

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

1985 Tornado Victims

Personal Experience

O.H 1194

SUSAN HEATHERINGTON

Interviewed

by

Molly McNamara

on

November 9, 1988

Susan Heartherington

Miss Susan Heatherington was head of the Niles Recovery Coalition, providing relief to the 1985 tornado victims. Her perspective of the tornado is different from the victims' because she was a member of a relief organization. The Coalition was created by a nation wide Church World Services, which helps needy people recover from disasters. Miss Heatherington explained how the organization functioned. They were made up of a number of religious denominations, all designed to help the people of Niles. Unlike the Red Cross, the Coalition provided recovery several months after the . tornado, instead of immediate relief. After determining who were the neediest families in Niles, the Coalition offered funds. Their relief was very successful and accomplished a great deal both socially and monetarily.

M This is an interview with Ms Sue Heatherington for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Tornado Victims by Molly McNamara, at 920 Cynthia Court in Niles, Ohio, on November 9, 1988, at 6.30 pm

Ms Heatherington, tell me a little bit about yourself Give me some background on yourself

H Well, I am an elementary school teacher and I have been in the Niles area for about 10 years During my years here in Niles, I have worked as a teacher and also as a social worker I worked for Catholic Community Services for several years, which is a social service outreach branch of Catholic Charities, and that ultimately is how I got involved in the tornado recovery program

M Now the recovery coalition, that was already established before the tornado? That already existed?

H Oh, no It is the recovery program that grew out of the interfaith community The local pastor's churches came together immediately following the disaster I believe it was the very next day.

M I did not know that

H They had a meeting at the Methodist Church and they gathered for the purpose of establishing some kind of direction in the church's response to the community need And at that time, they did not really know exactly how to deal with the problem There are many facets to this that you may not be aware of

M I have come across this in the newspapers and all, but as far as knowing the background of it or anything, I do not know

H Well, there is an organization in the United States called Church World Services, which is one of the largest disaster response programs Well, disaster response is only one facet of their work But one of the things that they do is they get in touch with local communities that experience disasters almost right away following something like this, and offer their assistance because they have a lot of expertise They have trained people that know exactly how to come in to the community to address their needs So that is what happened. Church World Services made contact here with, I believe it was the Methodist pastor He said, "We will call your people together and we will have a meeting We will send somebody down to help " So that was how the ball got rolling

My own personal involvement stemmed out of the fact that I had worked as a social worker for Catholic Charities for several years, and I always worked in the summer, just as a kind of "help out" with vacations and so forth And the director over there called me and said, "If you are not doing anything else this summer, why do you not come and see if we can put you to work here?" So I

went. And initially, of course, there was no money. There was nothing in the beginning, and Catholic Charities decided that the best way they could respond to the immediate need was to provide whatever needed to be done to establish an office. So they came up with money to put in telephones and hire someone to work to put the program together. And that was me.

They hired me and they hired a secretary for me, and we established an office. I guess the 21st of June was the day the office opened. Up until then, I was just kind of running around, working out of the back seat of my car, and we were in the Board of Education Building downtown. They gave us space because they had people off for the summer. After that we moved into the Trinity Lutheran Church on Chestnut Street, and that was where we spent the rest of our existence, working out of that office. Anyway, Church World Services came in and they had volunteers who gave us books and guide sheets and some general direction, and also were willing to help fund the program if needed. So that kind of got the ball rolling and the director of Catholic Charities, whose name was Kate McCullough, she was on the initial board made up of the pastors and herself. She represented the Catholic facet of the community.

M: Before we get too far ahead, let me go back a little bit before and talk about the tornado. You live on Cynthia Street. Now do you remember the tornado happening? Do you remember that day? Were you home?

H: Yes, I remember it quite well.

M: Tell me about that first, please.

