

End of June, 1979

Occupation: Retired farmer, dabbled in a lot of things

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

NARRATOR: Not exactly, but its been surely a year ago.

INT: Do you remember who you heard it from or what you heard it from?

NAR: On television.

INT: What did you think when you heard about it?

NAR: I just figured that they didn't quite perfect it. You know, they just didn't know all about it, that nuclear power.

INT: What did you think happened?

NAR: Well, they just underestimated something.

INT: Like how didn't they perfect it, in what ways maybe?

NAR: Well, that valve that leaked, they didn't have strong enough a valve or something.

INT: Do you think they knew about not having it perfected or?

NAR: No, I believe that it popped up in the future from it.

INT: Did you feel that it was a serious situation?

NAR: I would say that, I thought it was serious, yes.

INT: What did you think could happen, or might happen?

NAR: Well, if that would spread to certain people it would affect their health.

INT: How do you think it could affect their health?

NAR: Well, they tell me that if you breathe what it leaked out, it was dangerous.

INT: Do you mean the radiation that leaked out, that kind of thing?

NAR: Umm.

INT: In what way could it be dangerous, do you think?

NAR: Well, radiation is dangerous at any time, I understand.

INT: How so?

NAR: Well, you take this here cancer business. They used radiation in a different respect, I guess, to cure cancer now. So I'm not too well acquainted with it.

INT: Do you think even though they used radiation to cure cancer and things like that, in another way it could be harmful? Like it could cause other things?

NAR: Umm.

INT: Do you know if it could cause cancer and things like that, or is this just general?

NAR: That's what I understand it does.

INT: Do you think it matters whether you have long term exposure to radiation, or just short term with high doses to things like that?

NAR: Well, I would say that they first announced it, we were to move if we lived within five miles of it, the Three Mile Island and I, you'd generally put your judgment on the guys that knows more, opposed to know more than you. So I just couldn't estimate the damage it could done to people's body.

INT: You were saying about the people in charge who knew more about it, how do you think that the government handled this, when it happened?

NAR: Well, I think they handled it the best they knowed how.

INT: How do you think that was?

NAR: Well, they had any amount of inspectors and Jimmy Carter, he was there himself. And, you can't help but appreciate the guys that was interested in the Three Mile Island, how it affected the people.

INT: Why do you think that we should appreciate these people, because they were working in a dangerous situation or because they know more, or why?

NAR: Why, they protected the people. They didn't know what the outcome of it might be. So they were working in a kind of dangerous situation.

INT: Do you think it was important that President Carter went there?

NAR: Oh, yes.

INT: How so?

NAR: Well, he had us all to protect, so you the tops when you had the President.

INT: What did you think of when the President went in there? Did it make you think that the situation was very, very serious, or not very serious?

NAR: Well, I thought it had to be serious or the President wouldn't go.

INT: I remember seeing him on TV with those great big boots on, and things like that walking in there .

INT: Did you talk about this with family or friends?

NAR: No, I didn't.

INT: Did you hear much about it from family and friends, or anyone?

NAR: Well, I have five televisions and I have three on practically all the time when I'm home. So, I heard an awful lot on Three Mile Island.

INT: What all did you hear about on the TVs?

NAR: Well, that governor there, he tries to close it down, I don't know if he was right or wrong. And he suggested it #1, it looked liked the one's doing the leaking or doing the damage.

INT: So you're not sure if the governor was right or wrong to do what he did?

NAR: No, well I would say there's things in the future, that it's almost unbelievable.

INT: What do you mean?

NAR: Well, they can, I have a nephew that has the mote control, you know. You press and button here and have something happen out in another building or something. And, well, there's so many things to invent yet you wonder. Now take for instance, they are going to make artificial food. Now (laughs).

INT: Do you think artificial food will be better than regular food?

NAR: Well, they fooled us with this other stuff, why wouldn't they fool us with that.

INT: Do you think they are fooling people with nuclear power?

NAR: Do what?

INT: Do you think they are fooling people with nuclear power?

NAR: Oh no, they need that nuclear power we got.

INT: Why?

NAR: They want to take care of the surplus of people, you have to get into this new, new things, you know.

INT: So you think its important that we have nuclear power. Do you think we'll have to expand it?

NAR: Oh yeah, I think they're making new stations right along. The way it sounds on television.

INT: I remember you were saying about, you have all these televisions, do you think the media handled it very well, handled the situation very well?

NAR: Well, I feel that they done everything that they thought would improve it.

INT: So you watched TV a lot?

NAR: Yes, I do, I think that's the greatest knowledge that there is. I had the first television that come to Adams County.

