

July 19, 1979

Occupation: Technician

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

NAR: I will say about mid-afternoon of the day it happened.

INT: From whom?

NAR: The news media.

INT: Did you know that the reactor was there before it happened?

NAR: Yes, I did.

INT: How far is it from Carlisle?

NAR: Approximately 25 miles.

INT: When you first heard about it, what did you first think about or talk about? Right then.

NAR: I think most of the talk and what I thought about most was, you know, the worst is going to happen, so I think I reached the consensus of most of the people.

INT: Do you think, did you feel it was serious?

NAR: I thought it was serious. I thought it was more serious than what the informers were telling us about it.

INT: Did you think it was a crisis?

NAR: Yes I did.

INT: Why?

NAR: I'm not really well schooled on nuclear power plants or anything like that. But I know fallout can be dangerous and it can take a (unintelligible) of your life. Which, that's what worries me more than anything else. I don't think I'm going to see great big effects right now, but I think over the long run there will be some.

INT: Did you try to find out anything more than what you were being told?

NAR: Just through the news media, that's all. Just through news release and everything.

INT: Did you talk about it with your friends or family, people you were working with?

NAR: We discussed it quite a bit.

INT: What did you talk about, do you remember specifics?

NAR: I guess the biggest concern, what everyone was going to do if there was a meltdown.

INT: Did your attitude change, about thinking it was so serious?

NAR: As time went on and they discovered more of what did happen and what could happen, I would say maybe the end of the second week or something like that I did, you know I started to change, think about it a little bit more. It didn't concern me as much then.

INT: How did you feel about the way other people were reacting to the incident?

NAR: I don't know. There was certain people who just thought nothings going to happen, I'm not too concerned about it, which I couldn't agree with. But I think the majority of people were very concerned.

INT: OK you said you followed the news media. Do you remember any particular sources, any particular radio, TV, newspapers that you followed?

NAR: Just local Harrisburg stations and local newspapers. Time and Newsweek.

INT: Did you pay, would you say you paid more attention than usual?

NAR: Yes.

INT: How do you think the media handled it? Do you think they did a?

NAR: I think the media did a real good job on it. The governmental informers and the informers for GPU and Met Ed, I think they were a little hazy at first, a little slow in reacting. But as time went on I think they came out a little bit and really start telling us what was going on. But then of course you have to look at it the other way too. They didn't want to have a panic right off the bat saying this might happen, this might happen. They wanted to find out. You know, collect their data on it and gather some information before they did really say anything really harsh.

INT: Was there anyone that you? Anyone whose word you trusted more than anyone elses?

NAR: Harold Denton's. I think most of the people trusted what Harold Denton had to say. So I think he was very straight forward and I think he gave us some excellent advice.

INT: Anybody you didn't trust?

NAR: I didn't trust the Metropolitan Edison spokesman right from the start. Maybe because I lost confidence in them because it took them so long to notify the local authorities and everything.

INT: Did you think that those, the people in charge over there, had control of the situation?

NAR: Right from the start I don't think they did. I think once they got a little more brainpower and all in there. Like maybe after the first day or after the first 8 or 10, 12 hours, something like that, I think they might have had control over it. But I don't think the technicians that were working at the time and the employees from Metropolitan Edison did have control of the situation. I think they were more or less just stabbing in the dark.

INT: That made you uneasy?

NAR: Yes. I didn't think they were trained well enough. I don't know what training they would have to go through or what training they did go through, but it seemed to me. Of course in anything like that there's a mental error. But I don't think they were trained well enough.

INT: Do you think they are in control now?

NAR: I think it might have made them sit back and think a little about it, as far as being more in control over that particular situation, I think they are. But over something else going on, I don't know. I couldn't answer something like that.

INT: Were you worried about the whole situation?

NAR: I was concerned to a certain extent.

INT: What worried you the most?

NAR: Well what worried me most was a meltdown and radioactive material going into the air and everything. Which whether it would come this far or not nobody would have known, depending on the weather conditions and everything.

INT: Did you make any plans that were any different from what you normally did?

NAR: We had plans for leaving if they had evacuated. We had taken money out of the bank and had a little plan draw up. We didn't have anything packed or anything, but we'd have had enough time to do that if we needed.

INT: Did you change any of your ordinary routines? Either at work or at home?

NAR: No, no everything was about the same.

INT: So you thought about leaving, did you leave at all?

NAR: No, no we didn't leave at all.

