

Date: June 22, 1979

Occupation: Purchasing director for Cumberland County

INTERVIEWER: Can you remember when you first heard that there was a problem at Three Mile Island?

NARRATOR: I think it came up about maybe late Friday, that I heard of it and if I recall, I don't think that we had actually started the processing some material here at the time but I was called in on Saturday in here to work.

INT: Which is unusual?

NAR: Right.

INT: Do you remember who you heard from?

NAR: Someone in the office.

INT: Did you know that there was a reactor there before the incident?

NAR: No, I didn't know what all was involved there. I knew that Three Mile Island was there and it was nuclear, that's about the extent of it.

INT: How far is Three Mile Island from Carlisle?

NAR: Oh dear, it's about twenty miles.

INT: Did you know that before the incident?

NAR: Well, yes I would say that because I knew that it was close to Harrisburg, and I know it's about twenty to twenty-five miles from here to Harrisburg.

INT: When you first heard about it, what did you think about it?

NAR: It really didn't alarm me too much.

INT: You didn't see it as a particularly serious situation?

NAR: No, I didn't.

INT: Did that change?

NAR: A little bit, but really not a whole lot because I don't know, it just seemed like you know that being in here and being involved you knew somehow, in a way there's a sense of security, but yet you know it could've been real, I knew that it was serious and that

something really serious could have happened. We could have even been blown off the earth for all we knew.

INT: But at the same time there was something about working here that made you?

NAR: Just made me more relaxed.

INT: Can you tell me why you felt that way?

NAR: Well, it's because we were getting, we were relaying back and forth with the communication lines and we were knowing what was going on supposedly.

INT: Okay, You felt sort of on top of things.

INT: Did you talk about it with other people who work here?

NAR: I mainly just listened to them, there was conversation going back and forth.

INT: Do you remember any of that conversation?

NAR: Most of them were pretty upset about it.

INT: They were worried about it?

NAR: Oh yeah a lot of them they wanted to get out of the area in case there would have been an evacuation, and to a point, I would kind have liked to have seen the evacuation go through because there was a lot of time spent planning, making preparation.

INT: And you like to see it, why?

NAR: To make our efforts worthwhile, see if it would work, see how smoothly it would go, but at the same time a lot of people would've probably panicked over it too.

INT: Was that a fear during the planning, that people wouldn't respond well to it?

NAR: Right, because everyone would try to evacuate at once and there would have been so much congestion on the highways that no one would have gone anywhere that fast, because if they had started in one area to move they would have scared people in another area that knew that it would have eventually come then they would think, oh my God, let's get out of here, those people are already starting to move.

INT: So all the time planning was going on, one of the chief worries was to keep that sort of thing from happening?

NAR: Right.

INT: Did you talk about it with your family?

NAR: Not a whole lot because they didn't seem to be alarmed too much, to a point they were but yet being older they were kind of more set well doesn't matter what happens, we're going to stay.

INT: I see, they weren't going to leave?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you make any plans?

NAR: No, because the area we live in the evacuation would not affect us.

INT: You live right here in Carlisle?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: What was your attitude toward people who did leave?

NAR: Well I thought that especially if they lived in an area where they would have been evacuated I thought it was a good choice for them to go. And if they wanted to stay out of the area for awhile, I thought it was alright for them to do so.

INT: Did you follow newspapers or radio or TV reports?

NAR: Not closely.

INT: Do you think you would have or was it because you were so terrible involved in here?

NAR: I think it's because of being involved in here and knowing what was going on.

INT: How did you feel about, well I wanted to talk about really three major elements that were involved in the situation. In this three Metropolitan Edison and government response at a number of different levels, clearly that's a complicated issue in your case and media handling. Do you have any sense of how you felt about the media handling? You weren't following it yourself, did you see any effects of the media handling?

NAR: Well maybe they, the media, tended to make it maybe just a little, at times, they tend to make things worse than what it really is and maybe to a point that's what had happened here.

INT: Did you see any effects of that in your work?

NAR: No.

INT: What about government handling, you might speak there at several different levels. Your working and involved with the county and that's one level (muttering).

