Marlene: This is Marlene Payne. It’s May 29, 2001. I’m at City Hall with Ann Wall. Ann is the City’s budget manager and before we get into the interview I would like to say that she is the person on whom probably the success of the FEMA grants depended. She ramrodded that whole effort and coordinated it, so we can talk about that maybe a little bit later, but Ann how long have you been the budget manager at the City?

Ann: I moved to Rocky Mount to become the Budget Manager in October of ’95.

Marlene: And could you tell us a little bit about your duties as Budget Manager?

Ann: In a typical year, non flood related, I do the city’s budget....We were talking about what my duties were in a nonflood year, I’m responsible for compiling and analyzing the city’s budget, doing special projects throughout the year, doing performance measures... sort of monitoring the budget and again I do a lot of just sort of special things throughout the year.

Marlene: Okay, so ...well, how long have you lived in Rocky Mount? You are not a Rocky Mount native.

Ann: No, I grew up in Virginia and I moved in ‘90...October of ‘95 to Rocky Mount and that’s when I started work here. I moved here for the job.

Marlene: For the job...and that was what four years maybe..three years before the flood?
Ann: Four years before the flood and it was six years ago.

Marlene: And I'm sure that most people on the outside of the city government would...would not think of the budget managers being heavily impacted by a flood because you think of fireman and policeman and that kind of thing and yet you were ....so ...and you’re...you also had the direct experience with...with the flood itself and EOC...so could you just kind of tell us your whole story?

Ann: Yeah, I had...I had really have had two flood experiences....the first one is the whole public assistance area, that’s where the city gets reimbursement from FEMA for all the damage to the facilities and I did that with Fran. In fact, with Fran we got back about $3,000,000.00 and I sort of worked through all of that process and I learned a lot hoping that that would be the last time (laughter) I mean it, unfortunately it wasn’t and Fran actually was a very good exercise for what Floyd had in store because we are probably at about $21,000,000.00 for Floyd versus the $3,000,000.00 that we got for Fran.

Marlene: And this is maybe the largest?

Ann: No, the buy out is the largest. That’s what Charles has done about buying the property. Our $21,000,000.00 is a very large chunk of public assistance dollars, but other people....that public assistance can go to schools, public utilities, it can go to counties, to cities, and so some other cities who might have lost other buildings...you know, probably in Andrew when Andrew hit south Florida there were probably some very large public assistance claims. Hugo was another very large public assistance claim. Now, ours was large and probably one of the largest in the state because of the Children’s Museum and the Art Center and the substations, but it may not be the largest.
Marlene: Still $21,000,000.00 is a lot of money.

Ann: $21,000 is a lot of money and that’s the replacement of all the facilities that were lost and employee time associated with flood recovery and those kind of things. So that’s the first and that public assistance is a big chunk of what I do now even two years after the flood. But what I did during the flood is I always worked the telephone call center. I kind of like to be involved, I like to know what’s going on and while I don’t have direct experience...I don’t have direct supervisory responsibility of a department, I...I work with Craig and sort of work on the phone system.

Marlene: Craig Kevitt.

Ann: Craig Kevitt.

Marlene: He’s the finance director.

Ann: And his job is to do sort of support services as part of the emergency plan. And one of those support services is we set up a telephone bank and the telephone bank is supposed to take rollover call.....is to take non-emergency calls. When people call and they have a question and they don’t know what to do or they are scared or their lights are out and they try to get through to the utility department and they can’t get through, we create this non-emergency line and if a non-emergency call comes into 911, it’s transferred over or we publish that non-emergency phone number in the phone book and so people can call that number and find out, you know, when are their lights going to go back on or what’s going on or where do they go, and those kinds of things. So the night of...the actual night of the flood, I worked there from probably...I try to remember, I would say I got to city hall about 8:30 that night with my son and I probably worked....started to work between 10 and 11 and worked until about 5:00 the next morning.
Marlene: A lot happened.

