

August 16, 1979

Occupation: Retail clothing merchant/Mayor

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

NARRATOR: The Thursday evening after the first occurrence it started to hit the news media.

INT: From whom did you hear it?

NAR: Word was received down at the Borough office through the county office of Emergency Preparedness. And of course they got word to me right away and we started looking in it to see what might be necessary to be done around here.

INT: Did you know what there was a reactor there before this incident? At Three Mile Island?

NAR: Yes, I did.

INT: How did you know about it?

NAR: Seeing it in the newspaper and, oh articles in magazines and such where different reactors were located throughout the country.

INT: Did you have a long standing interest in nuclear energy or it is something that just passed in and out?

NAR: It was just something that more or less passed in and out; I had no particular interest in it other than possibly feeling that it was something that was going to be necessary in the future.

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

NAR: 25 miles.

INT: Is that air miles or driving miles?

NAR: I think that would be figured more air miles.

INT: When you first heard about the incident, you said you heard about it at the borough council, at the borough hall, what was the occasion? What were the circumstances?

NAR: It was just pointed out that an emergency existed and it was the type of emergency that could affect the entire area if certain things were to happen.

INT: Who was it that actually gave you the information here? To the borough hall. Did you get it from a particular official?

NAR: No, I can't say that I did. I'm not sure where the first information came from. I know it came out of the county Office of Emergency Preparedness that were alerting the differently political subdivisions in the county.

INT: You hadn't heard about the problem at Three Mile Island at all before this? This was your first?

NAR: This was really my first notice of any (unintelligible)

INT: What did you think about it when you first heard about it? What did you think? Did you think it was a serious situation or did you think that it was routine or that it was not particularly important? No.

INT: Your first reaction?

NAR: I viewed it as a serious situation. But in my own mind a situation which was going to take a little time to find out what to do to correct it and it would be corrected. I really never had any thoughts that it was something that was started that there might not be any way of stopping. I just felt that it might take a little time, but with all the educated people that we have today in the world somebody has got to come up with a solution and correct it. But until you got to that point you weren't sure exactly what to expect.

INT: How did people around you receive that information?

NAR: I think pretty much the same as I did because when you mention the people around me, most of them were Borough Officials also or county officials. It was almost a case, it depended what age group you were in as to what different degrees of concern and alarm that you got as far as different people's reactions. The younger group was very much more concerned than what the older group was. Of course I consider myself in the older group.

INT: How do you mean there was a difference in opinion? You said the younger group was very concerned about the older group's opinions? Or?

NAR: No, the younger group was much more concerned about the incident that was taking place at Three Mile Island, what the end result could possibly be. Of course right away you started hearing how it could affect you and then they started saying, well 20-30 years possibly and with the younger generation, they were much more concerned about themselves than what the older group was. And I think they had every right to be, to have that concern. But myself, I figure I had my family and I'm not planning for a larger family which a lot of the younger people are. And that was their basic concern, was for the future generations.

INT: What was the nature of the communication from the Office of Emergency Preparedness? What did they tell you?

NAR: Actually the first notice that we got was more or less of an informal nature pointing out that more knowledge was becoming public exactly what was going on down there, we possibly were facing a serious situation and if not a situation that would involve us leaving the area, a situation that would involve us preparing to accept evacuees from an area closer to Three Mile Island and that there were going to have to be a lot of plans made. And from there on in of course then we were in direct contact with the County Office at all times after that. And then you had more of the official type communicates coming out of there.

INT: So your borough then was in communication here with the county?

NAR: Yes.

INT: The county office also here in Carlisle?

NAR: Yes. We were fortunate to have the county office right here, right at our doorstep, and practically every hour somebody from the borough was in and out of the county office seeing if there were later communicates coming in or any new developments. So we did have that advantage with, of course the other towns or boroughs around didn't have it because they had to be on the telephone or travel to get the information that we had right at our finger tips.

INT: Did you have any interaction as the Carlisle borough council, borough officials, with other borough officials from Newville and places like this?