H: Well, I was not at home when it happened. I was at the Eastwood Mall and I knew that there was a storm coming. It looked real nasty that day and the neighbors were downstairs. We had gone over to the mall to pick something up. We were on our way out and we were approaching the front entrance when all the lights went out in the mall. And I heard a terrific noise. It sounded like a freight train just going right over the roof. And I said, "That must have been a terrific storm, to hear it inside the mall." Because you never hear anything in the mall. Anyway, we walked out and we had missed it by seconds because we were just probably within 30 feet of the entrance. And when we walked outside, there were about 100 people standing there and they were all just staring at the sky in silence. We stood there looking at them, and then my friend turned around and said, "What is everybody looking at?" It was a real awesome moment. And then everybody started to talk at once and pointing to the sky and saying all this stuff. And somebody said, "It had to be a tornado, I never saw anything like it." Well, she looks right in the direction and where they were pointing, she lived at the time. So we got in the car and we came immediately down. I had to have been the second or third car down the street after it hit because when I got to her driveway, she lives right on 46 right by the fire station. She did at that time. I said, "I am not going to pull in your driveway. I am going to

go home to see my own house, which was on the other side of the cemetery. So she got out of the car and walked in, and I came down and as I got to what should have been the convenient store, I saw the most awesome thing I had ever seen in my life. Everything was just smashed all over the street and there were cars and there were people, there were uprooted trees. It was like driving into a movie without a script. I just did not know what to do. And of course, I could not drive any further.

M Yes, I was going to say, how did you get through? That is amazing, you got that far.

H I did not. I got as far as the fire station and there were firemen there and by then, I had to be just seconds ahead of the crowd because immediately, they were blocking off traffic but I was there. I turned around in the fire station there and went back up and just got out of my car and went back to where I was, and I was very anxious about the condition of my own home because you have no way of knowing. I was only a few blocks from the cemetery. So I went back and, of course, they would not let me leave. Finally, I said, "I am going home." And I started to walk and down through the cemetery. And at that point they were letting people walk through there because they had to and I walked through the cemetery. It looked like a war zone. It was unbelievable. I had to climb over the trees and down in ditches. Very awesome.

Anyway, I got to the other side and I got home and everything at home was fine. I took the dog, locked up the house and started back because my friends had insisted if you get through, make sure you come back because we will not know if you are okay and I would have been home alone. I live alone. So I went back, and as I was walking through the cemetery going back, I could see them on the other side very anxiously waiting for me, and there were people everywhere. Then they were yelling through these bullhorns, calling to clear the street because they had spotted another tornado that was supposed to be coming and people were panicking.

There was a woman there, an older woman that was carrying a shopping bag and she got stuck down in a ditch and could not get out. It was like a big ravine. A tree had fallen down. So I tied my dog to a stump that was there and went down in the ravine and got her out. I brought her up and gave her to some high school kids that were going through and asked them to take her the rest of the way. Then I went back and people who were on the streets came into the basement to where we were, everybody was doing that because they were trying to get people off the street. Then we waited until about 11.00, when they said that it was clear and people could leave. I have no idea who those people were that were with us that night.

M I know what you are talking about because, just from experience. I live on North Bentley and we had people. People flew down from my fiancé's

house because they lived on Roosevelt, and there was supposed to have been a big gas leak, so everybody came down to our house and we had people that I still do not know who they are

H I remember taking food out of the freezer and we had some frozen lunch cakes and things. We were trying to keep the kids happy and entertained, and we were all in the basement. It was so interesting. It was like we established this relationship for that moment in time. I would not know those people if I saw them again.

M That is neat how people come together when something like that happens.

H The next day, was kind of awesome for me, personally. I got terrified. Well, I left home early the next morning and drove out towards Warren. And at the time, I was teaching at St. James in Warren, so I figured I would go up that way and stop at somebody's house I knew and see if I could get a phone. In the meantime, while I was gone, the National Guard arrived and consequently, I could not get back in. When I came back, I did reach my family on the phone and then I turned around to come back home and I just could not get anywhere near. They had sealed off all the main streets and they were not letting people in.

M Did you have to show proof of identity or something?

H Yes, I did. I finally went all the way out to 82 and came down Tibbets-Wick road to Robbins Avenue and got back to my own house on Lincoln Avenue. But then to get back to where I wanted to be, which was on the other side, up 46 -- I was going to stay at a friend's until it was all over -- I could not get through. They would not let me through. I finally went back and got some mail from my desk and I had nothing with me. So I went through some mail that had my name and address and things on and I went back up to the cemetery and I started to cry and I pleaded with the guy. I said, "I live alone and I cannot stay there alone and these people are waiting for me and I need to get through." So he said, "Okay." He took me by the arm and walked me through. By that time, they were concerned about people's safety. There were power lines down. So he walked me through and when I got home -- I had left the house at about 5:45 a.m. of course -- nobody slept that night. We sat up with candles and everything. I left the house at 5:45. I never got back until 3:30 in the afternoon. So I had decided that I was never going to leave that house again for the rest of my life. And I stayed there for a couple of hours and then I decided to take a walk. I went across the street and those people, their backyards, there on 46, are in Shadowridge development, so I walked up through Shadowridge. When I got up there I was just horrified.

