

Date: July 23, 1979

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

NARRATOR: Wednesday morning.

INT: From whom or from what source?

NAR: Through the news we have at the station.

INT: So you heard it at the station?

NAR: Yes, we knew that there was a problem over there.

INT: Did you know that there was a nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island before this happened?

NAR: Oh yes.

INT: How did you know about it?

NAR: About the reactor being there?

INT: Yes.

NAR: I'm very familiar with nuclear plants around the country from the standpoint of where they are and our current need for them, for energy. So I was aware that we had a couple of them operating over there. I knew it went on fine in December.

INT: So it's because of a long standing interest in...

NAR: Not nuclear power per say but I'm aware of things around me.

INT: Do you know how far TMI is from us?

NAR: From our area here?

INT: Yeah. Right from Carlisle.

NAR: About 21 miles.

INT: Did you know this before the incident happened?

NAR: Approximately.

INT: When you first heard about the incident what did you think about it?

NAR: Nothing.

INT: Did you think it was serious?

NAR: When I first heard about it? No. They have their problems over there; they close them down all the time. Peach bottom's been closed down a couple of times the past few months. It's not an uncommon occurrence. When we first heard about it.

INT: When you first heard about it did you seek out any further information?

NAR: The station, we were- (indistinguishable) there was a problem and it wasn't normal style problem KBO was pushing them at that time and we weren't working with them much. Are you finding that people were not aware that a reactor existed over there?

INT: Yeah, a good number of people.

NAR: That surprises me, I just can't imagine people being that unaware of the world around them. I mean, you know, what the hell is going on?

(Multitude of other voices; including interviewee): Not living here, you know, if they lived down in Maryland...just moved in that's one thing. Well, particularly, people who have moved here say within 5 years might not be aware of it because there's never any publicity about it... Well, things come out though from time to time... (indistinguishable) Christ that thing has always been in the news with regards to their security, there have been at least two or three articles about... they had a big stink on that, they didn't have the proper security... (indistinguishable) It does seem to me that people wouldn't be aware of it.

INT: People were very aware of the Peach Bottom one. I think they were more aware of the Peach Bottom one than the Three Mile Island.

NAR: In this area?

INT: Yes, apparently school groups go through Peach Bottom. So parents had their children taken through tours of Peach Bottom but they have never gone through Three Mile Island. So they would have heard about it that way.

NAR: ...It almost seems like an assumed thing to me.

(indistinguishable: 7 minutes of blank tape: indistinguishable)

INT: Where were we?

NAR: About the media. So by and large our news gathering is a local, in other words we have two full time news people, we co-op with other stations in the area so on that

particular incident most of our news within the station was being generated locally, from our local sources. And as I pointed out, I don't feel that the local stations- they were not in step with the national as far as the alarmist type of news was concerned. In fact, we were having to play the opposite role to sort of keep the lid on things. Because Wednesday wasn't too bad, but by Friday and Saturday in this area they kept hearing so much of it, in fact it was taking over national news, as you well know. It was the one thing that was going on. What was disbelief on Wednesday became- well maybe there's some truth to it on Thursday, and by Friday and Saturday they were saying 'my God the whole thing is going to blow up'. That was literally the concept that I think most people in the area had. Hiroshima, the big ball, they literally thought the whole thing was going to explode. And I think that was a fear that was in most people's mind. So, the local media had to take the opposite track to the national and that was to play down the sensationalism of the event, to try to be factual but to belay their fears with announcements that there is no evacuation at this time. Not only that, people were being ripped off. I'm not sure if you are aware of the fact that in some areas people were going around door to door saying, "there's been an evacuation, you have to leave." Then as soon as the people pulled out, they pull in with their trucks. Clean out their house.

INT: That hadn't happened in Carlisle.

NAR: On the west shore.

INT: On the west shore?

NAR: That's right, closer into the area there. And it happened in a couple of instances, and the police in fact were calling us to be sure that we were to inform people of the fact that there was no evacuation pending and so forth and so on. So we had to take the opposite track of the national and that was to try to play things down.

INT: Did you get a lot of calls into the station with people really concerned about what was going on?

NAR: Oh yes. Sure. We became a clearing house from the standpoint of they would hear one thing somewhere else. We had a couple of people - staff people - I remember Sunday afternoon, I had to call an engineer out of Williamsport. And he wasn't planning on coming back to work. But I had to assure him because he had heard in Williamsport that the whole area had been evacuated.

INT: Williamsport is here in Pennsylvania?

NAR: Pennsylvania, yes.

(Another voice): It's only a hundred north of here.

NAR: It's a hundred miles north but up there they had heard that it had been evacuated. So he wasn't planning on coming back since we had been evacuated. And I had to assure

him that we hadn't been evacuated and we had a few engineering things to get squared away in case an evacuation was still needed. Because at that time over the weekend it was felt and what we were dealing with at that time was a possible evacuation depending on whether they had to take some steps to try and correct that bubble. You see the bubble was a new aspect of this thing. Now they know a lot more about it that they know that it appears that there was never a chance of it really blowing up, but hell, at that time they didn't know that. You know, and there were a lot of things that they didn't know about.

INT: You mentioned before when we were eating that you're tied into the Civil Defense Network. What is it called and how are you tied into it?

NAR: We are the lead station for Cumberland County, by lead station – in other words, in any disaster, whether it be flood, whether it be tanker truck that explodes or whatever; in any disaster information would be fed to the county through our facility. We have a direct line from the courthouse where through our facilities we could put the people in civil defense at the courthouse directly on the air to be updated on of any eventuality. So it's nothing more than a direct line.

INT: And this just came into operation last year?

NAR: Last year.

INT: And this is the first test of it then?

