

July 16, 1979

Occupation: Printer

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

NARRATOR: No, I don't. I honestly can't remember.

INT: Do you have any idea from whom you may have heard it or how you may have heard it?

NAR: Probably here, in...

INT: In the service center:

NAR: Right, yeah, I would imagine.

INT: Did you have, the right reactor was there before the incident occurred?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Did you know how far away Three Mile Island was?

NAR: No.

INT: No, what did you think about or talk about at the point when you first heard about it?

NAR: I mainly didn't give it a lot of thought because I didn't really fully understand it. I was not really, I just didn't understand it, I had never gotten into anything like that in any kind of discussions so it was all new to me. So, I really, I can't remember real what I thought.

INT: Did you think it was a serious thing?

NAR: Not at first.

INT: No, when did you decide that it was?

NAR: Oh, when the news said it was.

INT: What made you think it was serious, just the news?

NAR: Right, but then I started hearing things here, and I heard the Professors, I didn't hear the professors, but from the students like Keith explained a lot to me.

INT: Keith, what's his last name?

NAR: I forget.

INT: One that was working here?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Did you start to look for more information about it?

NAR: Yeah, I did, that's when he really sat down and explained because I really didn't understand it, even after he explained it I didn't fully understand it. But I did understand, it, the professors here were not as uh, what do I want to say, they weren't as, they didn't

feel it was, they didn't act like they felt it was as serious as what the news media was making it. So that made me feel better. Especially when I found out that the one Professor lived right down there. Okay and this is his field and he was not moving away and I thought, wow, he has a much deeper and better understanding of this than what I did and if when he starts to moving you better believe I'll start moving.

INT: Did you talk about it with family or friends or people that you worked with?

NAR: Yeah, a little, some.

INT: What kinds of things did you talk about?

NAR: I couldn't understand, with all the rules and regulations that the government seems to put on everything, and they say they are so thorough how something like that could be, how it could happen. It doesn't give you a whole lot of faith in all their little, rules and regulations and everything they say. I mean they don't want you to eat sugar, or what is it the sweetener, okay it supposedly caused cancer and finally found out no, it doesn't. Seems to me they waste a lot of time on telling the consumer things that are not true or maybe are not quite as important. This to me seems like it should have been much more important than what, do you understand what I'm trying to say?

INT: Yeah

NAR: There should have been more safeguards put on that than what they had in my opinion.

INT: So what did you think about the governments handling of the situation?

NAR: Oh, wow...

INT: This stuff you were saying was before the crisis...

NAR: Right...

INT: That they should have had more strenuous safeguards placed upon it?

NAR: I was confused with why it took so long for them to get through to the proper authorities too, that didn't seem to make a lot of sense to me either. And I'm speaking of what I just heard in general so what I hear I'm not sure if it's the true information and the true facts. But it seemed like someone wasn't in their office, it seemed very dumb to me that there wouldn't be somehow you could reach in a crisis situation, 24 hours a day. There was something back then that I can remember, just a reason they didn't get a hold of them right in the beginning because someone didn't answer their phone or someone was not in their office, well that seemed kind of loose to me.

INT: Who called, who was calling who? Somebody was calling the government?

NAR: I understood, yeah, right from Three Mile Island the technicians or whoever at Three Mile Island were trying to get through to whomever they were supposed to, and in a crisis situation. And it seemed like there was something on the news about taking so long to get through. This has been so long ago you know I can't remember. But it just, I heard that, I remember hearing that on the news. I couldn't understand that either, that didn't, of course I'm kind of down on the government right now.

INT: Why?

NAR: I'm not really, have done all their little ideas, I'm not, they've come through with so much that false information I'm just not sure how much I really do, there's a lot of, too much political, just you know what I mean by political. I mean there's just too much of that and not enough of the true facts

INT: Did Three Mile Island make you start really seriously doubting the government's policies and all that type of thing? Or was it something you felt before?

NAR: It didn't help. It really didn't help. But its something I've been thinking about for quite a while.

INT: So you didn't feel that the government officials were able to get to it in the amount of time that they should have?

