

Date: August 9, 1979

Occupation: Teachers and student

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

NARRATOR 1: I'm not sure of the date now, but it was right around the time that they first let it be known to the public that some gas had escaped. I remember I think it was a Wednesday. What the date was, I don't know. And everybody seemed to be kinda making light of it and to be honest with you; the fellow that I teach with brought it to my attention. I was aware of it but to be honest I was going along with it thinking that we didn't have anything to worry about. He went on and told me all the possibilities that existed and so forth and they were trying to hush it up and make light of it. It wasn't more than a few days until of course it became more and more serious in nature as far as the public being aware of it, and I guess I reacted like everybody, not everybody, but many other people. We didn't think of ourselves as being alarmists but when we realized some of the possibilities it was frightening.

INT: So initially it was sorta another news event and then you became increasingly concerned as time went on?

NAR1 Yes. And there was this one friend of mine that seemed to be ahead of most of the others. Everybody that I spoke to made light of it, but he was very much concerned and in speaking to him, I thought that maybe he was maybe overreacting, but then I realized how aware of the whole situation he was.

INT: Are you working right now? What is your occupation?

NAR2: Well, I'm a student and I also work.

INT: Where are you a student at?

NAR2: At Shippensburg.

INT: Where do you work? What is your occupation?

NAR2: I'm a cook for a private family. Dr. Stetler. He was the librarian at Dickinson a while ago.

INT: I just had to use his book for a big project. I was just doing a paper on religion on the Dickinson campus, sort of tracing it over the years. And he was a biggie. (chuckles) I couldn't have made it without him. When did you first hear about the Three Mile Island incident?

NAR2: Well, I heard it from my sister. I was at school and I guess it was the day that it happened. And I came home and she was very upset, and I didn't even hear about it because I was at school and I generally don't listen to the radio. So I didn't hear it at all.

INT: And how did you feel about it when you first heard about it?

NAR2: Well, I was just bewildered. I didn't know what to believe, if it was true that you really had to stay inside because it's something that you can't see or feel or hear and you don't know if it's true and if you have caution, you should be. Because I wasn't up on it at all. I didn't even think about nuclear energy.

INT: Did your attitude change at all as time went on?

NAR2: Yes. Definitely.

INT: In what ways?

NAR2: I was terrified and I think that the plant should be shut down until it is developed where they say it is 100% safe.

INT: So you don't think it is possible to do that?

NAR2: Probably not. Nothing is 100% safe, but having an accident that would cause, would cause more damage than anything, I guess.

INT: When did you first hear about the incident?

NAR3: Well, I read about it. But like Rich, I didn't feel like there was any great threat but when we were at Saint Patrick's, I can remember coming into the principal's office and Mr. Smith, who teaches at Dickinson, he and his children...

NAR1 This was two days after you initially heard about it.

NAR3: Right, right. But it was the same. As Georgie and Rich said, he had called the school and told everyone to stay inside and not to go out at recess. That there was danger and it was just shocking. That's when I first really became aware to worry about it.

INT: Did you know a reactor was there before the incident?

NAR1 Yes.

INT: And how had you felt about it being there?

NAR1 Well, I really didn't think there was an immediate danger. I have to be honest. I just didn't think a lot about it. I would always worry whenever I would read about nuclear energy and it being a part of the future. I realize the, you know, how I guess a catastrophe could result and so forth, but I guess I was just lulled into thinking that it was

100% safe. And I just never entertained the thought of the leakage and the possible melt-down.

NAR3: Everything that seems to have gone before the public before this that I've ever read from magazine articles or whatever always stated that it was, you know, about 99.9% sure that there would never be an accident, until now. Unless you study nuclear energy or something. But nothing ever, you wouldn't think there would be an accident. I didn't think there would be an accident. I think too though that we might have been a little bit biased, at least I am, because my mother is an industrial nurse at the power plant that they are building in Berwick.

INT: A nuclear power plant?

NAR3: A nuclear power plant. She's a nurse there. From what she would tell us, it was safe and how they are building cooling towers and how nothing can ever escape and how safe it is. Richie and I both went on a tour of the nuclear power plant a couple years ago.

INT: This is in Berwick?

NAR3: Yeah, and they explained the nuclear core, you know, how many feet of cement and Rich, do you want to tell her that you worked there? We went home, we were in this area before.

NAR1 Just as a part-time job. It was a summer job. I was an iron worker.

NAR3: We were home for a summer. And he was an iron worker at the nuclear power plant and we had it explained in detail by the nuclear specialist or whoever was there. We had questions then on the safety or whatever to get it firsthand and they were absolutely positively sure that there would never ever be a problem and explained it to us. We had a private discussion with a small group...

INT: So you've had a lot more exposure than most people have had to nuclear power then?

NAR3: We thought it was very safe.

INT: Were you working at the plant while it was operating?

NAR1 No, it's still is not in operation. They don't think it will be ready...they're already late on it. I think maybe this year, 1980. But I don't think they will make it. So it's not like I really had any first hand information. It was really just the idea that it was a nuclear plant and what my wife said about the tour we had gotten.

NAR3: There are no nuclear materials there yet.

NAR1 They are just building the reactor and pouring the concrete.

INT: So there was never any danger that you might have been exposed?

NAR1 Oh my gosh, no.

INT: When you first began talking about the situation, what sort of things were flying around? How were people reacting to it?