INT: Well, do you think it was important the television, the media, talked about Three Mile Island?

NAR: Oh, yeah. People can pass their opinion to have free speech, they like to talk about a lot of things.

INT: Why do you think it was important? That the media was on top of Three Mile Island?

NAR: Well, if anything that more or less make them have their guards up if something would develop worse, you know.

INT: So perhaps to keep the public informed about being aware of what was going on?

NAR: Um, hum, that's right, because they did have it, and got it down to control.

INT: You still don't think they have it under control?

NAR: Huh, uh (no).

INT: What do you think could happen?

NAR: Well, they're making these bombs you know. They could really drive us practically all off the earth if they wanted to.

INT: What do you mean? Do you mean the nuclear power plant could be a kind of bomb or what?

NAR: Well, if they you find they, see these new inventions come around when things happen, and that's developed into bigger things, you know. I never was a reader, I went to school, but I was always interested in people. I always figured I could remember everything that happened, but as I got older I find out that ain't true.

INT: Do you think Three Mile Island, well you said you don't think that they are still in control now, what do you think it will take for them to become in control?

NAR: Well, there so different, may people that's got so many different ideas about life and so on its hard to screen out the ones going to do the right thing, because a lot of people sell their self for a small amount of money. It's hard to tell what the nature of that will be.

INT: When you were watching all this on TV what did you think about?

NAR: Well, I didn't give it too much thought because people that's handling it surely got a lot more brains than I have.

INT: The people who are handling it, do you mean the government or do you mean like Met Ed?

NAR: This company that built it.

INT: So you think they should pretty much take care of it since they know more about it?

NAR: You take these machines that they invent for offices and like that (snaps fingers) they have improved that so much that its unbelievable.

INT: Do you think that they will be able to improve the nuclear power plants and correct the imperfections that you think are still there?

NAR: Oh, yeah. Umm, hum.

INT: You said before that you didn't think they had control over it now, do you think they will be able to improve it and have control over it later? In the future some time?

NAR: I don't believe it will ever come to be a hundred per cent controlled.

INT: Why not?

NAR: Why because at the, this atom is so small and it does so much that you don't know where it would end at. You understand?

INT: Yeah, its just so many things that it could do that no one will ever really understand at all, is that what you mean?

NAR: Well, I don't believe that they can build anything that can get full control of it. I believe that this atom is here to stay and we'll have to contend with it after all.

INT: Do you think the people just living in this area here thought about just having to contend with Three Mile Island incident? Do you think those things are going to happen all the time, that people just have to learn to live with it?

NAR: That's what I think.

INT: Did you associate with this incident at Three Mile Island with anything else in history? Any other kind of happening that you can think of, the way people were reacting or something like that?

NAR: Well, they, as I took it a lot of people figured it was just one of these things that we have to face every now and then.

INT: So as far as you know people weren't overreacting or getting excited about it or too much?

NAR: Umm.

INT: Did you talk to people here about it at all?

NAR: Yeah, we passed opinion on it at times.

INT: What did some people say? Do you remember?

NAR: No, I don't. Nobody was deeply interested in it because most people here are in their seventies and eighties and their time to be spent ain't too long anymore. You know, you can't live forever.

INT: So no one here that you know was very worried about it?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you know if people followed it on the news or anything like that?

NAR: Well, if its on the news. See, every night, when the news come on its always something about Three Mile Island. That's the first thing you get on the news.

INT: Ok, let's see your hometown.

NAR: What?

INT: Your hometown?

NAR: My hometown was Bendersville, but I live at Huntsdale now. Do you know where that is?

INT: No.

NAR: It's right up Walnut Bottom here.

INT: Not very far out of Carlisle?

NAR: Its about seven miles.

INT: Do you know how far away that is from Three Mile Island?

NAR: I think that my house would be approximately twenty mile.

INT: Do you think that there's a difference about how far away you might live from Three Mile Island as to how dangerous it might be?

NAR: Oh, yeah. I would say so.

CL What do you think is more dangerous?

NAR: The closer you be.

INT: If you had been closer to Three Mile Island, would you have been more upset do you think?

NAR: Yeah, I'd have moved out like some of them did.

INT: Oh, really, but being this far away you didn't think it was that necessary?

NAR: That's right.

INT: You said if you'd lived there, you'd move out? Why would you move out?

NAR: Well, they claim that it has effects on people that this here radiant getting away, that it could affect your body.

INT: Do you know in what ways it could affect your body?

NAR: No, I don't.

INT: Just that it can affect you some way that's harmful, and you don't want it?

