

Date: July 9, 1979

Occupation: College Administrator

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember when you first heard about Three Mile incident and from whom?

NARRATOR: Yes, the first reports I received were if I remember correctly were media reports, I'm sure of that, but I believe the first was the visual media, TV, evening television.

INT: Would that have been Wednesday?

NAR: Yes it was on Wednesday. Oh, and come to think about it one before that, word of mouth, someone else had heard a radio report and brought it to me in the office.

INT: Were you aware that there was a reactor in Three Mile Island before all this happened?

NAR: Sure.

INT: Were you aware of how far that was from Carlisle?

NAR: Precisely.

INT: How did you happen to know this?

NAR: I fly over it at least twice a week, it's the pylon that Allegheny uses to bank around and I understood reactors I had been to the Burwick reactor core. A couple of months before this, before they closed it and put the rods in.

INT: When you first heard about it what was your initial reaction, what did you think about at that point?

NAR: Largely a, just a response to description, the usual thing that an executive would do. I usually have two immediate reactions of what will the potential of next steps be. And I usually will build two scenarios in my head, three, best case, worst case and probably. And it was precisely what I did. I did it in the light of two matters. One was on the effects of individuals who are in that sense in my care, the constituents of the college and the second would be the effect on the institution.

INT: What did you see as, what were your three scenarios at the time?

NAR: The best case would've been simply a minor reactor adjustment, I do understand the dynamics of the reactor and it could have well have been one that could've been helped, overnight or by the morning. That clearly was not the case. The worst case

clearly would have been an explosive meltdown, type of situation and I did understand those, I didn't know the phrase meltdown at the time but I knew precisely what could occur. And I did not assume that probability would be high. I did assume a probable case would be one more difficult than a quick adjustment but not as extensive as the one that we had. That was the Wednesday reaction. If I had felt that we would have any severe situation I would have cancelled my trip to Philadelphia and Washington the next day. As it was the probably led me to want the senior officers to be sensitized to this and to know exactly where I was which they always knew and to get me immediately if there were any changes. Which is precisely what happened.

INT: Did you go after further information about what was going on here?

NAR: Yes, I asked, I had four extensions of myself out there and those officers, and I asked for reports and got them. I also asked my public relations officer to keep me fully informed. He works both ways, receiving and sending.

INT: Did your attitude toward the seriousness of the situation change and at what point?

NAR: Yes, I had been in Philadelphia at a Yale alumni luncheon on Friday, noon. It was moving very rapidly. I was a guest there of President (mumbled) and I left there to rush to Catholic University in Washington for an inaugural dinner that night. I had gone to the hotel and was dressing tux, I remember and Judy and I had just dressed, and had the television on, and I picked up the much more extensive reports on that Friday afternoon. At that time I also had a call waiting from one of my senior officers when I was watching the screen, I called them. They were at that point in a senior staff meeting called to deal with the matter, as I told them to do. And I talked with the crowd, with the five, my assistant and the four senior officers and we basically agreed on a plan for the next 48 hours, or at least the next 24. They felt things were well under control, there was a meeting of the students that evening, called by the senior officers, students, faculty and everyone, to inform. But, and they said they felt things were doing quite well if I came back Saturday afternoon. I responded that I wouldn't feel comfortable and came back that night. Left the dinner, paid my respects, went to the dinner, was back here by, oh, midnight, 1:00 and met with the senior officers the next day for four hours. And with our faculty who are nuclear physicists. And so had agreed on the staff meeting the next morning. And moved on that plan.

INT: You have very interesting recall of the entire sequence, more so than most people.

NAR: I had to. It was not virtue but a necessity.

INT: Did you follow newspaper and television reports of the incident more than you usually do?

NAR: Extensive, yes. Although I did so from a particular vantage point. I did not assume that they were factual. In fact the mix of rumor and information and retraction

led me to be very careful to give greater credence to the reports from the governor's office and from the preparedness (mumbled).

INT: How do you feel in retrospect about the media's handling of the information?

NAR: Unfortunately, or fortunately, I'm on record about that in the Philadelphia Inquirer. I felt that, it's always difficult to attribute motive, let me just speak my perception of the occurrence. I felt that both the newspapers and a number of the television-radio sources had provided as I said an amalgam of rumor and information with a higher degree of distortion and then retraction which again threw, and of course retraction was necessary, threw a great deal of doubt into the picture. Now, I must admit that I wondered what crass motives might occur, but I do not know. I can say this, it would, there is ambivalence among all organizations including the media, they try to be "professional" same time they're hustlers, they have to sell. And my feeling was that it could've possibly been, at least this was my private feeling, highly private, that they had exploited the feelings of the people of the state, especially the surrounding area, in order to sell time and paper. And this I found repugnant. As I put it in the Inquirer, it was not their finest hour and I'm not anti-media. I have a high respect for a lot of the channels, some of my best friends are newspaper editors, nevertheless, I did feel that they did behave less well than many of the other groups that I saw. There were clear exceptions to the generalization. Very good exceptions to it.