Ann: Yeah, and you know that was real...we were....it was...that was an amazing night because the first two hours there wasn’t a lot going on, it was real kind of quiet and we were laughing and joking in the room and we were kind of...I think....we had been through that drill before and there...the same four kind of always work together, and I think we kind of thought it was going to be like one of those other storms that would kind of geared up and nothing really happen and so we were eating chocolate and laughing and telling stories, and as the night wore on, the call load increased and you can see...the...the tension of the calls increased and it was probably about 12:00 or 1:00 when we really figured out something was going on. And it was because the calls....people didn’t know what to do, they didn’t know where to go. At that point all of the shelters had been full, I can remember coming in and I’ll bet within an hour of getting there all of the shelter spaces were full and we didn’t know where to send these people, and we didn’t know what to tell them and we had to tell them, you know, leave if you can leave, and we knew we would...we would have to run messages back between the EOC and the 911 center and we could see the frenzy of activity there. And so it was really...it was an amazing period of time because it went from a sort of jolly old time to where you could really see that all hell had broken loose, and this was the start of something that nobody had ever thought it would.

Marlene: Were the people that were calling, were calling from their homes by in large?

Ann: Yeah, most of them were calling from their homes, a lot of them calling from the housing authority. It must have been about the time that some of the housing authority property started flooding and we were telling people, you know, they were like.....what do we do? And we were like, leave, if you can leave you need to leave, you need to get out of your house now. But where
do I go? And you are like, well, we are trying to open a center right now and, you know, that was kind of frustrating at times because we didn’t exactly know where to tell people and we kept putting out calls to people to come and open up shelters, but we didn’t have a shelter to send people to. And I had, we had a lot of calls for people who were just trying to figure out what was going on. One of the first calls I remember receiving is a guy who lived in Country Club Cove apartments, which is right there on Country Club Road. And, you know, that place always floods. The entrance to that always floods, has flooded even in a bad rain storm. He called and he said that he had...his neighbors had told him to move his car to the Moose Lodge parking lot which was actually closer to Stoney Creek than his apartment was because they said he wouldn’t get it out the next morning. And so he called, because he wanted to find out how his car was and he said what do you know about that. I said well we have flooding everywhere. He goes, “Do you think my car is okay”? And I said, “No, I don’t think your car is okay”. He goes, I’m going to go check on it. I’m like you can’t leave your apartment right now, don’t go over there because you are going closer to the...to the creek and he goes.....well, reminded me that he or told me he had just bought the car and he had no insurance on the car and you know, I remember thinking to myself, that’s terrible, that poor man lost his car but that poor man when it was all over with probably lost a lot more than his car. He probably lost the whole contents of his apartment.

Marlene: ‘Cause Country Cove did totally flood.

Ann: Yeah, and I don’t know if he lived on the first or second floor but I think he probably lost a lot more than just his car. So, and the other call that I remember, is a call and I don’t have any idea what time it came in. It was from an elderly lady. And, her neighbors had left their dog out back and their yard was flooding and the dog was drowning. And she wanted somebody to come
and let the dog out. But these were during the times that we were rescuing people out of trees, and, you know, getting people...people from everywhere and we couldn’t take a police officer over there to save the dog and the woman was like, please come, it’s a terrible sound, the dogs crying, and we were like we’re sorry, we can’t do anything. And that...you know everybody, I think, you now, we started getting these calls and everybody kind of looked around at each other like, this is bad, this is...this is way worse than anybody had ever thought it was. And then I worked a succession of...of days after that or shifts after that and the calls were just different every time you went in. When...by the time I went in the next time, the water had risen, most people were in a shelter that could get to a shelter and we were trying to find people. You know, people would call, frantic because they can’t, couldn’t find their aunt, could you help me find my aunt, you know, what do we call? Well, you need to call Red Cross, here’s Red Cross’ number. Well I can’t, well you got to keep going through and so that was a frantic period. Now...now they were out and we knew the immediate danger had passed but it was that almost as if though it was that realization point. You know, I can’t find my aunt. You got to help me find my aunt, where’s my aunt. My family lives over here, where are they? Or, I had a lady call in a say “I need baby formula, I can’t find any baby formula. What can you do?” And you know all the stores were closed, there was no power. We kind of had to walk people through a lot of those kinds of issues. “What do I do, I need to call FEMA, let me call FEMA?” And you kept saying, “FEMA is not ready to take your call, you need to sort of sit back and wait a couple of hours and you know they’ll be geared up to deal with it”. Those later hours, the first five are pretty scary, I mean, I really was scared, you know, not at the storm, not at the thundering and lightning. But just, it was just scary. Imagining what was out there and you know it was pitch black, there was a little
bit of power in City Hall, but that...and then when it got later on in the days and the...the...you know, first day turned into the second day, then sort of the realization of how significant the disaster was sort of set in.