Because so many of those people were parishioners, friends of mine and families of kids I had taught in school. I was just overcome with the whole experience. But I was sort of numb. You just do not know what to do. You feel so helpless.

M That is understandable.

H So anyway, I went back and we stayed where we were for -- how long were we -- about five days without electric.

M Yes.

H No running water. It was really something.

M So, tell me what the goal was then of the organization you were involved in? What was their goal?

H The goal of the program was initially to assess the community needs, and then to find a way to address those needs as best we could. In the beginning, we were working with nothing, and then the finances came. The initial money that became available to the community came through a \$40,000 check.

M Oh really? Wow.

H. Yes, And that was the first money. When that money arrived, there was a very interesting thing that happened. Some of this is information you would never get from anybody else.

M That is why so many people told me to talk to you. You know they gave me your name.

H The initial check came and when it arrived, there was some distention in the group because a lot of people felt that money should be given to the American Red Cross. But that money came with a letter and the letter very specifically stated that the money was to be used locally. And to give the money to the American Red Cross would have meant to put it in their national fund and then to allow them to address the community needs as they saw fit. They went round and round and round with it for a long time and they finally agreed to establish a local fund to open this office, to begin to assess needs, and then to address needs by giving grants or whatever we could do to help people using that money. And that was kind of the seed that was planted, that \$40,000 check, because the money more than tripled after that.

Let me go back a little bit. I will let you take these three things. I will tell you about that after. Let me just page through here and the initial meeting was

the 25th of June, 1985 This was after the committee had been formed. The first actual coalition meeting

M Okay

H And they discussed the needs, assessment and general questions, and how they were going to handle the meeting The meeting was held at the Niles-McKinley High School and the mayor was there In the beginning, it was interesting because in the beginning we had tremendous response from the community. We had the local politicians, the local school system, lots and lots of people I do not know how many But by the time June 25th rolled around, we were down to 39 people who showed up for the meeting We established a board of directors that was made up of 24, and by the middle of September, we had dwindled to a group of about 12, all of who were church people

I think that it is interesting to point out here that in the beginning, we were told by these national organizations who deal with this, to stay close to the churches because in the end, it would be the church people who would be there to see the program through The rest of them, we would lose. But we could not come out and say that to people. Even in the beginning, we wanted to put the office in one of the church buildings and they insisted, "No, we could not have it associated with the church " They wanted it associated with public buildings So we put it in the school, in the Board of Education building And we had to do this and we had to do that, and we could not have it associated They would not allow one of the pastors to be chairman of the board or anything

M Why? What was their purpose?

H They thought that people would be hesitant to come, people who did not have church affiliations, would be hesitant to come to a church related organization This was in June But by the first of September, we moved into the Lutheran Church because the Board of Education needed their space back and by the point, nobody cared In the end, it was a very small group of about nine people, all of whom were church people

M From all different churches?

H Yes, primarily Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic The Episcopalian pastor was very supportive It ended up basically being the three The Methodist, Lutheran, and Catholic pastors, and then several lay people who were directly connected to those pastors

M Tell me how they went about distributing the aid then, or did people come to you or did you go to the people?

H We did both. We did a lot of advertising in the newspaper. We established committees: a committee to work on the needs assessment and a finance committee, and a publicity committee. In the beginning, those committees were very active. Then the needs assessment committee really was under the direction of Kate McCullough, who is the director of Catholic Social Service, and she then worked with me. We did a lot of advertising. We got a lot of volunteers. We had about 36 people, most of whom were school teachers who were off for the summer who came. We put them through training sessions, and then we divided up the neighborhoods, assigned them to neighborhoods, and sent them out to go door to door to fill out information from neighbors. Where people could not be located and coming back and saying, "This is what Nancy Street looks like. This is how many people live there. This is how many people's homes were damaged. This is how many people have insurance, and how many people do not." Just real general, the initial assessment. Those people brought all that information back to my office and then we sorted it out. We color-coded file folders.

M A lot of work.

H It was a tremendous amount of work. And it was all done with volunteers. I was the only paid staff person. Then that gave us a sense of how many people were really going to be able to take care of themselves to some degree because they had insurance, or how many people were going to need advocacy, because the insurance companies were not cooperating. There was lots of that. And then, of course, there was the federal government. We had to be very careful in the beginning. We could not jump in and spend our money because if we did, it would have caused people to not qualify for federal government programs.