NAR3: Most people at the school, for instance the principal took it very lightly. I talked to her immediately and said that we would probably leave the area which I wouldn't be teaching, Richie wouldn't be going to school and we would leave if something would happen. She didn't seem concerned, even if there was an accident she felt that we were far enough away but she said that if she had a family though she would be concerned. It was sorta mixed. Some people were either leaving completely and upset or they weren't worrying about it and they weren't going to leave. Like the Hendersons, as we talked about; they were very concerned. It seemed as if you stayed and didn't worry about it or you left.

INT: What sort of things were flying around with your friends?

NAR2:: No one. Well, yeah, I guess a few people were aware of it but they weren't really thinking about it because they felt Shippensburg was very far away from the thing. They just weren't worried at all. And when I voiced my opinion that I was really scared and that I was in Carlisle, they just kinda shrugged it off. (unintelligible)

INT: Were they like that during the whole thing?

NAR2:: I don't know, I wasn't here. I went home.

INT: So you took off? (no vocal response) All right, how did you feel about other people's reactions, about their nonchalance about it? Did that upset you?

NAR2:: Yes, in a way because since they were away, they thought they were safe, but I thought what about me, I'm close and what about everyone else. And what about everyone else; I should be worried about them. Someday you might live next door. It's time to worry now and do something, instead of waiting.

INT: Were there any comments made when you did come back? I don't know, anything said that your having left, that you shouldn't have left or anything along that line.

NAR2: Oh, I guess. My roommate didn't leave and she wasn't worried at all and she thought that I was overreacting but she said that she could "see your point why your was worried. But I don't think you should, and I'm staying." So she didn't think it was a good idea.

INT: At what point did you leave? Do you remember what day it was?

NAR2: I don't know. Peggy, do you remember?

NAR3: It was the day after the gases leaked.

NAR1 As I recall, there was some leakage and it seemed like there was several days before the public really got hold of it and it got to be, you know, and Thornburgh was saying that the young children and expectant mothers and that evacuation and so forth. It was right when that was initiated, right at the beginning.

NAR2: When the pregnant mothers...

NAR1 Right, it was right around that time.

INT: Okay, that was on a Friday that they evacuated pregnant mothers.

NAR3: Too days after.

NAR1 So it was about 2 days after the initial leakage.

NAR2: We went from Saturday through the weekend. Was that right?

NAR1 Yeah.

NAR3: So we left in the morning and then we didn't come back.

NAR2: Well Rich and I came back because Rich had to teach school. He teaches in West Perry, which wasn't shut down and Peggy's school was shut down but Shippensburg was still open. So I didn't know if I had to go back to school or not. So the two of us came back. And then when did we leave again, Rich?

NAR1 I think we left that Monday. I came back thinking that there was school. I hadn't heard anything on the news and I called my principal, came back to teach on Monday and as it turned out they did close my school with the idea that it could be an evacuation center. Which, you know, there wasn't mass evacuation. So it was sorta hectic because we then went back to our home which is about a 2 ½ hour drive and then I got word that there would be school the next day and we had to turn around. I did come back to teach and we left our children at home. When I say home, our former home, you know, where they are well out of the area.

INT: Were the children staying with relatives then?

NAR1 Yeah. Grandparents.

NAR3: We were mostly concerned about them. So that was the biggest thing, that they would not be touched, because we thought their whole future could be in jeopardy and

why take the chance for a few days of missing school or being away. We go home for the weekend during holiday, so we just took them and left them there.

INT: How were you afraid that they might be affected?

NAR3: Like Georgine said, not knowing. Everything we were reading then, anything could happen in the future. And if it did happen, then we would look back and said if we would have taken them away for the weekend, if we took them back a week or two.

NAR1 I was just going to say that just the fact that the young people, their tissues are so much more susceptible to radiation and that's what concerned us. And also, we felt like many other people did that we were kinda being misled when they were talking about the rims and saying that we were only getting the equivalent of a chest x-ray and they weren't really saying the fact that it was a cumulative effect x-ray or after x-ray and so forth. So much, as had Peggy said, we were especially worried because of them. Because if anyone was going to be affected, surely they would be much more vulnerable.

NAR3: Would you like to ask them, or anything, or not?

INT: I think it might be easier if I keep everything, it makes it kinda hard when I'm typing it out. Unless you want to throw something in that you can think of. Okay. Did you ever have any thoughts that you might not be coming back when you left?

NAR3: Definitely.

Richie Cronin: I won't be able to sit on my bike anymore.

INT: You wouldn't be able to have your bike anymore? Did you think about it then? No?

NAR1 Richie, don't say anything like that. It's not what you feel now. She's trying to get our feelings then.

NAR3: We thought there would be a melt-down and that would be it.

NAR1 Yeah. Yeah, I think we did. I'm sort of confused now with going back and forth to leaving the children but there was one point when my wife stayed at our former home and Georgine, my sister-in-law, and myself came back for just that one day. I think what scared us the most, I know myself was, everything that was going on. The news was plans for evacuation and the Civil Defense and so forth and everybody was prepared and they were saying for elderly people and people who don't have transportation to make sure you call and make them be known and it just really felt like they were trying to tell us something, almost like it was inevitable. And that was frightening and the thought that, you know, it takes some million years for the radioactivity to whatever, to disintegrate. Not disintegrate, what do I want to say. To decompose or just not become radioactive. But we did think of it. We thought of valuables. My wife even made the point, it might sound silly but photo albums. You know, things of sentimental value.

INT: You know, lot of people thought of that.