NAR: I would say that from a county level, that everybody tried to work together, tried to be prepared and also even making connections with some state officials and everybody seemed to be working.

INT: And they did a pretty good job at that?

NAR: I think so.

INT: What about at the state?

NAR: I think they tried.

INT: Do you think they were operating under some difficulties?

NAR: I think so.

INT: What about the national level?

NAR: I would say that they were concerned and they would have tried to offer any assistance as far as that goes.

INT: Was there anybody in all of this, or any particular source that you found most trustworthy?

NAR: I don't know how to answer that at this point.

INT: How did you feel about Metropolitan Edison?

NAR: It's something that could have happened with any company.

INT: And their handling of the event?

NAR: It could have been better.

INT: In what way?

NAR: I'm thinking maybe it could have been prevented, I don't know how, but in that way, I wonder how to answer it.

INT: Did you feel they were in control of that situation over there?

NAR: To a point because I personally think that it may have been planned.

INT: You do, would you talk about that?

NAR: I don't really have a whole lot to say about it but its just that things seem to me a little fishy.

INT: You have a suspicion?

NAR: Yeah, I'm really suspicious about it.

INT: Can you tell what makes you suspicious, why they would set it up like that?

NAR: Well even though it only took a couple of seconds for things to really emerge and really build to the point of disaster, it just seems that someone may have just slipped up a little bit and I think if they would have just been a little more careful in what they were doing I don't think it would've have happened.

INT: Do you think somebody might have been subverting the plant, somebody inside?

NAR: It could have been.

INT: Do you think they had motives for that?

NAR: Maybe, maybe to get the higher rate that they wanted.

INT: Higher rates for the consumers and so forth?

NAR: That could be.

INT: Would you say then that of all the people involved in handling and so forth, these were the people you mistrusted the most?

NAR: Not necessarily.

INT: Just too complex at this point?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Do you think they're in control of the situation over there now?

NAR: They were there trying to be but I really don't know if they are or not because I think that the government is going to want to try to have at least some say in it now.

INT: Did any of your routines, you've spoken about some routines maybe you might even elaborate on that, your ordinary routines, did they change?

NAR: Yes they did.

INT: Can you talk about that?

NAR: Okay. Normally its just you know trying to, purchasing supplies for the county and all but it kind of changed in you know constantly doing a little bit of typing and mainly making copies and there were a lot of copies that had to be made and the funny thing about it is that the machines got tired and you know they just, they quit.

INT: They quit working.

NAR: Yeah they didn't want .

INT: People were keeping them working but the machines wanted to quit. Wow, that must've been an awful...

NAR: Yeah, well you know I can remember that Sunday that I was in here for like about fifteen hours and I know that there was a lot of people that spent a lot more time on them than I did but I can remember that we had done quite a bit of Xeroxing that day and we were doing it even up into the night because of different meetings that were taking place, that wanted to have literature available to the people as to processes to be taken. And I can remember about like 12 o'clock the machine just would not go and I imagine that when it got tired, so to speak, it would have been going till about 3 or 4 in the morning until we finally got it done, so we just called it quits and went home and got some rest but then we had a 24 hour schedule set up and I wasn't to be here during the day but I was to be here at night.

INT: I see. So you were constantly at work over how long? Four days, five days?

NAR: Something like that.

INT: Over that weekend and that's a very unusual thing

NAR: Right, right.

INT: Did it affect your work in other ways?

NAR: Yes, it put me behind because I just dropped all my regular work to do whatever had to be done in the situation.

INT: Did you have any mental pictures or images of what was going on at TMI?

NAR: Yeah I was thinking in this, you know like just the reactor or whatever. But I was picturing this great big bubble just keep getting bigger and bigger

INT: A bubble. On top of it?

NAR: Yeah. You know getting so big and then finally maybe exploding and everybody on the Eastern Coast possibly being just being wiped off.

INT: If the worst had happened, is that what you envisioned?

NAR: Yes.

INT: What kind of, can you remember what the explosion might have looked like?

NAR: Everything would be just a disaster, a disaster as if a hurricane or tornado went through and just ripped apart everything.