M I see.

H We had to kind of wait and hold back and see what they could get everywhere they could get. And then we finally started spending money in September, I guess.

M You had to wait that long?

H Up until then, we were channeling people. See, the difference was we considered ourselves to be a long term recovery program rather than an initial one. The initial response, the immediate response to the disaster, the immediate relief, like the American Red Cross, comes in and gives people blankets and soap and a cot to sleep on and that is the immediate response. We intended to be more long term, help people rebuild their homes.

M I did not know that I was thinking it was immediate

H No So we had to wait We did a lot of channeling people in the right direction A lot of referral work, initially And Catholic Charities and the American Red Cross were the two primary relief organizations that met that initial need Then as we saw that people were getting insurance settlements, people were underinsured, people were not going to get anything more and then the American Red Cross moves out after they feel the immediate need has been met Their job is done and they close the books, except for the few long term cases, additional systems cases that they carried through. It was interesting This is just a footnote here, I left from this job and became the director of the American Red Cross Disaster Response Program in Trumbull County, so I kind of followed through in a completely different phase It was interesting

M But now that you have the experience, once you had the experience .

H It was interesting to see from their perspective, after it was over

M I was going to ask you that What was your impression of the Red Cross?

H Well, in the initial phase, they did a superb job. They did a terrific job setting up the shelter at the high school and seeing to it that people were fed, bringing volunteers in and so forth They did their job and I suppose, in the beginning, I had more negative feelings about them, because I, myself, did not understand their role But after I became a part of the organization, it became more clear to me that their role is to meet the immediate need. They are the relief organization, not the recovery organization

M Yes I guess a lot of people do not understand that That does make sense and you are making that very clear

H Yes, they did a superb job initially. However, they are like many organizations, very failable because they work primarily with volunteers and volunteers, God love them, there are a lot of organizations that could not exist without them, but they are not a trained professional person who is able to go in and make a judgement call that has a better chance of being accurate Do you understand what I am saying?

M. Yes, I do, because I have talked to so many people that are either very negative about the Red Cross or they have something wonderful to say about it I can see that now after doing nine interviews

H The big thing that I saw was that, as you say, people did not understand

the role of the Red Cross, and the volunteers had to make the evaluations. Now people, myself, this was the whole reason why the people at Catholic Charities felt that someone who had some training in social work should be hired to do the job, because you have to be able to make those judgement calls. And you have to say just because someone slams the door in your face, "My God, they have just lost their home, their husband, their car, their job, all kinds of things, their life is blown to bits." And you knock on the door and say, "Yes we were collecting information." And they slam the door in your face and you say, "Well, to hell with you buddy." Scratch them off the list and leave. Then you come back and say, "The client was not cooperative, so forth and so on." Those are the kinds of things that we ran into. You know, people did not want to talk about it anymore.

M Oh sure, I find it with this in interviews. I have had a hard time getting people to talk to me.

H Yes, sure. That is right. They have been through so much at that point. Where you take the trained professional person, who is able to deal with that kind of situation, you get a different response. And I think that is what happened with the Red Cross in several instances. And they, themselves were interested, very surprised to hear what I had to show with them afterwards, from my perspective as to where, but the human element we all make.

M It is interesting to note that you said originally -- about the money that you got -- that there were some people who wanted to give it to Red Cross. Most of the people that I have talked to that did receive money from their insurance companies, but they were not qualified for any federal aid or did not even try to get that, they wondered where their money went, all the money that had been given to the Red Cross. They had assumed that money was to be given to them to clean up their yards or to get the trees out of the way, which did not cross into any of that.

H No, they did not. And they did not specifically because I am what I am, sharing with you now, you can see that, but people give money to the Red Cross not understanding what the Red Cross does with that money.

M I realize that now. Yes, you are right.

H Ultimately, we were the organization, and Catholic Charities. Catholic Charities spent \$130,000 right here, for clean up of debris and things that the Red Cross did not do, and for things that we did not have enough money to do. They chose not to put their money into our pot. Neither did the Lutheran Brotherhood. They kept their money separate, they gave us chunks of money for this amount. If I would go and say, for example, they funded my salary. Half of my salary came

from Catholic Charities, the other half came from the Methodist Church. I forget what the Methodist call their organization. Rather than putting the money in the pot, they came and said, "Bring us specific requests." We went and said to Catholic Charities, "We need to clean up debris." They said, "Okay." They spent \$130,000 and did it. You have probably heard that from people

M I have heard. Most of the people have told me about that.