NAR1 We thought the value of our car, and the big things. So we most certainly did consider it. Georgine and I were, as a matter of fact, at the bank and we were going to take all our money out of the bank.

INT: Did you take it all?

NAR1 No, as a matter of fact we were sitting at the bank. We would have, we got to the bank at it was if it opened at 10, we got there at 9:30 or if it opened at 9, we got there at 8:30, but we were waiting for it to open and we were going to do just that and in the meantime we got a very encouraging news report and it was that the bubble had dissolved greatly and they were very optimistic and then we kind of, we still left, but we didn't take all our money out. We were much more optimistic that we were going to come back.

NAR3: We did take our photo albums and stuff

NAR1 We took, I can't even think now. The car, we did load up things.

INT: Can you think of general categories of things that you took? Your sentimental things?

NAR3: Just sentimental.

NAR1 It was more... yeah.

NAR3: Music boxes, photo albums. Personal. Nothing that was really of value.

NAR1 WE don't like to think that we are real materialistic. I guess we are; everyone is to a degree, but we thought mostly what my wife said, personal things. From there, we were practical in terms of what things would be sellable, what things would have some value.

NAR3: Did you stay a while?

NAR1 No, I think we had to come right back because...

NAR2: Well, you and Peggy came back. I didn't want to come back.

NAR1 She opted to just miss her college class and Peggy and I were sort of felt obligated to teach. We didn't agree with Governor Thornburgh in having the school open. I thought it was foolish and I just took it for granted. That's why we went up there in the first place. It was so serious, I thought. And I was surprised. I just couldn't help but think of the complications involved in trying to get the school buses and trying to get them home and to their parents and parents working if there was an evacuation. I thought it was kind of foolish from my point of view anyway. So we did come back to teach and

my sister-in-law stayed at our parent's home and watched the kids. My parents are retired and she just kinda stayed with them to help out her mother.

INT: What was your feeling on government in general? You mentioned that you felt Thornburgh should have shut the schools down? How did you feel about other areas of government?

NAR1 You mean...

INT: For example, the NRC would be one aspect of government or possibly local government. Do you have any feelings there?

NAR1 I don't know. Can I pass that? I sort of have thoughts, but I don't know what I want to say.

NAR3: I thought that maybe the federal government should have stepped in because Governor Thornburgh, when he was interviewed, to me it didn't come across that he was really sure. One day he would say one thing and the other day he just didn't sound sure of what he was saying. He was saying that he didn't think that they should be evacuated, then he evacuated them, but then I thought what about the other children that, you know. The teenagers, everybody could be affected. I thought why isn't he just evacuating everyone. Even if it was slowly, young children and older people first and gradual. Because they didn't know what would happen but it was so very close to a melt-down.

NAR1 I don't think I was very much impressed or in awe, as you say, with the NRC. I didn't think they seemed to be very competent under the circumstances. We wanted, I think we all did, just some reassurance and there was just too darn many conflicting reports. That seemed to be the consensus of, you know, I would say the people at school or friends of mine, don't you get the impression or aren't you misled. Everybody seemed to think all in the same line. We were all asking one another and everybody and it was awfully confusing.

INT: How did you feel about the government?

NAR2: The same, as they had. I don't have anything to add to it.

NAR1 I might add. It would certainly come under that question, when President Carter had visited the plant and talked to Thornburgh, I didn't care for that at all. It was sort of a, you know... Carter just went on to praise Governor Thornburgh on what a wonderful and marvelous job he had done and so forth and Governor Thornburgh went on to say how gracious it was of the President and stuff and it was kind of that apple-polishing stuff. I guess when Carter came, he kinda wanted to think that just the power of the office, that he was going to make it all better or really do something and there weren't any changes. Nothing different. He just checked it out and talked about when he was in the plane and had his lead suit on and all and he was still around. If anything, I think he kinda made light of it.

INT: That bothered you then.

NAR1 It did. Yeah, he really didn't make light of it. I know if I were in that position, you can't get people panic-stricken either. I'm not saying that I know the right way it should have been handled, but I can't honestly say they were the feelings I got...I shouldn't have maybe said that the President made light of it, I don't want to be put on that. Just the fact that there wasn't any positive action or nothing. There wasn't a new course of action. That I think a lot of people tend to equate that with just...

INT: I know a lot of people's feelings seem to be that nothing seemed to really be being done and you couldn't really listen onto one report where they were saying that this, this and this is happening and this is what we are doing and this is going to be the outcome. So you would turn to one station and they would say one thing and another station another thing.

NAR1 Even with very intelligent, I mean people in the field, there were Nobel winning physicists and one guy would say that there was a great danger and get the heck out and somebody else would say there is nothing to worry about it. We have a friend of ours from home who is a student at Drexel and his major is high energy physics and he sorta laughed it off and said that I get more radiation than that in the lab everyday. And it's no big deal. It was hard to put it all together and decide when people in the field who supposedly knew what they were talking about had so many conflicting views.

INT: Was there any person or place or something that you turned to, that you relied upon more than another?

NAR1 I really don't think so. No. I think it was one of those things we all sorta went by our gut feeling, you know. It just came down to that, and we just had concerns for the kids and just as a family.

NAR2: We really wanted to be together.

NAR1 We just wanted to be together. It didn't come down to, we didn't call friends and say if you go, we'll go. It wasn't anything like that. We had some friends who left and then other friends whose the mother was expecting and they didn't go. We gave friends of ours directions to get where we were going so they would have somewhere to go because that was a problem. You know, just getting a place to stay and where to go.