NAR: Uh, huh.

INT: Did you, well, you said you talked to people here a little about it and no one was really upset, and you weren't either. Is that right?

NAR: Uh, huh.

INT: So you didn't really look to anybody else to see like on how to react or whether to stay in the area or not, or whether to leave. Do you know anyone around this area who did leave?

NAR: Not around here.

INT: So you weren't worried about the situation being here? You weren't worried since you were here about the situation? What about religion at all, did you think at all about God?

NAR: Oh, yeah.

INT: You did, how? In what ways?

NAR: Well, I figured that he's kind of us all and that he has control of everything.

INT: Do you think He had something to do with Three Mile Island?

NAR: Well, He could, He controls everything as far as that, I understand.

INT: So what might He have to do with Three Mile Island? Do you think He was involved for some special purpose?

NAR: Why they just have to prove the weakness of it.

INT: The weakness of Three Mile Island?

NAR: Uh, hum. The equipment at that Three Mile Island.

INT: So somehow do you think He caused this incident to happen?

NAR: Hmm?



INT: Do you think He caused this incident to happen at all?

NAR: The cars?

INT: Do you thin God caused the accident?

NAR: Ohhh! No, I believe it was the weakness of those valves.

INT: So it was just the weakness of the valves? And God just controls everything in general anyway?

NAR: Um, hum.

INT: So it wasn't a sign by Him or something like that?

NAR: I wouldn't think so because He's all out for everything that's good.

CL Did you go to church at all during this time?

NAR: No.

INT: So you don't know what the people at church might have been thinking?

NAR: Hum, um.

INT: Did you pray at all during this time?

NAR: More or less, I guess I, uh.

INT: What did you pray about the incident at all, something to do with?

NAR: No.

INT: Something to do with the incident?

NAR: No, I don't believe I did.

INT: You said before that the radiation from Three Mile Island, could affect your health?

NAR: Ummm.

INT: Do you think it could affect people's health here in Carlisle?

NAR: I don't believe.

INT: Because it is farther away?

NAR: Um, hum (yes).

INT: Did you picture in your mind any other effects of the radiation on the life around you? Say to animals or plants or something like that?

NAR: They said it, cows was adapted to it or something. Some part of the cows.

INT: Do you think that's true.

NAR: Well, it could be possible.

INT: Do you think it could affect like food and things like that then for people?

NAR: Um, hum (yes).

INT: Do you think it could be dangerous then?

NAR: Well, anything it affects you is dangerous because everything develops from little things.

INT: So somehow perhaps it could have affected the cow which could have affected the people?

NAR: Um, hum (yes).

INT: Because they eat the food, is that it?

NAR: How's that?

INT: Do you think it could have affected the people because perhaps the radiation e affected the cattle?

NAR: No, I don't think anybody's been affected yet from it.

INT: What about through the food. You were saying that maybe the radiation affected the cattle somehow. Could that be harmful to people?

NAR: Oh, yes. If the cattle's affected the people'd get it too, because they eat the animals.

INT: Did you think at all about death?

NAR: Dying?

INT: Umm hum

NAR: Yes. Yes, I figure that at a matter of a second you can be gone or you lose your breath or you lose your life.

INT: Did you think about death at all in regards to Three Mile Island, about people dying or about you dying somehow?

NAR: No, I never give that a thought. You didn't think it was that important.

INT: Did you think you had certain responsibilities during this time?

NAR: All we all have responsibilities. Some way or another.

CL What kind of responsibilities do you think you had during this incident?

NAR: Well, no more than trying to help other people.

INT: In what ways would you help other people?

NAR: Any of their needs because you are rewarded, I figure, when you can help others.

INT: So what other people would you be helping? Just other people in the area, just to talk to people and to keep them calm? In case something happened and people had to be evacuated from Harrisburg? What do you mean by helping people?

NAR: Well, if those people that lived where the Island is, they'd want someplace to stay I think you'd be obliged to help them or put them up and let them stay there.

INT: So you felt those were your kind of responsibilities during the incident?

NAR: Ummm.

INT: Did you have ideas about how best it was to behave? Now you said to have certain responsibilities, what, that you had to help people. What about the government, say? How do you think the government should have behaved, or did they behave the way you think they should have?

NAR: Well, I'm really happy with Jimmy Carter and I think that he's done a wonderful job. And to become friends of so many different countries. See, when Nixon was in we lost all our friendship, it seems. Nature's wonderful. I claim that in anybody's life should try to get on the Lord's side so that you have luck. It seems like luck's with you when you are in the right side, because you take it – if you have an automobile accident, you'd wonder why it happened to you or why it happened to this guy. Well, it's just being at the wrong place and the wrong time. And it goes in this luck. You can be helped when the lord thinks that you need help.