INT: So you saw buildings knocked down and all that sort of thing. Did you think about or have images of how that would have affected life and so forth, of what that would have looked like afterwards?

NAR: Well a lot of dead everything and lot, yeah maybe if those who had survived, possibly maimed.

INT: Did you have any ideas about how radiation might have affected the area at that point?

NAR: Well I thought it would be really heavy and living as close as what we do, it would have be (unintelligible) and maybe affecting a lot of other people's lives and causing damages to them.

INT: Beyond the area which it was the explosion. How would it affect?

NAR: I was thinking maybe in the line of maybe causing some kind of, I'll just use disease for now, a disease in the body or something.

INT: Do you have any particular sense of that?

NAR: I was thinking of cancer.

INT: Radiation as a cancer danger in the future?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Did you see it as affecting other life too?

NAR: Maybe, possibly animal life. Maybe causing, well yes in the animal life because if it would get into their body and we, and the humans would then eat that. It can cause yeah, just keep passing it around.

INT: Did you have any worries about the food from the area and so forth, milk?

NAR: Not a whole lot.

INT: Not a whole lot.

NAR: No.

INT: Now, we were talking there about what you might have imagined as worst case and so forth. Do you think anything that happened at TMI actually might have affected your health?

NAR: It may, but at the present time I don't know.

INT: You have some doubts about it? Do you have any notion about what that kind of effect might be?

NAR: I hope not but maybe in years to come it could cause cancer. And that's something that I just can't stand to see.

INT: You have a real fear of that?

NAR: Yeah, mainly because it's been in the family and I have seen the results of it and its disastrous.

INT: I was going, your anticipating question I was going to ask whether... Now this is a little different but during the sequence of events, did you connect anything that was going wrong, or potentially wrong with any of past experiences in your life?

NAR: Well, to a point, I may sound like I'm contradicting myself all throughout here but to a point you know the people would have had a fear and like an anticipation about what's going to happen next. I can relate that back to some sickness not in, with, between my parents and I but in the family.

INT: In the longer family?

NAR: Yeah and its with the cancer and the, its like what's going to happen next? Will a miracle happen? Will they get better? Will there be a cure for it or will they die? When? How long will they have to suffer like this? Will they get worse? And I guess you know relating to that to some of the questions, is will, will Three Mile, will, yeah Three Mile Island will get worse. Will the situation get worse? Will there actually be an explosion? And like different questions like that.

INT: The kind of unpredictability of a serious situation and so forth.

INT: Did you connect it with any historical event?



NAR: No.

INT: Did you think of any books you might have read or TV shows or radio shows?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you have any daydreams that you remember?

NAR: I think I was too busy to daydream.

INT: To busy to even look out the window.

NAR: Uh huh.

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

NAR: No.

INT: Was your sleep disturbed at all?

NAR: I don't think so because I was too tired when I went to bed to even lie awake and think of it.

INT: Just exhausted.

NAR: So exhausted from pushing myself.

INT: From working and stuff. Slept very well,

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Did you observe changes in people around you during?

NAR: Yeah an uneasiness within them.

INT: They were pretty anxious? Did they behave as you would have predicted under stress and so forth?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Very much?

NAR: Especially if you knew a person and knew how they would react in even just a, many situations, you could see the same thing happening.

INT: Same sort of behavior (mumbling).

NAR: Yeah

INT: Do you think any aspects of your community have been affected by TMI, any other kinds of outside the job situation and stuff like that?

NAR: Not that I can think of right now. I'm sure that if they were lets say, maybe to build something or to go on and explore in some other, some type of area, and before they would get really involved in it, I'm sure that they would at least maybe have some thoughts as to what effects that it may have, as to regardless of the what the project is, it could be anything.

INT: They'd have some second thoughts?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Did you feel that you had particular kinds of responsibility during this?

NAR: Not any particular, it's just if they need you to be ready to, you know be there and to help in whatever situation.

INT: Okay, but you felt strongly that you had had responsibilities connected with your job, in relation with the business. Did you ever feel those responsibilities conflicting with other kinds of responsibilities?

NAR: Well, let's just say to a point because it would cause delay in other areas.

INT: In other areas of your life.

NAR: Yeah, because this came first.