INT: Did either of you turn to any particular place for a particular source of information? Any special?

NAR2: I wanted to leave. I didn't want to be here. That was just my own feeling. I didn't believe that it was safe.

NAR3: I watched TV if that's a source of information.

NAR1 Yeah, the media.

INT: How did you feel about the media?

NAR1 I thought they handled it well considering. I mean, the question that has been brought up to us, people outside the area, since the whole TMI thing was, do you think it was, you know, blown out of proportion and do you think the media reacted and so forth. I really don't think so. I think it was justified. I think it was that serious and they had to have those evacuation plans and, you know, I thought they told us as much as they could. There were certain questions that they couldn't answer. They just plain didn't know. It was hard to pin it down, you know, on a scale. It wasn't like a weather prediction or there is 75% chance that the bubble will dissolve or not dissolve, and there will be a melt-down or there will not be a melt-down. Many of the reports were just very nebulous.

INT: Did you feel that it frightened you more than a natural problem would?

NAR1 Much more so. We had all experienced Agnes and the area we were from was very hard-hit.

NAR3: The flood.

NAR1 The flood of '72. And my father's house was damaged and it was into thousands and thousands of dollars and at the time I couldn't imagine anything worse happening than that. What we talked about, any sentimental things that he and my mother had had from when they first got married were just ruined and it just killed them to see them carted away, but I think we all realize the great danger of nuclear accidents. At least he could clean up the mud, rebuild, and go back. With, you know, a nuclear accident, that would be it. It is very hard to conceive of and I don't know if we fully realized it but we were thinking along those lines.

INT: Did you think of Agnes during the nuclear thing?

NAR1 Yes. Yeah, we talked about it. We made the point. Just kinda compared it, much like you said, you know, a fire and that sort of thing. If you escape the immediate danger you can go back and rebuild or clean up, whatever. We just sort of felt that, like Georgina said in the beginning, that we didn't know. It was like a grand experiment, you know, and we were involved in it. And that was scary.

INT: Did you think of any other event in the past of your life or a historical event?

NAR1 We talked about the bombs and where they had done the testing in the Western United States and the high incidence of leukemia in children who had been exposed to it and...

NAR3: The uranium mines. Anything having to do with nuclear.

INT: Did any of that come to your mind as well? Nuclear testing sites or bombs?

NAR2: Yes, I thought about it.

INT: Did you think of anything else? Any other historical event or personal event that may have happened to you?

NAR2: Nothing other than something that would be connected with nuclear power. I didn't think of a war.

INT: You didn't?

NAR2: No.

INT: Did you think of any books or movies? Or TV shows?

NAR1 *China Syndrome* was kinda the talk then and we hadn't seen it. A person that I teach with had seen it right before TMI and said how much he had liked it and the point was made in the newspapers and so forth that this was really coming true just like in the movie. And as a result of kinda living through the whole experience when friends later had mentioned that why don't we go to *China Syndrome* or whether it even played in Carlisle or somewhere local, we didn't want to see it. Since then, at least myself, I have had no desire to see it.

INT: Sort of once is enough.

NAR1 Yes, exactly. I don't know what it was. I don't think you grow apathetic but you do reach a saturation point where we were watching all the newscasts and reading everything that was, you know, in papers and magazines and it just got to the point where we wanted to block it out and make it go away and just get back to normal life style, you know, where we could enjoy ourselves. It is not to say that...that's why I tried to clarify that and say that its not apathy because I think after reaching that saturation point, you know, we kinda got back on the track were something would be in the paper, there is an anti-nuclear group locally and we had gone to several meetings and wanted to kinda just keep, you know.

INT: What are the meetings referring to?

NAR1 Well, there is a local chapter in Carlisle.

Women: TMIAS.

NAR1 TMIAS. And it's an anti-nuclear group and we haven't done anything in terms of we haven't been to any protest rallies. We did go to, there was a demonstration in Harrisburg at the Capitol. It was right during or shortly thereafter. We did go to that but

not to the recent ones like in the spring in Washington or anything like that but we've just gone to these local meetings and just talked about, you know, different goals and things that we might accomplish and we all, I think I can speak for my wife and my sister-in-law, we kinda have misgivings there. But it sounds a bit like a cop out but I know myself, I want TMI to be closed for sure and the idea of a protest group and anti-nuclear group, the things that were talked about in our meetings, I think were very good. They had concrete ideas but I just don't know how well I'd be able to implement them. It was going to the place in Middletown where they have the, you know they show a movie and so forth and stand outside and talk to the people as they come out. And go to the Carlisle Theatre and have us stand and that kind of thing. I think that could be very productive but I'm just not that kind of person, for example, I wouldn't be able to sell anything to anybody. I sorta feel my role is I'm a teacher and I can have quite an influence on the kids in terms of, you know, nuclear energy. It's dangerous and not to impose my values on them but at least give them the facts as they are and just kinda do it in a quiet way, you know, as far as carrying a sign and demonstrating just sorta goes against my grain. I don't know if that's the way, you talk about let's do this and let's do that and I can't see all the different things involved. What it comes down to to me is just why doesn't everybody just sit down and write a letter to their congressman. I just want it closed. I'm sure those t-shirts and bumper stickers. As I said, that's just not me. I don't know why.

NAR3: We thought by getting involved in this, it's an extension of Three Mile Island Alert from Harrisburg and they could maybe get legislation passed on how we could go about with the group in Carlisle to help the larger group. And like Rich said, going to the Carlisle Theatre, we don't feel, unless it is just raising money or something that could help, people with power to do something like that. We don't have the same power.