INT: Do you think the Lord helped people during Three Mile Island at all?

NAR: I would say so.

INT: What people do you think He helped?

NAR: Why, anybody that would ask for it.

INT: Do you mean anyone, people that didn't work there, people that did work there, people in control?

NAR: Anybody engaged in Three Mile Island should ask for help.

INT: Do you think He did help people during that time?

NAR: I would say.

INT: In any ways that they asked?

NAR: Um, hum (yes).

INT: Do you think they had anything to do with them being able to reopen the plant or to start operations again?

NAR: Why, I would say that the people that had energy enough to open it up and go ahead with it, it was the will of the Lord. I think the Lord had an awful lot to do with our lives, I really do. Because I had my foot off at twenty and I made an awful good living and there things happened in my life that you would just say it was purely luck. But it ain't. Its how you express yourself and how you sell yourself to people. You'd think if you can't sell yourself, nobody's going to buy you and you have to be an all around person to seem to have luck because it don't matter how hard you work. You can be torn down. I know that my first experience. My old man asked me to take him down to the Wills Out Hospital and I knowed the old fellow had a lot of money, and I thought man, you could easy pay anybody to go with you. So I thought, well, I'll get a good meal out of you so I'll take you down. So I stopped on the other side of Lancaster at a nice restaurant and invited him to go in and he grips at his coat and got a apple butter sandwich out and he said, "I brought our breakfast along." And we got into the hospital and they started asking questions about what his income was, and he fibbed and didn't give them the truth and I said, "now listen, they are trying to heal your eyes, but eh good Lord has a lot to do with your eyes. And you know he broke down and he told these, more or less in line with the truth, and he came home and he put me on his will. And I yielded about ten thousand dollars out of it. And it didn't cost me a dollar really. But those are the breaks you get in life. You said, that couldn't happen to me, that couldn't happen to that. That could happen to anybody. And then I had, was talking to Pare Old Woodies one time and I said, "Why don't you sell your farm." And they said, "We

would if we had somebody to sell it to.” And I said, “Well, you happen to be looking at a guy that would buy it.” They said, “Well, will you give us so much.” I said, “Yes, I’ll give it.” And I goes into the bank and I ask them about this money and they asked, “How much you got to put down on it?” I says, “I wouldn’t be here if I had any money. I have to borrow it all.” And you know when I walked out of that bank I walked out with a check in full to this farm. And those the things, now, if I hadn’t gotten talking to them Woody’s I probably wouldn’t have bought this lovely farm.

INT: You feel you are lucky in that way?

NAR: Huh?

INT: You feel you are lucky in that way? And that God has something to do with that?

NAR: If people don’t put their selves in the path of those things, they’ll never get any of those places. You take a job in a garage, or a novice. You’ve penned yourself in. Maybe you’ll only see daylight morning and evening. Right. And if you be careful how you start your life that’s the way you’ll enjoy it. If you don’t start it right you ain’t going to enjoy it.

INT: Well, you were saying before how you think God has control over things, but you don’t think He had any direct control with TMI? With Three Mile Island, you don’t think?

NAR: No, he had no direct control.

INT: Do you remember having any dreams or day dreams or fantasies about Three Mile Island at all?

NAR: No, I never had no dreams about it.

INT: When you were watching all these things about Three Mile Island on TV, did you recall any TV shows or movies or anything that you had seen?

NAR: Did I call any?

INT: Did you recall any, did you remember any that the Three Mile Island reminded you of?

NAR: No more than they showed these here immense big silos, like. And how this here gas escapes, you know. Or this nuclear energy I guess they call it, I don’t know. But its one of those things that you, when you’re not deeply interested it passes just through your mind, you just can’t recall too much about it.

INT: Well, when you saw those big silos on TV and when they were talking about nuclear energy, did that remind you of anything that you had seen before or heard before?

NAR: No, I never seen 'em before.

INT: Did you hear any jokes or anything like that about Three Mile Island?

NAR: No.

INT: Not even hear at the Center when you were talking with other people about it?

NAR: No.

INT: People here you say weren't very interested in it, weren't very worried about it?

NAR: No, hum, um.

INT: Have you developed any opinion about nuclear energy at all? You said before that it has to continue?

NAR: Well, I understand that the light companies need that power awful bad. And I'm interested in electric heat in houses, you know. And we need a lot of power and I guess that's about the only way we are going to get it.