

Date: 1979

Occupation: College professor

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

NARRATOR: The day it occurred. (Unintelligible)

INT: And from whom?

NAR: The news media, not from the news media from some of the other professors here had heard it on the radio first.

INT: And did you know the reactor was there before?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did you know the distance?

NAR: Yes, because we had been out to the Luetzelschwabs' which is just a mile and half away. So I knew about how far it was.

INT: What did you think and talk about when you first heard it?

NAR: Uhm, I wondered which way the wind direction was, whether any of the gasses that were released were blowing this way or away from us. I think that was the first thing I thought about. And then as to how long would it be shut down, how long would it be out of power.

INT: Did you feel it was a serious situation?

NAR: Not until the Friday, when they had more problems.

INT: Why did you change your mind? What was it just the other radiation leaking or?

NAR: Yes and the reports that it was, they were having trouble controlling the temperatures.

INT: Did you seek out further information?

NAR: Yeah, a little bit. Keeping in touch with Professor Luetzelschwab and the test that he was monitoring, the air, and they went down and took some samples at his home and then monitoring what was going on here at the college. Having the radio on in my office most of the time.

INT: Then you talked about it with friends and family and co-workers?

NAR: Well, just immediate family- none of our relatives called until Sunday, I guess it was.

INT: Did your attitude change? Like did you attitude?

NAR: As to whether to stay or not?

INT: Well, just your attitude about what was happening, I mean it changed from being,

NAR: From the first day, it change Friday, I came to feel that they really didn't know how to handle the situation. Less confidence in the Metropolitan Edison people.

INT: How did you feel about other's reactions to the incident?

NAR: Some were a little bit too panicky like maybe the parents of students being so anxious to have their kids come home when there's still a lot of distance between us and the reactor.

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

NAR: Yes, all the time.

INT: Can you remember any particular sources? Channels or?

NAR: No, I usually flip the channel to catch all of them, all of them I could. Usually, not, channel 8 mainly...the Harrisburg stations or the York or Lancaster.

INT: So would you say you paid any more attention to these than usual?

NAR: Yes.

INT: How did you feel about the media handling of the situation?

NAR: Well, the local media, I though it was alright, I thought the national media too much publicity and over emphasizing certain points, they didn't need to make such a big deal out of as they did.

INT: How did you feel about the way the government officials handled it?

NAR: There were slow getting but once they got here the particular man that they had, Denton, was very good, a lot of confidence inspiring. As far as the government as a whole, they might not have been quite so good. But they had a good man there at the time.

INT: Everybody seemed to like him. How did you feel about Metropolitan Edison's handling of the incident?

NAR: It sort of struck me that they were more after their own interests than the public and not telling us everything that was going on.

INT: Was there anyone that you found particularly reliable, or anyone's word that you trusted more over others?

NAR: I'd say Professor Lueztchelswab's opinions.

INT: Why?

NAR: Just because of his expertise in Nuclear Physics and Health Physics and then living himself, so close to the plant.

INT: Was there anyone you particularly mistrusted?

NAR: Oh the closest would probably be the Metropolitan Edison officials.

INT: Did you feel that those in charge were in control of the situation?

NAR: After Saturday, as I remember the time period. They started getting more control and could make people believe they had control, Saturday or Sunday.

INT: What reassured you about this?

NAR: Getting more data to the people I think.

INT: Do you feel now that those in charge are in control at the plant now?

NAR: At the present time? Yes.

INT: Were you worried about the situation?

NAR: On Friday I was. All the phone lines here at the college were tied up so I went home and told my wife to make sure she had the radio on in case the wind direction changed to this direction, and they had a meltdown and a catastrophe occurred, that we could be ready to go. I made sure there was gas in the car and what not.

INT: What worried you most, was it the radiation?

NAR: Yes, having a large escape of radiation if the wind would happen to be in this direction.

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

NAR: No, not other than classes being cancelled. We didn't change too much. Although we go to church in Mechanicsburg and the civil defense had ordered them, had suggested that they didn't have service on Sunday. And there was a program Saturday night that they cancelled. That was the only change.

INT: Did you change any of your ordinary routines?