NAR: Right, the protection, it didn't seem to be the protection that the people that they, like to tell us that we are, that we have, you know. They like to lead us to believe that we're protected from all these kinds of things. But I didn't see that. Especially in the beginning moments or the beginning hours of the thing. It didn't seem to me like it was that protection that I thought we were supposed to have and they professed to have.

INT: What do you feel about the media's handling of it? The information that they gave out? Newspapers, television?

NAR: They seemed to do okay, I think.

INT: What made you think that?

NAR: I was impressed with the fact that they interviewed people in the know that were not associated either with government or three mile island, as technician or, there again, I see people, professors here at the college. They had them explain and that was kind of like, I think that helped, I really do, and that I liked, that I thought was a good idea, that to me was fantastic that they did that.

INT: Getting so called experts in the field to explain it to people?

NAR: Right, that were not directly associated that were not, I don't, there again, if it would've have been a government official I'd don't just know how much of it I would believe, okay.

INT: What did, how did you think Med-Ed handled the incident?

NAR: I'm not sure, they seemed to be doing okay until they, I just did not agree with the idea the customer paying for the incident. I there was something about that I remember. That I didn't agree with, which no one did. But I think they handled it fairly well. I mean, in a situation like that who's to say how long they should've waited to call or maybe like they said they felt they could have it under control, that they did have it under control or, and if its a human error we all make mistakes, that, no, I think they did pretty well. If what they say they did is what they did, okay.

INT: How did you feel about other peoples reactions to the incident? Did you think that they were over reacting or under reacting?

NAR: Not really, I thought they reacted well. The ones that I was around, I thought reacted well. I heard some stories about some that didn't react very well but I thought

everybody did very good, I thought. They were prepared and they were, I thought they handled it very well.

INT: You did follow the newspapers and the radio and that type of thing or not?

NAR: Probably not as closely as I should've. I felt there was nothing I could do to control it. There was nothing, I had no control over what was happening, so, if they were to tell me that I had to evacuate, then I would, You almost have to depend on them because really we, no understanding ourselves, we have no control over it, we have to put our dependence in them. So, I, that's exactly what I did, I just decided when they said it was time to evacuate that's what I'd do.

INT: Did you follow them more closely than you normally do, did you pay more attention to televised or radio or listen to either one more than usual?

NAR: Maybe, yea, I think I probably did, a little more.

INT: Was there anyone whose word you particularly trusted or anyone you found particularly reliable?

NAR: The professors here at the college.

INT: Really?

NAR: Oh, yeah, I you may say I staked my life on their word, I really did, I relied on them. I did not understand it, and I still don't understand it, but that's their field and they do understand it and I just, I relied on that.

INT: Because it was their field?

NAR: Right, and because I felt they knew exactly what was going on. You would think they would have to in order to teach it they would have to understand it. I mean they teach us this type of thing, don't they, right, am I correct?

INT: I don't really know I would think so.

NAR: The Physicists are there or something.

INT: Yes they are.

NAR: So yeah I would assume they knew exactly what they were doing. Keith had a lot of faith in them and Keith seems pretty reliable.

INT: Was there anyone you particularly mistrusted, whose word you didn't feel was accurate?

NAR: Hmm, not really.

INT: Did you think that those who were in charge were in control of the situation at Three Mile Island? This was looking back; when you were in the particular situation did you feel that they were in control?

NAR: In what way do you mean in control?

INT: That they knew what was going on and they knew how to handle the situation and how to correct the errors that had been made?

NAR: I sure hope they did.

INT: Did you think so at the time?

NAR: I wasn't sure I was just living on trust that, I really wasn't sure that they knew what they were doing, and if they were handling it correctly I was just living on trust that's about and trying not to panic because panic wasn't going to do anything. I tried to just live my life as normally as possible if it was to happen it was to happen and there was nothing I was going to do about it.

INT: Do you think now that they were in control?

NAR: They seem to be as closely as nearly as I can understand it. Ok, I'm probably a very bad one to question on these because I really, I really don't fully understand it yet. I guess they were, pretty much in control.

INT: Do you think they are in control now?

NAR: I would hope that some safeguards would have been put on that this would never happen again. Hoping that what they say they are doing and what they are going to do that they have done it. I would sure hate to find out that they didn't.