INT: What about the government's handling of the situation by government officials at any level, how do you feel about that in retrospect?

NAR: I have sympathy for those who must govern because to govern is to choose and choice is very difficult. Administration for me is the most human of endeavors, it's easy to run away from because it is such a difficult (mumbled) in that sense I identify with them. Ambiguity is pervasive in those situations and to bring clarity out of it, difficult. I felt that the local, municipal level was unusually, unusual responsibility solidity. There were false moves, yes and at times allowed their feelings to pend a little inappropriate here and there around the edges. But the civil defense, the emergency preparedness network was excellently handled. And it got better, and better and better as things got worse and worse. That, of course Friday to Sunday they constructed a plan that would have usually taken weeks because they really didn't have much plans at that point. I was there at the meetings, from the beginning, and the idea of moving 100,000 people like that is very, very difficult. I liked what I saw. People stepped in an attorney in town, the emergency preparedness director the borough people, I saw them at 2 in the morning dead tired they were zonked. At the state level, I have the highest respect now for Thournburg. He handled it well in two ways, three ways. He was receptive to information from all sources, he was very careful in the judgments he drew from that information not at all impulsive and thank God he wasn't. And then when the thing was over he refused to indulge in the euphoria that began to do some very hard and careful questioning of the (mumbled) and the causes. He refused to either be up or down, he kept a very stable solid approach... I knew the Lt. Governor, he's been in my home and I found this young man rather impressive for his age and thought he handled it well. At the

national level, Mr. Carter had an unusual vantage point, which I was very much aware of, his own work with nuclear reactors would've made him both more worried, in the same way that a doctor is a bad patient. At the same time it gave him a chance to really deal with it. I thought he handled himself pretty well. So, I gave them rather high marks as a group.

INT: What about Metropolitan Edison's handling of the situation?

NAR: I'm not as negative as the people around me that I listen to. I think that Met-Ed at the beginning either did not assess it as well as one can in retrospect, I'm not sure how well one can in prospect, I really don't know. I do know that they must've felt two things, the desire not to over stimulate the population and cause panic, which would've been even perhaps worse than the situation. On the other hand to be accurate and true, I do not attribute anymore than I attribute crassness to the media, because as I said, I can't attribute motive there. I don't attribute any intent to falsify part of the nuclear people simply because I don't know that in any way. I would assume that they would certainly have wanted to be very careful of what they said. I do think they probably did not know the extent of the thing at the beginning. And whether they should have is a good question, I don't know and until we know fully the cause and their, the setting in which they occurred I don't know how we could say. So I have sympathy for them, I've never liked short devobulgic solutions and I don't like scapegoating, therefore you're find me being maddingly complex about each one of them. I found them very human, but pretty good human.

INT: Was there anybody who's words you found particularly reliable or who you trusted extensively during this period?

NAR: The easy one would be to say Dr. Denton. I found Harold Denton, a it's interesting that they doctored him, that's fascinating, understandably, once surgeon, once pilot, once nuclear authority. No, I would say, I did find the governor and Denton solid honest people. I found our own local network information network, in the basement of city hall solid. And I trusted myself and my people around me.

INT: Was there anyone that you mistrusted?

NAR: Let me think about that for a minute. I became very weary of television and newspapers reports, yes. And I always show a bit of healthy skepticism where anyone has strong self-interest involved including the nuclear people. I would've assumed that they would have had at least a bit of something first involved in that, I certainly would have if I had been there. But I don't think that made me disbelieve any of those groups totally I think most of the time each was trying to be as accurate as he could be...

INT: Did you feel during the incident that those who were in charge were in control of the situation?

NAR: Control is an interesting word, it's a good stimulus word, but I'm going to have to dissect it. Uh, I don't think anyone had total control of the situation, I think we were dealing with two things. You were dealing with a nuclear process and you were dealing with human beings' reactions to it. Neither one of those was totally controlled. That's where the anxiety laid. May I give you, well you'll ask later, I'll stay away from images and things.

INT: Any time you want to put it in, we've arranged the interview to keep the flow going.

NAR: No, I'll make it easier on your transcribers. Yes, I think there were degrees of control in each of the situations. I think there was more control in the nuclear situation than we even knew at the time. We were better at what we were doing than we thought but how can one know? One is dealing with probabilities, but one does not explode or melt down or radiate 2%. One either does or doesn't. And therefore odds tell you nothing as you look back retrospectively. So I would say, yeah, it was an anxious time for an awful lot of people part of it was the sense that they did not have complete control over a very awesome twilling of things. The reactor itself and their own reactions to it, both were frightening to me.

INT: What worried you most? About the whole situation?

NAR: At that time the panic, the ensuing panic of people. That was my major concern, and most of my strategies were involved in two ways. I felt the greatest probability lay in panic rather than in nuclear death. But I was better informed regarding the nuclear situation than almost anyone around. I had not only all the other reports I had three physicist with me all the time. So my anxiety regarding that was relatively low, I did see, because I was with so many constituents, I did see the potential panic. And that I took very seriously, so the effects of the nuclear thing would have been far more dangerous than someone who is in panic, but the probabilities of that are so much lower, than the probabilities of the panic, and I worried more about the panic. Although I made very sure that we don't (mumbled) the possibilities of an explosion we had to put that with the parameters of decisions. Then after that I worried a lot about the panic question.

