

May 10, 1979

Occupation: College student

INTERVIEWER: When did you first hear about the Three Mile Island incident?

NARRATOR: As soon as it was in the press. As soon as the media picked it up. Not long after that.

INT: Do you remember what day?

NAR: Okay. The incident was March 28th? Right?

INT: Mmhm.

NAR: I think it was that evening. I caught it on the 11 o'clock news or 6 o'clock something.

INT: What did you think about it at that point?

NAR: Um, very little.

INT: So did you feel it was a serious situation?

NAR: No. No.

INT: Did you seek out further information?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you talk about it with your friends, family, or co-workers?

NAR: Friends here at school.

INT: What did you talk about?

NAR: Just "Have you heard?" That type of conversation.

INT: How did you feel about everybody else's reaction to the incident?

NAR: Like at what? Like at what specific time? Immediately...?

INT: Initially, and as it progressed.

NAR: Initially I didn't think that it was really a reaction of worry or concern. And later a lot of people were concerned but I didn't feel that way and then I feel that the attitude here at school became more of "Well, this is great because I'm going to get another week's vacation."

INT: Did you follow any newspaper, radio or TV reports?

NAR: You mean consistently through the crisis?

INT: Did you listen to any at all?

NAR: Yes. Oh, yes.

INT: Did you listen to any particular sources?

NAR: Well, I was reading newspapers.

INT: Do you remember the names of the newspapers?

NAR: The Harrisburg, The Patriot and the Evening News and watched the Harrisburg television station.

INT: Did you pay more attention than usual to these?

NAR: No, no more than usual.

INT: How did you feel about the way the media was handling the incident?

NAR: I didn't, well, I felt it was blown out of proportion.

INT: Was there any one source that you particularly relied on?

NAR: Although the Harrisburg paper, being that they were the source that was closest, I thought they were...I don't get the Washington Post or the New York Times so that was the source I had.

INT: Did you make any plans different than you ordinarily would have made?

NAR: No. If the school hadn't have cancelled I would have been here, but the school gave us the week off so I went home.

INT: Did you change any of your ordinary routines?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you ever think it was a crisis situation?

NAR: No.

INT: What did you think about the idea of leaving the area, not necessarily as it pertained to you, but the whole concept?

NAR: I didn't feel that we were really in danger located here and by going home I wasn't really that much further away from Three Mile Island than I am right here.

INT: Did you leave?

NAR: Yes.

INT: When did you leave?

NAR: Sunday of... the Sunday that they announced that they had cancelled for the week.

INT: (unintelligible)

NAR: That evening.

INT: How long were you gone for?

NAR: Till the following Sunday.

INT: What was it that brought you to leave finally?

NAR: Just the fact that they told us that classes had been suspended.

INT: What did you want to take with you when you left?

NAR: I took enough clothing for a week and books.

INT: Was there anything you wished you would have brought that you hadn't brought?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you have any mental pictures of what was happening at Three Mile Island or what might happen?

NAR: As to what was happening, no. As to what could happen, I thought about that maybe once or twice.

INT: What did you think?

NAR: Well I could see the possibility of an explosion.

INT: Did you visualize what that was going to be like?

NAR: As to it's effect, no.

INT: Were you worried?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you think that anything that happened at TMI might have affected your health?

NAR: Possibly but not significantly.

INT: And how's that?

NAR: Well, in that I could have been subjected to more than like a normal, like an everyday dosage of radiation but I didn't feel that it's really going to harm me overall.

INT: Do you think any other aspects of your life may have been affected?

NAR: It could be in the sense that maybe the milk that I drink came from cows that were on farms near there. Possibly, I don't know, I wouldn't. I can't sit here and say yes or no.

INT: Do you think that any other aspects of the community or home may have been affected?

NAR: Yeah. My town, there were about 200 people there who were from the Middletown area that came to our Civil Defense evacuation center.

INT: How do you think that changed your community at all?

NAR: In a sense that our motels were filled, our restaurants did more business, like places in general did more business.

INT: If the worst had occurred what do you think that would have been?

NAR: (long pause) Can you tell me a little bit more?

INT: Let's say you imagine the worst, you said this may be an explosion.

NAR: Okay.

INT: What do you think might have happened if there was an explosion? How would people react? What would have happened to the environment?

NAR: Okay. I can see that. If there had been like an explosion I can see that a lot of people could have, would have died. In the environment, it would be greatly disrupted but I think it could return and of course the people lives, that can't be, can't be brought

back. But in the case of like in Japan when the atomic bomb was dropped, it...
(unintelligible)

INT: How do you think all this would have affected your health?

NAR: Okay, like in the question before, I said that it might have affected me but my feeling was that the effect was probably minute. Had there been an accident of the type of explosion, then the effect would have been a lot greater than I feel.

INT: Do you have any idea of what it would have been?