NAR: Yeah, but we never really put it into use. The only time it would have gone into use would have been for an evacuation. You see, the other thing is to, one station in the area did decide to operate beyond its normal hours. But they were pulled off the air shortly thereafter. Because that is an alarmist situation. When a station that normally signs off a sunset stays on beyond their normal sign-off period, and is sitting there saying "We're on the air in case there is an evacuation pending," the public begins to think "My God they're normally off the air, they're on the air – we must going to be evacuated in a few hours" and that was not the case. And we finally got them to see the light – the civil defense people did, and they shut them down. Because it was that type of thing that we couldn't afford in the area at that time with the pressure of things, the way people's fears were running.

INT: What sorts of calls were you getting, when people called into the station?

NAR: Calls mainly regarding evacuation – where would they go, so forth and so on. Which we did not have the answers to – which they were still working on. Also, more or less reassuring. We met a lot of people – the one thing that I told all of my staff was that if you get someone, no matter how dumb the question may seem to you simply let the person talk. Because the odd thing was that you had a lot of lonely people – mainly elderly people who may have been alone and they simply wanted someone to talk to at that time. So we became... if nothing else I just told them, sit down and listen to whatever they have to say. And just assure them to keep listening, that if anything comes

up then we will be informing them of it. And that's basically what we did. But it was an unusual amount of calls from the standpoint that there were people who were just frightened and they wanted to talk to someone. And they would hear one thing from one source and they didn't know whether to believe it or not. And they would call us and we would assure them that we're not evacuating yet, it doesn't appear to be needed and so forth and so on. And we were getting, of course, radiation readings from the college – from Dickinson – and we could assure them that the levels were perfectly normal in our area; there were no levels that were a problem. And this was all very reassuring to them. Because that was one thing that Dickinson did that was very helpful to us, during that period – to be able to assure people. They are monitoring over there, if there are any changes we'll know it. Because people at that point in time began to distrust anyone and everyone.

INT: Why do you think that happened?

NAR: I think it happened because of the sensationalism – they would on one network or this network or the other, they would hear all of these dire things were going to happen. Because unfortunately, while the networks kept saying, “These things can happen,” they repeated them so often; it became a scenario as if they were going to happen. It was a matter of time. And I really believe that the national networks just felt that it was a matter of time before that thing went through to China. I mean you know, (laughing) they really wanted to believe that for some reason there you had a slow news period of something and they felt this was great they really wanted a big story.

INT: Yeah certainly people in the area thought that the media was playing it up as an event.

NAR: Well, it was an event. It was a hell of an event. It was an accident that. You see, we've had probably other similar accidents around the country that may have been just as bad if not worse as far as the amount of release over all. But it was an event that happened at the right time. And probably at the right place – Pennsylvania, which had been mentioned in the movie, Three Mile Island all of a sudden it had a lot of magic to it. And it's a... they really give these places some exotic names – Peach Bottom, that would have been another nice place for it happen. That has a nice ring to it. You know... Peach Bottom hits bottom. Sure.

INT: Yeah. How was the station affected by the whole thing, how differently were you operating than you were before?

NAR: As far as difference of operation, we tried not to operate any differently. Other than the fact that we had two different things going. We had the normal operation of the facility with the regular reassuring announcements of where things were at that point in time, and the updates and assuring people that if anything came up they would be informed. Then you had the underlying – the undercurrents, the background, and quite frankly we had to also be operating on another footing that we couldn't make the public aware of. Okay, some people may say, “Well that was wrong that you weren't letting us

know that you were preparing for an evacuation.” Why should be sitting there saying, “Friends we’re preparing for an evacuation?” Suppose they had ran out of the plant on Wednesday morning – they fault Met Ed for not letting everyone in on everything. Why didn’t they all run out of there on Wednesday morning and run around and say “My God the sky is falling, everybody get out, get out.” There’d had been mass carnage on the highways. So they say they are wrong, but in retrospect I don’t know. Maybe they slipped a few places, but I don’t think they were totally wrong in not running around saying the sky is falling. Nor could we be running around and saying “Hey we’re working feverishly here, preparing for an evacuation.” Because that could have been and eventuality. The worst thing in the world would have been to have a need for an evacuation and we not be ready for it. So we had to be ready and we had to go as if the evacuation was going to happen. But quite frankly we kept hoping that this would not be. When did we start that?

INT: When did you start getting ready?

NAR: Friday.

INT: Friday. So it wasn’t until Friday that there was an apparent need to get started on things like this?

(Another Voice): Well it was Friday that it looked like it was going to develop into something...

NAR: No, by Friday the minor incident had taken on the aura of being a major catastrophe. Nationally that pressure was being pushed. By Friday also the local, and since we’re tied in with the local civil defense – the local civil defense was being pushed by the state, and here again everyone is trying to cover their own little piece of responsibility so that if anything did come along the finger won’t be pointed at them in saying “You weren’t ready.” So this is what happens. And you have to recognize that that’s a normal “I’m going to cover my butt” syndrome. So the state was pushing to be sure that they were ready and they were pushing the county to be sure that they were ready. And we’re tied in with the county and the county was pushing us to be sure that we had everything ready. So it became a domino effect all the way down the line. Because nobody wanted to be left out from the standpoint of not having their end of the deal ready in case it was needed. And even Wednesday of the following week when, quite frankly the news had started to go the other way – you know, civil defense was still in a panic with trying to really push and get things ready for an evacuation when starting Monday the evacuation possibilities seemed to fade away. That’s where we had, what I felt– what I had felt was the greatest contradiction in what was going on. In other words you had your local and state civil defense still working feverishly for an evacuation and the news was saying that things had gotten progressively better. And hundred fold better. We had crossed border with the bubble decreasing in size and that was the biggest thing that they didn’t seem to have answers to at that point in time because it was a new wrinkle. So we had contradiction there. There we had the national picture and also our local picture saying, hey it’s time to give a sign of relief, it’s getting better. But civil

defense didn't have all their pieces in line and they were still pushing to complete that. Which it was good exercise for them, quite frankly. Here again I think out of the whole thing we'll wind up much better off for anything. Makes no difference what comes down the pike. I don't think it will be another nuclear, but there's a greater likelihood what is forgotten is the phosphorus truck that burned in the middle of Gettysburg the week before, which was probably a greater hazard and potential hazard than TMI ever was. But it was dwarfed by the national media. But unfortunately phosphorus truck or an oil truck exploding – any number of things can happen in the middle of a town in any hour day or night. And that's much more of a reality that TMI...