INT: How did your ordinary routines change during that time?

NAR: We had certain things at the college that have to go on. We shifted those things around, meetings of senior officers, and faculty and I felt it was very important to have certain noble fixed points around which people's lives could move at that time. As a psychologist, I'm convinced that in times of anxiety structure is an absolute necessity. And so I set up certain things that a lot of our time, hourly reports, dated and (mumbled) even if they were the same report. We reset the hour tag, so people would know that every hour someone was putting that report out. The hotline kept open 24 hours a day, someone called up and was saying his bedtime story and that two hour session in the evening was a way to give people a chance to come together and talk and get information. Those three things were a necessity plus the lines for parents that we kept open. Then there were meetings with civilian authorities and numerous phone calls. A

heavy, heavy load of calls. And then in the evening I would go down into the quads and dorms and talk, listen, just be present, squelch rumors so that I slept about perhaps 3, 4 hours a night for about 4 or 5 nights. Rest of the time 70% of my time was taken up with plans for taking care of the people who were here and assisting people around here to know what was going on and getting ready for people who might come here as an access place for evacuation.

INT: Did you think about leaving?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you think about your family?

NAR: I said to Judy at the time, that I did not assume, as very much the way I always work, when I came here, I said to my son you need not transfer to Dickinson College because I've come here. He did, he did transfer (mumbled) but I said to Judy, look you're a human being, with your own right to make various choices, you're not roped to Carlisle. I will have to stay, no, more than that I want to stay, very much want to stay. I wasn't being a hero, it's my way of being. And I'm not sure it was heroic, I'm not sure one can say one was good or bad to go. In fact I'm sure you can't. But, for me it was a necessity, and the commitment I made to the school implies that. She felt equally a need to stay both with me and with the school and the town. We are Carlislians, we're Dickinsonians and we are together, that's about it.

INT: This gets back to what you wanted to say before, did you have any mental pictures of what was happening at TMI or what might happen?

NAR: Some were more organized and cognitive and some were clearly bubbleings from my unconscious. I'll start with the ridiculous, the unconsciousness, it's not like they're funny. When it rained on Sunday night, I thought, gee I wonder if the drops will glow, I knew absolutely well that wasn't true, that was a free association totally unconscious but I've been a therapist 20 years and I listened to it. I asked Judy what her association with the rain was, and she said "oh, it'll cool the reactor", both of those are and we both knew they were absolutely ridiculous, but that was an association. So that's at the deep unconscious level. There were certain (mumbled) role models and paradigms and images that came to mind. Are you going to ask that later or do I?

INT: Just keep going.

NAR: Okay, I'll free associate. One kept coming up, I, (mumbled) this sounds arrogant but you have to understand it. I grew up in World War II, here we go with that generation. I remember when the people were threatening, in Germany at certain points to make soap out of people, you did not know how that was going to come out, it's easy in retrospect to look back but I do remember a person who would've been the wrong person in many other situations but he wasn't then. I remember Churchill and in Churchill there would be cigar smokings eccentric man who (mumbled) I still remember a human being

who had a sense of benevolence and priority and knew precisely where he was. I'm sure Churchill had moments of anxiety but I also knew that he was a well centered person to use the Quaker term, centered down, I did not identify with him, but it was comforting to remember human beings can, I remember him saying once in some conversation with someone that the question is not whether one will die but what and the style (mumbles) until he dies. And that did come back. At a more systematic level I was teaching a course that week and I was teaching one on reactions to crisis and stress, (mumbled) and I was searching for a metaphor, I think you were in the group when I used it, but I refined it later and I think it makes sense to me. I was trying to understand the reactions of human beings to this, and it struck me and I'll say it again very briefly, if you took a desert population, in the middle of the Gobi desert and you said to ½ million people, you shall now live on the banks of the Susquehanna, you magically placed them there. But the Susquehanna was invisible and its rate of rise to inundate people was incalculable, and the only thing that you knew about its lethality was that it was probably potentially lethal at certain times. And on top of that the only literature you'll ever read on the thing was about tidal waves, and on top of that the information sources you had did not distinguish authorities from grocers and mixed rumor, fact and retraction as they did. Then you would have begun to have had Three Mile Island. I think there is something deeply archetypal about the question of splitting atoms. The very cells of which I am made contain energy of which we've never come to terms with. That I think was the intangible the invisible, the archetypal nature of (mumbled). So, those were the images (unintelligible).

INT: Did you think anything that happened at TMI might have affected your health? Either now or in the future? At the time or subsequently?