NAR: Yes, we had. That was after many meetings of our own. When we found out the possibilities of what areas we could be hosting we got together with their Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, their Chief of Police, and their Mayor to point out what plans we had set up for them, where different groups would go. We had different areas laid out for people who would be bussed in. You were getting mass groups possibly at one time there, yet it didn't involve as much parking as the possibility of a hundred families driving in their own individual cars. And they could be coming in staggered or hopefully we were trying to lay plans for a caravan type movement. We wanted them to know what we had available, what our police protection would be, what was going to be expected in cooperation with that people that would be coming in here. Because we also had, we had our own population here to begin with and I think they figured the, possibility of maybe ten thousand people, if need be, could move in here into Carlisle.

INT: I'd like to talk about this a little bit, since we are on it right now. What areas did Carlisle plan to serve as an evacuation center? What?

NAR: Camphill, Mechanicsburg and Hampton Township were the three areas that we were to get.

INT: You were to get only part of these populations, I assume, since there are more than ten thousand people living in those three?

NAR: There is a factor used there as to how many people had already left the area. Their own area. How many people, even if they had to leave at a later time already had facilities or relatives and such to stay?

INT: These were to be people accepted then only after the official call for evacuation was put into effect?

NAR: That's correct.

INT: And so they were already figuring in that so many people would have left before that?

NAR: Yes, some of these closer areas had a much closer count on. The Sunday following the Friday I guess really when the news hit nationwide or world wide and everybody's attention was drawn to Three Mile Island at that time. And that Sunday several areas made door to door canvases to see how many people might need help?

INT: Was that here in Cumberland County?

NAR: Yes. Some of those areas were Cumberland County, the lower end of Cumberland County and I know it was done in part of York County also. If you have to leave do you

have a place to go? And if you do have a place to go do you have a means of travel to get there. And it was just amazing that so many things were thought of. In order, when you stand back later on you always figure "Gee if I'd have thought of this. If I'd have thought of that." And there were just so many minds at work that it just seemed that nothing was being left out.

INT: Well what has happening here in Carlisle? You planned to host the remaining population that would still be in these areas and didn't have any place to go when the time for evacuation?

NAR: That's right, was called.

INT: Where did you plan to hold these people?

NAR: We had mainly figured on the use of the schools. They were our number one locations if, or as they became filled up then we had other areas. The college, the college was - as you are well aware was most cooperative in every way. The college was to be the center for fire fighting equipment from the entire county. Because that's another thing. When you left your town and your community you had to move some of this equipment out, too, so that when you were able to go back. Had there been fallout that could contaminate a large area, you couldn't move back and have your public safety vehicles and equipment out of service. So all of the, ambulance, fire services possible would be brought to Carlisle here. And I think the center of that was to be around the College area. But we had plans if necessary, then we had churches, we had firehouses. We had other places that we could have handled more once the schools, but our schools, because of availability there is so much space at one time, the schools were our number one project.

INT: How did you get in contact with these particular institutions and alert them that you would be using them. Or did you have to ask some of them if you could use them? That sort of thing?

NAR: We ask out of courtesy. There was no doubt in our minds that if we needed them they would be available. That's.

INT: Did you call a meeting then?

NAR: Yes, I was going to mention there. There was meeting after meeting. We had meetings with the schools, the head of the school district, and meetings with certain group of doctors; we had meetings with communications personnel and such. We set up a field communication unit out at the Borough Hall and we were all set up in every manner possible. But everybody in certain sections got together for a meetings and briefings. And then from that point on there was always one key personnel from these different groups that if things were going to move we merely notified one individual. He in turn notified two and you just keep going until everybody is aware of what is going on.

INT: Were there any snags or hitches or anything like this that developed? Misunderstandings?

NAR: No, as far as misunderstandings. The lack of that was very noticeable. It doesn't matter how well you lay most plans, it seems like at times you might be stepping on some toes that you shouldn't have, or this or that. Everybody seemed to be working for the

very same goal and in most cases it was “well, if you know how to make use of this you say so.” And cooperation was the key word.

INT: Were these people at all upset in any way that this was going to happen or did they feel confident that nothing was going to come of it eventually or was there a certain air of urgency throughout this, these negotiations?

NAR: No, the groups that we were meeting with and had as much information as we did and even then you weren't sure how much information we were getting. But the groups were, we were meeting with, there didn't seem that great of an amount of concern. The urgency wasn't necessarily there. The average citizen, the average mother who had a child in the school system and such. They wanted to get their children out of school. There was a lot of them wanted to leave the area, which a lot of them did. And as I mentioned before I can find no fault with anybody as to what their own idea was of the emergency and of the urgency. The amazing part was the older group that I referred to. They had, oh they had concern for themselves but not the urgency or they weren't facing the 20 or thirty year period when you could become affected and such as the younger group was.