Marlene: Did you work in the EOC too?

Ann: Yeah, I would flit back and forth between the two of them and answer calls as...as lines came in and we tried early on and it really worked pretty well to get FEMA to come in. We knew a..we knew a disaster happened on Wednesday and by Friday, by Thursday afternoon or Friday, we called Nash County and requested that FEMA open up a FEMA office in Rocky Mount because we knew having gone through Fran that, excuse me, that you had to request it. And so we put a call into Nash County and by Saturday, FEMA was calling and we were finding office space and so I was coordinating all of that and trying to find space for the Red Cross because, probably by Friday....maybe by Thursday, everybody realized that this was...this was a big time disaster, this wasn’t, you know, this wasn’t a Fran, this was what you saw on the national news. And so we were trying to organize an intricate people in mind so that we could get services out to everybody, so I was working on getting with FEMA, getting their office set up, lining them space, getting, you know, utility lines run and phone lines and all that kind of stuff to their FEMA office and they in fact opened the Monday after the storm which I think was pretty good that we were able to get it all lined up so fast. And that the day that the FEMA office opened, there was a line of people out front ready to go in.

Marlene: And for a lot of these people I would imagine it was really important because of needing instant help, I mean they...they were all of a sudden without housing, clothes, money,

Ann: They were without anything. You know everything they had was gone. They had what
they might have left with and you know because this flood happened so fast, many people didn’t have the luxury of watching the water rise and being able to move stuff up. I mean, it was gone.

I can remember seeing Linda Bobbitt, who is a city employee, the Thursday morning after the flood. And I went in to find a phone to call home, because I had not been able to go home. And to call one of my neighbors to have them check on my house to tell me that my house was okay. And I saw her husband, and I said “How are you?”. He goes, well I’ve lost everything. And I said, “Huh”. He goes, “Well I’ve lost my house and all my cars and I said “Oh, Okay”, ‘cause you know, it never really dawned on me what he was telling me. And I went on and I called my neighbor and they checked my house and told me everything was fine and I went back and I said, “Are you telling me everything is gone”? And he goes, everything is gone and I saw Linda and she said, “A neighbor called me and asked me when we were going to leave because water was ready to come into my house”. And I said, “You mean all your stuff is gone”? And I thought Oh my God, you know. And it was because the water came so fast, I mean, nobody...nobody had time to do anything. I mean, you know, I can remember her saying to me, “I lost my children’s pictures. I lost all the mementos”. And I was like, Oh. And I was like. And then...then during those couple of days, you kept running into people who had lost everything, and you’re just in total amazement. These are people who continue to work and do stuff and had no home to go home...home to.

Marlene: It is amazing.

Ann: It...it you know, it is amazing.

Marlene: It’s amazing that they kept working too. I mean did this surprise you?

Ann: Yes, you know Linda. I can remember Linda working, I can remember Richard Oxidine,
who I didn’t find out until days later. I mean, I worked with him in the EOC right there for shifts and lo and behold, he lived at Riverside and everything was gone in his apartment. And you would never would have known. And I went up to him after I got on, I said “Richard, you lost everything, are you okay?”. “Yeah, I’m fine”. They...I guess they...you know, maybe for some of them work was their salvation. Maybe they could work and for a while forget that everything was gone.

Marlene: Uh huh.

Ann: I don’t know if I could have done that. I think I would have.....and maybe people handle stress in a different way, I just don’t know if I could have ever...I could have done what they had done. But they continued to work and you would ne...and for many of them you would never have any idea that it was all gone.

Marlene: What about the community? What do you think their response was like? Do you think they coped well?

