteen-year olds—fifteen through eighteen. We said, "Well, there probably won't be any response." But we literally had a couple of hundred of those older youth that I think had just been in it so long that they needed to get away. That became something that we had to coordinate and put together. We funded a significant amount of it, about $10,000 spent on the camp program.

Later in the year, we began to see stress build up. People under strange environments were beginning to feel stress. We had not recognized fully what was happening, but Thanksgiving weekend, to us here, was very significant, because we had fifteen suicide calls that weekend. Now these were people who just were desperate, they didn't know what else to do. It wasn't real. They were saying, "Somebody's got to help me. I'm at the end of my rope." By being available and answering the phones, we did and still do have twenty-four, seven-day telephone responses. We'd say, "Okay, we know your problems. We know what you're going through and here are some things we're

going to do starting next Monday to help you." We were able to avert them. I'm not saying that any of them were real. They were rather desperation class. After that, the Monday after Thanksgiving weekend, we said, "Why? What's going on? Why was this weekend so much worse than anything before?" we realized that was the first holiday season when family, home, community were part of their tradition, and the whole thing wasn't available and they really felt the loss.

We said, "Hey, we've got to do something for Christmas, or we're going to have one horrible time." We put out the word across the Northwest, "Who can help us respond to the needs here for Christmas?" Churches were asked if they could donate decorations that were good, used, boxed, and labeled. We bought lights. The Jay Cees said, "We'll buy 1,500 trees" and they delivered 1,500 trees. A lot of people, mostly senior citizens, said, "We can make decorations. We don't have money." We bought the materials, raw materials, and gave them to the senior citizens at the old folk's home. Some of the schools were given materials to make home-made decorations. We could go out to literally every home say, "Here's something so you can have a little traditional Christmas." It won't be the same, but Christmas will come to you home." We took a list of children and tried to give a package to every child. I don't know that we made every one of them but we tried to. Some of the people said that they could take care of it, they were not hurting. We tried to make sure that there weren't any children in the area that didn't get a Christmas present. That came primarily from churches again, almost all over the country, responding. Many of them do gather presents for Christmas time, so they sent them to us to distribute. We had literally, truck loads of supplies to take out. Consequently, we had zero suicide calls Christmas. Maybe there were other factors that influenced it, but we certainly saw the difference.

Then in December we began to recognize that income tax was going to be a problem. We asked IRS to respond. I talked to the director, the regional director, and said, "There's going to be a horrible problem." They set up three seminars at Ricks. We used the facilities there, and that worked well, except that they were seminars put on by tax professionals. The disaster victims didn't even know what they were talking about. All it did was add to the confusion. It was really another disaster, and yet the people were excellently qualified. But you can't in four hours, explain income taxes to the average citizen. A citizen who's under extreme stress and pressure from all other problems of life can't be expected to learn. It just wasn't possible. IRS had never addressed problem like this in any other disaster. It's never happened before. Most disaster victims don't receive money. It's a matter of a loss, not gain. We didn't even have the proper forms. There was no program available. Companies like H&R Block don't have anything in their manuals about this kind of a problem. There weren't any resources to respond. So in desperation almost, we began to prepare our own tax program, to see whether we could put something together, because people were asking questions and they had to start doing it. In January you've got to start preparing. People are required to turn them in by the end of January. Others are by the end of February. Not everyone gets to wait until April fifteenth. After we started working on it, we found an individual in IRS, who wanted to help us, who was local and saw the problems, and said, "I'll work with you. As you put things together, bring them over and I'll at least critique them." We developed a program, and we started doing taxes. We trained fourteen volunteers from the local community to be tax preparers on disaster taxes. We

started preparing taxes and submitted them to IRS. The first ones we submitted right here locally to see if this would work and the feedback we got was, "Yes, it'll work fine. Keep doing it. We need your help."