INT: Getting back to the evacuation again. You mentioned something about busing group in. How was that going to be organized? Who was in charge of that?

NAR: We had a transportation committee set up. Of course practically every committee that we had set up for Carlisle area there was also a county committee set up. So the chairmen, say of our local communications or transportation committee were sitting in on up the minute briefings all the time or updated briefings from the county level. But, the school system once again was our main way of busing. Because all your schools have your bus set up your bus scheduling and we figured that would be the easiest way. Because the busses were going to have to be used if there was an evacuation as far as getting the children home from school, even to get ready to evacuate. So this, the schools were going to be your number one assembly place for evacuees. Now additional bus could have been gotten from private ownership if we needed them and such.

INT: That was arranged for with the owners of the busses?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Were the people from Camp Hill going to be coming in on buses, on Camp Hill school buses and that sort of thing? You weren't going to send buses from here to there to pick them up?

NAR: No, they would be using their own means of transportation to get here. And of course certain routes were set up. A certain community would come by way of the turnpike on a particular lane. Harrisburg for example was to go further west and north than what we are. Both lanes or all four lanes - 2 lanes in either direction - were all going to be used for travel west. There were to be no travel east on the turnpike once you start an evacuation. Mechanicsburg of course was given a designated route to use and Mechanicsburg, or Camp Hill was to use a particular route. So we didn't have all communities trying to get away on the same road and end up with a mass traffic jam where nothing was moving.

INT: So once the evacuation was started then people, for instance who wanted to go to relatives and that happened to live in that particular direction, they wouldn't be able to go stay with those relatives. They would have to with the rest of the town?

NAR: No, no they still had the option. If you had a place to go. Now, we would have had at the turnpike what would have been the exit for Carlisle, there would have been a check point set up. Now if you were coming from Camp Hill, you'd be told exactly where to, which way to come into town and to where the buses. We had maps all prepared so the drivers would be given a map showing exactly where there location was, for the school where they were going.

(INTERVIEWER Steve Kassovic UNINTELLIGIBLE MAPS)

Yes, where, what school they would use, where the parking would be in that area. And then if somebody had a place to stay further west they would be permitted to continue on the turnpike. But it would have been, still as far as I understood it, they still would have had to be from an evacuated area. Because that's what the pike was to be used for.

INT: People who were not from evacuated areas would not be allowed on the highways?

NAR: Not on those particular designated highways. There are enough other roads around here, especially in this area where we have 81, 83, along with the turnpike. There would have been enough roads for anybody to get out of the area that wanted to get out without possibly jamming up any of the evacuation route.

INT: Who were to be the chairman of these committees? You mentioned the transportation committee and things like that. How were they chosen?

NAR: Mainly from somebody that had the expertise in that field. Our communications we had a gentleman, I think he just retired from the National Guard and I think he was if not the head of it one of the officers in the Field Communications Unit.

INT: Do you remember his name?

NAR: Yeah, Kermit Wilson. But we had our own telephone lines set up if power went out. As far as using your own phones, we were all set up with our own communications section down in the borough offices.

INT: Who was the transportation chairman?

NAR: Transportation, off hand I can't tell you. It could have been one of, I'm not sure. Ron Shearer rings a bell for some reason. Ron I think handled all the buses and bus routes for the school district.

INT: These are all local Carlislians then?

NAR: Yes.

INT: If it was Ron Shearer and Kermit Wilson they are both local people?

NAR: Yes.

INT: I am new here so I am still learning the names.

NAR: That's all right, now Kermit Wilson.

INT: These are people I can see that we might want to talk to about their experiences in that particular.

NAR: Kermit is also very active in and I think instrumental in starting the local REACT Group also. So we had, REACT was tied right in with us at all times.

INT: What do you mean by the local REACT group? I'm not sure what REACT is?

NAR: REACT is a group similar to a group of CB'ers that have communication units in their cars.

INT: Are they CB units or are they Short Wave units? Ham units?

NAR: I think they are CB units.

INT: So he would be a good person to talk to now about that?