INT: And you said you did think about leaving?

NAR: Yes.

INT: What made you stay?

NAR: Well after the first. After the real...I don't know how to put it, not the real bad stuff, but after they did seem to know what was going on and the temperatures in the cooling towers and the reactor did start to dissipate a little bit. When they came around saying, well we don't think we are going to have a meltdown, we don't think we are going to have this or that. It did, convinced me a little bit more they did have things under control and I wasn't nearly concerned about it then.

INT: If you had left, you were thinking about leaving, what did you want to take with you?

NAR: Just the family and a few personal belongings. That's about it.

INT: Then you would come back?

NAR: Probably, yes.

INT: Was there somebody in your life, friend, part of your family, that you were watching, keeping an eye on, in order to decide what you would do?

NAR: Not really no. We just made the decision on our own.

INT: At the time did you have any, what we call a mental picture, about what was happening over there? Or what might happen?

NAR: I did. I think my mental picture right from the start when they were really having a lot of trouble was not a lot of concern because I wasn't very well versed on what might happen and what could happen. But as the media come our with more information and

everything I sort of pictured the worst thing – meltdown. And then you have the contaminants in the air and everything.

INT: Do you think that anything that happened over there might have affected your health now?

NAR: I don't think right now it would. I think in a long range sort of way it might, but I don't think there would be any immediate effects. Granted because we didn't get that large an amount of radiation.

INT: What about things other than your health? What other aspects of your life might have been affected by the situation?

NAR: I don't know. I had a concern for my children, what might happen to them over the next twenty, thirty years, forty years, something like that. But that was the only thing I had thought of beside myself.

INT: What about in Carlisle, in your community where you live? What do you think, do you think it will have any effects on the town?

NAR: I really don't think it will in Carlisle, not being. You know, 25 miles away from it, from Middletown. But I think it definitely will hurt the economy down there, and even as far as property values, people accepting jobs in that area.

INT: If the worst had happened, can you tell me what you think might have happened? If there had been a meltdown, which you seem to think is the worst, what do you think might have happened?

NAR: I don't know. I sort of picture in my mind as a (pause). There was a movie, it was Soylant Green.

INT: Soylant Green? Was that the movie?

NAR: Yeah, Soylant Green. I don't know. I just sort of pictured in my mind as just everything being nothing really. There's no people, no life at all, where it's gone.

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

NAR: I think it might have had an effect on it. I don't know how bad it would have been. Of course it depends too on how fast we would have been able to get out, how of the dose of radiation we would have had. I think we would have been able to get out soon enough that we wouldn't have had any major effects.

INT: If not your health, anything else in your life?

NAR: Well, I imagine it would have affected the environment some, which would have upset me. I'm not a big environmentalist, but I do like nature.

INT: Do you have any concerns about food or milk from down there?

NAR: Right now I don't, no. I know there had been a couple cases where some cows had died and of course the farmer. The first place he pointed his finger, at the reactor. Then the way some of the other people talked it wasn't from that. Now whether we'll ever know whether it was or not is a different story. But, I don't think the dosage of radiation was that great there would be that many containments. They did keep a close watch on that sort of thing.

INT: Did you think about what the effects would be of radiation? Whether immediate or long term?

NAR: I thought of it more of a long term basis. I didn't think there would be very many immediate effects at all.

INT: Did you think of what those effects would be?

NAR: Not really, no.

INT: Did you think about dying? About your own death?

NAR: No, I didn't. I didn't think about that at all. I picture maybe a handicap of some kind. Maybe even hair falling out or something like that. But I never thought about dying from it, no.

INT: Did you think of anybody else dying?

NAR: Maybe some of the people that were closely contaminated or maybe reporters or immediate people, employees down there.

INT: So then you thought you would survive?

NAR: Yes.

INT: You were reassured by it? The distance reassured you?

NAR: Yeah, the distance reassured me, plus I was reassured that I could get out in time if anything major did happen.

INT: Did you think about God during the whole time?

NAR: Not the whole time. I thought of him now and then, but I don't know what aspect I thought of him. I don't recall what aspect I was thinking of.

INT: How did he figure in all of this?

NAR: I really don't know, I never gave that any thought.

INT: Did you pray?

NAR: Yes.

INT: What about, can you remember?

NAR: For my family and the long term outlook of the thing, my children, maybe my grandchildren.

INT: Did you think that you had any certain responsibilities during the incident? Either your family, your job, to Carlisle – the community as a whole?