INT: Were you worried about the situation?

NAR: I was concerned, I wasn't worried.

INT: Well what was your biggest concern?

NAR: My children, I think. Mainly them.

INT: Their well-being?

NAR: Right.

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

NAR: Not really, except we had the gas tank full and the camper ready.

INT: So you were prepared?

NAR: Yeah, right.

INT: Did you pack?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you think about leaving the area then?

NAR: Oh yeah. We were we were thinking that, we were prepared if it came to the time we were to evacuate. We were pretty prepared, as closely as what we could without packing clothes and this type of thing.

INT: Did you have any idea of the things you would be taking with you?

NAR: Not really. I wasn't really considering taking too much more than just my clothing and the camper. And of course the family.

INT: What made you stay?

NAR: I think probably the fact that, if there was to be an evacuation they were to come here, the people there would come here you would think that would be a safe distance or

they would be evacuating even further. So I kind of, that put me more at ease. I kind of felt, well you know this is probably ok that they were coming here. I think I did get excited one morning when they said they were going to evacuate a three or four county wide area. I can't remember, but Cumberland was to be one of them. And I thought oh well now we are going on our little trip, pack it all up and take off.

INT: Did you know where you were going to go?

NAR: Hmm, not really.

INT: So did you change any of your ordinary routines or did things that you really didn't do?

NAR: Not really.

INT: Was there someone in your life that you were watching to decide whether you should go or not?

NAR: Probably we would have left right away because my husband's a fireman and he's in Civil Defense. I wouldn't have left without him. And he would have to stick around to help evacuate everybody else so I would have stuck around too, although he had other arrangements mad, I was to leave without him but I wouldn't have left without him. I would have waited.

INT: You were basically watching what your husband was doing?

NAR: Yeah, right.

INT: Did you have any mental pictures of what was going happening at TMI?

NAR: Any what?

INT: Any mental pictures?

NAR: No none other than what they showed on the television the diagrams and all that.

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

NAR: No

INT: Not now or in the future?

NAR: No

INT: Do you think that any other aspects of your life have been affected?

NAR: It's made me more aware of the danger of the nuclear, which I wasn't, like I said I still don't fully understand it but I do realize it's a lot more dangerous than what I had ever anticipated it would be.

INT: Do you think it's caused any lasting changes in yourself?

NAR: Not really

INT: How about other people, how do you think they were changed, or did you see any changes in other people?

NAR: No not that I've seen or heard.

INT: If the worst thing had occurred, what do you think might have happened?

NAR: The worst?

INT: Yeah the worst.

NAR: My understanding is the worst, ok this is probably very dumb ok, like I said I don't fully understand, the worst would have been the meltdown right? Am I correct in saying that? Wouldn't that have been?

INT: I don't know either.

NAR: I assume that would have been wow, really bad. That would have wiped out most of PA or all of PA, right? We wouldn't have been able to return, did they say we wouldn't be able to return to our homes for centuries or something, something a far-fetched. This is all hearsay because this was just bits of information I gathered up where I heard it I'm not sure it maybe not be a reliable source. But this is my, this is what I had gathered up and put together, this is what I thought the worst would be.

INT: Did you think people would be able to get out?

NAR: Yeah

INT: How would their health have been affected?

NAR: Their health. Hopefully it wouldn't have been affected if they could have gotten out in time. Hopefully they were going to evacuate in time, they weren't going to wait until the very final and then say oh everybody better get in five minutes. I kind of assumed that they were going to allow a enough time for evacuation safely.

INT: How do you think other aspects of your life might have been affected, if the worst had happened?

NAR: I haven't really thought about it I haven't thought that far ahead really.

INT: Did you have any concerns about the food or milk from the area?

NAR: Hmm, would you believe I haven't thought about that either.

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

NAR: No I didn't.

INT: Did you think of your own death?

NAR: Of my own death? Yes. Yeah, it crossed my mind but when our time is here we're going to go; I could die sitting here in this chair, when the good Lord feels we're ready. Ready and nothing we're going to do about it if that was that was His way of choosing our time that was just meant to be, that was just it.