In February, the IRS in Washington, and the regional office decided that they were supposed to respond. They sent out their instructions and their own forms and it was another disaster because it wasn't prepared here, using input from people who understood the problem. It was written in very technical language. The average family panicked. IRS mailed it to every disaster victim, and when they received them in the mail they didn't know what to do with them. They didn't understand it and all it did was add to the problem. We ended up doing about a thousand people's taxes, plus a lot of people called in, found out from us basically what to do, picked up forms from us rather that using the ones that from the IRS, and prepared their own. It worked reasonably well. Unfortunately, it's going to continue to be a problem year after year. It's not over.

Another problem area that was unique here, but won't be in the future, persons in the area who were receiving supplemental income, SSI, or food stamps, were sent notice that if they had not reinvested their BOR payments, or payments for flood damage in six months, they would be cut off from, effectively, food stamps and welfare. You cannot reinvest in six months if you can't find a contractor, and there was, and still is, such a shortage of contractors that the people who have small jobs, home repairs, little houses, are at the end of the line. They can't get any priority at all. So we found that they were being cut off. Then they were going to have to spend that BOR payment for living expenses. That means they don't have the money to rebuild when they can find a contractor. It also means they've not spent it on reinvestment and so they have to pay taxes. They're low income people or they wouldn't have qualified in the first place. The whole thing was wrong. We started a really loud battle to straighten that out and after meetings with the governor and Secretary of the Interior Andrus, and Senators Church and McClure, we really got some attention to the problem. The Bureau of Reclamation picked up a solution. It's really a patch, not the right solution, but a patch to that problem, so that those people receive the same benefits as a result of disaster conditions, rather than being paid by welfare, or the Department of Agriculture food stamps. This worked fairly well.

The first of May, there was a determination made by Social Security, that Medicaid to people who were under the welfare program would be cut off. Well, this meant that if you went to the hospital, you could spend your entire payment in one trip if you lost your Medicaid, and this was horrible. Plus, it was something that was almost impossible for the Bureau of Reclamation to pick up. They're not in the medical insurance business. They'd have to have a whole new program and a whole new organization to even begin to address it. So, we started in May on another major hassle, to stop the cut-off, because the first people were to be cut off the first of June. We didn't succeed in stopping it, but we did succeed in getting Mr. Oreo, the head of the Department of Aging, out of Washington, D.C. in a meeting with us, understanding the problem and who would be affected. The governor became very much involved, very concerned, and between those two people, they got in touch with Secretary Telefano, and the governor received a letter from the Secretary of Health and Welfare that there would be no one cut off from Medicaid. Because it is a state-administered program, Governor Evans issued a directive, telling the people in Easter Idaho that they were not to cut

anyone off. Now, this is the first of July, and that's where it's still standing. It's not really been resolved, except there's an order not to cut them off, but the corrections have not been made to make the problems go away. Therefore, the next disaster, when people borrow money to rebuild their homes and the money is in the bank because they can't pay the contractor, they will be cut off from Medicaid.

As summer came, or late spring, we did begin to see an increase in crisis calls. Again we started to see two or three suicide calls a week. I think it had to do with purely time, that when a year, or nearly a year had gone by, and you still had not been able to resolve your problems, and put it together, you didn't even have any viable plans, you became desperate. Some of them didn't really have a lot of options, and they weren't able to cope with where they were, and what to do. That's still an existing condition, because the percentage is very small, but there are in every large group of people, people who are unique.

The person who lost three family members in the flood, and has not been able to cope with working since, had a great loss in income. And yet, BOR said, "There's no reason why you can't be earning money." But the stress, the whole thing has destroyed him as a person and he's not able to. It's really a mental stress situation, and he's not put it together, but with the problems he has, I can understand it. I don't know what you do, because even today, he hasn't put it together, and he's now lost all of his income from a year and it's nearly wiped him out, he's nearly bankrupt.

Another lady lived in a house that was so marginal before the flood that if you'd have inspected it, you'd have condemned it. But she was living in it. It was her home and she really considered it adequate. Now, when the Bureau has to examine paying for damages, the flood damages were not really significant. But no one will take the contract to repair the house, because they wouldn't have repaired it before the flood. But she can't understand that, and how do you tell her? What does she do when it's not repairable, and she's offered a few thousand dollars, because of the flood damage, but the best bid she has is $50,000? Where does she go from here? It's not the Bureau's fault, and yet it's one of those unique ones, of which there are a small number. But in seven thousand claims there's probably fifty or a hundred families that fall in that.