NAR: My family and children came first, of course. And I did think about the responsibility of the job I had, because it is a service, the same as what they were trying to provide down there. And if I could have gotten my family and all out of here on time and things did slow down I could have come back here myself if the job would have warranted it, and left the family away until things settled down a little bit.

INT: So did you think that those two conflicts, or those two responsibilities conflicted?

NAR: I didn't think about it, but if I would think about it they probably would.

INT: How did you resolve that conflict finally?

NAR: Well I'll just see the better decision, do I go back or not. The family and I didn't discuss anything like that. But we would have had to go, we would've. Either on the way or once we had got to our destination.

INT: At the time, was your job affected by Three Mile Island?

NAR: As far as being busier, yes. In the communication business something like that happens, you know the telephone office goes crazy, absolutely crazy.

INT: Then did you have things to do you normally wouldn't have had? Because of the incident?

NAR: I think so, because of the amount of traffic in phone calls that was being made through the office. There was a lot of little odds and ends here and there that we didn't know about until we had a large drain on the office.

INT: How did that affect those around you, how did it affect them at work?

NAR: There really wasn't any big change. You could tell there was a little more tension a little more anxiety and it made the day go a lot quicker.

INT: Do you have any idea, or any thoughts about what the best way to behave in a situation like that is?

NAR: I think just to be cool....Not a, I don't outwardly show stress or strain or anything like that. I sort of keep it to myself.

INT: Would you call those ethical ideas, or anything like moral or religious ideas?

NAR: Not really.

INT: You mentioned being cool, did you try to behave that way?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Anything, was there anything that made it difficult, made it hard to do that?

NAR: Not really.

INT: Then did TMI bring to mind anything else that has happened in the past, experiences or events or?

NAR: I thought of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but that was about the only thing.

INT: Anything happen like this to you before?

NAR: No.

INT: Was this incident at all similar to anything else in your life?

NAR: Yes, from a different standpoint as far as the flooding we had around here.

INT: Was it more or less frightening?

NAR: It was more mentally frightening, but it wasn't as physically frightening. Because you know they had, with a flood situation like that if you can get around you can get around. You only have to worry about things you can't see. That's what worries you the most, it was a lot more mental than what it would have been physically.

INT: You mentioned a little while ago Soylent Green. Did any other movies or TV shows, any books or stories come to mind?

NAR: No, I don't believe they did, not that I can remember.

INT: Did you find yourself singing any songs, or any stories?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you have any dreams while you were sleeping?

NAR: You mean concerning that situation?

INT: Yeah.

NAR: No, not that I can remember. Nothing out of the ordinary yet.

INT: Did you have trouble sleeping?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you see any changes in the people around you?

NAR: Not really. You could tell there was a little bit more tension. People had this on their mind all the time but it there wasn't any real major changes.

INT: You don't think it was lasting changes then?

NAR: No, I, it was just a momentary thing, a couple week thing, then it was all over and everybody was just back to normal.

INT: Were there any jokes, any posters or graffiti, anything like that going around about Three Mile Island?

NAR: Oh there was some, not particularly in the immediate Carlisle area. I know there was a lot more around Harrisburg and Middletown. But not so much when it was going on, it was the first couple of weeks afterwards they.

INT: So that were some things. Why do you think that there was this joking? Do you have any idea about it?

NAR: I don't know. It is just human nature I think. You know, something like that happens, somebody comes up with something and after it is all over it is a big joke.

INT: Do you remember any jokes from anything else, any other crisis in the past? That's like Pearl Harbor, was anybody joking about that or Guyanna or anything?

NAR: No, I can't, I can't remember any right now.

INT: After all this, have you developed any sort of an opinion about nuclear energy?

NAR: I don't trust it. To be very straight forward I don't trust it. I don't think there has been enough engineering into it. The people that designed and engineered the thing just came out on a news release yesterday, that was a few memos they sent down that GPU and Met Ed didn't get concerning this accident.

INT: Oh yeah?

NAR: The guy said, oh yeah, it just slipped through a crack somewhere and they never got it. But they were two very important memos about the particular kind of accident that they had in Three Mile Island. But I think they should look more into solar energy, which is a lot safer. Although they have put billions and billions of dollars into nuclear power, it doesn't seem like it would be a waste to just junkyard it. But I think, I live to close to it, its probably how I'm basing my opinion. But I think they should look into solar power more.