INT: Okay, but you didn't feel serious conflicts like you should be somewhere else or you should be doing something else.

NAR: Not real serious.

INT: Did you think about God during the incident at all?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did you pray?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Are you willing to tell us what you asked him?

NAR: For his protection and to help us and guide us and to do the right things, making the right decisions that would be beneficial to the people in the area.

INT: Do you think there might have been any message from God in all of this?

NAR: That he has, still has control over everything and that even though people try to think that they're in control and can do everything, He still has the final say.

INT: Did you go to any religious service during these days?

NAR: No, because I was here.

INT: To busy.

NAR: Yeah.

INT: In terms of trying to make a relative judgment would you say that an incident like this is more or less worrisome or frightening than let's say a flood or hurricane?

NAR: I would say that it is more worrisome because just the wrong move and just, just, just the wrong thing and it, things could really have been a lot worse, where as with the lets say the example with the flood you can pretty much determine what's going to happen to a point.

INT: So it's more predictable, you see than...?

NAR: I would, I think so, because you know that you know if lets say it keeps on raining or something like that, you know that the water's going to keep on getting higher, you know basically what areas its going to affect and you know what to do then basically.

INT: And in this case you...

NAR: It's because it doesn't happen all the time, its like the floods do. Like floods can happen everyday but you know they do happen once in a while. We've had several in our area and we know basically what to expect.

INT: How to deal with it.

NAR: How to handle it, yeah

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

NAR: Oh, just some of these, you know like things to survive, did, you know your lit up or something like that. Shortly after that I was on vacation and I was down in the Bahamas and some of the people that were down there or even that were on the trip with us were from other areas and like the one girl was drunk one night and she says about

being from Harrisburg and about the Three Mile Island and they got to talking and so the one guy said to her, the next day, he says' well we'll see you know as we get near Harrisburg if you'll be all radiated or something to that effect.

INT: Why do you think people joke about this?

NAR: Well the crucial point of it is over with now and nothing real serious happened and now that they can talk about it and make light of it.

INT: Do you think that this incident changed people in any lasting way? You said something about that and I'm kind of coming out of it at a different angle.

NAR: What's that again?

INT: You think it changed anybody in any sort of long lasting way?

NAR: You mean as far as wanting to live longer?

INT: It might be that, it might be psychological?

NAR: I don't know, oh I think maybe lets use it maybe for a longer life for example. Maybe it did because now that they can see that just in one second or two seconds time, things can be all over with and maybe it has caused a fear in them and also with like radiation maybe coming out heavily upon a certain area and knowing that in later years it could affect their life and cause their life to be even be a lot shorter and maybe that put a fear in them and in wanting to make the most of life as how they possibly can.

INT: Did your, thinking that because they could imagine their own death in the situation, did you think of your own death in this situation?

NAR: To a point but not a whole lot.

INT: You didn't dwell on it?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you feel reassured that you would survive?

NAR: I did, I really did. I don't know I just really didn't have too much of a fear but yet I was concerned.

INT: Do you think that it changed you in any lasting way?

NAR: No, no I don't think it did.

INT: Have you developed, out of the four or as a result of this, any opinion about how we should handle nuclear energy?

NAR: I really haven't given it a whole lot of thought. The thing that I think about is you know like people will say, you know they shouldn't open this plant back up again, they should close it down and keep it down. I don't feel that way, I feel that just because even though one mistake was made and maybe it could have been prevented. I think that they should work on it and let it in operation again and because if they can make it better and improve it, why not? I mean sure there are accidents every day and even though this could have been an accident which could really affected a whole lot of lives, I still feel that they should work on it and put it in operation. Because it's really its gone to a point its gonna be wasted money and what, what was spent there as far as getting it in operation.

INT: And that we should take advantage of that, are you saying make it safer or?

NAR: Yeah make it safer and usable again.

INT: Is there anything else you would want to say at the moment? Have I missed something?

NAR: No, [unintelligible]. I used to really be pretty silent on this subject but then Emily [unintelligible].

INT: Did you talk to [intelligible] this morning?

NAR: I usually, I don't know. I just am able to listen to other people and what they have to say on it.