NAR: Not aside from just listening to news a little bit longer each day, probably. Listening to the briefings, the press conferences once or twice a day, watch to tune into those.

INT: What did you think about leaving the area?

NAR: I didn't think it was necessary until actually the catastrophe happened, that we'd still have a lot of time.

INT: Did you leave then?

NAR: No we stayed the whole time.

INT: What brought you to stay, just confidence or...?

NAR: Confidence in that with the information from the college here and from after Denton got to, on the scene that the situation was in hand, didn't pose any danger to Carlisle.

INT: Is there someone in your life that you were watching, in order to decide what to do, like to leave or stay?

NAR: Not too closely, probably the closest would have been Prof. Luetzchelswab.

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

NAR: No, I don't think so.

INT: In the future?

NAR: No.

INT: What other aspects of your life might have been affected?

NAR: A little bit more in how the semester was rearranged. We didn't leave on vacation as soon as we would have. Otherwise pretty minor. I worked on fixing up the house during that week mostly, not too big a change.

INT: Do you think there were any aspects of the community that changed? That might have changed during the incident?

NAR: Probably their outlook on reactors, wanting to have more reactors in the country has probably declined. More people will be against starting up more reactors in PA.

INT: Did you notice your neighbors, how they reacted, did they overreact, did they leave?

NAR: Yes two of our neighbors did leave. One to South Carolina another to western PA. They said they wouldn't leave till we left but then they ended up leaving.

INT: Did you have any concern about the food or the milk?

NAR: A little bit until finding out that they were keeping track of the radiation in the food.

INT: Did you picture in your mind any affects of radiation on the life around you?

NAR: Not in terms of what might have happened in the future, how plants or animals or people would have been hurt. I just pictured it more in terms of the radiation actually being there, but not its affect.

INT: Did you think of your own death?

NAR: Do you want me to read the questions?

INT: Ha Ha Ha.

NAR: No it didn't cross my mind.

INT: And that of others?

NAR: More worried about the people working in the plant, being so close. They wouldn't have as much time to get out.

INT: Did you think about God during the incident?

NAR: Yeah. Prayer for the people there.

INT: How did God figure in all this?

NAR: Oh trusting him that he still has everything under control; it still wouldn't be out of his control, that's the best way to put it.

INT: Did any biblical stories or events or sayings cross your mind?

NAR: Not that I recall.

INT: Did the idea of Satan the last judgment or the end of the world enter your thinking or feeling?

NAR: No. It's going to be a lot worse.

INT: Did you or do you now consider the incident at Three Mile Island as related in any way to God and his instructing and disciplining people?

NAR: I don't think I do.

INT: Did you attend a religious service during the crisis?

NAR: No. It was cancelled.

INT: Did any one speak about TMI, it was completely cancelled they didn't have, they didn't move someplace else and have it held in another part of town or area?

NAR: They just cancelled it.

INT: Do you think religious persons or institutions should take a public stand regarding nuclear power?

NAR: No.

INT: Does your faith say anything about the rightness or wrongness of man's controlling atomic power?

NAR: I believe we have dominion over all aspects of the world. I think it's alright for us to be involved in nuclear power.

INT: Do you feel that you had certain responsibilities during the incident?

NAR: A little bit although there were more people on the faculty here with more expertise in nuclear energy. There were some people who relied on me, some of our neighbors that did stay for some information on what was happening.

INT: Did any of those responsibilities conflict, like those with your family and those with your job here at the school?

NAR: No.

INT: Was your job or work affected by TMI?

NAR: Yes.

INT: And how?

NAR: Well just the fact that we didn't have classes that week. I had to re-adjust the syllabus for the rest of the semester, films were off schedule that we had rented, but it was no major affect I think, minor inconveniences.

INT: Did you have things to do which you otherwise would not have had to do?

NAR: I gave two planetarium shows. There wasn't much extra duty.

INT: Did you have ideas about how it would be best to behave in such a situation?

NAR: Yes to be calm and wait for real words on what was happening at the sight before taking any actions.

INT: And you think some people just overreacted to the whole thing, they just sort of panicked?

NAR: Yes. I could understand with people with small children and pregnant women near the plant, they had good reason to leave. Maybe they waited a little too long to tell those people to leave.

