

Date: June 20, 1979

Occupation: Tax assistant for the county

INTERVIEWER: Can you remember when you first heard about Three Mile Island?

NARRATOR: Very vaguely. I remember them talking about it on the news. As far as I know here at work, nothing too much was said right then. And I really didn't give it that much of a thought.

INT: You weren't seriously concerned then?

NAR: Right.

INT: Did you at that time, or did you know before that, that there was a reactor at Three Mile Island?

NAR: No.

INT: So this is your first discovery that it was there?

INT: Do you know how far it is from us, Three Mile Island?

NAR: How can I say this I guess about twenty miles, something like that.

INT: Would you have known that before this?

NAR: No. Just through all the typing.

INT: I see. You said that at that point you didn't think much about...did that change?

NAR: Oh, yes it did.

INT: Can you tell me what changed it?

NAR: Well, I was called on Saturday morning; early Saturday morning they called me to come in and. When they explained to me the situation, that they thought it was getting out of hand and they needed me in here to get things ready in case we had...we really did have to set up an evacuation program- whether we would put it into effect or not. Then it really hit me, that it's close to us, and it is really more serious than people believe it is but. As time went on, it really concerned more of us...more so. And especially now that I am expecting and I was really concerned about that. And I should say that my husband was, too. In fact, we were going to go to Harrisburg. We had made plans previously, and it was definitely cancelled.

INT: So you changed your plans as a result of this? You had been planning to go into Harrisburg that weekend or something?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: So then you were called into work. Your ordinary routines were very much disrupted here?

NAR: Right.

INT: Did you work then over that weekend and so forth?

NAR: Yes, I did. I was called in Saturday morning about eight o'clock and I worked to 5:30pm. Then I was called in at 10:00 on Sunday and I worked to 12:30 Sunday night, and then I came back in Monday morning and worked from 8:00 till 9:30.

INT: Would you say that you were looking for more information on this, did you pay more attention than usual, say to media sources- newspapers, that sort of thing?

NAR: Right. Yes. We really were. We in fact, I had my portable in here, which we had the news on constantly; or the radio we had on. And of course we were always getting bulletins from downstairs from the EFC. We were really concerned about...wondering about what was going to happen. And I should say that a lot of the girls that were working with me were closer to it than I was.

INT: You mean they lived closer?

NAR: Right. And they were very concerned about heir children, as well. We were really...we were rather I should say upset about it.

INT: Did you make any plans that you wouldn't have made ordinarily?

NAR: No. My husband and I had just talked it over. But really as far as making plans...

INT: Do you remember what you said to each other and so forth?

NAR: Really, we didn't know what we were going to do if we had to be evacuated. We didn't know where we would go or ... We had often talked about going to my sister's place in Philadelphia, but then we would be going right by the Three Mile Island. But other than that, no.

INT: Did you pack?

NAR: No.

INT: Keep your car filled with gas?

NAR: Oh, yeah. Yes, we did.

INT: What did you think about other people leaving?

NAR: Well, a lot of those were very close to Three Mile Island, I thought it was a very sensible thing to do. Especially with the pregnant women or the small children. I'm sure I would have done the same thing.

INT: You said that you paid more attention than usual to the media, how did you feel about their handling of the situation?

NAR: Their coverage was great. Really, it was. It really gave us more of a detailed...now, we all know how the press can stretch things...but they really gave us a more detailed and frequent programs and news bulletins on it that was really good.

INT: So you thought that they were keeping you very well informed?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: How about industry's handling of the indent; how about Metropolitan Edison's? How do you feel about the way they handled it?

NAR: Well, I don't know. I really don't know what to say. It's hard to tell. Maybe we would have handled it the same way they did, if we were in their position. The only thing I can say is, they, they say they did the best they could.

INT: Did you feel that the people who were in charge over there were in control of the situation?

NAR: Sometimes yes, and sometimes no. When we had heard when it was, when everything was going to be okay, and the next minute everything was going to blow up, or this and that and the other thing, we were wondering exactly if the person in charge did know what they were doing. But then again, they must know something or they wouldn't have been in that position.