INT: So when you thought of your own death, did you think of that of others?

NAR: More or less, I thought of my children, they're so young. As the world, as it is today who's to say that's such a good.... That's terrible isn't it? I don't have a lot of faith in the world today, let's put it that way.

INT: So Three Mile Island didn't help your faith in the world either?

NAR: No.

INT: But you did think you would survive?

NAR: Yeah I really did.

INT: What kind of things reassured you of that?

NAR: I don't know, I really don't I just kind of tried very hard not to over react. I like to be in control of things, if I'm not in control, I try to very hard to keep myself in control, in other words I try very hard not to over-react and I keep saying, if it's going to happen it's just going to happen and there's just nothing I can do about it, which there was just nothing I could do about it. It was the thing that we had to depend on other people we had to, we had no choice.

INT: Did you think about god during the incident?

NAR: About God?

INT: Yes.

NAR: Oh yeah.

INT: In what way?

NAR: I feel that God controls and if this was His will this is what was going to happen. I feel that He's very much in control. Now I feel that Mankind does think sometimes his control, our own stupidity. I still feel He's very much in control.

INT: Did you pray?

NAR: Yeah

INT: What did you pray about?

NAR: I don't know what I always pray about.

INT: Did you pray about the incident at all?

NAR: Yeah, protection for the children. I don't know, I don't really remember.

INT: Did you think that God was trying to show mankind or teach mankind a lesson of some sort in all of this, in Three Mile Island?

NAR: I didn't think that at the time but it's probably true.

INT: Now that you think back on it?

NAR: Right, I think He has a way of trying to show us He is still in control and that Yeah very much so. He does it in our daily lives He does it everyday He does it with everyone so this was probably no exception.

INT: Did you go to a religious service during the crisis?

NAR: No

INT: Did you feel that you had any particular responsibilities during the incident?

NAR: Just to my family more or less, my children. This may be selfish, someone else needed help I'd run and help but I felt that everyone else was, I couldn't be responsible for everyone my children of course are my responsibility, that's about what I thought.

INT: You didn't feel any kinds of responsibilities to your job?

NAR: In what way?

INT: Just that maybe you were you would have responsibilities to be there or that you might have extra work or something like that that you may have had to do?

NAR: Yes as a matter of fact I got a phone call Sunday, they asked if I was needed if I would come in and print up evacuation maps and notices and this type of thing and I said yeah that I would.

INT: You did say that you would?

NAR: Oh yeah.

INT: So you didn't feel that there was any kind of conflict there between your responsibilities toward your children and responsibilities toward your job?

NAR: No, if I was to come in and print out those evacuations that would mean that this would have to be done before the evacuation so that I could still get to my children and get out before the initial evacuation.

INT: Was your job really affect at all by TMI?

NAR: My job?

INT: Just that if some thing had occurred it would have been affected?

NAR: Yeah I suppose in that respect if they needed any. I did print out forms as a matter of fact for, what were they. They were forms for people to come here with their name and address and where they were, it was forms to be filled out as they came into Carlisle so that what was it 80,000 people were suppose to come to Carlisle or something somewhere I got that number, but anyway it was suppose to be so many thousand these people would all have to, they would have to have a record where all these people I did print them up, I don't know what they ever did with them.

INT: So who ere were they for?

NAR: Civil Defense.

INT: So that was basically the only thing that you had to do that you normally would not have had to do?

NAR: Oh you're right, Oh I printed up things for the college for the professors, that week that the students were off they had various kind of classes.

INT: SEMINARS.

NAR: Yeah seminars, I printed up things for them.

INT: So they were something that you normally wouldn't have to do?

NAR: Right

INT: Did they change the people around, with the extra work that you had to do?

NAR: Not really.

INT: Did you have any ideas about how it would be best to behave in this type of a situation? Any moral or ethical or religious ideas of how one should behave in a crisis situation?

NAR: That's very difficult, I've never been in a crisis situation, I mean a real, if it would come down to the evacuation and that type of thing. There I would rely on Lee, my husband he has been in crisis situation so I would just rely on him.

INT: What kinds of situations has he been involved in?

