

May 10, 1979

Occupation: College student

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

NARRATOR: Friday morning.

INT: Do you remember who you heard about it from?

NAR: I think (unintelligible)

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

NAR: Well I wasn't particularly excited over it. I didn't get worked up about it. I just waited until I heard some more on it.

INT: Did you seek out further information?

NAR: Well, it was about right before lunch time when I heard about it and at the table I got more information from my friends.

INT: So did you talk about it with friends, family or co-workers?

NAR: My friends (Unintelligible)

INT: What did you talk about?

NAR: Well I didn't talk much, I just listened.

INT: What was the topic of conversation?

NAR: Basically what happened or what was going to happen at the plant and the danger.

INT: How did you feel about everyone else's reaction to this incident?

NAR: I thought it was natural. They were excited, but none of them were hysterical or overreacting.

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

NAR: TV and radio.

INT: Do you remember any particular stations?

NAR: WDCV and (unintelligible).

INT: Did you pay any more attention to these than you normally would?

NAR: WDCV, yes. They were getting updates from the UPI teletype so I thought that was my best source.

INT: So how do you feel about the way the media handled the incident?

NAR: I think they handled it poorly.

INT: Can you elaborate on that?

NAR: Well, they were printing erroneous statements and grasping at words and for example when the college campus cancelled classes, they immediately said that the college closed down. When all that was, being done was cancel classes.

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

NAR: Not really. Just the radio and TV.

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

NAR: Yeah, my friend and I planned to go to Washington, D.C. for our evacuation plans.

INT: Did you change any of your ordinary routines?

NAR: No, not really.

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

NAR: Well, I didn't think it was a "crisis" really. I thought that they were in control at all times.

INT: So did you feel at the time that those in charge were in control?

NAR: Yes. I thought they would watch it very carefully and take steps to rectify it.

INT: Do you feel now that they are in control?

NAR: I haven't followed it ever since the government stepped in. Well, I did read something about Denton.

INT: While the incident was going on, was there anyone that you trusted?

NAR: No.

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

NAR: No.

INT: What did you think about the whole idea of being in the area?

(Tape is muffled and unclear unable to hear response)

INT: Did you leave the area?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you think about leaving?

NAR: Only if evacuation had been recommended.

INT: What brought you to stay?

NAR: It wasn't transportation. I did have a ride home. I thought (unintelligible)

INT: What did you think you would take with you if you did leave?

NAR: (chuckles) Probably the checkbook so I could have some money to spend and a few clothes.

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

NAR: When I think of Three Mile Island, I think of a little bubble on the cooling tower, but that's about it when it comes to mental images.

INT: Were you worried?

NAR: No.

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

NAR: No.

INT: Do you think anything that happened then might affect your health now?

NAR: No.

INT: What other aspects of your life may have been affected in this incident?

NAR: (unintelligible)

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

NAR: I think it definitely should be researched further; I think they should concentrate more on other forms of solar energy.

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

NAR: Well, here would have been all kinds of deaths, mutations and birth defects.

INT: How do you think that would have affected your health? If the worst had happened?

NAR: If I had been exposed?

INT: Yes, what would have happened if you had been exposed?

NAR: Well, I could have gone blind, lost my hair or given birth to a mutant.

INT: Do you think any other aspects of your life could have been changed?

NAR: What specifically, my lifestyle?

INT: Lifestyle or emotional or mental health?

NAR: If I had lost my hair or gone blind it definitely would have affected my lifestyle but I'm not sure how I would have reacted to a nuclear energy explosion.

INT: Did you picture in your mind any other effects of radiation?

NAR: Well, I'm sure the place would have been burned out for a while. By now.

INT: Did you think about God during the incident?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you pray at all? Or think about how maybe God fit into this incident?

NAR: I didn't pray. I didn't think there was any danger. I guess I might have prayed for the people in charge. I didn't think it was any kind of message or anything.

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

NAR: No.

INT: Had anything like this ever happened to you before this incident?

NAR: No, it was the most exciting event.

(Unintelligible question)

NAR: Mm mm.

INT: Did you have any daydreams that you can remember?

NAR: I don't think so.

INT: What about sleeping dreams?

NAR: I can't think of any.

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

NAR: No.

INT: How about any songs?

NAR: No.

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

NAR: Most of them ran. A lot of them ran. I doubt fear was behind it. They just took advantage of the excuse just to get away and have a vacation. There are those who are against it and I've had some arguments with these people about nuclear energy and some people got excited.

INT: Do you think it has changed people in a lasting way?

NAR: It made some people like I had these discussions with even more committed to their cause against nuclear energy.

INT: Did it change you in any lasting way?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you remember any jokes about radiation at Three Mile Island?

NAR: Yeah, there was the joke about glowing in the dark, how it wouldn't be hard to find each other and if you smiled your teeth would glow. A couple people . . . I had a cold at the time and people asked me if I thought radiation would cure my cold. I don't think it did.

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

NAR: Well, quite quickly after the incident. I'd say Friday afternoon people starting joking about it.

INT: Do you remember what was going on when these jokes were told?

NAR: Well, there had been a radiation leak and radiation had been released into the atmosphere and... I think people were aware of the possibility of a melt down.

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

NAR: Yes. It was joking, but I think it was more a release of tension than anything else.

INT: Did you laugh?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did other people laugh?

NAR: Mm hm.

INT: Did you tell these jokes to other people?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Do you remember any more?

NAR: Why I told the jokes?

INT: (Unintelligible)

NAR: They were good for a long time. I . . . I guess it was sort of a fad to joke about it at the time. That's one reason why I joked around and those jokes went on for a couple of weeks; at least a week after the incident happened.

INT: Did you see any posters or graffiti?

NAR: (unintelligible) "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

INT: Do you remember when you first saw them?

NAR: I think it was the Monday after the radiation break.

INT: How long did you think of this as funny?

NAR: I didn't think they were funny so much because I agreed with them about how everyone ran. Those who were genuinely afraid I felt, well I can understand that and that's okay. But those who just used it as an excuse, I didn't like that.

INT: (Unintelligible question)

NAR: I can't think of any at the time.

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

NAR: Tension.

INT: Did anyone ever joke about other situations, like the Guyana incident or the flood?

NAR: I think . . . (unintelligible) There was couple about, I think I recall some about the Guyana incident and several years ago in my area we had flood and I heard how it was really a river.

INT: Is there anything else you would like to say about this?

NAR: Yeah. I think those who use the fear of other people to say yes, I was afraid, I ran when I was afraid when actually all they wanted to do was get a vacation were just (unintelligible). While those of us who stayed and helped out . . . and I was willing to help out with evacuations from the area . . . Those other people didn't think of anyone but themselves.

INT: You are saying that people ran because they just wanted a vacation, what about those who ran because they were scared?

NAR: I feel that if they were genuinely scared it was all right to run. I wouldn't want to stay in a place where there was danger. I feel like the effects were all psychological as well.