H They did a tremendous job. It was unbelievable, really.

M Oh sure. They all praised the Catholic Charities.

H Then again, the Lutheran Brotherhood and the Methodist Church were very good with what they spent money for, too. And the Methodist Church ended up, in the end, spending the last money they had to help the city finance the tornado warning system that was ultimately put in after the thing was all done, because they city did not have the money to do it.

M Tell me then, specifically what the money was used for. How do you determine that? You said you went door to door.

H After we did door to door assessment we came up with from the city directory and from the postmaster and from the initial crew that went out from the first assessment, we established lists of neighborhoods and people, and then we began. Of course we were advertising in the newspaper frequently, you know, "Please call, the office is open." Then we began to do mailings. We sent out a letter asking each family to be in contact with us because we were not sure if we were reaching people. People who lost their homes obviously could not live there, but we were hoping they were getting mail through some channels. A lot of people called in, a lot of people did not, and after a certain period of time, we began to establish files.

As people came in or after we were able to reach them, we sat them down and interviewed them, took them through extensive forms of questions about insurance, about income, about trying to weed out the people who were going to be able to take care of themselves and people who were going to need help. That was a very difficult task because there were people who had very good jobs who were working at Packard, had \$60,000 incomes, but they felt that they should get help, too. And ultimately, their losses were the same but their potential to help themselves in the long run was there and that was our job and that made it very difficult.

M Somebody had to decide that.

H So that is what we did. We set up files. They are still in existence, those files,

even though they are closed and we did as much actual social case work as we could possibly do. Then we made evaluations, we asked people what they felt their needs were, we took the information that we had and we had a committee A steering committee that met once a week, they reviewed the cases, and that was part of my job, to present the information about the case and to make a recommendation as to how we would assist the individual families. Nine times out of 10, the steering committee did as much, if not more than what I requested. In the beginning, of course, they were very cautious because they wanted the money to go as far as it possibly could. But in the end, we did spend all of the money and I can show you, here, a breakdown. Of course I would want these names to remain confidential.

M. You do not have to give me names.

H. We built a barn, we built a house and a garage that was appraised at \$40,000. When we finished it, it actually cost us \$8,882. We did some painting and some electrical work. We built three other garages. We built another house that cost us zero dollars and was appraised at \$40,000. That was a cooperative case between ourselves and the American Red Cross. The American Red Cross provided the material. We provided the labor and we built the house. Then, I need to go back and talk some more about how we provided that labor. Ask me that later if I forget. We fixed a roof, we did four siding jobs, we built porches, we removed 408 tree stumps from a total of 50 properties. We bought a lot of top soil, we had nine families we provided with clothing and that was in amounts that varied from \$500 to \$2,500 depending on how many members in the family there were. We did household furnishings, which could be anything from kitchen table and chairs to bedding, sheets and towels and things like that for 16 families. So these are the kinds of things we did. You can feel free to take that information right out of that report if you would like to.

M. There was something else I wanted to ask you. It says on here about group counseling with 45 people. What sort of counseling did you give them or offer them?

H. We worked in cooperation with the Trumbull County Mental Health and a young woman who is a very good friend of mine, whose name is Gloria Dunn. She was put in charge of the Trumbull County Mental Health and got a grant from the Federal Government to come in to the community and set up the program, and they worked very closely with us. We did all the personal contacts and whenever we felt there was a need for counseling for people who were really still having problems, traumatized, we referred them.

And then we did some group sessions up at the church on the top of Niles-Vienna Road there, The Church of the Nazarene. Jim McGuffey was the

name of the pastor up there. He offered his facility and we had meetings there a couple of times in group sessions. The American Red Cross participated in that to some degree by coming in and talking about how we could have better responded and how we need to be prepared for the future. Then we did work primarily on focusing in on group recovery because that is basically what people were experiencing. A lot of talking and sharing and trying to build some support there for people. And they came. They came in large numbers.

M I guess so

H And then, many individual referrals, either to Trumbull County Mental Health, or to Catholic Social Services for individual family counseling. And that same Gloria and her co-worker went in to all of the school in the city and they made presentations in classrooms and talked with kids. They did group counseling and individual counseling with children that were traumatized for months, particularly in the spring, when the tornado season returned. We had lots of problems. It was amazing.