INT: When did they tell them to leave anyway?

NAR: I forget was it Thursday, I don't know whether it was Thursday or Friday.

INT: Friday, that's when they let off the even bigger radiation that I had no idea until late that night that they had done anything Friday. Do you have any ethical, moral, or religious ideas about how people should behave, should they be considerate?

NAR: Sure, you shouldn't buy up all the gas in town, leave some for somebody else, or give somebody a ride if they needed a ride.

INT: Did you try to behave this way?

NAR: Yes.

INT: At the time, did this event bring to mind any past experiences or past events?

NAR: Well, I knew about some of the other problems with reactors around the country. Browns ferry where the electrical cables had burned through. I guess somebody was testing, looking, into the control cable package. I knew there had been other accidents but this was the worst one.

INT: Did anything like this happen to you before or in history?

NAR: Not to me and the other nuclear reactors of less magnitude of problems.

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

NAR: No. I don't think so.

INT: Was this incident more or less frightening than say a flood, a hurricane or anything like that?

NAR: As it actually occurred, I think it was less frightening, rather than being more. It depends, if you're in the flood and in the hurricane that would be more frightening than this was. If you're in both of them, like if we lived right next to the plant. Living right next to the plant would have been almost as frightening as being in a flood, it'd be comparable.

INT: Did Prof. Luetzelschwab leave or?

NAR: No they stayed the whole time. He had taken monitors down to his home.

INT: He lives like a mile away?

NAR: A mile and a half something like that.

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

NAR: Well, we still haven't seen it, but the China Syndrome.

INT: What made you think of them?

NAR: Well, seeing the advertisements before this happened, just remembering them.

INT: Any books or stories?

NAR: No, I haven't been reading much lately, fictional.

INT: Did you find yourself singing any songs or any lyrics or poems?

NAR: No.

INT: At the time, did you have any day-dreams that you remember?

NAR: I can remember imagining what would happen if it did meltdown.



INT: What did you imagine?

NAR: A big cloud of radioactive gas coming off and drifting down wind.

INT: Have you had any since then?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you have any sleeping dreams?

NAR: No, not that I remember.

INT: Have you had any since?

NAR: No.

INT: Was your sleep disturbed in any way were you restless, if not remembering the dreams?

NAR: I think I remember wondering how I'd wake up if something happened during the night. I don't think it affected my sleep any.

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

NAR: More edgy, I think in general. People were on their toes a little bit more not being so relaxed.

INT: Do you think it changed them in any lasting way?

NAR: Just in their attitude towards nuclear power, being exposed to what possibly could happen it is more easy for them to visualize now I think.

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

NAR: Maybe a little bit more serious evaluation of nuclear power and wanting the government to be a little stricter in safety requirements for the reactors.

INT: What jokes did you hear about the radiation?

NAR: Mainly phrases like Radiation Vacation.

INT: Did you see any posters or graffiti?

NAR: Mainly just the t-shirts going around could be closest.

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

NAR: Not that I recall- just people glowing. Professor Luetzelschwab's garden, his radishes will really be hot now.

INT: Did you think the jokes were funny?

NAR: Yes.

INT: And did others laugh?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did you tell it to anyone else?

NAR: Yeah, my wife.

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

NAR: Well, it's sort of a common event around this department here, for people to make up puns and a few phrases. I think there was more joking in between news releases more than there would be near a time of a scheduled news conference there would be fewer jokes. More in the time when you had to pass the time till the next piece of data came out.

INT: Was it a nervous kind of laughter as usual like all the others?

NAR: It varied with the people. With the personality and how much trust maybe the person had. If they had more trust in the people down at the sight they were more relaxed, if they weren't so trusting, then they had more nervous laughter.

INT: What joking do you remember from other crises, like the Kennedy assassination, Guiana, do you remember anything, hearing any jokes about that?

NAR: No, I don't.

INT: Have you developed an opinion about nuclear energy?

NAR: I'm still in favor of it, I was in favor before and I still am in favor now.

INT: But you're a little more cautious?

NAR: Yeah a little more, better inspections or maintenance of the plants.

INT: Is there anything you'd like to say about this?