(Another Voice): There's something mystic about nuclear energy.

INT: I think the thing that most people brought up was that they were afraid of the nuclear business because they couldn't see it, feel it, touch it, taste it, or sense it in any way. It's just the idea that the radiation is coming, they weren't sure what it was necessarily, but they knew that they couldn't run away from it. And you couldn't tell what its effects would be necessarily right away.

NAR: And I think the over-playing of what we were – actually having in the area, where the media was playing up each release of radiation in the area, they were saying that it was 200 times and all this that and the other, but they weren't clarifying the fact that that was all sight and what have you, and this gave the impression to a lot of people that that great amount of radiation was covering a wide area.

(Another Voice): People generally don't understand nuclear physics or anything like that. They try to explain that if radiation escaped in the cloud, they tried to explain that the half-life was seven minutes. You know, but people don't know what the hell that means. Basically. All they know is that it is escaping, you see. And they still associate it with a bomb. Where the half life is 100,000 years.

INT: Did you have a lot of people calling the station with that kind of...?

NAR: Not as much with the technical questions as I said, with just needing reassurance... It got to be a frightening time only from the standpoint that... personally I was never concerned about the thing. In other words, the idea of evacuation, even though they were planning on evacuating, I wasn't going anywhere.

INT: Did you make any preparations yourself for evacuation, pack bags...?

NAR: No there was no way that I was going to ever leave, period. Because from what I knew of what was going on over there they would never convince me that leaving the area would be a good idea. Because that would have been the worst thing in the world. Because you would have people in here from Baltimore, Philadelphia – looting and just having a ball while the place is deserted, so there was no way I was ever going to leave the area. They couldn't convince me that there was a problem that big over there, quite frankly. From what I knew of things. And I read a lot, I keep up with things. I'm not an

expert on nuclear energy by means, I know a little something about it and maybe it's a just a little enough to be dangerous to myself, I don't know, but nevertheless I had no plans to do that.

INT: Even if they would have called an official evacuation?

NAR: I wouldn't have left. You know, there was nothing in the evacuation thing where they could force people out. That still had to be volunteer. And I wasn't going to be doing it. And my family. We discussed it. And no one in my family was concerned or bothered about it, really. We just- the thing that got to be fascinating for me was the amount of near panic that we had in the community or in the area. I mean, it verged at times on panic. And that bothered me very much and that doubled my efforts to try to keep things calm as far as the facility that we were operating in – not join in on that panic routine. Because I don't think that was health for anyone. We had a far greater possibility of a disaster created by panic than we did I think at that time, by the problems over there with the reactor.

INT: What do you think was the major cause of the panic, it was primarily the news media or...?

NAR: By and large the abundance of conflicting reports and there was an abundance period, to the– you know.

INT: This is one thing that people have told us a lot about- they had conflicting views on the role of the news media because after Watergate, a good many of the people that we had talked to tended to think of the news media as hero or as good. And now they had all of these conflicting reports all of these sensationalistic reports, they were listening to the local, then they were listening to the national and just seeing the terrible differences between them...

NAR: And then they began to wonder “Who do you believe?”

INT: Yeah.

NAR: Right. I mean there were times we didn't have too many. But we had indications from people who would call us that we weren't telling them the truth. And that bothered me.

INT: So they felt that you were playing it down?

NAR: That we were holding back something. You know, that we were holding back, you know, some dreadful news or something. (laughing). It was if they wanted to hear the worst. They had really been psychologically worked up to this fever pitch point of expecting the worst out of this thing.

INT: That's interesting.

NAR: And it wasn't coming forth. Things shouldn't be getting better, they should be getting worse. It was a strange situation.

INT: Why do you think people react like that? That's kind of curious. I hadn't thought about it in this way.

NAR: Well I think that they react that way because of the conflicting – they're trying to number one Walter Cronkite – the was by and large well respected, I mean if you were to say who is one of the most respected news people, I think you'd have to say that Walter Cronkite would probably stand high in the electronic media. But yet Walter Cronkite comes on and says, "The world has never known a day such as today." That's no small statement. Now when Walter Cronkite says that, how's that going to square with what we're saying on our local station? You know, how does that square? Who do they believe? Here's a well respected, national news figure making this statement, and here is a little local station saying, "Well things are..." this that and the other. But still there is no alarm and no cause for panic and no evacuation is imminent and so forth and so on.

INT: Do you think that a large percentage of the people tended to think that you were holding back or was it only a small percentage – what's your impression of it anyway?

NAR: My impression of it would be that it would probably be equally divided. They wanted to believe us. In a way they wanted to believe what we were saying, but those who became really keyed up over this thing became almost hysterical with regards to expecting the worst that they were hearing about on the national thing. So they were torn between the two. They wanted to believe us, but then there was the other side of them that was scared to death because they didn't understand this thing and they thought it was going to blow up anytime. And we had neighbors, for instance, that had plans to evacuate to Ohio. Hell, they weren't going only a hundred miles away or whatever, because they didn't think that was far enough away. And I talked with this people and it was strange trying to communicate with someone who you could not rationally reach their fear. In other words you could not reach them.

INT: Did they actually go to Ohio?