NAR1 They have to resort to lots of gimmickry. You know, hey were talking about getting one of the Redskins football players and everyone would come over and when they are there to get him to sign autographs for the kids and get everybody to sign a petition. I guess you do need things but as I said, that's not in keeping with the way we are. I'm really not to say that anything is wrong with that. We need people like that. I just kinda think we could do it in other ways.

INT: That's sorta something that is almost like evangelizing. You are going to run into a lot of slack from other pro-people and you got to be. I'm just thinking personally, myself, I'd have a hard time going up to a person and saying now look this is what I think and especially if I thought they didn't want to hear it. It's a hard thing to do.

NAR1 It does take a certain kind of person and we just felt, I particularly at the last meeting, really out of place. It got to the point where a few people were monopolizing the conversation. I just felt more and more that this just isn't me. I wasn't really down on them; I sorta thought that there are some people like that around. They are very much informed and wanted to do something, but as I said, I just was saying all that to clarify that its not that we are apathetic or how soon we forget type of thing. It's not like that.

INT: Peggy, did you think of any books or movies? Or TV shows other than *The China Syndrome* that your husband just mentioned?

NAR3: Someone told us about, we didn't read this but someone told us about an article they read in a paper or magazine a couple of months before this thing, but we didn't see it.

INT: I've heard of it.

NAR3: But I haven't seen it. I've heard of it. I don't know if it was a story or a reality that there could be a sabotage or something lost. They were the only things I could think of.

INT: Georgie?

NAR2: I thought about those two things, that movie and that article, and a book *Future Shock* and there was a film that was shown in school that they didn't necessarily show anything about nuclear power that I remember...

INT: There was a movie about *Future Shock*? Or was it connected in some way? You mentioned a movie in school.

NAR2: It was in high school, I guess I saw it in. Are you familiar with the book *Future Shock*?

INT: No, I'm not. I've heard of it.

NAR2: Alice Hoffman...? Is that her name?

NAR1 Something like that

NAR2: I can't remember exactly, but it was about test tube babies and being plugged in to be waked up in the morning, and how things would be in the future if people would let them go on as they were with machinery and wasting everything and resources diminishing. Sources of energy. So I thought about that.

NAR3: I thought also, in college they showed the movie about the nuclear bomb dropping and I remember to the effect I didn't know if there was going to be an explosion or if there was just going to be a lot of gas going over the environment and kill things in the environment and the movie was horrible. And it was, well a lot of it was realistic depiction but a lot of it was just to show what would happen if a nuclear bomb would drop on someone.

INT: So you had images of that happening around Carlisle?

NAR3: Yeah.

INT: Did you have anything images? Anything similar to that? What sort of thing ran through your mind?

NAR2: I thought just about the same thing. Because I can remember being in Girl Scouts and having a section of the time devoted to the treatment of radiation and what you would do, and I thought that that's what would happen, the same things that a nuclear bomb would do, would happen if the gas leaked out.

INT: What sort of mental images did you have?

NAR1 I think much of what's been said. I didn't really think of Future Shock. Along with... when I mention the earlier testing, it seemed like it was compared with a bomb and when my wife said a cloud, was it the Russians or the Chinese a year or so before whenever there was a cloud that it passed over when they were testing. And they, you know...

INT: The Chinese.

NAR1 The Chinese, okay. Well, as I said I think we were led to, many people were led to believe for a minute, led to believe that nothing had happened during that and everyone was still alive and well and it wasn't of much concern. When you say mental images... I don't know...

NAR2: Could a mental image be something about we could never be able to come back?

INT: Yes.

NAR2: You could picture the place desolate and your house still standing and no one around.

INT: Yeah, that's a good one. Did you think at all about what vegetation would be like? If it would be all barren or...? What would...?

NAR2: I guess I thought of barren. Trees standing, nothing on them.

NAR3: We also thought that our area would be affected up by Wilkes-Barre. You didn't know how, know what to think. We took it as a good start to go there. We took it seriously.

INT: Did you have any daydreams? You talked a little bit about mental images, what about daydreams? Like if the worst had happened, for example, could be one daydream.

NAR1 It's sort of a combination of all the things we've been saying. I didn't really get to the point where, you know, trees would be bare and that sort of thing. It was just the idea that my mind would keep dwelling on it. It was so hard to fathom. You just couldn't go

back. I just could hardly imagine that. I thought of what it would do economically to the area...well, not just to the state. To Harrisburg. It was just inconceivable.

FEMALE: Our kids, though, Richie...Meg didn't know then. She's too young. But he's aware just from watching TV and he would say things like, "Are we going to die?" You know, he really took it seriously. What does it mean? When we did bring him back, "Can I come back and will that stuff that you can't see still be there?" He was a little realistic. We didn't dwell on it to them, but they were aware because that we did leave and they were aware because of the TV being on all the time.

INT: They pick up on it certainly.

NAR3: And he did take it seriously. He was afraid. As much as you can be afraid. One thing we did think about and it is really a shame for little children. You see when we grew up, nothing like that ever happened. You have to expose them to that fear and their little minds, and you know, it doesn't seem fair to them that they have to worry about such a thing. Then we compared it to war, how terrible it must be where they are fighting and children going through hardships. Then I personally would think that the worst things like children starving. Things that didn't have anything to do with it. Just very bad things.

INT: So all sorts of images of anything bad that could be going on all over, just sort of conjured up every sort of evil.