Ann: Yeah, I think everybody for a long time was just in shock. I don’t think people really realized how devastating it was, and I told a couple of people a story. I got home from the flood, I went...came to work on a Wednesday and I think I got home Friday or Saturday, is when I actually got back to...to my house. And the water plants were still down, the main one, Sunset was down, ‘cause it was down for a while. I think the reservoir might have just gotten started up but we had no water pressure in my neighborhood. And I remember driving up and my neighbor flagging me down and she’s like I can’t flush the toilet, why can’t I flash the toilet? And I said, “Because you have no water pressure”. Well why not? And I said, “Well, the Sunset Water plant is completely gone and the reservoir has just started pumping water again”. She goes, “Well,
what happened to it?” And I said, “Well, there’s six feet of water in it”. From what? And I said, “From the river”. And she looked at me like I was speaking French or something. And I said “Cheryl, the city is flooded, it’s flooded. There is nothing...you know... half the city is under water”. And that was an exaggeration, but it certainly felt like half the city was under water. And I said, “The Children’s Museum is gone, the Art Center and the Playhouse are flooded. They are gone”. And you know, if you look around my neighborhood, you would have thought it was a bad storm, it was just a bad summer storm. There was some branches down and stuff like that, you know I had a little bit of water damage to my house, but I mean, my neighborhood didn’t flood, but they were so isolated because they had no, they had no TV, no cable, you know maybe they weren’t listening to the radio, I don’t know and by that point the radio I don’t think was really talking about Rocky Mount, and they had no idea.....and it wasn’t until somebody come from the outside world came back that they...they had a realization. And I think for a lot of people those first couple of days they really didn’t know what was going on and then - then sort of a shock set in. And those first two weeks after were pretty hard on everybody. I think overall the community did really well. I think when they realized what happened they really did really well and if you talk to people now so many people surprised me about where they went to volunteer. You know, I went to Tarboro and I served meals or I went to this church and I made food and I don’t think we ate a meal here for a few days after the storm that somebody else didn’t prepare and bring in. Because people were bringing food and water everywhere. So it was wonderful to see them and to see them even now.

Marlene: What about a lasting effect?

Ann: Yeah, I think that, you know, the physical damage is pretty overwhelming. You know I
concentrate on the physical damage because that’s what I’ve been dealing with and I think because that’s easier for me to deal with than all that other stuff. (Laughter) You know all that other emotional kind of stuff I don’t really want to talk about. You know that physical damage, you know, I…we’ll never, I mean, Rocky Mount will never ever be the same. But but that will never…we, we can improve, and we can move on but the physical damage will still be there. I mean I think that if you were in Rocky Mount in September of ‘99 and you come back 10 years later you can point to someplace that you can see the effects of the…the flood. That’s just the way it’s going to be. I…I think the emotional part of it, I’m not sure people will get over that either. You know, I think that you…you move on and you heal and I’m not a flood victim in the sense that I didn’t lose everything, I didn’t lose anything, you know, and I really don’t consider myself a victim of a flood, but I think that I…I still will always remember the flood and there’s probably not another hurricane season that will go by that I won’t think about the flood and won’t think about what happened and what could happen and I think the good thing is that you realize that your neighbors are your neighbors and everybody sort of pitched in. You know even in my little neighborhood that wasn’t even damaged, my neighbors were walking around my house and calling me back at work and tell me that my house was okay. You know people went everywhere to help people unload stuff and you know, try to move stuff out of the flood water, but I, you know, I’m not sure that we’ll, ah, I think you move on, I just…I don’t think you…you forget it, you’ll never forget it, you just move on.

Marlene: What about the FEMA thing. I know because of the small, small involvement I had that it was a monumental chore, I mean, it…it really staggers most minds. I mean…I…I…And there were times that I actually thought, how does she stand it (laughter), thinking about you. I
really did, how in this world does this woman do this?