CS: Overall, could you make some evaluation of how you feel the flood has affected the lives of the people in general?

ME: The entire situation is very different in the kind of people affected. Appalacia, right now has another Buffalo Creek on their hands. I'm involved with it, and it's going to be just like it. Our people here are much more self-sufficient. There were much more capable of responding, plus we all received some government funds to rebuild, sometimes adequate, sometimes inadequate, but we did receive money, which is not true in any other disaster. So it makes those situations different. Yet the stresses, the underlying problems, making decisions, of people coping with life, are here, too. It became such a burden with all of the things that had to be done at one time, the continual need to keep the pressure on, to keep driving, driving, driving. If you were going to put it together at all, you couldn't relax, you couldn't do the things that you ought to.

I can go back to myself and say that I realized in early December that I hadn't had a day off for anything. I'd worked seven days a week, solid. I went to a seminar on

disasters in Colorado, to be a resource person, and there was a psychiatrist there that I didn't know, but he took an interest in me. He said, "Man, you better back down, you're going to blow yourself apart. You can't keep going. You're almost on the edge of a nervous breakdown." I said, "No, you must be crazy. I don't have those kinds of things." He said, "You can't live in that kind of stress, day in, day out, without having had tremendous effects, and you've got to back away from it, of the rubber band will snap. You've got it stretched almost to the end. I realized that that was true, and I hadn't even lost anything. I just was working with people who did.

The loss of identity is a horrible thing. When you lose a family member in death, you still have all the supportive community, and you have the supportive environment. Even if your home is in a fire and you lose it, the community is still there. You still know who you are. But when you're in a disaster like this and the whole town is wiped out, you're not living where you were, your momentos, your traditions, the documents, the artifacts, that are really significant as to who you are, are gone. You really begin not to know who you are. Then when you don't know the person next to you, because you're in a HUD trailer in a trailer court and it's a whole new environment. We could see the temporary breakdowns. I can think of a lady whose husband is a very successful businessman in Rexburg, and she's a very supportive wife to his, involved in church activities, and all kinds of things. She's really an on-the-ball type gal. In October, I went out to her house and found her sitting there sewing. And she had been sewing the same hole in the same piece of cloth for over an hour, just running the needle back and forth. She lost track. All of a sudden she was numb. I talked to her and I found out that she'd been having those kind of problems, that the pressure had gotten so much, that sometimes I think the protective devices take over, and your just don't even know anything for awhile. She was adequately equipped to deal with life. I'm sure that that was happening to everyone, to some extent or another. We found people that couldn't remember very simple things, like their birth date, when you were trying to fill out a form, or maybe their children's names. It was just too much for them to cope with at that point in time.

Another thing that was helpful to us was a gentleman named Dr. Farborrow, who is the father of suicide prevention programs, in the United States, perhaps in the world. He came up here in July and said that if we were going to prevent suicides what we had to do is keep options open. People only commit suicide when they have no other option, when they think there's no other option. If you keep a phone line open then there's always someone they can call for help. If there is someplace that they get a response, even though the response ends up saying you can't to what you want to do, then there is always an option. Then you can prevent suicides. We took that very seriously in the things that we did, and we heard people in their earliest cries for help and tried to make sure that options were kept open, that the doors were open, that somebody was touching back with them regularly. Are you putting it together, do you still know where you're going, do you still have an option? And I think that makes a lot of difference in all crises, but particularly where it's broad and you lose commonality and identity.

CS: Very generally, within the scope of what we've been talking about, what problems do you think in particular have been taken care of? And which ones do you see as still continuing problems that remain to be solved?