NAR3: Right

INT: That's understandable. Did you have anything you would like to add so far? Anything that you said about...?

NAR2: No, I don't think so.

INT: Did anyone have any sleeping dreams?

NAR1 No, I didn't.

NAR2: Hey, I thought I remembered you telling me about a dream.

NAR3: I worried about the kids mostly. I would be really afraid. Especially when we came back at first I was worried about them up there and I would worry about, when I would hear a siren I would worry. Even weeks after that, you know, I would wake up and be really frightened and think something was happening because when Rich said about the flood, we were in Wilkes-Barre and everyone was evacuated during the middle of the night because two of the dams broke and there was a really bad flood and...

INT: When was this?

PC/NAR1 '72.

INT: Agnes.

NAR3: And Wilkes-Barre was probably the hardest hit area.

INT: Yeah, I remember that.

NAR3: We were there and Richie was a baby then. He was eighteen—

NAR1 A year old.

NAR3: A year old and he was screaming all night because the sirens kept blowing and we didn't know why. We just thought they were fires or we didn't have any idea that they were warning people to leave and we finally knew when someone came to the door at about 4 or 5 o'clock, pounding on the door saying that you have to evacuate, it is going to come over the dikes or they're afraid the dikes are going to burst. And we had just seen Rapid City, Idaho.

NAR1 Iowa.

NAR3: Iowa? I had seen this man interviewed and he said he was in a service station with his wife and his child, his baby. And he was in the hospital and he said all of a sudden water came flowing down the street and he grabbed his wife and tried to swim to the service station to get on the roof and his wife and child just floated away and he was crying and it was so traumatic. He was alright but in the hospital. You know, injured, but all right. After hearing the sirens all night and hearing Richie screaming and waking up to the sirens and then all we could think of was hurrying to get out to the lake where my mother was staying. Because I thought that would happen so whenever I hear a siren, I just associate it with it, something terrible and because that was Three Mile Island, you know, I was thinking the bubble has come back or whatever. Since we went through that.

INT: Did you relate it back to anything else in your life? Or was that...?

NAR3: Well, that was... Not many terrible things happen if we're lucky. (chuckles)

INT: Did anyone else think of anything else?

NAR2: (short laugh) That's hard to think of. It's not that long ago but to conjure up anything about that...

INT: Did you think of any songs? Any particular songs run through your mind?

NAR3: Rich, this is just up your alley.

NAR1 Yeah, but I can't think of any right now. I just didn't, it was unlike what my wife said and I can, it is very logical. I can see why she felt that way in the association of the sirens. But it was just totally unique. From my point of view, I didn't consider anything.

It was just, I mentioned before about the flood thinking it would come back, but as far as having dreams or imagining. I couldn't imagine anything else. You said about songs.

INT: I was thinking, like I thought of, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot". That's one that, that shows how I was during those days. I was getting prepared. (laughs)

NAR3: That's a good one. (chuckles) Did you personally... Do you want to pause or anything and say any words about it? Were you worried about it?

INT: I was worried initially. I'm strange that way. I always get very upset at first and it sorta paves the way for me to calm down. It seems that I get all my emotions out and... My boyfriend was at the college and he went all to pieces and when he went all to pieces, I thought someone has to be calm and rational about this so I sorta went to the other extreme and said, "Oh, there's nothing to worry about", but looking back on it, I think I was really naïve in my assumptions.

NAR3: That's how we looked at it. We thought we don't know anything so why sit around and say that I'm going to be brave if something could happen. We were lucky enough to just go for a 2 ½ hour trip. And I think having children does make a difference because you do think of them. That frightened me more than anything and Rich said he would stay with his parents because his mother wasn't going to go because her mother wasn't going to go because she was an invalid and his father wasn't going and Rich said well, he better stay. Everybody was saying well then if you aren't going and I said we're going, because, and you have to come with us incase the water comes and it didn't come for another day but then the dams burst and his parents had to be evacuated by helicopter and it was terrible. His grandmother, she had tubes in her and had a, you know, heart condition and she had to be evacuated to a hospital and it was a horrible thing and we didn't know where they were for almost a week. It was really a scary thing. So, you know, it was another thing that if we had some control that we could leave we thought we would use our control.

INT: Yeah, I remember I called home to my parents at the time when I started getting upset and my father would just laugh at me over the telephone which was a big factor in calming me down. I said, "Well, should I come home?" and, "Ha ha ha ha!" and "Don't worry about it!" He seemed to be pretty up on it and then my mother would always be on the other end and she would be all upset and say, "Maybe you should come home," and then my father would say, "Oh, you are going to upset her," and then they would have a little argument over the telephone. (chuckling in the background)

NAR3: (chuckling) It just got more upsetting. "What should I do?"

INT: And then I'd listen to the physics professors up at the college and they were saying and that was a big factor for me. They were calm about it.

NAR3: Well, Mr. Smith was initially very upset and then it must have been the physics professor who said everything is cool and everything is alright, but then Jack and Mary

Jane Henderson said they spoke with someone else who had a Geiger counter or whatever they have to measure the radioactivity and one day it was much higher than it was in Carlisle and because their one daughter had been exposed to a lot of radiation, she had a kidney problem, they immediately left. And that occurred in (unintelligible) They were very concerned.

INT: It is just a hodgepodge of everything for me at the time. (chuckling) Enough of me. They already have me down and transcribed all ready. All right, stepping back a little bit, I'm going to back over some questions. I've been jumping around and I want to try to get back into a little bit of order again. What did you think about Met Ed?

