

September 11 1972

Mr. Robb DeWall  
c/o KOTA  
Rapid City SD

Dear Robb:

I am responding to your request for experiences with radio and TV during the flood. Let me set the stage a little: I and my 90 year old mother live high and dry near St. Johns Hospital. I had a daughter and six-year old granddaughter living at the Brookdale Court. But, my mother and I were in very isolated ranch country about 150 miles north of Billings, visiting another daughter of mine.

Friday nite, I had gone to sleep with my little transistor radio playing thru an earplug. Fortunately, the batteries were fresh, the volume was low, and so did not go dead. I woke up at about 4:30 a.m. with KSL-Salt Lake "Nitecap" program playing in my ear. The first thing I consciously heard was a phone call from a man who said "Isn't it horrible about Rapid City?" That of course, brought me wide awake. I got enough from the call to know it was a flood and bad. I continued to listen, got the CBS 5 a.m. news, which gave some details, enough to make me very fearful for the safety of the Brookdale Court.

At 5:30 I woke my daughter. She said, "let's try calling". At that hour, we did get a phone call thru with no trouble, to a nephew who lives in north Rapid, as I thought if my daughter and granddaughter were alive, they would likely be there. He assured us that they were alive and well, because he had called them the night before and asked them to leave the trailer court and go up to my house near St. John's. Another phone call direct to my daughter was made.

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In that part of Montana, so isolated, radio and TV reception is quite undependable, but we did get some national TV news thru Billings and Great Falls, and some radio news. On the Sunday night, I was just twirling the dial of my little transistor radio when I heard the words "...all Soo San workers are to report as usual for work tomorrow!" For about 2½ hours we listened to KOTA radio, getting a very "there" feeling of what was going on in Rapid. I have since found that my sister-in-law, who was visiting her daughter in Calgary, got this same program on a car radio in Calgary.

I have not personally talked to any person who was in RC that night who got ~~their~~ <sup>his</sup> first warning of the flood danger by radio, apparently everyone in RC was either watching TV or wasn't aware of danger at all. The main criticism I have heard, is that the TV warnings were visible only, on those little ribbons across the bottom of the screen, and most people didn't take them seriously. (My own experience with those things, on other occasions such as elections, is that they whiz by much too fast for me to read more than a few words.) Undoubtedly, now, looking back, most people feel that the TV stations should have broken in with audible warnings in addition to the visuals. But of course, no one could foresee such a disaster at that point, apparently.

My daughter who lived in Brookdale Court, was watching TV, but she said that to her, the warnings gave the impression that "well, if you are worried, maybe you will want to get out, just suit yourself". She herself was not alarmed by them, and would not have left Brookdale, if her cousins had not called her and told her to do so. And she was so sure she would be back in the morning that she didn't take a thing with her except her purse.

I hope this rather too long letter will help you in some way. And I wish you good luck in your thesis writing. *And it is nice to have you back - I missed you when you were gone.*

Sincerely  
Clara B. Lobdell