NAR: No, they didn't. Their plans were on Sunday to go to Ohio and they were going to wait at go on Monday and Monday is when the bubble began to decrease and that then relieved their anxiety. But it was the first time I've ran into a situation where you could not logically reach someone to get them to put things in perspective, to understand – you know, as I pointed out to them: I'll really become worried when the first report I hear from Harold Denton, he says, "This is Harold Denton speaking to you from Washington." Then I'll become concerned. (laughing). I mean when Harold Denton decides to go to Washington and tell us what's going on, then I'll become concerned about it. But as long as he's standing over there on the site, I'm not going to be all that concerned about it. Because when it reaches that point, and surely they know a lot more about it than I do – and I don't think any of them wanted to be martyrs and stand there while something

drastically happened to that unit. So as long as they were standing there working on it, I really didn't – I wasn't all that concerned.

INT: Did you know anybody who actually left?

NAR: Yes. One of my people – one of my employees left the area. In fact I receive the call Sunday. Stating, by the way, "I'm up..." I forget where they went to – State College or something. And he says, "I won't be back Monday." He left... he's divorced, he has the responsibility of looking after his daughter. She's about six, and he was very much concerned for her. He lived in Mechanicsburg. And I could understand that. I mean, I think everyone has to make their own decisions, so that didn't bother me one bit that he had decided to do that. Because I think he had to do, in his own mind, that he felt comfortable that he could live with. And to him, he didn't understand it; he was very concerned – not necessarily for himself – but about what the effects might be on her. He kept hearing all these stories about young children that would be sterile, you know, this, that, and the other, and he bought them. Lock, stock, and barrel. Yet he was one of the people that had worked in my news department for some time. So here's a person that should be able to cut through that. But that's what I'm saying, that there were so many conflicting stories as to what was going on locally and as to what was going on nationally. He tended to believe the national.

INT: When did he come back, how long was he gone?

NAR: Wednesday. He came back to work on Wednesday.

INT: Do you know anyone else who had gone?

NAR: Not really, I know of a number of people within our area that we live in, but I didn't know the person.

INT: Did he go to stay with family?

NAR: No, they went up and stayed in a motel out there.

INT: So he just went to some area that he thought was far enough away?

NAR: Right.

INT: Because of most of the people that we talked to didn't leave, but they all had plans to go and they were all going to stay with family, so that meant going to Florida or New York or...

NAR: Oh I know a number of people who had their bags packed. In fact the people who were going to Ohio, they were all packed and ready to go. They weren't... you know, it wasn't a casual thought about it. I mean, they were ready to go. But no... it was a strange time when you found people wanting to believe that things would be okay but

being so hyper about the fact that the worst was going to happen. And being torn between the two. It was a strange time.

INT: Do you think that people here in Carlisle reacted any differently than people, say, closer in?

NAR: Not really. I was amazed of the numbers after – finding out the numbers who had left Carlisle. And there were considerable number of people, as you are well aware of the number of students who left Dickinson. And as far away as we were from the plant, what have you, I traveled over into the area on some of my regular business on that Friday afternoon and boy you talk about ghost town, around Mechanicsburg and through Harrisburg and areas through there – the amount of traffic you would normally see and what was going on in those areas. It was like a ghost town.

INT: Do you know how many people left Carlisle? Do you know if there is any place to get figures on that?

NAR: No. I would hazard a guess that 200 or 300 left. But I have no way of being able to confirm that.

INT: I know one researcher was working in Middletown and found that fully 57% of a random sample that he contacted had left – had evacuated at some time or another for some period of time.

NAR: In Carlisle, I would think maybe- I would be surprised if 5% left.

INT: That was my impression – we haven't tabulated our results yet, but I think it's fewer than 5% also.

NAR: I would think less than that.

INT: How do you think the government – we're talking a lot about the media here – how do you think the government handled the situation?

NAR: If you're thinking of the government as being Denton, then I think in this point in time, we really have to say that Denton was the government, because quite frankly Denton was the man on the scene and he was the government man responsible – I think he did an admirable job. I thought he was probably the leveling factor that kept things locally under control. And he were not second guessing him as the... the problem with national again, was that after they would give the comments from Denton, then they would turn to a few of their experts and say, "Well Denton said this, now what if that doesn't happen?" (laughing). And in the next breath right behind that would come out some dire consequences of something else that was going to go wrong. So that's where they problem lays – that on the national thing there all these experts to say that "Well, what Denton says is nice, but if that doesn't happen, here's what going to happen." And they were playing this type of game. We weren't doing that locally. So he was our

expert, we took what he said and that was it. But as far as the government is concerned, they reacted about as well, under the circumstances – they certainly found out that they weren't prepared for that. As everyone did. So the only thing that we can hope is that quite frankly a lot of lessons will be learned from this. It will make – surely it will make nuclear energy safer. I came up with an editorial later, relative to the fact that my only fear that there are going to be certain interest groups that will certainly jump on this thing and will ride it just as hard as they can and try to do away with nuclear energy. I'm not opposed to doing away with nuclear energy, not at all. But I'm a realist and I fully understand that we can't close them all down tomorrow. And my editorial basically stated that let's go on with the job that's in front of us, and that is coming up with alternative in the way of energy – synthetics and what have you. Let's get on with the job of perfecting that so that we can make nuclear power plants, you know, the horse and buggies of tomorrow. In other words, we can out date them. Let's get it to that point where there will be a time that we don't need them. That's fine with me. I'm not as concerned quite frankly about power plants or the possibility of something going wrong with it as I'm concerned with what do you do with the waste from it? Where do you put it? Where do you put something that you have to hide it for 20,000 years? That's more of a concern to me than the plant blowing up. I think if anything, the plant- I think that the plant proved that with all the malfunctions of equipment and with all the malfunctions of people operating the equipment, that in spite of all that – all the dire consequences that they we're talking about did not come to pass. So that to me is heartening. That to me says, there are a lot of safety factors in the thing. And I just hope that they improve in those safety factors and that we don't tie ourselves up in so much red tape that we'll never get anything done in nuclear power in the future, because we do have to have something.

INT: How do you think the industry handled the whole thing – Metropolitan Edison?