NAR1 Is Met Ed the...?

INT: Metropolitan Edison, the company that owns TMI.

NAR1 I was... I thought they should have... Well, I'm thinking of an adjective to describe them and it's hard. Incompetent. I should be able to do better than that. I thought it was terrible the way they just made light of it and that they were just so concerned with their image and so forth and also the way they insisted the people come back to work right away and if they missed any work, they would cancel their sick days and so forth.

NAR3: Weren't they firing people or something?

NAR1 I think they have, yeah.

INT: The firing people?

NAR3: I thought they were.

NAR1 Some women lost their jobs because they refused to come back.

NAR3: Someone was pregnant or something.

NAR1 That's why I kind of fumbled around when you first asked me. Because I can't even imagine that. It was outrageous.

NAR3: It would be one lie after another. They would say one thing and then the NRC would say well, it wasn't really like that. It was a little worse. When they just countered what they said a few times then you didn't want to believe anything they said. And even now when they talk about how much radiation is in the water that they are letting out and that won't harm the environment or whatever or toward Lancaster County... I don't believe what they say and the NRC weren't even there and they let it out and they just have so much radioactive water now. I don't know what gases they released. I still worry about it or wonder. We need to keep things as accurate as they can for people who don't know anything.

INT: It keeps you on top of things. How did you feel about Met Ed?

NAR2: Well, when you asked questions before about the government and now Met Ed, I think I take things more personally and I don't worry about what they are saying. I just feel danger around and want to get away. Everyone says it is alright and I don't believe them.

INT: So you live a lot more by a gut reaction?

NAR2: Yeah, than what they said or I didn't really care because I knew there was danger and that's all there was to it.

INT: All right. Did you feel they were in control of what was going on at Three Mile Island at all?

NAR1 No. No. I think they fouled up and they were trying to cover it up because they were concerned with their stockholders and, so... I think that was the biggest thing and I think once people got on to that their word meant very little. Whatever they said you kind of wanted it to be checked out a bit further.

INT: What about you?

NAR3: Um, I forget...

NAR1 Met Ed... Were they in control?

NAR3: I was looking at the moon, I'm sorry.

INT: To tell you the truth my mind sorta jiggled there for a moment. I've been interviewing since 7:30.

NAR3: Oh my God. (chuckles)

INT: After a while they sorta all go together. (laughter) Did you have any concern about the food or the milk from the area?

NAR3: We still do. We get it all from Allen Dairy, which is out past the MJ Mall.

INT: Right, with the good ice cream.

NAR3: Right. (chuckles) They just have milk from Allen Dairy, that area, so we were concerned until they get everything under control, we'll go out and get it. Plus we like it better now. Ask Rich.

INT: Did you have ideas of how it would be best to behave in such a situation? Or conflicting responsibilities? You mentioned you came back for your job, so did you feel torn between your family and your job? Responsibilities there?

NAR1 To a degree, if I had taught say within the twenty mile radius or if I were a teacher in Harrisburg, I wouldn't have come back, but I was coming back to a situation where I knew it was safe and I came back with the idea that in the event that there was an evacuation or any problem, I'd be out of the immediate area and I would just move from there. As I said, if I taught in Harrisburg or Central Dauphin, those school districts, you know those schools that are right in the immediate area, I wouldn't of come back.

INT: How about you, how did you feel about responsibilities? Did you have any trouble with conflicting responsibilities?

NAR3: Yeah, because at Saint Patrick's, you can't get a substitute because they don't pay them. So I felt, Rich said forget it and stay there if you want to stay. And I felt I should come back.

NAR1 I said her obligation was as a mother and, but we were fortunate with Georgine, she insisted that she stay. She said she wanted to stay anyway and she is very close to the kids. She watched the kids. So that made it easy for us.

NAR3: If it came down to it, either come back because there is no one there or bring the kids, I would have stayed. We were lucky enough to have Georgine.

INT: How did you feel? Were you worried about missing classes? Or did you feel you had any conflicting responsibilities?

NAR2: Classes were the only responsibilities that I would have and the first time we left, we did come back and I was going to classes and then things were getting worse and worse so I just called the school and said I wouldn't be there until things are safe. The secretary who answers the phone in the education department just said "Oh, alright" and that's all she said. And when I came back to classes, which was not until after the following Monday, that's when they bubble dissolved as well as it could be. My teachers said there was no problem. They understood and I talked to someone in the department and asked if there were many other people evacuated and there was something like three people who left the whole school. But they were understanding. I didn't care if I never went back to school at that point, it didn't matter how many classes I missed.

INT: Did you have any difficulty making up the work?

NAR2: No. Because it was only a week so... Well, I took my books home and we have classes, one class three times a week usually, so it didn't seem to me to be that much of, you know the teachers gave me extra time. I guess they could have been picky and been hard on me but they made it easy.

INT: Well, you live in Carlisle too. And as was pointed out before, it was closer.

NAR2: It was closer, yeah.

INT: Did you think about God at all during the incident?

NAR1 No. I didn't. I didn't.

INT: Did you pray at all?

NAR1 No.

INT: Or did you attend a religious service?

NAR1 No. I'm... no.

INT: Did you think about God at all?

NAR3: Yeah. There was a particular service, but we had left. Or else I would have attended that. And I do remember being in church and being upset because the priest, when he gave his service did not even mention it, or say something special that it should be remembered because of all the people involved. I did think that was poor. I know him personally. He's removed from it and the other people are removed from it and they aren't going to worry about it, when all the people back here were so worried that I personally knew and all the people who were being evacuated and it would be affecting them for life.

