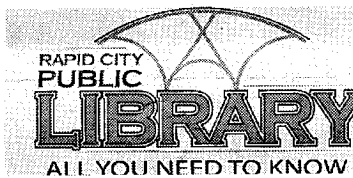


# Library site shares memories of flood

■ Flood project offers survivors a chance to share their memories and photos online.

**By Ron Hopp**

Rapid City Public Library



the seriousness of the situation came when he saw Rapid City Mayor Don Barnett broadcasting evacuation orders over the 10 p.m. news.

Getz's electricity cut out during the broadcast, and he grabbed a flashlight and went to his basement to shut off the gas lines.

"I heard this strangest noise like someone was in the room just a few feet to my right," he said.

He pointed the flashlight beam toward the noise and saw "this brown water cascading through a little vent in the foundation and down the wall." Getz, his wife and their 3-year-old son got in their pickup truck, which was facing toward Jackson Boulevard.

Joan credits a police officer with saving their lives. "He knocked on the truck window," and instructed the Getzes to avoid driving toward Jackson Boulevard, she said. Jack put the truck in reverse and backed up in hubcap-deep water for more than a block before turning his truck around and driving his family to the church for safety.

Returning to their house the following morning, they witnessed the destruction that occurred in the neighborhood. The Getz house survived with relatively minimal damage. Walking through her back yard, Joan found dead fish and cancelled checks from a woman who had lived near the Cleghorn Fish Hatchery, but who had died in the flood.

In the days after the disaster, Getz was a bewildered reporter. His normal police beat had been destroyed, along with the police station and much of the infrastructure along the floodplain.

One day, more than a week after the flood, Getz rode with a police officer to a house located near the creek behind Baken Park. He leaned next to the patrol car as the officer, donning a gas mask, entered the badly damaged and abandoned house. In a scene reminiscent of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing aftermath, Getz watched as the officer emerged from the house with the body of a young boy draped in his arms. "I took the picture ... but never made a print out of it. I couldn't do it," Getz said emotionally more than 30 years after the incident.

More of Getz's recollections, along with those of other flood survivors, are viewable at the Rapid City Public Library's

Web site. The library's staff has created a digital flood archive where users can access firsthand accounts of flood survivors.

The library's site also contains a flood wiki. Readers may be familiar with Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia where users read, post and edit content. The flood wiki works in a similar manner.

Visitors to the flood wiki may post photos and memories of the flood and its aftermath.

Additionally, users will find links to other flood-related resources and a list of the 238 people who died. There are also many viewable photos donated by Dr. Keith Johnson. Instructions for posting to the flood wiki are available at <http://rcflood.wikispaces.com>

The library's flood project serves as a centralized archive and link to other flood-related resources. Users will find links to the ongoing floodplain development debate and discussion.

As survivors post their memories, the collection becomes more valuable to others interested in learning about or remembering a difficult time period for the residents of the Black Hills.

For more information, call the Rapid City Public Library at 394-6139 or go to [www.rapidcitylibrary.org](http://www.rapidcitylibrary.org).