NAR: I don't think that there's books in on that yet. My first impression is that you can't say that they were crystal clear in everything that they did and that they were perfectly proper. But I can't fault them for that either, after all you have to understand that they were dealing with a first time situation of this magnitude and how in the world do you prepare yourself for something like that? That's like asking 'how are you going to react if you find out tomorrow you have cancer?' Who the hell knows? You know, you won't know how you'll react until that eventuality hits you in the face. There's no way to prepare for it. So therefore they could not prepare for this type of eventuality. The only thing that I could say is that while they were being faulted in the media for not being as candid as they should have been with the people; I still say that the worst thing in the world that they could have done would have been to run out of that plant Wednesday morning, crying, "My God the sky is falling. We've got a disaster here." That's the worst thing in the world they could have done. So I think that they and any other operator of a nuclear power plant should have learned something also from this experience. Here again, if nothing else, it should have been a learning experience in many ways. In other words, the text books should now be written because we have the event that it can be written on to help any other eventuality in the future. To help the

operators of the plants to have a better way of knowing when do you do this, when do you do that, how quickly... you know.

INT: For your own information, was there anybody that you found particularly reliable or whose word you trusted more than anything else during this time?

NAR: I would say Denton. I admire the calmness with which he handled... he was the right man at the right time in that situation. If he had been a hyper type of individual we could have had- because I could even fault our governor. Our governor, while a lot of people are patting him on his back for doing a good job, I think he fumbled it in a lot of ways – most of them after the fact. And I think he is throwing a lot of things around that he shouldn't be throwing around because the full story isn't in yet. And I hope the full story will be in soon so that we'll basically have some – but what is the full story? It's going to be this version or that version and the other version, and somewhere in there is the facts. And I hope we can get to them. And get it squared away. But I think Denton was probably the most calming as far as I'm concerned.

INT: Was there anybody that you particularly mistrusted then? Somebody who you felt was not as reliable or any organization or anything like this that was not reliable?

NAR: The most unreliable organization as far as I'm concerned was what I would term the mass media. The blitz that was put on by all three networks and the continuous follow-up of the 'what ifs' that were repeated so many times that it almost became "this is going to happen" or a factual statement to the public. I was very disappointed with the reliability. But as far as individuals – no, I can't say that there was a particular person or there was certainly no person that I'm aware of that I could say- I could point my finger to them and say that I wouldn't have trusted what he said. Because I would recognize that if a statement was being made by Met Ed it was certainly made with Met Ed's best consideration. The statement being made by an anti-nuclear group at the time it was being made, with their best considerations. So therefore I'm aware enough that when people like that make statements that they're going to shadow it or shade it one way or the other. And that's common sense.

INT: Well Met Ed had certainly taken a lot of fire over the last – well since the incident's happening. I think they, in terms of the public mind, have become the villains of the whole piece.

NAR: Well that is because I think of some of the comments that the governor has made and I think it's because of the fact that they happen to be the operator of that particular plant. And I think that, you know, quite frankly, I don't think that Met Ed was all that clean with regards to its operating practices. I think that will show up. That will show up and that's unfortunate. But I don't join those that say, "Fine, let's crucify them." Good, let's bankrupt them – let's put them out of business... now who's going to run the plant and what's going to be the cost of the power. You know, those people who run around and say, "Hey, let's put them right out of business" – they're not thinking beyond today. We have to live tomorrow too. And those people who have electricity from Met Ed, they

don't want to be getting it from a bankrupt corporation, because if they do they're going to pay dearly for it... and since we're all right in the same area, then there will be quite a bit a sharing of that – dearly. We're all be paying dearly for it. So I'm not for that. I mean, I just think they they've been held up to public ridicule quite enough and it's time to stop the punishment and get on with the corrective steps that need to be taken. I don't think Met Ed is going to come out of there the same corporation that went in. I think that they're operating practices will be far different, I think the operating practices in *any* nuclear power plant is going to be far different. Because I think every single one of them realizes it could have been them. Under given circumstances it could have been them. And I don't think any of them would repeat that again. But we get back to people, we get back to people. And when you get back to people humans can make mistakes, whether it's in the design of the plant or whether it's in the operation of the plant. So, you know, if they really want to get right down to it, why do we crucify Met Ed? Why don't we go out and hang the son of a gun who turned off the cooling system? Let's be factual about it. If we're really going to get down to the nuts and bolts about it, he's the one who was wrong. He was the one who turned the whole damned thing into a simple solution – from a simple solution into a major problem. So why don't we put him out into town square and flog him and hang him – you know, that's ridiculous, but my point is that it's ridiculous to go the other way, too.

INT: It's interesting, nobody knows who that particular operator is... I think...

NAR: I think that's very good, quite frankly. I hope they never divulge, but I hate to be that particular operator (laughing) because he is fully aware of the fact that a decision at a moment in time turned out to be a very bad decision. Now it's turning out that the operators – or the builders of that plant had information that they should have disseminated 14 months ago to all the plants stating that "Don't rely on this," "Don't shut off that cooling system." You know, now it's all coming out. So why do we put it all on Met Ed? They are just as much a victim as the rest of us were.

INT: I guess in a way they were the most visible...

NAR: Well everybody is looking for a scapegoat. And I don't look for scapegoats, I mean I think that's futile.

INT: Well did you have any kinds of- this is a little bit more speculative or fanciful in a way – did you have any kinds of imaginings about what was going on there at TMI during the incident?

NAR: No. Number one, I never imagined that the thing would ever reach a point of the China syndrome, so to speak, or the meltdown, although that was the thing that was really being played up. That to me was as far from being possible as you could get. I had too much confidence in basically just the system itself. I felt that in spite of everything that there were too many systems built in and here again I get back to, even though they screwed them all up, it still didn't do it. And no, I... that's the reason I say I just had no

idea of evacuating, because I just didn't think that – I may have been proven wrong, but... I wasn't.

INT: Do you think that anything that happened at TMI then affected your health in any way, either now or in the future?

NAR: No, no, no.

INT: You have no worries...

NAR: No...

INT: Or anything...