M So that was even part of the follow up through, was doing something like this

H Oh yes, very much so.

M Well that is great. You wanted to mention something about the labor you were talking about earlier.

H Yes. When we had our initial contact with Church World Services, they told us that there were organizations that were directly related or attached to specific denominations who came in and did this kind of work. Of course we were all familiar with the Amish and their barn raisings and the Mennonites. Well, I was surprised to learn that there are a lot of church organizations that do that kind of work. And the two that responded to our needs and came here and lived in our city, our fair city, and worked with us and provided us with free labor for four months was the Church of the Brethren and the Christian Reformed Church. Neither of those have churches in our area. The nearest church of the Brethren is down somewhere near East Palestine, real close to Pennsylvania. And the nearest Christian Reform Church is in Cleveland.

But they came and they stayed in the basement of the Methodist Church; they set up dormitories. We borrowed cots from the Red Cross, provided the food to feed the volunteers, and they came. The first project that they did, they came around the 10th of August, I am pretty sure, and the first project that they did was the building of the barn at Sisko's farm. The church of the Brethren actually provided us with more workers and the Christian Reform Folks were the ones who did more of the work in supervising. They sent the building contractors, the skilled tradesman, the plumbers, the electricians. We got help

from the local community too. There was a man in town here who is a plumber, Lou Carbone, and he provided us with all the plumbing material we needed at his cost, and he also supervised the volunteers. Plumbing is a licensed trade in the city so we could not bring volunteers in to do plumbing, because you have to be licensed. So the plumbers all worked under his supervision of his license. And he did all of that free of charge. There were a lot of people in the community that did those kinds of things for us. That enabled us to accomplish what we accomplished. Anyway, those were the two organizations that provided us with the volunteers.

M Okay, tell me then what you think was the overall success of this? I know it was very successful. What do you think it accomplished in the long run, after a year looking back in retrospect?

H It accomplished a lot of material good. You can see the work that we did. I think it enabled the community to mend in a lot of intangible ways, as well, because we did something to help take care of ourselves. First of all, to realize how vulnerable we were and secondly then, to pick ourselves up by the boot straps and address the problems and rebuild our own community with the help of outsiders. You know, Niles is a tough town. Have you lived here all of your life?

M No.

H Where are you from?

M I grew up in California and I have lived here.

H Well, it is a very close knit community and the people here have a really great sense of pride. This was a real tough thing for them to experience, even in the beginning. Like I said earlier, they felt we can take care of ourselves, let us see what we can do. And then they had to really realize it was a problem they could not address without outside help, and then to be willing to accept that outside help and in the direction and advise that people had to bring us to enable us then to do the job ourselves. So the effects were very far reaching, I think. I do not know if that makes sense?

M Yes, it does.

H Ask me another question.

M There are a couple more questions I want to ask you. You said that you went into the Red Cross and became director of the Red Cross, the Disaster Response.

H Emergency Services Department of the Red Cross for Trumbull County.

M. How did your impression change then of the Red Cross?

H The big thing was that I developed a very clear understand of the Red Cross's role in the community, and that is the initial relief response rather than the long-term recovery. Also to realize, having had the opportunity then to get involved and work with the Red Cross Volunteers, to see first hand what terrific people they are. However, they are volunteers and they do make mistakes, but then again, so do a lot of professionals. So this is the kind of situation where nobody really knows what to do. If we had another tornado tomorrow, I am sure that we would have many of the same kinds of problems simply because of who is affected and who it is that responds. You know, you and I would not address a problem in the same way because we were two different people. And you learn from your mistakes. But then you have to meet the uniqueness of each situation as it comes.

So to answer your questions more directly, if I can, I developed a better understanding of what the American Red Cross's role is supposed to be. It helped me then to better understand why they did what they did. Also to realize they would accomplish very little if anything in the community without their volunteers, so you cannot be too critical of them because they do a fabulous job at what they do, and it is all volunteer.

M. It is interesting though that you made that clear. The distinction between them

H. But at the time we were going through it, I did not understand. I was very frustrated because I thought that they were really not being fair. And we had some tough cases where there were some problems, you know, like I said, related to situations where people really did not respond appropriately. But those kind of things could happen anywhere, at anytime. I may run into it during parent conferences on Thursday. You never know. So it was a good experience for me. It was also a good experience for them because I told them plenty when I got there. But evidently, they saw a lot of good in what we accomplished and in the work I did because they came looking for me for the jobs so I have always felt good about that.