NAR: No I, again, one interesting association cause I was listening to so many people who did wonder, and they usually wondered in two ways, will I die, or will my genetic make up be rearranged in some way. And I sort of chuckled over the latter thinking well, my children are out and raised, and I'm just not terribly worried about that. I wasn't insensitive to other people. I thought well I've got enough to think about, that's one I don't have to worry about. So, specifically no, I didn't.

INT: Did you think about it in terms of if something else happened, if the worst had happened, what that might have been at the reactor, did you think about health effects?

NAR: Whether it killed me or damaged me or damaged future generations?

INT: Yeah we're just kind of curious what sort of threat people perceived?

NAR: I was aware, and I don't think I was inaccurate, I was aware that no one could rule out totally the possibility of death. But death is for me an old acquaintance. I took care of dying people when I was 18, 19, 20 at the hospital. I had also, well that's another story, also something that I do not necessarily cozy up to. I once said in a group, when I was a therapist, they said what do you associate with death, I said it's an old acquaintance (mumbled) but its one that I understand. So, but I found the probabilities to be highly

marginal, very, very small. And so did the physicists, who, none of them were losing any sleep about it, nor did I.

INT: Did you have any concern about food or milk, say from that area?

NAR: No, I remember when they gave the, how is it measured now? Not milliremkins, well whatever it is, the possibility of a rise in the iodine – radioactive iodine – that type milk close to TMI. I listened and calculated in my head and said, that's not (unintelligible) significant at all. Never thought about it again and I drink a great deal of milk. You know...

INT: Did you think about God during the incident?

NAR: Remember I'm also a theologian but I don't push religion, I study it. Yes, I thought about it. I was thinking about the way people related this to their understandings of God. I'm incurably a studier of things and disasters... disasters I don't get very panicky about, but I get terribly curious. And I was in a plane crash over LA one time – crash landing – and we knew we were going down. And I wasn't frightened, I was fascinated at the responses of people. Later I was frightened, very – but the social scientist in me takes over at those moments. It's very deep within me. So, no, I was very curious about the way people responded in relation to God. That's one reason I'm interested in the study. Or whatever they think God is. So, but for me, no more than I usually think about God. But God is for me, not a person, God is whatever makes molecules come together in your right hand. And it's... God is in some way miraculous natural process and therefore I think a great deal about God, whether it's.. but not in pronoun terms. Whether I'm looking at the leaves or light or whatever. I'm not a pantheist, but... that close. And for that reason, yeah I thought about God.

INT: Did you think about God as figuring in this incident in any way?

NAR: Causing this in any way?

INT: Well, however you want to... ?

NAR: Okay, no. I thought of... other than all natural process being involved, I would say no, I don't think that God intervenes and... in situations (unintelligible) when you try calling and say, hey get me out of this. No. In my prayers I don't pray that way. I usually sort of report for duty and that's about it.

INT: Did you pray during this?

NAR: I usually do. No more than usual.

INT: No more than usual?



NAR: But I don't usually do it in a formal way. It's sort of leaning back and looking at the ceiling and communing with whatever is deepest inside of me. But I guess that's prayer. (unintelligible).

INT: Did any Biblical stories or events or images cross your mind in connection to this?

NAR: It was interesting that I knew that was coming because we had talked earlier about that possibility. No. It's interesting. It didn't even (unintelligible) disaster. So... no, in fact at that time I was a pure administrator and I wondered if I had taken out 50,000 or 75,000 in flight insurance. I couldn't remember. No, they didn't come out.

INT: Did the idea of the Last Judgment or the End of the World or any of those images?

NAR: No, no. The whole (unintelligible) type of things.

INT: Did you consider the incident to be... to have anything to do with God communicating with man?

NAR: Oh, no. Other than just the sort of... when does God ever communicate with man. Very, very...

INT: Mysterious ways?

NAR: Well, no I was going to say very platitudinous and mundane things. The whole concept of sacrament is the idea that if there is a... if God reveals himself, he does it through earthly things like (unintelligible) water, towels, and sand and all... if one cannot see a burning bush (unintelligible) everyday bushes, (unintelligible) God (unintelligible) process (unintelligible). I think God speaks in a very continuously natural, mundane ways. But not in any arbitrary fashion. To see the glory of creation that God made. So I didn't think he had roused up any more that day than any other. (Unintelligible) I thought we botched something, but that's not the point. Which we will do again and (unintelligible).

INT: Did you attend a religious service during the... what you would consider the duration of the...?

NAR: yeah, I went to the usual Sunday service. But nothing special.

INT: Was anything said about TMI at the service?

NAR: I can't remember. Did Don say anything about... well, he had to. (Unintelligible) particularly to miss. But it wouldn't have been one of these alternatives that you mentioned. He wouldn't play it that way. That would have been for him, dirty pool. You don't hit people when they are down, with God, you know. He might have used it as an illustration of some sort – about human beings or God or something like that.

INT: Do you remember whether... you may have forgotten whether there were fewer or more people attending the service?

NAR: Certainly not more, I can remember that and not many fewer. Allison Methodist, I think if we were... well I think if they were pouring brimstone down the street – High Street in Carlisle – they'd be the same number of people at Allison, the same optic level... (unintelligible), the same decimal count?