NAR: No...

INT: About 20...

NAR: No...

INT: Years from now?

NAR: None whatsoever. None whatever. How could it? How could it?

INT: Do you have any concern about eating any of the food or the milk in the area?

NAR: No, no.

INT: You don't think that the China syndrome would have happened? Had the worst happened what do you think, what would have been the results? Had the worst possible thing happened?

NAR: You see, that's where I think that the most... unreliable information in the world is, that I'm quite frankly, I'm glad that that's the textbook that we didn't get to write that page of it. But that's where I think most of the people, locally, still were thinking of Hiroshima. The ball, the actual explosion, not understanding that what happens is if it does in fact melt and goes down into the riverbed, the cracks open up, you have a whole of a lot of steam that's emitted, and then you're at the mercy of the winds, you're at the mercy of which way is the wind blowing; is the wind blowing at all; what are the barometric pressure at the time; is it going to be held close to the ground; or will it simply go up into the air – because then you're dealing with a cloud and where the cloud goes who knows?

INT: So in other words, then it could be that the public's only experience with nuclear disaster or a nuclear problem or nuclear anything, was the bomb at Hiroshima.

NAR: Sure.

INT: And so that consequently...

NAR: That's my impression.

INT: This would be the only way that they could think about it.

NAR: That's my impression.

INT: Do you think now that we've gone through this particular experience, do you think that if this happens again that people won't think of Hiroshima that they'll think of TMI?

NAR: No, I still think that people are not aware. Because they just go right back to that same thing. I really think that people – number one, there's been nothing like this ever happened that we're aware of – so they have nothing to relate it to. And they will still come back to the Hiroshima. And even though it didn't happen at TMI, if a similar thing took place at any other plant I feel that the news media would go the same way but at least one more time until they would destroy their credibility and then they wouldn't be able to afford to go that way the third time. But I think one more time they'd try for it once again, hoping that the China syndrome would be there.

INT: Do you think that this is a conscious thing on the part of the news media or that they're trying to manipulate it or that...?

NAR: They're not trying to manipulate it, remember what is news? You know, somebody going and getting a cat out of a tree doesn't make very good news. However somebody throwing a cat in a tree (laughing) that's better news. News unfortunately today is sensationalism – the more sensational the better. Let's take an example of the situation in Florida where they showed pictures and they give all the drawings and they give all the minute details of the executions – this type of thing. That's news. Now that tends to build people's impressions and sensitivities against executions. But suppose they had given the same amount of detail and sensationalism to the act of that person killing his victim and describing the results of the victim's death – then what would be the feeling of executions? You see, they can shade it and mold it by whichever way they want to go with it. And whatever happens to be the vogue of the day is the way that they run with it. Today it happens to be let's go anti-nuke. Any group that gets together five or more they can be assured that there will be a TV camera there rolling close in, so that the five people look like 500. This type of thing. That camera is a funny thing. You know, you could draw us back and they'd give you the wide view, you'd find out that that crowd that you think you're looking at isn't all that big. But all they have to do is zoom in and they can make five heads look like a crowd. But I don't think that they – number one they're not going to go out to an area like that and play it up and give a wide angle view of five people standing in a field, therefore they're going to give a tight shot. Because they don't want to look like idiots, either. So it gets back to covering your own self interest. And their self interest is to develop viewers and the way you develop

viewers is to give them sensationalism and give them things that really turn them on, for good or bad. They don't question whether it's good or bad. That's the part I think that bothers me.

INT: Did you have any ideas during this time about how it would have been best to behave in this kind of a situation – ethical, moral or religious ideas?

NAR: No, because how do you tell or explain to someone, and I ran into that with these friends of ours that I was trying to explain that there was no need for them to be considering evacuation at the time, but I found out that you're dealing with someone else's upbringing, someone else's patterns of dealing with the unknown. And I think the unknown sometimes can shake people pretty soundly. And I think this was what we were dealing with. They didn't know what to expect, they didn't understand it. It was the unknown. And it frightened the hell out of them. And therefore you can't tell someone who is that scared, "oh calm down and stay home." It doesn't mean a thing to them. It doesn't make them feel one bit better. So they should do whatever they feel they should do. It means that they wanted to evacuate, and they should. You can't tell people how to react to something like that.

INT: You yourself felt a great... you were compelled by your own sense of ethics and this sort of thing to stay here and work in your station.

NAR: Wasn't a sense of ethics, I had no fear, I never felt frightened by it. I saw nothing to be scared of. Of everything that was coming out of there, that I was aware of, there was nothing that bothered me.

INT: Did this entire situation bring into your own mind any kinds of past experiences of past events? You mentioned that the public immediately thought of Hiroshima.

NAR: No, I had never been involved in a situation where you had so many people with such mixed feeling about things. That was the first time that I ever had to encounter that and I hope it's was the last time. It's a very unpleasant thing to have to deal with. To... because after a while you begin to question your own... you know, you're here and everyone else is shaking in their boots and they had this fear, that fear and the other. You say, "Well what's wrong with me? I'm not bothered by this; what's the problem here?" You know, it really at times didn't make sense at all to me. I felt like, "God I'm missing something. Maybe I should be packing my bags or something."

INT: Did you do anything at all during that time – even top off your gas tank?

NAR: Oh no... I just had no feeling whatsoever about it.

INT: Do you find an incident more or less frightening than something like a flood or a hurricane?

NAR: We were here in '72 when the floods were here.

INT: I moved here just in time for this. You apparently came in time just for that.

NAR: Right. No, this is more frightening. Because as I say, you're dealing with the unknown. Water, they can see it. They know where it is, they know what it's doing, they know whether it's still coming up or whether it's going down. That, they don't have to rely on a news reporter, you know, they can see it. So therefore it's not a question of doubting what he is saying is true or not; but in this case it's dealing with the unknown and something that most people do not understand, haven't read anything about it, and aren't up on it, so to speak. But I do a great deal of reading and many of it was in...