ME: The people of this community, and I would assume in any community who are capable of coping pretty well with life in general, may have felt some very bad effects during the months after the disaster, but in general, they have put enough together that they now have identity, commonality, support, community, and they can care about their neighbors, which is also part of what makes us whole. The people who were surviving marginally are the ones who are still having trouble in almost every case. It's those who were marginal before, who didn't have much room for error and didn't have the maneuverability; those are the ones that we really have to be concerned about, because they still haven't put it together today. If someone doesn't keep helping them to the next step, they're not going to survive the long haul.

CS: What overall changes to the community involved do you foresee or have you seen as chief?

ME: Each community in the disaster is unique. We didn't have on disaster. We had five. Rexburg, Sugar City, and Wilford, were a totally different situation than Roberts. We saw some early responses in Sugar City that were tremendously heartening. We were really pleased. We from Interfaith were the first to suggest that they look into geothermal, to put in a different type of heating system. We put together the program to bring the experts to have them start looking into it. We then saw Rexburg making some plans, getting together as a community to see, "What do we need to do and how do we respond?" We saw Roberts doing nothing, literally nothing, for a period of time. We were greatly concerned that they were just going to sit and be idle. Looking back at the end of a year, I see Firth is a city or town that has done very little. It still doesn't seem to have been accepted as part of the disaster. It was marginal before the flood and it's more marginal now. It's a sad situation. We have had quite a few volunteers down there helping, but it doesn't seem to make any great impression.

Roberts was gradual, but they began to put it together well. I'm extremely enthused about Roberts. Roberts was a city that I thought would have died in five or ten years without the flood. I think now it's a city that's going to be healthy in five or ten years. In fact, of all the cities in the flood, Roberts looks the best to me in the long run. They have stayed practical. They have done the kinds of small things that make sense. They haven't stuck their neck out. They look like they're in good shape to go someplace in a very gradual way.

Sugar City has some serious problems. The increase in value of property, the horrendous jump, meant that people have invested money to buy property, then invested a lot to build new homes, and most of these did not get paid that much. They have large mortgages on those homes. They were low income people, in general, in Sugar City. Sugar City was not an affluent city. Now with expensive homes, expensive mortgages at high interest rates, they're going to have to pay high taxes, they're going to have to pay much higher insurances, and unless they change their income, their standard of housing is above their income level. I look for some real problems in three or four years as Sugar City shakes back down into the kind of town that can really pay their bills.

Rexburg is pretty sound, I think. The significant thing there is as a town, they work together, and I don't think they're going to stop. There's been a spirit of cooperation in Rexburg that's going to help them over the long haul. That's probably

more valuable than the business investments. I tend to wonder if the business investments, the new investments in Rexburg, can compete with the businesses of Idaho Falls. Unfortunately, that's reality. They are in competition with Idaho Falls and they're going to have a difficult time. Over the long haul, some of those businesses may find themselves in trouble.

CS: I've heard some expressions that following the disaster there's been some difference in treatment of these various communities due to political reasons, political pull and this type of thing. Without going into any details, do you think that there's generally any basis for this?

ME: No, it's not really based on that. It's a fact of life that the response goes where the highest publicity is. We found out that the volunteers wanted to go to Rexburg, because Rexburg was the place that was on television. Rexburg was the place that got the publicity right at the beginning. It was exciting. It was traumatic. It made great pictures. And the television cameras could get a whole lot of new things, so they covered Rexburg. Who wanted to go to Roberts while it was still under water? We found that it was almost accidental. It was not so much intentional, as the emphasis went to the areas that got the publicity. And that's what hurt, it really hurt the little towns of Roberts, Menan, Firth. They didn't even get television coverage. Sometimes they didn't get volunteer help. There was not a single LDS bus that I know of that went to Roberts. You know, every night on television were pictures of the strings of buses going to Rexburg. The same thing when the senators came, they went to Rexburg. You had to be able to talk about Rexburg, and you had to go to the dam, if you were going to go back to Washington. If you were here with the Department of in Interior, you went to where the publicity was. It was just one of those things. It's unfortunate, and I don't know what to do about it. You recognize it and you try to prevent it in the future, but it'll always happen. It always will.