M. There is something in here I wanted to mention. I think we got this off tape, that is why I am bringing this up again. Some of the money you said that was left over you used a year later, and you told me that you bought trees with it. Tell me about that.

H. We, as I had said earlier, assessed the needs of the community as best we possibly could, and then we listed those families and we addressed each of them as best as we possibly could. At the end, we ended up with a rather insignificant amount of money and we felt that we needed to do something in general for the community. The last major project that we did was the clean up of the schools. We spent \$10,700 on the clean up of

the property where Lincoln and Barnum Elementary Schools are That was a questionable project because again it was putting money somewhere else, rather than in people's homes

But then we felt that we had done the best we could to meet the specific needs of families in the community at large So we spent that money on the schools and then we ended up with \$3,000 left. And somebody came up with the idea that the biggest loss in the community that affected the general population was the trees So we took that \$3,000 and we shopped all around, everywhere to see where we could buy trees and we bought them We got 150 trees, 150 3-year-old Maple trees, and they were about 12 feet tall So they were well on their way They were not little saplings that were maybe going to die And we took them to the service that we held at the Church of the Nazarene and we blessed the trees and did a dedication "A commitment to new life," was the theme of the service and we gave those trees to anyone who came Many of the people who came were tornado victims and some were not, but anybody that came who wanted to take a tree home and plant it as a sign of commitment as a sign of new life and moving on after we passed that first milestone was welcome to do so So that is what we did about trees. It was kind of nice It always makes me feel good when I ride around town because I know where they are

M: How about those in front of the cemetery there? Were any of those the ones?

H No, those were purchased by the fund that the cemetery had The cemetery established its own fund and they did their own thing, and we felt that people who gave us the money to spend gave it to us because of what we were doing, and they were giving to the cemetery

M I can see exactly what you are saying and I can see why people felt that way. So many people I interviewed in different areas of the city were upset that so much money was pumped back into the cemetery They felt, why worry about them when these people are still living and they cannot even afford to do this and that in their neighborhood and yet the cemetery is getting all the money So, I think I can see what you are saying

H The city was pretty careful at the way they handled it They did the clean up I mean, that had to be done But they waited long enough, I think, to begin actually with the rebuilding although there was a great need for top soil Here people were desperate for top soil, and it is quite expensive, too There were places where we took 10 and 15 loads of top soil and it did not even put a dent in And yet, other people were sending top soil to the cemetery And those things cause problems

M Yes, I think so It just depends on how you look at it Is there anything that I have not mentioned that you would like to talk about, something that I have forgotten or have not covered?

H I do not know. It is hard to say. Let me see. Let me just kind of skim through this final report here. We served the needs of 105 families. Most of our own expenses, even for the program itself, we did not spend money on anything. I mean, they would not even give me a stapler in the beginning. So the money that we spend, that \$87,000 went to actual community needs. There was nothing spent on administration out of that money. The money that we needed to run the program came from other sources. I could go on and talk about this for hours and hours because it was such a tremendous experience for me.

M Does this exist now? Does the recovery coalition exist now?

H No.

M It is not in existence?

H We closed up shop. Our last meeting was on the 29th of October, 1986. The meeting was held at the First United Methodist Church and we gave a summary, a month to month report. The final financial report was given. People said lots of thank you's and that kind of thing. And the program was actually dissolved. We have scrap books to be turned over to the Niles-McKinley Library, some of that you still see here. Boxes and things that we do need to put together.

I think that the biggest thing that we learned from the whole experience was first of all that no matter how people feel about church and government, that ultimately, when there is this kind of need in the community, it is the church people that will see you through. And secondly, that we need to work together. We need to take care of ourselves but we also have to be willing to accept help from outside and I think the greatest thing that they did for us was to enable us to do the work ourselves. That was a real important thing for a lot of people. We had tornado families that had insurance that were buying furniture for other people who did not have insurance. We had people that gave out of their own pocket to take care of each other. There was a moment in time that touched us in a way that I think nothing else ever has.

M Or ever will. Until something like that will happen again.

H Yes, I would say, and in a way it is sort of gone. It really is. I see even lots of the same kind of people, the same people, I see them out and I sort of remember. That brings tears to my eyes. It was a tremendous experience. I am so grateful for the opportunity that I had because something that I never anticipated but I was able to really provide to be a part of something. It was really great.

End of Interview