INT: Do you have any feeling now that you've come through this particular incident how a radio station such as yours should deal with a situation like this?

NAR: I wouldn't deal with it any differently tomorrow. No, no. You must- when all else around you is losing theirs, you've got to keep your head. That's- that to me, was priority number one. That I keep number one, that people at the station and I had people on the air that were quite frightened; but yet I admire them because on the air they kept their cool and they did not allow the situation to get to them. Or allow it to go out on the air sounding that way. So, no.

INT: Did you change your programming at all during that time?

NAR: No, no. No, that would be bad. That would have been bad. Why? Here again you would only be adding to the aura of difference – that something is different – something is wrong. And that, here again – I think those who were even staying kept looking for normalcy in things. Because there wasn't a great deal of normalcy at that point in time.

INT: That's certainly the way the College, that's why they wanted to stay operating.

NAR: They were seeking normalcy and therefore you had to maintain normalcy with what you're doing.

INT: How did your family react to all this?

NAR: As I said, we discussed. My kids- I guess they basically have shared my philosophies in things and we discussed it and I answered questions the best I knew how for them about it. There was no feeling one way or the other. You know, it was no big deal for them. They didn't make a big thing out of it, we never even discussed the... we laughed about people who were moving or leaving the area. Laughed, I mean, in a tension relieving way, I guess; because maybe I'm sure they wondered, "Hey are we going to?" We discussed it, but I said, "Hey there's no reason to. I'm not going anywhere." And they agreed with that. So there was no... to us we were going on in a normal way in a very un-normal situation.

INT: In a way I was asking if you've had any ideas or any imaginings about past experiences, did you think of anything in the present that reminded you of the situation? I know that a lot of people were thinking of movies and television and found themselves singing songs and that sort of thing.

NAR: No, not really. There wasn't anything that... I can't think of anything that I could relate it to, whether it was past, present...

INT: Some people, for instance, in your area, what they were doing is- they were thinking about movies, some people had seen the movie "On the Beach" for instance which dealt with a nuclear disaster. And they found themselves singing Waltzing Matilda which was a song that kept on going through the movie. Japanese monster movies- what was just brought up here at the table a while ago was Monster Tomatoes. People were thinking, they were cracking jokes about monster tomatoes and their garden and their huge worms crawling out on the streets.

NAR: No.

INT: No imaginings or fantasies or anything that you thought about? Did you have any dreams?

NAR: No. Slept like a log.

INT: it's an interesting thing, so did I.

NAR: No, as I say, I don't think that there's anything that I could relate it to. No. Nothing.

INT: Did you hear any jokes about the whole incident?

NAR: Oh, the usual. In fact this was a little bit after, but I mean with some of our friends and what have you, I kidded them that probably one of the best things to do – and I was talking about that the week after the bubble started to subside – that the best thing we could do would be to go over there and buy some land, if somebody wanted to get rid of it real cheap. That you could oversee the whole site and set up a campground, it would probably become one of the biggest vacation tourist attractions going. And quite frankly, this turned out to be somewhat true now. They're finding out that there is a lot of curiosity.

INT: I know Met ED just opened up a- well I guess they've had their observation before. I was over there about a week or so ago and they said that they had three hundred people maybe going through in a week, and now they have 1000 and more.

NAR: That's right. I mean you can't give that much publicity to something and then have it turn out to be- even though it was a false alarm, so to speak. There's still going to be a lot of curiosity and a lot of people saw a lot of pictures of those towers and they want

to see it in person. And if they're going to be anywhere within a hundred miles of this area, I'll be they'll drop by to stop in to see it.

INT: Did you have anything circulating around the station, there's something that in folklore we call 'xerography' and they are phony memos and announcements and things like this – letters that somebody will write up and then they'll make a copy of it and they'll pass it on and it'll go into the office and they'll make another Xerox of it and pass it on again. So you have anything like that go through?

NAR: There was one- but this was dealing with somewhere over in Harrisburg or something like that. I don't know where it came from, something about the last person out of Harrisburg, please turn out the lights or something like that. That was going around here and I forget...

INT: Was that one of those typed sheets or drawn up or something like?

NAR: I believe so, I believe so. Someone types it up for something.

INT: If you run across something like that in your office, let me know. Because I'm making a collection of it. I have some things on Xeroxed – one was an announcement of a tour of Three Mile Island...

NAR: Been cancelled? (Laughing)

INT: No, no, no. It's a wonderful tour where you can go through all these things, you can see the President's footsteps still glowing. And it was this wonderful thing, and at the end of it it said that we, at Keith's Travel Agency or something, have but one request of you after your tour: 'Please do not come in and tell us how much you enjoyed it'. First in a lifetime, perhaps last in a lifetime chance to do this. And another one they had was for sale, a beautiful island in the middle of the Susquehanna River, approximately three miles in length, comes with own electrical generators, one working, the other needs a little bit of...

NAR: Figuring. (Laughing)

INT: Yeah. Things like this, these are the types of things that I've collected. I've collected a good number of them now. So what I'm trying to do is just to build up a little collection of the things that people have been ... Because one of the reactions- we were talking about the humor before and why people makes jokes about it. Did you find that people were joking a lot in your station?

NAR: Yeah. Yeah. I would say that there was a fair amount of- because I think it was a way of them relieving tensions. You know, because they felt the tension. With all the phone calls I know I had to reassure a number of people that things were okay and that there's no need for them to be concerned. This was a constant day to day thing. Because they didn't know who to believe. Even though hell they were working right in a facility

that had access to the latest up to date news. They were finding it hard to get what we saying to jive with what was coming across on the network news at night.

INT: Why do you think people really tell these jokes?

NAR: It's to release tension.

INT: Why does that relieve tension? What does it do for people?

