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August 25, 1972

Mayor Don Barnett
Office of the Mayor
Rapid City Municipal Building
22 Main Street
Rapid City, S.Dak. 57701

Dear Don:

Since the June 9th Rapid City area flood disaster, I have been working on a paper dealing with broadcasting's role in the rescue and recovery operations, and it is in this regard that I am writing. I plan to submit the paper as a Master's Degree thesis for the University of Iowa graduate journalism program, where I previously have earned my classroom credits, and I would very much appreciate some of your thoughts on this subject for use in my thesis.

That thesis will focus largely on the period of the immediate emergency-- that period beginning about 6 p.m. the evening of June 9th and continuing through the following week. It will chronicle the early broadcast warnings, the first formal news reports, the civil defense broadcasts, and the special reports and panel discussions aired during that first week (and after).

In my professional capacity with Duhamel Broadcasting Enterprises (in addition to my civil defense broadcast work June 10th), I was directly involved in all these aspects of the broadcasting on KOTA AM-TV, so I am able to write from a singular vantage point on just what was done. But, your comments on the import of that broadcasting in the emergency stricken community would be a valuable asset to my paper.

Undoubtedly there are things which broadcasting should have done that were not done or that were done that could have been done more efficiently. But, it is my personal thesis that on that grim "morning after" on June 10th broadcasting to a strong degree helped avert possible panic in the community, which I think was minimized because there was at least the one communications link (civil defense) open in the paralyzed community, and through which the public was being given the uncolored truth about just what had happened, what was happening at the moment, and what had to be done to help the situation as much as possible.

I would sincerely appreciate it if you might find time in your busy schedule to give me your thinking on this subject: the role of broadcasting in the Rapid City flood disaster.

Sincerely,


Robb DeWall

PS: Inclusion of some comparative comments on broadcasting in the second flood emergency a week later also would be most helpful.