INT: Does your faith say anything about the rightness or wrongness of the use of atomic power? Has it made any sort of a statement...?

NAR: That is something I hadn't thought about. Not in the way you are asking, I think. You aren't asking in a way... but not the way I think most people would respond... to put it that way. Yeah, I think it does. I think that my way of looking at the world does do that. But not just nuclear or atomic I think human beings have gained a great deal of power over things. Technologically advanced (unintelligible). They have not learned a lot about understanding (unintelligible) controlling themselves (unintelligible). And they're not terribly good at that. But I think it's unavoidable that if human beings are to be fulfilled in any way that we will have to... we will not be able to move back to a time when we had less control over nature. It will be impossible to do so. We may learn restraint, but we will certainly not be able to walk away from power. Not as a species. We have not it in the past, the promethean myth is a good one. And... the Frankenstein stories of (unintelligible) are good. But basically I don't think that because we've learned a... a capacity that we can deny that capacity. I think we then must learn to live responsibly with it. So I will not be anti-nuclear power. I will be very, very careful about minimizing its hazards, but I wouldn't want it to leave.

INT: Do you think that the churches as institutions, or say your church as an institution ought to speak out, take a stand on matters such as atomic power?

NAR: If they're not over-simple. It's too easy for churches to feel good by saying nice things that they don't have to (unintelligible). It's sort of "in the bleachers syndrome" in which you watch and second guess quarter backs. If we are willing to talk about the complexity of human responsibility with... yeah, the church is got to say something about that. But not in an escapist (unintelligible). (Unintelligible).

End of first side of tape.

INT: Did you, this is a silly question, but I'll ask it straight the way we do everybody – did you feel that you had certain responsibilities during the incident and what were these and did any of these conflict?

NAR: (Unintelligible) I had responsibility in constricting circles, coming in concentrically. I had a responsibility as a citizen in a society, I clearly had a responsibility by virtue of office for my campus. I (unintelligible) all of the people within and beyond it that were related to it. It wasn't sole responsibility, and many of us

had responsibilities too. I had responsibilities for people who were (unintelligible). And I had responsibility for myself. (Unintelligible).

INT: Was there any conflict?

NAR: No perceived conflicts at that time. There could have been, but there wasn't. If my wife had felt differently about my staying or about her staying, there might have been some torridness, but there was none. If my children had felt differently, my children are adults so you know...

INT: I think this is...

NAR: Oh yes, I have something... They asked me... at one time I was called out of a senior staff meeting because someone wanted to know whether we would shut down. And were almost demanding that we shut down everything so that they could use us as an evacuation center. This person was without the authority to do some and I went in and said, "Are you speaking for the governor?" and he said, "No" and I said "They why do you think we should do it?" and he said, "Oh in case we need an evacuation" and I said, "No. At the time the governor assumed the need for this I will be utterly cooperative and we will make plans with you for that. I will not be precipitant, impulsive, and do it on the order of a..." I think I used the word "flunky" – no I don't think so. On the order of someone of less magnitude. If the governor gets ready, have the Lt. Governor call me. And that's precisely the way it worked. We did agree fully and unqualifiedly to take people. But I did not allow them, I would not allow them to stay in the dormitories. Because they were the possessions of students there and looting is always a risk. So I was stealing a balancing – not as much a torridness – but a clear cut balancing and trading off of priorities at that time. I was going to take care of the thing that I alone was responsible to take care of. But I was deeply aware of the commitment to the community and the state. And one other thing... a quickie... I was quite clear that the saving of life and the protection of life was the crucial thing. I was not sure that with panic we would not have even greater loss of life and I knew that people were watching Dickinson and thought we knew more than they did. And I thought that it could well have precipitated panic if we had just perceptibly shut down and evacuated. I was not willing to do that, nor was I willing to link Dickinson more to TMI than accuracy required. In other words, I didn't want people seeing us as three miles from it when we weren't. I wanted it to be a very clear statement that we were related but only to the degree that we were. So I made it very clear that... I was watching out for the institution's future at the same time... but that paled in comparison with taking care of my own (unintelligible).

INT: We've found that faculty members were the only, say professional person, in their neighborhood, had everyone watching them on the assumption that they were more...

NAR: That was precisely what we thought. Yeah.

INT: I think this is implicit in what you said, but did you have or do you have ideas – ethical, moral, religious ideas about the best way, how people ought to behave in a situation like this; and was it possible to behave the way you would have wanted to?

NAR: I go back to (unintelligible) statement that one should think as a person of action and act as a person of thought. And that thought should be... should incorporate the widest possible range of feeling, but it must be fair in differentiating where one's responsibilities lie. Thoughtless action is impulsive and terribly dangerous (unintelligible). Obsessive thought without action can be paralyzing and again (unintelligible) it can cause great damage. Ethics for me are bound finally in taking situations of relative good and bad, weighing these, living responsibly with the results, and reweighing them again. Now that doesn't tell you how I would have acted, but it does say the style with which I approach it and everything.