INT: Can you pinpoint what might have made you in easy about that?

NAR: Oh, let me think. It just seems like it's been so long ago.

INT: Yes, it's hard to remember.

NAR: Not really. I couldn't say.

INT: Now, I asked about industry and the media. I'm going to ask you about how you felt the government responded in your judgment. Now, for you, this becomes a more complicated question, doesn't it?

NAR: You mean as far as the county here goes?

INT: Yeah, actually you could address, see the different points; talk about how the county operated, talk about how state and local...talk about federal...?

NAR: Well, as far as the county goes, I think naturally they are going to expect me to say everything was fantastic. But they really did do a good job. I mean, they seemed to cover all avenues to take precautions for everyone. I thought they did fantastic. They really did. As far as the federal government, I wouldn't know.

INT: Like the NRC, for example, the regulatory commission that came in...you may not have anything?

NAR: No, I really wouldn't know what to say about that.

INT: And state?

NAR: Well, I guess it was just because I was in just such close contact here with the county that I saw all their movements and all their procedures that it's difficult to say something about the state of the federal.

INT: Is there anyone that you found particularly reliable?

NAR: In what way?

INT: In terms of as a source of information and finding that you trusted what they were telling you. For example, you thought about leaving. Is there anything you were looking for that would have told you it was time to leave?

NAR: Yeah, I was looking for the thing to blow up.

INT: Oh, really? And that would have said that it was time to go??

NAR: Everybody would have left.

INT: If the worst had happened over there, is that what would have happened?

NAR: Probably, yeah.

INT: Did you have any mental images of that?

NAR: No, I just didn't even want to think about that. I didn't want to...I just wanted it all to... When it first started about, I remember saying to my husband, "Oh, it'll be alright, I think they are blowing it all out of proportion", but when I was called in and actually put in the situation to help set up plans, then it struck me that it really must be getting serious. But as far as thinking about the thing blowing up or people being hurt, I didn't want to think about it. I just...I'll come in, I'll help set things up, but as far as getting any worse, I didn't want to imagine it at all.

INT: I've come at this a different way, I'm just going to come head on again in a sort of way, you've said that some of your ordinary routines changed you were in working more than you would expect to be, ordinarily. Were there any other changes in your ordinary routine?

NAR: Yes. Even the things we do day-by-day now, it was put aside. For all of us, it was just put aside in our main priority list. To work on [garbled].

INT: Did you have any mental pictures about what was going on over there?

NAR: The only pictures I pictured were the pictures I saw. And then they stuck in your mind.

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

NAR: No. I really don't think so; because we were outside-where I live-outside the danger area. But believe me, if I had been a little closer, I would really be concerned about it.

INT: If the worst thing occurred, and I gather from what you've said, you [garbled].

NAR: I just...when I thought of anything getting worse, it was just everything going. Just everything falling apart...

INT: What do you think might have happened?

NAR: I have no idea. I just don't...I don't know. You mean now what would have happened with us? Or what would have happened there?

INT: Well, with us and the area, or whatever you...?

NAR: I don't know, I think if the situation would have gotten worse...a lot of the people do get scared...and a lot of people were moving elsewhere. And if the situation would have gotten worse, if just, it would have seemed like, to me, I would have imagined masses of people just going aINTost berserk to get out. And maybe I would have been one of them. But you just don't know.

INT: As it was, did the people around you, did their behavior change at all?

NAR: No. As far as at my home, neighbors, family, no. As far as in here, everyone was too busy setting things up and really...but at the time I just really...it just didn't register.

INT: Only afterwards?

NAR: Right. It was just the more concerned with their families, maybe more so than the day-by-day concerns.

INT: Did you imagine or know about any of the effects of radiation?

NAR: I have read about it, I have heard about it, and I don't like it. Well, it really concerns me because I am expecting. And it had me scared that it might not endanger my life, but endanger my child's life. And to me, I just can't imagine bringing a child into this world and something's wrong with it. It really petrifies me. It really does.

INT: Are you still worried about that?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you think about God during the incident?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did you pray?