CS: Very briefly, could you just give your general opinion of the roles that the government played and how effective the various government agencies have been such as HUD's different problems?

ME: Yes. The overall government response is amazing. I could not believe the humanity, the humanist, the caring of government people, in trying to really help thousands of disaster victims. The logistics are enormous. As we got involved we found out that no matter what agency was here, you were dealing with an enormous problem. Every disaster's unique, and this one, of course, was the most unique. HUD normally brings into a disaster, at the most, two or three hundred trailers. Here they brought 2,000. They had all kinds of problems. But the overall job was really outstanding. If you happened to be one of the individuals who got in a problem you had a real problem and it was sad, because the government agencies operate on rules and they have to do things en masse. If it fits, it went chugging along very fast. If you got out of step with it, you were out and you couldn't ever get back in almost. That's bureaucracy. But they did a good job. The Bureau of Reclamation, I think, has processed of the claims paid, 90% of them very well. They have not been ripped off, and yet they've been pretty fair. If you're one of the ten percent, you're pretty unhappy. But that's a pretty high percentage. They've

done a good job in total. We've been involved in some of the few that have not been so good, and they're always very complicated. Now, each of the agencies comes in here with restricted role. They tried to meet people's needs but they are guided by rules. That we had to live with.

CS: Do you feel that in all the communities that were affected by the flood, is there any strengthened sense of unity?

ME: Yes. I think overall, definitely. And I'd like to use another word, a strengthened sense of brotherhood, of responsibility for our fellowman, of being willing to do a little more for someone else.

CS: How about the volunteers that came in both with your group and then other volunteers from other groups that came into the area, did you find that in most cases they were able to relate to the people here, to feel for the experiences they had undergone, or were there ever any problems which arose from a lack of understanding between the outsiders, and the communities here?

ME: In general, there was not a problem at all, because every volunteer that I was involved with, everyone that I met, came here with the real purpose of serving and helping someone less fortunate. They came with the right motives. Sometimes there were problems on the part of the recipient, not because they weren't nice, but because so often, people would say, "I want you to help my neighbor first." You just can't go down the line, and be passed from neighbor to neighbor. Everybody was concerned about someone else needing the help more, and really, there was enough help to try to help everyone. But, probably the biggest problem was the disaster victims saying, "Help someone else first," when we had the resources to help both of them.

CS: Do you feel that your total experiences of this last year have affected or changed your life, or in any way strengthened your values, spiritual, or otherwise?

ME: For twenty years I've been involved in management of things. I'm a specialist in management in the nuclear industry, highly technical type work, primarily with things, with data, with people sometimes, but people involved in producing things. Last June 10, I got involved with people at the gut level, day-to-day. I'll never be the same again, by any means. I have considered myself a person involved in my religion and in the religious community for many years. For the first time, I really found out what Christ was talking about when he said, "To help our fellowmen, to feed and clothe, and to take a drink of water." Those things that are necessary. I found out how important that is, and that, in fact, we really don't do anything about preaching the gospel to someone until we have taken care of those needs first. I'm having to face the decision of where do I go from here? I have the opportunity to go back into the industry that I that I'm a professional at. I don't feel that I'm going to be very satisfied working with things when I found out what it means to serve people.

CS: I can't think of any more specific questions, but is there anything else that you would like to say at this point or any feeling that you would like to express?

ME: Yes. We haven't said much about the effect on the religious community. I think it's been a miracle, it really has, the working together, of taking of hands all the denominations, even those who were not used to cooperating. The Christian Scientists, the Seventh Day Adventists, they're not normally part of any church co-operation program. They responded to human needs. We did not have an official type arrangement with the LDS and yet the co-operation, the working together, was there. We met, we talked, we shared, we planned things together, we did it together. It was all of us, as the Body of Christ, in total, responding to human need, that will make this community totally different, a religious community. I think that's where we will really never be the same again. We can never be as bigoted, we can never be as narrow, we can never be as mean as we may have been in the past, because we don know that every church cares and is willing to serve when the time comes.

CS: Thank you, Mr. Eld.