INT: Are you talking about the services in Wilkes-Barre?

NAR3: Yeah. There was a regular Sunday service.

INT: Did you pray at all?

NAR3: Yes.

INT: And what sort of things did you pray about?

NAR3: That it would peacefully resolve somehow. Because I didn't think it would be. That everyone would just be free of any long lasting effect.

INT: Did you think of God directly intervening in any way? Either to say, cause the accident or solve the accident?

NAR3: No, I don't know how I think of it. I just think of it as a sore spot.
(unintelligible)

INT: Did you think of any biblical images?

NAR3: No.

INT: Nothing like the last judgment or ...something along that?

NAR3: No.

INT: Did you think of God at all?

NAR2: No. Not in the sense that I was praying and said, "Please stop this." I guess I don't believe in the power of prayer in that way. That if everyone prays together, you can change what's happening. I just think that things are going to happen because of what men did and they made them happen so you have to kinda live with the consequences. I didn't think I was going to hell or I was going to die. I'd better pray or anything. I just think that when I die I will go wherever you are supposed to. No, I didn't pray to God.

INT: Did you hear any jokes about Three Mile Island?

NAR1 Yeah, I think the stand-bys. I can't really think of any jokes as such except the stuff that was on T-shirts and bumper stickers.

NAR3: Dickinson came out with some T-shirts right after.

INT: Yeah.

NAR3: I remember some of the kids wore them on gym day. What was the one that you talked about...?

NAR1 There were several, I forget many of them now, but.

NAR2: "I Glow in the Dark."

NAR1 "Hell No, I Don't Glow" and... All that stuff.

INT: "Puke on the Nukes?" (laughs) I didn't hear that one.

NAR3: "I Survived Three Mile Island" ...I think. That's a little more tasteful. He likes "Puke on the Nukes."

NAR1 I can't remember. I'm sure there were some, but I can't remember any jokes. People said things jokingly. It wasn't a joke as such where the seriousness of the injury to the children was brought up and people would say in jest, "Well, at worst they can cause sterility." I don't think it was very funny, but you know... Cutting remarks that were meant to make light of the situation.

INT: Do you know why they were trying to make light of the situation? Was it to relieve tension or why were people joking?

NAR1 You never know. There are people who say things like that at funerals and they go along with the thinking that well, he or she would have wanted it that way and they are trying to liven things up. It is hard to make certain that something like that is tasteful. It is hard to say what their motives were.

INT: So you didn't do much joking yourself?

NAR1 No. I didn't do... No. We really didn't do much joking about it. I guess we talk about things we had seen on the news, you know, and make a remark about it.

NAR3: You know, we still think about it as very serious, not that a catastrophe will happen now but there still could be some remote danger. I don't think, "Oh gee, the bubble's gone and everything is going to be okay now." There could be a chemical spill. There is a chemical spill up in the Wilkes-Barre area now polluting the water in Danville.

NAR1 70 miles down the river.

NAR3: 70 miles down the river. And they, you don't know where it is coming from even. They just know it is coming down the river and they can't stop it. And that's so much worse even though that's very bad too. I worry about other people too. The people in Lancaster. I just think of everyone.

INT: It is sorta a continuous thing and people are getting hit right and left.

NAR3: Yeah.

INT: Did you hear any jokes?

NAR3: I can't remember but like Richard said, mostly people trying to make light of it or a lot of people just like to joke about anything. So I can't remember anything.

INT: Anything you want to add?

NAR2: No. (laughing)

INT: Is there anything you would like to add?

NAR1 I think just our feeling in general on nuclear energy is, well I should not say "our," is that not just TMI of course, because we live so close to there we would like to see it shut down, but nuclear energy is still, I think, maybe a possibility in the future, the distant future not the immediate future. Not that we don't want it to be in our lifetime, but I just don't conceive of everything we talked about and everything we've read and heard that we are just not quite at the stage where we can be 100% safe and until we get to that point I think that it is foolish...

INT: To mess with it.

NAR1 Yeah, right. There has been so much money invested in so many plants and I'm not saying, lets completely abandon nuclear power. I know that's sort of a normal reaction in view of what happened but as I say I think it's not a question of whether we will have nuclear power in the future, it's just a question of when. We're just not ready. Especially TMI.

INT: Do you have anything you would like to add?

NAR3: I just think that the nuclear plants can be converted to other sources of energy: coal, gas...something that they can be converted.

INT: I'm not sure.

NAR3: I think they can be utilized temporarily, whether that could hurt the environment. We were just talking about things with a guy who works for Honeywell. I said to him, can't they adjust the facilities so they won't be so expensive, for heating or electricity or whatever. Because, like, we're just laypeople and we don't know. But even though seems that since it is such a big industry, there has to be a switchover sometime. They can't wait until an accident or whatever that you can switch over to manpower to work for the company. It is something that they can work it out and that you can still have people working and not losing jobs and have a switchover and start now and not just wait until we're out of energy or the world is so polluted or somebody could be doing something. And they should start now. No one wants to suffer, but somebody has to. Everybody has to. Like I would be willing to suffer if everybody was going to. If it would just be for the long-range thing, because I have kids and there are other kids. I'm not just thinking of just us. Why not now? Why wait? Because then it's going to be worse.

INT: Do you have anything you would like to add.

NAR2: No, I don't. I agree with what they both said.