NAR: Sure.

INT: Do you remember what for?

NAR: No. Just that he would keep his hand upon the family and the friends and those that are involved and that are working directly with it. That's really all that I can remember.

INT: Do or did you then think that the accident at Three Mile Island might be God's way of instructing or disciplining mankind?

NAR: I couldn't say. I really don't know.

INT: Did you attend church during that time?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did anyone speak about it there?

NAR: The only thing that I can remember is our minister mentioning to remember in prayer who are working with it directly, those that are living closer around it, and that maybe affected by it. But that's about it.

INT: Were there fewer or the same or more people at church at that time?

NAR: It was about the same.

INT: Did there services make you feel any different about the incident?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you feel that your faith says anything about the rightness or wrongness about using atomic power or anything like that?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you think that religious institutions or people should take public stands on this sort of issue?

NAR: I think that's up to the individual.

INT: And it doesn't have anything to do with the institutions?

NAR: Right.

INT: Did any biblical stories or events or sayings cross your mind?

NAR: No.

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

NAR: Such as?

INT: Well, either related to your work or to your husband-particular responsibilities that resulted from this sort of emergency situation?

NAR: I thought I had an awful lot of responsibility to my work-to my job. And also to my husband. But in this kind of a situation where people's lives seemed were actually at stake sometimes, I was more concerned with my job than my immediate family because I know they were outside the danger.

INT: You knew that you were relatively safe, and so your concern was with dealing with the people that you needed to through your work and so forth?

NAR: Yes.

INT: I'm just looking...sometimes we are going back and forth, and I'm just checking...Did this event bring to your mind any past experiences?

NAR: No.

INT: Any historical events?

NAR: Besides earthquakes or floods or something like that, that would be it.

INT: Did you or would you find this event more or less frightening than say an earthquake or a flood?

NAR: I think that they are all frightening.

INT: About the same?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Did any TV shows or movies or books you've read come to mind?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you find yourself singing any songs?

NAR: Probably not.

INT: Did you have any daydreams that you remember?

NAR: No, I was too busy.

INT: Did you have any sleeping dreams that you remember?

NAR: No, by the time I get home I was just so tired.

INT: Was your sleep disturbed in any way?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you think that the people around you changed in any lasting way as a result of this?

NAR: I really don't think so.

INT: Did you?



NAR: I don't think so.

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

NAR: Oh, yes, I've heard quite a few.

INT: Can you tell me some of them?

NAR: Sure. One of the girls that is at college, she comes in the summertime to help us, and last week she was telling us that she came home, she was coming home right at the start of the TMI accident, and she really didn't know what was going on. And when she got home and heard all about this and then a week later then she goes back to school and everybody says, "don't touch me, don't touch me, we don't want to glow, we don't want to..." But that's about it that I can remember. I remember that afterwards there was quite a few going around, but that's about the only one that I can remember hearing.

INT: Why do you think people were joking?

NAR: I think people joke after everything. After the excitement or the fear is over with they make a joke about anything.

INT: Have you developed an opinion about nuclear energy?

NAR: No, not really. There is always a safe way or a harmful way to use things. Not really. I mean, they are going to continue to use it anyhow. Continue to build their plants or whatever.

INT: Think we ought to change things in any way?

NAR: I don't think it will help us to... I don't think they will anyhow. I mean I think if they're going to it, they are going to go ahead and do it; if not, they're not. Whether we like it or whether we don't. That's just the way I feel about it.

INT: Does that upset you?

NAR: No.

INT: It's just the way it is?

NAR: Right.

INT: Is there anything else that you'd like to tell me about all of this?

NAR: Just that I'm glad that it's over.

INT: You are, huh? And relieved?

NAR: Yes I am.

INT: Just as soon not go through it again?

NAR: Right.

INT: I want to do a quick check...oh, were you at all worried about the food or milk from the area?

NAR: Not too much. My in-laws live on a farm, now they live further outside the danger area than we did, and we get our milk from them. And it really didn't bother me, I didn't even think about it.

INT: Is there anything else that you want to talk about?

NAR: That's it.