INT: Did... would we be able to continue this at another time rather than.

NAR: Its 2:30 and how many more do we have?

INT: A bit.

July 12, continuing the interview...

INT: At the time of the crisis, did it bring to mind any past experiences that you've had, or past events?

NAR: Yes, several. I had been on a train that was in a collision with another train. And I was, I suppose 20 years old. It was near Arkansas – Little Rock. I think it was the middle of the night. But it was very different because it was immediate, unanticipated, and a real disaster, at least for one man who was killed and another 29 who were injured. But it was not a slow countdown type of thing and it was not a massive reaction of people. It was just a group who within the train. I was fascinated, I suppose then I realized I was a social scientist, I was more fascinated with people's responses than I was with anything else. Another time I was on a plane that went down over LA and the wing of the plane was on fire. And again it was not really comparable, it was quick and unanticipated, over in 5 minutes as far as the outcome was concerned. We were falling down and crash landed. So no, there was never... the answer is yes, certain things came to mind but they were inadequate analogies.

INT: What was similar about them?

NAR: People's experiencing the threat of non-being. They were... invited the threat of non-being. I'm using it in a theological sense, not just death. But that their very existence, the worth of it, might be sharply questioned. I'm not even sure that death encompasses all of that feeling that I got... where a large number of people are responding to something that is unknown. And that seems to threaten the very fabric of their existence. There are ways of dying that don't threaten that. Surrounded with rituals

and rites of passage that make those all right or at least kosher in some sense. There was not that sense about TMI. Because they could not surround it, they couldn't drape it, clothe it, in the symbols that would make it a part of their being. So it was a threat being. The whole fabric of it. Yeah, I think the same thing is true in those other two.

INT: Do you think that TMI was more or less frightening than perhaps these incidents of something like a flood, which is an experience that Pennsylvanians had had, or a hurricane?

NAR: It was certainly not as dramatically terror producing in the sense of stark terror. I remember people on that airplane who did not behave as one would usually behave in society at all. The defenses came down much more rapidly. The stewardesses were sobbing – out of role, people... the man on my right was chanting “if I ever get out of this, I'll never fly again,” the man on my left was saying, “I've had electro-shock and I think I'm coming apart,” things like that one did not hear at TMI. People were glossing more, because well they had more time, there was no sense of immediacy, there was possibility of immediacy, but it was always an hour from now or when the next report comes in. It was... perhaps more pervasive and massive, but not as intense. Or immediate.

INT: Did it bring to mind any historical events perhaps that you lived through or feel as though you lived through?

NAR: Back to Churchill again. Closest thing I guess was the London Blitz. Again, a lot of uncertainty. I wasn't there, I've been there numerous times since, but... I was a child, but you got the feeling in America the way it was because you listen to radio tapes every morning of the way it was. And you got movies and that sort of thing. There again, when the buzz bombs were, the B-2s, coming down – they were uncontrollable. Not saying that there's a nice, civilized human being dropping an uncivilized bomb. It was something that had been set off from (unintelligible) or somewhere and then it just came at you from somewhere and it was whirrrrr and then it cut off and... yeah, that is similar in a way. New technology that was frightening and in some ways unpredictable. I guess that's the closest.

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

NAR: I'm trying to think, something way back in the back of my mind. Good God, I don't know why, this is irrational... High Noon – I don't know why – it was a western. But westerns are very much American myths. Well I won't try to rationalize it. People who were alone, well there was only really one person in the show who was alone. Yeah. The person who was alone image was being misunderstood by frightened, panicky people. And had to make certain decisions that had to be done. And was being from every angle by people who wanted perceptive action that would have been destructive. And I guess that's identification too. Because I did experience a great number of pressures from a lot of people that week and I was equally convinced that I wasn't going to allow impulsivity or panic to govern the decisions. So that was identification.

INT: Were there any books or stories?

NAR: Not right off, no.

INT: Any songs?

NAR: Good Lord. Dr. Strangelove. God knows why. But the background music at the end, “We’ll meet again, don’t know where, don’t when, (unintelligible).” Highly satirical, bitter thing – with the bursting... quiet, no noise, just quiet atomic explosions in different places, and just soft rather sickening melody going on in the background. The feeling, I guess, of that people have not incorporated into their worlds their capacity to do things to things. But they have that great capacity but they don’t know what to do with each other. That’s what I came out of Strangelove with – that the real threat is human beings, not nuclear power. That intense reaction – it’s the only thing they don’t understand. And the things they can do without that.

INT: Do you remember any daydreams or sleeping dreams during that time that seemed to be related to the incident?