NAR: ... Well... I think the very act of laughing itself... you're accustomed to laughter being associated with- it's a mental game- it's associated with a relaxed state of mind. It's associated with a carefree state of mind. So therefore if you can laugh, you must be relaxed and carefree. And so therefore if you're in a tight, tense situation, if you make a joke about it, you'll laugh a little. For a moment in time it relieves you. I think it's a mental association.

INT: What did you think about some of the jokes that were circulating at the time? People were calling it things like black humor and gallows humor and things like where they really...

NAR: I thought it was healthy. I thought it was healthy. I didn't see anything wrong with it. I mean, I can see- I can understand, however, people who were extremely hyper about the whole thing not finding humor in it all. I mean those who were tied in a knot with it that they were ready to, you know, literally collapse with anxiety, I can see them not finding humor in it, I can see them even being downright aggravated at people who find humor in it.

INT: Why do you think that they wouldn't be able to? Wouldn't they be the people most in need of it?

NAR: That's a personal individual situation. You're dealing with the individual. How do they respond to certain stimulus? And this case, some people simply could not handle it. They were doing the best they could under the circumstances, but they were extremely uptight about it and you were not going to get them to unwind with cracking a joke about it. In fact they could be downright aggravated at you for it. That purely gets back to the individual make up of the person.

INT: Do you remember jokes like this being passed around in other crises?

NAR: During the flood, yes.

INT: There were jokes over Hurricane Agnus I guess it was?

NAR: Right, but it was more rain than hurricane. Yeah, but that... as it started to subside and what have you, there was quite a bit of joking. I mean you see it in any natural

disaster. You saw it in the Waco disaster, where people had tornadoes and the next thing you knew, the house was gone, but somebody put up those front lawn “garage sale”.

INT: My family lives in Southern California, they just moved from the San Francisco area to Rancho Mirage, they had a dam break on Thursday night, actually Friday morning this past week and there’s 8 feet of mud in houses around there and my father’s house the mud went in the front door and went right through the back and my sister’s house, the same thing happened, and the house down the street had 8 feet of mud inside the house. And they’re not laughing yet. But what you just said was very interesting, it’s that right afterward people start laughing. One of the things I noticed here is that people started laughing at it before and then the laughter really stopped right when they were very very worried about it on Saturday and Sunday and then afterwards the laughter started again.

NAR: That’s right, that’s right.

INT: During Agnus you think you remember that you joked some...

NAR: There was no jokes before. There was no jokes before – it was afterwards when they knew the water was subsiding.

INT: (Unintelligible)

NAR: I can’t remember particular jokes.

INT: Because one of the things that strikes me as funny or interesting is that sometimes they’re funny in the situation and they’re not funny afterward.

NAR: That’s right.

INT: Because I remember a reporter asking me about the jokes here and I told him a few and he said, “That’s not funny” and I said “Of course it’s not funny, you had to be here in the situation to understand what was going on. It’s only funny in the particular situation. Afterwards you look at the joke and it would be dumb.”

NAR: That’s right. No, because at that point in time, here again it’s a release of tensions, it’s a way of relieving tensions, and so therefore it serves it’s purpose at the time but you look at it out of context or if you weren’t involved, like you say, it could look very dumb. I don’t remember any particular...

INT: Were they jokes about the water or jokes about the houses...?

NAR: By and large, relative to things of that nature.

INT: But it was really specifically dealing with their situation?

NAR: Ummhumm. (Yes.)

INT: It's a fascinating human response and it just again, fascinates me to no end. I just am very interested in finding out why people react that way and how they react that way and especially in different types of crises.

NAR: Specific jokes about for sale home with indoor pool or with running water or this type of thing.

INT: I'm really glad that you brought that up because I have no information about that and I'm interested because there have been jokes about- I'd assume there must have been jokes about Pearl Harbor, I wasn't around to know about it. There were jokes after Kennedy's assassination – I remember some when I was a little kid – Invasion of Cambodia, things like that, I don't remember any jokes from that time. There have been even jokes coming out after the Jonestown Massacre in Guyana.

NAR: That so?

INT: So I'm just trying to find out what the relationship is between the jokes here and perhaps some of the other jokes about crises that people have gone through and I just hadn't thought about Agnus because I wasn't here at that time. We really ought to get this finished up because I'm taking too much of your time.

NAR: I'm ready.

INT: Just as a last question, do you think that your perception had been changed in all in way about nuclear energy over this crisis?

NAR: No. If anything, my perception has been fortified that by and large it's as safe as they had claimed. Now they have found some flaws and thank goodness the finding of the flaws didn't create any more of a problem than they did. I fully believe that out of this that nuclear energy will be 10 times safer than it had been in the past. It has proved that the China Syndrome or the meltdown, while it is always a possibility, you can also be struck by lightning tomorrow – that's a possibility. Therefore the odds are so long that they are almost nonexistent. But the system can take a great deal of abuse under adverse conditions and still survive without going through the meltdown procedure. So my feeling has been simply fortified that it is something we will have to live with for a while but I simply hope that the government will move ahead- the thing that bothers me more than anything else is that in '74 we heard all of these great promises about how we were going to move ahead with a program to solve our dependency on Arab oil when they wrapped it four fold, or twice. Here we are 5 years later and we still have no programs underway, no direction whatsoever, and we're hearing the same old shop-worn promises. And I simply hope that we can encourage our leaders to get their heads out of the sand in the Middle East and move ahead in coming up with some proper responses to the challenge that we've been thrown. And that is the one of our very existence as far as energy is concerned. Either we're going to have to exist at the mercy of others as to what we pay for it and how much of it we will have or we'll solve our own problems and I'm

not one of those who feels that the best way to solve it is to build 10,000 nuclear plants. No way. Let's use them to the maximum today but let's make them obsolete tomorrow. Because we can do it. We can do it. All we have to do is decide that we're going to do it and we'll find a way. But without that resolve that we're going to do it, 5 years from now we're going to be sitting around paying 3 dollars a gallon wondering why in the world we haven't found any alternatives. And I don't like that. It's a very bad feeling.