Ann: Well, you know... you know, doing public assistance is a... it's a... it's a... reimbursement, so you don't get the money back until you spend the money. And their very, you know, if you can show them a piece of paper with a number on it, they are okay. But, you just can't... you can't just say we spent the money, you know... trust us, because trust is not a word that FEMA understands. You know, you have to sort of show me. Maybe they...(laughter)... maybe they all grew up in Missouri. I don't know... but it's... you've gotta show them. And so we had... what happens after the disaster is they send in these people called P......, they are called Project...... and ___________, I've forgotten. I don't remember what P...... is, something coordinator, Project something coordinator, I don't remember that. But, public assistance coordinators is what they are. And they send the pack in and they do this training with everybody and they tell you all you have to do is complete these forms and you know we'll do this, but it is nothing. It is never that easy. And we ended up... the flood started happening in September, our pack started showing up probably the week afterwards, and they'd come and stop by and I would place them with different people so that they could go out and do ...... and sort of assess the damage. The first part is the assessment period. I've never quite figured out why they assess the damage because they know it exists and they know they are going to have to come and write it out, but they come and they assess the damage. And then they send these other people, these project officers back, and the project officers work with you to fill out this... these variety of FEMA forms, and project worksheet form and so we ended up with probably between 50 and 100 project worksheets that represent everything from firefighters time rescuing people to the replacement of the Children's Museum. And it took us six to eight months to complete the project worksheet
phase. That's just telling FEMA that this is what's damaged and this is how much we think it is. And we would spend hours, you'd have to detail, you know, what the damage was. So you'd have to detail mucking out a room, sanitizing a room, repainting a room, you know, you'd have to do... and how many square feet it was, I mean, you just couldn't say the Children's Museum is completely gone, you know, it is damaged beyond repair, you'd have to show them in detail how that occurs, and it took, I mean, I had a resident project officer that was across my office and I think I talk... I talked to him every day for... for eight months. To the point now, I get cards from him, I mean, we still, I mean personal cards. (Laughter) We still have this...

Marlene: Comraderie.

Ann: Yeah. Now, he sends me cards and when he's in the area he calls and stops by and stuff like that, because you work so closely with these people. And, that's just the first period. That's the first session.

Marlene: Is this when... when the inventory lists were being made like for every single splinter that's carried out of a flooded building. It's recorded and a price put on it, like every (laughter) paper clip.

Ann: That's exactly right. If you want money back from FEMA, we have to demonstrate to FEMA that we have the loss, so we have to say we lost this office cabinet, this cabinet full of office supplies and this is what was in it. And you know, in some cases, for some things it was easier to do than others, I mean that is just the way, you know, it is. But, you know, when you lost an entire building, recreating the contents was a very, very difficult thing. Especially when half your records washed down the river. And you know we learned things like FEMA doesn't pay for live animals, you know. We learned that the loss of the animals in the Children's
Museum, however devastating that was for all of us who used to go to that Children’s Museum on a regular basis, FEMA doesn’t pay for live animals. FEMA doesn’t pay for landscape...landscaping, you know, the fact that trees blew down downtown, FEMA doesn’t pay for them. But other things...and you know, we worked through the process about what FEMA and I can remember a number of times I’d go in and say “So, well you won’t pay for this?”. No, No, that’s not eligible and I’d say, “Well, what about this?”. Yes, that’s eligible, we’ll write it out. And we had project .....after....officer, after pro...we had one guy who probably spent six weeks just writing...writing up the water plant. And, you know, you come up with, I mean you did it. I mean, inventory list of entire buildings, you know, we argued many times about...about the Art Center and about the Children’s Museum and about the kind of content they were. They would not have paid for the replacement of a work of art because it’s a one of a kind item. But..it has...the highest value or the lowest value...but you can’t place a value on this work of art. They wouldn’t pay for the replacement of that, but they would pay for the restoration of that work of art. You know, so we’ve argued all along that the Children’s Museum, when we lost the entire contents of it, it was a children’s museum that was meant, all of the items in there were meant to be picked up, and manipulated and played with and they were intended to be replaced because that’s the function of what it was. And that’s the reason that we’ll ultimately get 2.4 million dollars for the content of the Children’s Museum because they concurred with us, that it’s...it’s...their replacement items. Those items are intended to be replaced. So, some of the items were able to get restored and some of them ...they will be replaced. But, if we had had a museum that had had works of art, it would have been a far more difficult argument, although there’s some...there’s some instances where it’s almost like an American Indian art and those kinds of
things, some significant historical value that you can ______, but you know we have learned from
two years ago until today we’ve learned an amazing amount about what FEMA does, see how
they do it, you know, why they do it, what their logic is or the fact that there is no logic for, for
these...but we’ve learned an amazing amount about FEMA. I mean, you know, people who did
not know what public assistance is and that’s the part that I deal with. Which is separate from
individual assistance, and that’s what the homeowner got and that’s separate from the mitigation
part, which is, where we’ll actually buying the property. This is just what happened to city
property.

Marlene: Uhhuh, it made all that carrying art upstairs worthwhile then, because FEMA didn’t
plan to replace that kind of thing.