NAR: There were no nightmares except one nightmare – one sleeping dream – that was a work dream. It just continued the coping that was going on one night. Day dreams – in moments of revelry, a certain feeling that the people who had remained here were forming... it was more conceptual than it was emotional... I was watching the people coalesce around strong commonalities. And kept reminiscing and times I’d watch people... people would come together not by facing each other but by facing common experiences and I’d watch them by Wednesday become almost a... well, a quasi-religious group. People who remained did not want to stop those night meetings because they were... they were getting intrinsic value from them and they were enjoying them thoroughly in one sense. Because they had found a level of human relationship that was closer than their daily levels and they didn’t want to give up that depth of relationship. And yet I knew it was inevitable that they should and would, but I watched them go through the grief of having to give up that quality of life. And there is a wistfulness about those people still. Some will stop me on campus, and say, hey you remember when the faculty were really close to us and ate with us. Or, do you remember when we walked through the quad with you and talked. And I suppose I experienced that sense of wistfulness, but not quite the same way – I’ve been through it so many times, moments when people – as a therapist, when I watch people who need you for a period of time and then you must let them go, you’ve got to.

INT: This ties into the next question which is, whether you think the incident changed people around you and whether it changed them in any lasting way?

NAR: It certainly changed them at that time. And in some ways, this is a cliché, some ways it made them more of what they already were. They began to be more thoroughly what they already were. I know of one faculty member who panicked at a meeting and I

knew, Melissa, that he always was – I'd seen him do it in little ways before – the impulsivity, the panic, the implicit hostilities that were there. The aggression came out. He did it in spades at one meeting. Now he returned to his more stable world, I remember that, so the question was, it unlayered people, I think, for a little while. George Allen is basically a deemphasist. And at one time a solution that would have made Dickinsonians more secure at the expense of taking some rather precious material... well, I'll have to give you an example. We knew that radioactive iodine isotopes would be a major problem if we did have intense fallout in the area. We also knew as Priscilla had said to us, that if we purchased iodine and ingest it, it would make us not immune, but certainly much more resistant to this. And it can be purchased at drug stores. But very few people knew that. And the question was raised as to whether we should stock it. And George turned to the group before I could and he said, "That would be unethical, we have no right to corner a scarce resource because of superior knowledge." I still get tears in my eyes when I think about it. And I so applauded him, I was... he validated what I believe about human beings or want to believe about them. At that moment he was even more of what he usually is. That's the point. I think I was more of what I usually am. That pleased me.

INT: So you don't feel that people changed?

NAR: I don't think they altered radically. I remember that train accident – a man became a hero – he'd been the guy on the train who was griping and bitching about the circumstances on the train beforehand. And I thought, God, he really changed, he's carrying stretchers and he was a bloody hero. And then I found him in the Little Rock Station banging on the manager's door, demanding to see the manager and saying that he was going to sue the train company. He had gone back to type. I don't think that human change occurs in crisis permanently. I think it is much more precipitant in many, many events. Generally, although there are some conversions, I doubt if many occurred at TMI.

INT: Do you remember jokes about the radiation during that period?

NAR: Of course I was in a position to hear them all. I can't recount them all, they were usually aesthetically very poor. But they performed a marvelous function. They allowed people to say many things to each other without having to say them and they were cathartic. They were ways of getting rid of a lot of feeling and communicating in masked ways. Of course the t-shirts immediately come to mind. The captions on the t-shirts. Two that were never produced were interesting, one was the... from the group who stayed who wanted to give the others one that said, "I am an over-reactor" and the group who went wanted to give the ones, the people who stayed, that said "When the going gets tough, the stupid stay put?" That I remember. And my desire not to allow that kind of polarization to occur more than necessary. The jokes were numerous, they were often – the senior staff, as we had to face all of the things going on, there's a very, very warm bond among those 5 people who worked with me because they are very close to their own constituents and they also work with each other all the time. And there were continual things – puns, references, usually back to things that have... been experiences we've

been through before. They cemented us again things to many things, to many past experiences.

INT: That's interesting because most of our joke collection is from the students and I didn't know to what extent other people...?

NAR: Oh yes. Faculty and senior staff both. Administrators across the board. And the interesting thing about the humor is that it was very warm and human. It was not brittle or hostile. Very little hostile, brittle humor among our people. They were more laughing at the incongruities, the cosmic incongruities of life. Little things that... there were a few bitternesses, when someone needed somebody there and they weren't there, we would handle it with humor a little bit. That kind of thing. Again cathartic.

INT: Did you notice any difference between men and women, in their joking behavior?

NAR: I hadn't thought about that. If I had to make a hunch on it, I couldn't support it, I think the men were joking more than women.

INT: This was true among the students. Our theory was that the women could just say I'm scared, and the men at least initially couldn't so that they...

NAR: That would be the most obvious interpretation. That they did not, the men are not allowed that direct statement. Probably some truth in that but there is also the question as to whether this sort of camaraderie of males in our society – they play golf together, they joke together, they play team sports together, they are in locker rooms together. Women tend to bend in a more individualistic role. Joking tends to be a fold thing. So, I think probably of those.

INT: We've also found very little of it in the larger community. This was really the...

NAR: They didn't have the humor tools. There is a certain facility in the liberal arts mind. I'm not sure we produce better, but we certainly have a certain style that comes with the territory. I think, of course, I'm biased – but I think it (unintelligible) to creativity. But that's a strong bias of mine for 20 years.