NAR: He's a fireman and they get in all kinds of crisis situations. They get into floods, they do a lot with floods any crisis really they get into. They would have been involved in the evacuation they would have been accidents where people are panicked, accidents are very much crisis situations. I just kind of relied on his judgment there. I feel he was a far better suited person to decide than what I would be.

INT: Did the event at the time bring back any past experiences that you've had?

NAR: No

INT: Did you feel that anything like that had ever happened to you before or in history?

NAR: No

INT: You didn't see it as similar to anything else in your life?

NAR: Not really.

INT: Did you think that this incident was any more or less frightening than something like a flood or a hurricane or a war even?

NAR: Well that's difficult. More or less frightening? I don't know I just I'm kind of selfish I see all these situations as having my husband separated from us, I don't like that, but somebody's got to do it.

INT: So you're kind of thinking of his job?

NAR: Right.

INT: Do you think that's kind of a conflict, with his responsibility towards his family or his responsibilities towards his job?

NAR: Right it's a volunteer it's not really a job, it's a volunteer. I respect him in that somebody has got to do it that got to have people to do this but I feel a little selfish, I'd rather have him at home.

INT: Did any kinds of TV shows or movies or books come to mind when you heard about the crisis? Did it remind you of anything that you have read or seen?

NAR: No. I don't usually read. I don't go to those kinds of movies. I feel that in our lifetime we experience enough of those kinds of things. I don't have to pay money to go to a movie to see bad experiences.

INT: Did you find yourself singing any songs?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you have any daydreams at the time that you remember?

NAR: Daydreams... not that I can remember.

INT: Any sleeping dreams?

NAR: No.

INT: Any since?

NAR: No.

INT: Did it disturb your sleep in any way?

NAR: Nothing disturbs my sleep, no it didn't.

INT: What kind of changes did you see happening to the people around you, were there any at all?

NAR: Some were a little more sensitive, which is to be expected. I mean, when something like this happens, they become a little more sensitive. What I mean is, they're on edge. And when people are on edge it makes them a little touchy. So I noticed that.

INT: Do you think it was a permanent type of change?

NAR: No.

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

NAR: Oh yea, but I can't remember any. Were you going to ask me what I heard? I can't remember, but I do remember there were jokes.

INT: Do you remember if people thought they were funny at the time?

NAR: Some people actually thought they were funny?

INT: You didn't think so?

NAR: No, I didn't think that was anything to be laughed about. I wasn't... I am a very... I'm not... just didn't find that sort of thing funny.

INT: Did you find some of them funny and others of them not?

NAR: No. I never find anything like that funny.

INT: Why do you think people were joking so much?

NAR: Because deep down in they were scared to death and this is a way of releasing their fright.

INT: Do you remember any kind of joking from other types of crisis?

NAR: Oh yeah, they always do it.

INT: What kind of things do you remember?

NAR: I don't remember, there's always, you know, jokes about every kind of crisis that happens. There's jokes about ... we live in a very cruel world. They even have jokes about retarded people and they have jokes about short people, fat people, tall people,

Polaks. I really don't find any of them all that funny. I can't see that sort of thing as anything to laugh about.

INT: Did this whole incident make you or allow you to form an opinion about nuclear energy?

NAR: You really like to ask difficult questions (laughing). Say that one more time.

INT: Have you developed an opinion about nuclear energy since or because of the incident?

NAR: Yeah. I feel that if there was any other possible means of energy, that's what we should ...not go with he nuclear. And I understand that is other means of energy. And I really don't feel like, I don't know why we're not getting more involved in...what's this...?

INT: Solar energy?

NAR: Solar energy and other types of energy. Especially since it is so dangerous. And presumably solar energy is not dangerous. I don't understand, and maybe my sources are not right. I depend a lot on other people . . . it would be so nice to find for ourselves, really, what's what. But how do you ever do that. You have to depend on what other people w say. And if what they say is true, I can not understand why we're using this nuclear. It's far too dangerous. It makes no sense to me.

INT: Is there anything else that you'd like to say, you think maybe I have forgotten or...?

NAR: No, I think you've covered it very well (laughing).