Ann: That’s exactly right. You know, they were.....they were comfortable replacing a copier
machine on the first floor that might have had the same value as a piece of art. But because that
piece of art was....

Marlene: Not expendable material, I suppose.

Ann: Yeah. And because, you know, you could show them an invoice for that copier and say
this is how much that invoice...that copier cost or to replace it this is how much it will be, but you
can’t really do that with a piece of art. And that, you know, I mean FEMA, they have to do this
everywhere. They have to administer this for hurricanes, and snowstorms, and floods and
everything like that, and so that made that...the fact that it was carried upstairs a really, really
good thing. And you know we learned about insurance and flood insurance and flood planes and
flood zones and flood ways and all that kind of stuff. On the FEMA side, you know, that we...we
never...when we did with Fran, Fran was a big deal and Fran .....when we got money back from
Fran most all of it was because of debris, because we had to pick up stuff and with Floyd, debris was...I bet you debris was 3 or 4 million dollars, but nothing compared to a entire Children's Museum. And you know, and due to all of that, I mean I carried those guys around to a lot of different places and that really, just seeing the damage to the city property was pretty overwhelming and I can remember taking them to the...to the Children’s Museum and saying, “I can’t go in again”. You know, I took 3 or 4 of them there and I said, you know, you know, the first tour I went through and I said we used to have this be here and it was really cool, and you know we had this great place where we had all of these live animals and you know this display over here and I had been here the weekend before with my son, and I said, you know, there was this cool display on games and, you know, I said I remember playing hop...hopscotch, and they were like, okay, well let’s go to the next room and so you know these guys didn’t care (laughter). They care to the extent that they could care, but you know they, when you see a flood, you’ve seen eight floods. You know they’ve seen a flood. And you know the fact that I was so vested in that Children’s Museum, it was like, okay, Ann move on (laughter). I’m like, but you don’t understand, you know, this was really neat and the kids loved this room and I was just here. (Laughter). You know, and you go in the playhouse, and you’re like look and finally a couple of times I just went to _______ and said, “I’m sorry, I can’t go in”, and I’d arrange for a staff person, I’m like I can’t...I can’t go into it, I can’t go into the Children’s Museum again, I just, I can’t go in it. I’m sorry. You know, and you go out and all the stuff is piled out ....don’t you remember that.

Marlene: Yes, that’s the worst part.

Ann: Oh, my God, I can remember.....and all of that stuff outside the children’s museum just
piled up and there were slides from the astronomy ball, I can’t remember what that thing was called, from the planetarium, you know the big ball in the astro lab that was in there and there were those little slides...we just ordered those, we had just budgeted for them, and you know, I was like (laughter)and they are like, okay, what else. And you know, I can remember getting into discussions right there and they’re like, FEMA doesn’t replace irreplaceable items. I’m like, these are replaceable items. You can order these, we just did, you know, we are not getting into that point right now. But, it was much easier for me to go to the water plant, frankly, than it ever was for me to go to the Children’s Museum.

Marlene: Did you find yourself having to plead a case frequently?

Ann: Oh, early on, I can remember almost, you know. Yeah, I’m like, No, you know, they were ready to start on, you know, here’s the policy - FEMA doesn’t replace irreplaceable items like this and I’m like this isn’t irreplaceable. Specially, about the Children’s Museum. It is not, it is intended to be replaced, it is intended for children to pick it up and drop it and break it. You know, it...it’s...it’s a place where children interact with these science related items. This is supposed to be replaced, and you all have to replace it and I would get on.......thank God for the internet, because FEMA put all of these policies on the internet and I’d go out there and get all of these policies and they are like, Well, how did you get it and I’m like well I downloaded it yesterday. You all have to do this, you know. And I had this insurance guy come and he said we were talking about, we had a fire prevention facility was about four inches into Flood Zone A. And I can remember talking to him and I said I’m going to go get a surveyor and I’m going to have them resurvey the property. Because, he wanted to tell me that it came under our insurance and because of how our insurance worked I wanted to argue with him about it. And he said, It’s
under your insurance......and I’m like, no, you know, it’s in flood zone A, we have this $2 million dollars in flood zone A and I said, and I know that I can go get this letter of map amendment, aloma, and I can get this changed. He said well, how do you know that, and I said because I downloaded it off of the internet yesterday. He goes, you did....he goes what’s that site, here I’m giving the FEMA guy the site, but you know, they...they FEMA...FEMA helps you with some of that stuff and FEMA from Fran to Floyd was a drastic improvement. It was much easier to deal with, it was much customer...much more customer friendly. They were willing to let you argue with them and they still are, you know, they’re...we...we’ve maintained, I think, some really good relationships with the FEMA people and with the state people. And the state comes in because they actually administer it. That, you know, that’s worked to our advantage, and there’s a guy who works in Atlanta. He used to work here, who has given me five numbers where I can reach him probably 24 hours a day if something comes up in Rocky Mount. And they are real...the state and the FEMA people that we’ve dealt directly with have been really, really good, only a few have been...have been difficult to deal with and they really have looked for ways to help you out. You know, they haven’t said, this is what the policy says, forget it. You know, they’ll...they’ll...they would sit there and argue with me and try to work out a solution to many, many, many things,