INT: Did you remember this kind of joking behavior from other crises?

NAR: Almost inevitably. But not the immediate terror ones I mentioned to you. You have to slide into humor. It takes a germination period. Immediate shock does not allow for humor – the sort of, “well there we are” type thing. For instance I can remember when I was a small child an attempted lynching of two men. My father, my grandfather was the mayor and I was with him at the time he dealt with the mob. There was no humor there, no intention to add humor. In fact it would have seemed obscene, although it might have saved the thing. If the lyncher can laugh, he may not be able to lynch. You know, that kind of thing.



INT: What sort of crisis do you, have you noticed joking in?

NAR: These are more the every day type things. When we build budgets, interestingly enough administrators tend to joke with each other. Not because they are, they take it lightly, it is because it is a time of tension. An administrator knows that a budget is the creed of an institution. If you really want to see what people do to people you look at the budget. If I am a site listener in a school I don't want to listen to the rhetoric, I want to see where the space is allocated and where the salary lines are. Because it will tell you what they value. When you come that near to the core of the choices of a group of people, then you begin to get a little humor, generally so. A group like the personal committee of the college goes through a crisis every year (unintelligible). It is an intense and prolonged, I am talking about prolongation that allows time for growth of relationships. You have to have the growth of the relationships and enough time to experience together. Then the humor will come. But it is not, again it is not a way of being superficial or harsh. It is a way of living through it. Now (unintelligible).

INT: Can you remember in the crisis that you have been in that were immediate, was there any humor afterwards? Was there joking among some people who?

NAR: The relieved kind of humor. There is a euphoria that tends to come right after a crisis. The feeling that God's in his heaven and if He's not all's right in the world anyway. And gee, there is an old Wesleyan hymn called "And are we yet alive" and I think that pretty well sums it up. And people say "Hey, you know, I got through that one didn't I?" Then there is the illusion of immortality for people. "If we did that, nothing can get us." That's what people start to do. They laugh, they almost laugh inappropriately.

INT: It reminds me of one of Kubler-Ross's patients that she describes who had survived a very near incident in World War Two and couldn't imagine that he was now dying of cancer because.

NAR: Could be, he had made it. That's, well, bargaining occurs. Again, in Kubler-Ross's work there is a, the bargaining phase she describes is not a phase, you don't move from one to two people are not linear, and she knows that but the model is a thin model. But in the bargaining phase she described a woman that had cancer, intense cancer, painful pancreatic cancer and she was dying and she knew it but she wanted to live long enough to go to her daughter's wedding and still be mobile and live through the pain and she did, and when she got back she said to the resident, "but remember Dr., I've got two more daughters." People bargain continuously. Of the Feds about health activity, I agree with Lewis Thomas, I doubt very seriously that you extend life a great deal in some of those activities, but you give all people a lot of occupational therapy. They feel some sense of control. Once you've controlled a crisis its magic thinking, you didn't control it you just got through it, but that sense "of boy didn't we handle that one, we've made the pieces fit". Then you feel that perhaps you and Zeus are first cousins.

INT: Do you have a different opinion about nuclear energy then before the crisis?

NAR: No, I was trying to think of any aspect of it. No, not at all. I view exactly, I know it better. I think it's necessary, absolutely necessary, as one form, I never did want us to rely totally on it. And I think it is potentially lethal and I think we will use it and I think we ought to be darn sure that we're responsible about it. So I'm again with those four points where I was before. No I didn't change much.

INT: Is there anything else that we didn't cover that you would like to say about what went on then or what you think about now, anything you think we ought to know?

NAR: I'm more and more convinced, I read the works of Lauren Aseley, Lewis Tomas, other people who have watched the sciences, a biology watcher like Lewis Tomas, are poets. Poets say to me that human beings are notoriously bad at long range planning. Largely because they do not want to look at life. We have stumbled into most of the creativity, we tend not to be able to sustain our purpose very long or too look unflinchingly at the consequences, we really don't. It makes me feel that, two things, I'm not at all pessimistic about the future of human beings. I think there's not a single thing we're going through corporately now that we can't handle, but that is a as a society. But the questions are whether we will, I'm very much agnostic about it because the capacity is there that the species is so much a baby at this point it is a new-born. We think of it as old but it isn't, we haven't the infallibility of fish or cells, non-nucleated cells don't make mistakes, therefore we are caught with options and we don't know quite what to do with choice and option. And we just would hope the world would go away. The problem is that we are like babies that are handed razor blades and are playing with them. You can't take the razor blade away, there's no way we can go back. The real question is whether we can measure up. It would take a candor, humor, openness to meet new challenges, that we have never exhibited as a species in a sustained way. That which we exhibit all the time in fragmented places. The question is, can we come to the point where we will be able to live corporately as fulfilling as we often do as individuals. I think the thing I will feel when I die is a regret that I will probably have to leave the audience before the play I'm at is over. I will resent that as a social science because I would love to see how it's going to go, one way or the other. I would love to see the answer to that one. But I've at least gotten to watch the first half. That's about it.