NAR: I can't see that I would have, would have lost my life, but perhaps I would have had enough radiation that my chances of getting cancer, that would have been greater.

INT: Do you think any other aspects of your life would have been affected?

NAR: I think my life would have been a little more difficult in terms of the comforts that I'm used to.

INT: Did you picture any other effect of radiation on life around you? Either other people of nature?

NAR: You mean do you think I saw the effects of...?

INT: No, did you imagine any or think about any?

NAR: Yes. In the sense that radiation they were concerned about iodine 131 and that, that livestock around Three Mile Island could have been outdoors and then we would have been drinking the milk. That sort of situation.

INT: Do you feel like those in charge were in control of the situation?

NAR: Personnel... Immediately... Immediately at the plant, employees of the power company, no. But when the Nuclear Regulatory Commission came with their personnel they started to see what was going on then I feel that the coordination of things were worked out. But immediately when they heard of the situation I don't think that any one particular person or group of people who were in control.

INT: What made you uneasy then?

NAR: Nothing made me uneasy, but as I look back on it now I don't feel that they really knew what was going on.

INT: Do you think they are in control of the situation as it is now?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did you think about God during the incident?

NAR: No.

INT: At the time did any past events or past experiences come to mind?

NAR: No.

INT: Did anything like this ever happen to you before or history that you can think of?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you see this incident as similar to anything else in your life?

NAR: Similar or dissimilar? What did you say?

INT: Similar

NAR: Yes in the sense that in 1972 I lived, where I was living, the river that flooded with Hurricane Agnes and I think people, a lot of people reacted to that similarly, in my particular town no, because where Agnes directly affected us, this indirectly affected us.

INT: At the time did you have any daydreams that you can remember?

NAR: No.

INT: How about any sleeping dreams?

NAR: No.

INT: Did any radio shows, TV shows, or movies come to mind?

NAR: Now?

INT: Or at the time?

NAR: Well, I mean I watched the news reports and had the radio on from time to time but I can't...

INT: I'm saying did you think of a movie you saw on late night TV or something?

NAR: No. No.

INT: Did you think of any songs or lyrics?

NAR: No.

INT: What changes happened to the people around you during the incident?

NAR: Do you mean physically? Mentally? Emotionally?

INT: Mostly emotionally. If you saw any physical changes, you can answer.

NAR: I noticed several people who were very anxious to get out of the area and who I say normally very calm and level headed but within 2 or 3 days that they were informed of this, they were going home, whether the College was going to do anything or not.

INT: Okay, do you think this has changed these people in a lasting way?

NAR: I think that if they never thought about nuclear power before and they did now. I don't feel that they would support, that is they would be against nuclear power now, where as before they probably had no opinion on it.

INT: You think they would be against it?

NAR: Yes.

INT: How do you feel about the future development of nuclear power?

NAR: I would like to know more about, and I'm sure that we will know, I think that hopefully we will be better informed about exactly what happened at Three Mile Island

without a lot of sensationalism from the media and that will help us out a lot. I'm not against use of nuclear power.

INT: Did the incident change you in any lasting way?

NAR: No.

INT: What kind of jokes did you hear about radiation at Three Mile Island?

NAR: Well, come to Middletown, PA and have 2.3 children, something like "Hell no, I don't glow", and of course the T-shirt contest here and stuff like that.

INT: Do you remember when you first heard those jokes?

NAR: I heard and read the 2.3 children one on the television or newspaper, but a lot of them I didn't hear until I came back to school here.

INT: Who first told them?

NAR: I just heard them like in general conversation.

INT: That was before you came back here?

NAR: No, that was when I came back here.

INT: Did you think they were meant to be funny?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Did you laugh?

NAR: Some of them I did.

INT: Did other people laugh?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Did you tell these jokes?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you see any posters or graffiti?

NAR: I didn't see any posters. I did see that they were selling the T-shirts. But that's about it.

INT: Did you hear any new words or funny remarks?

NAR: Yeah, I think we picked up the use of "radiation vacation" and "TMI break" and so on and so forth.

INT: Do you remember when you first heard those?

NAR: When I returned to school. We talked about "What did you do over radiation vacation?"

INT: With your friends?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Were you guys just sitting around?

NAR: We were sitting at lunch or dinner or something like that.

INT: Do you think they were meant to be funny terms at all?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did you find them amusing?

NAR: Well, let's say that they were used that if you could, instead of saying, if you could say a sentence in two words, I think most of us would. I think that what the intention was in using a phrase like that.

INT: Why do you think there was joking going on?

NAR: I don't think most of the people felt there was, felt any real seriousness of the incident or any possible harm or injury.

INT: Can you remember joking from other crises for example the Agnes flood or assassinations or Guyana or something?

NAR: Here at school we had some jokes about Guyana, but not from the flood or assassinations.

INT: Is there anything else that you want to say about all of this?

NAR: No.