Marlene: That’s good. That’s nice to hear. Is the FEMA grant complete?

Ann: No, we have some projects that are done, we have some projects that are ready to be closed out, but we have some projects that are no where even near done. The Children’s Museum, the Art Center, all the money we got for all of those. I would say by the end of this summer, except for those three...the replacement of those three facilities, we should be nearing completion on getting all of the paperwork together. And see once you do the project worksheet, then you have
to get together all the receipts and all the invoices and all the time sheets associated with all of that. And we have some substations that are still... are still...they should be...they may be energized now although I don’t think sub 1 is. I think that the substations should be done by the end of the summer and then we’ll have the Art Center and the Playhouse and the Children’s Museum yet to go. And those will take a long time and we’ll really have to work hard on FEMA in the state on... on getting...that will take a long time to close out. It’s interesting with Fran, Fran.....they had the final paperwork for Fran for almost a year. Fran happened in ‘96, we probably took about 2 years to get everything closed out...maybe a year and a half. So for about a year, they had all the paperwork for Fran.

Marlene: And so you got that...

Ann: And we got that check in June or July before Floyd hit.

Marlene: Ghee.

Ann: So Fran was done for like 2 or 3 months (laughter) and then Floyd happened. So I’m not in any big rush to finish Floyd, cause I don’t know what’s coming after that (laughter).

Marlene: I heard when the first batch of paperwork went in for the FEMA grant...I heard people talking about the amount of paper that you tur... do you remember? Well, you know, there was a huge amount.

Ann: There were two...you know, when we...because public assistance is separate than hazard mitigation, the FEMA stuff went in every little...every day we were signing project worksheets and getting stuff to them and the amount that you turn in for them is probably....is pretty extensive but the amount that they turn in for hazard mitigation...for the buy out were.....I don’t know...I want to say 21 mill __, and ________ say you need to check that out, it was a huge amount of
paperwork on just the buy out side. That was just the application things. Separate from the actual clos...closing fees as they go forward. I mean they, you know, they like...they like paper, and they like to see numbers on paper and if you can give them that, any FEMA person or any state person, and you know, you work through the state because the state is actually the subguarantee of FEMA. So all of our stuff goes to the state and we deal with the state and then we talk to FEMA. Hopefully, you don’t have to talk to FEMA, but you know...I...the Children’s Museum is an example. That...that...that project worksheet went in last February, February of 2000. Was one of the final ones we turned in, was for the building and the content of the Children’s Museum. That’s one that we really spent time working with talking with them and they tried to get a technical person down to assist us and couldn’t find a technical, like curator type, to come down and talk to us about it and we tried to get like a preservationist down, couldn’t get anybody like that down and so we worked through them and that went in in February. And it sat on...in the insurance cube for 290 days and so since January of this year, I think I have called them every couple of weeks for about the first two months and probably on a weekly basis for the last three months to find out where that...that project worksheet was. And that...that took over a year, probably a year...probably sixteen months to get that project worksheet for that 2.4 million dollars through the process.

Marlene: Ghee. And the governor just announced that it was released.

Ann: Right. We knew...we knew last week that, ‘cause we had called from the FEMA...the National FEMA director’s office, who wanted to respond back to the Governor and that’s when the Governor finally called to...to the press release to announce the 2.4 million dollars. And, that’s just to say it’s approved. Now, we’ve got to turn around and demonstrate and you know
that’s...we have to demonstrate to them how it is that we have sp...that we’re going to spend this 2.4 million dollars and some of it, you know, we might put on the building and you know and you know we’ll have to work with them on that and it’s a long drawn out process and while they are helpful, it’s just a very long, drawn out documented process. You know, we have to have letters to say you monitored the contractors and everything they did and what you did to check and you know, I always tell people to take pictures, take a before and a after picture. You know, let’s have has many pictures in a file as we can have because there is no better way to explain what happened than a picture.

Marlene: Is there a time limit?

Ann: There’s a tim...we have the first extension on the construction. There’s really no time limit on getting the paperwork done. There is a time limit on completing the project, so we’ve gone through the first round of time limits on those projects that are not done...and there are some substations and a little bit of work here and there...some work that we had to do at the dam, ah, I’m trying to think of the other ones....the Children’s Museum, the Playhouse, all of those, there were probably 20 or 25 projects that were not done. So we had the first round of project extensions on those and we’ll have to press up against all the limits because the Children’s Museum, Art Center and Playhouse...that whole Imperial Center complex will look...exceeds the state limit you know, FEMA can give us an additional amount of time and I’ve told them now, they are going to have to do it. The pools are an example, you know, that was one we really fought with, the pools, you know, I fought with them tooth and nail on those pools. Pete and I went to meetings many, many times on what to do with the pools and the FEMA people wanted to give us 40 and we wanted to hold 900 and they ultimately agreed, and that was because the
state...that state agreed with us and won.

**Marlene:** That was $900,000 for each of the two swimming pools

**Ann:** Right. And the original project worksheets were written for forty, to simply clean the pool. That was all...and the...and the...and the structure and they went up to nine hundred. We were really pleased, we thought that was a real good...that was a real good fight and the state was really behind us and we were really pleased when we got that approved because that was pretty, pretty significant to get the pools replaced.

**Marlene:** Is there one flood memory that stands out above all the others or impression?

**Ann:** I think the lady calling about the dog was a pretty hard one...I think that was...I still have, you know, I still have pains about that one. And I can remember going to see the Children’s Museum the first time and there was water still in it and there was that banner that talked about kids at play hanging outside the building and it was kind of floating in the water.

**Marlene:** That was the exhibition that was Children At Play.

**Ann:** Yeah, I can remember seeing that, and you know, and Larry can’t come in after he cleaned out the animals and he was all grumpy and I was kind of ticked off that he was so grumpy...and I thought, everybody’s been through it and I realized what he had done and I was like, No....you know, I...I...and I take it back, I have one other memory and that is, that I think we had talked about this before...We have a tendency to all go out to dinner, to lunch as a group, the city manager and Charles Penney and Doug Roberson, who is our public works director and I, we all kind of go out to lunch as a group. And we usually do it on a fairly regular basis and you know, for about a week, we never did anything, we stayed in the EOC and got really sick of each other and it was probably, I want to say it might have been the Thursday or the Friday, a week
following the flood. We went out to lunch and to us it might have been the first kind of normal
day where we were actually working out of our offices and we might have done something that
wasn’t directly related to the flood on that day. You know we might have gotten done something
that was kind of the real...our real job. But we went out to lunch and I don’t remember where we
went, and on the way back, we decided we would drive around. And for an hour, there was total
silence in the car. ‘Cause we went through Riverside, and we went through North Taylor Street
and we came down through, you know, Lafayette Circle and we went over on Leggett Road and
we went to those places, I don’t think we went to Map...I don’t think we went to Maple Creek,
we might have gone to Melton Drive, you know, cause Melton’s used to always be our flood
monitor. And there was total silence in that car for an hour. Because, during that hour you
watched all of these people hauling entire contents out on the street, I mean, you know, china
closets that had probably been in their family, you know, for seventy-five years, and you know,
furniture and curtains and clothes and dishes and pictures...and I mean and you...as you drove
through the areas, there were mountains of stock, I mean, it looked almost like a wall, and I think
for all of us, I think it was our realization that this was...this was a hideous, devastating, awful
thing that had happened. I mean for an hour, I mean this...a car ride that we would have usually
been talking about something businesswise or something like that, the four of us sat in that car in
just total silence and I...you know, I...I...I...that was the day I think that it...it began to slowly
dawn on people.

Marlene: Thank you Ann.