NAR: Definitely, definitely.

INT: Good, well I'll make that a point of seeing if in fact we can get an appointment and Ron Scheer maybe, is that Sheer?

NAR: Shearer.

INT: Shearer.

NAR: There is Rick Horner who works with county communications over in the courthouse. Rick is our local Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. And Rick has all these committees and all the names and everything. Rick of course did most of the plan laying as far as the Borough was concerned and he the number one man really in direct contact with the county at all times. In cases like this, as far as towns or boroughs around here, the, anything that's of an emergency nature then the mayor steps to the front of the picture right away. I'm the only one that can declare an emergency, a state of emergency. And I'm the only one that can give the official end to the state of emergency. So I was kept to date on everything possible at all times, and Rick ran the operations as far as the town went. Everything really would have been under him because at that time I designate what power is going to go where. When I do declare an emergency its a case. I take, according to the state code I become responsible for every operation. Now if I wanted to run a particular operation myself, I could do it. But what I do, the borough manager becomes the emergency borough manager. The chief of police becomes the state of emergency chief police and such. There's really no change in command other than I am the only one that has the power to call a state of emergency.

INT: Was there a state of emergency called?

NAR: Not as such, no. We kept any emergency powers strictly with Rick Horner, our, as I said, the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. And Rick kept us up to date to see whether we were going to really go into a full state of emergency. And that would have been your curfew, everything possible. Keep everybody off the streets.

INT: Was a full state of emergency declared anywhere in Cumberland County?

NAR: I can't answer for the entire county. I know we never went into a full state of emergency.

INT: Was it ever considered?

NAR: Oh yes. Yes, depending on what direction that bubble kept going, whether it was going to keep going up or whether it was going to be reduced, and when you were facing the possibility of, the key word seemed to be meltdown. I don't know how many people ever heard of it before TMI. But when you were looking at possibilities like that, yes. Then we figured it would have to be a full state of emergency. Because not knowing, regardless of how well educated you are in that field, not knowing until something happens what the results are going to be. You didn't dare leave anything to chance because then we would have closed the schools and we would have gotten. In a case like that we would have been evacuated ourselves and at the same time we were setting up the plans to receive evacuees, we were going right back over the same plans. The centers that were going to receive the evacuees would have been the centers, the mass assembly centers for our people here to meet, to be bused out of the area. So you were really working two plans at the same time. But there wasn't a full state of emergency called, although it was considered if things had gotten worse.

INT: Was there ever the possibility that Carlisle would have been evacuated? Had that possibility come up that a state of emergency would have been declared and Carlisle would have been evacuated?

NAR: Yes that was considered at, a couple stages. Now truthfully I don't think the entire town was aware that there was that much consideration being given at that one time. Although when people heard about all the meetings and what you were making, they were talking evacuees, I guess a lot of them figured they were going to be the evacuees. And there was great concern. We got the word out as quickly as possible; "We are strictly being designated so far as an evacuee host area not to be evacuated."

INT: This was to be a calming sort of thing?

NAR: Yeah, yeah. Because there again we figured as long as people knew exactly what was going on there was less chance for a lot of fear and a lot of unnecessary movement and such.

INT: Had Carlisle been evacuated, what was the plan? Where was Carlisle going to go?

NAR: I can't tell you exactly. Rick, there again Rick Horner would have all those details because there was consideration being given I guess as far west as Pittsburg and (unintelligible) of Lewistown. I think Lewistown was to get some Harrisburg people. Hospital units and such had to be given special consideration. The Holy Spirit Hospital in Camp Hill and I guess the Harrisburg Hospital, I think they were to go to the State College area. But exactly where we were going, that might sound strange. I don't know where we were going, but thankfully we didn't get to that stage because.

INT: There were plans though for taking Carlisle out?

NAR: Yes, yes.

INT: Were those plans then basically in the county hands?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Rather than in the borough hands?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Your purview really was then accepting people and how to manage them here. But once Carlisle would leave that was out of your hands and into the county hands?

NAR: We had, the plans we made were how to get our people assembled, where to get them assembled and what manner of transportation we were going to get them out of the area. So we had those things all planned. And then it would have been the case, all they would have had to do would say, "Now Carlisle, you are going to be evacuated. You are going here. You are going here, you're going there." But I.

INT: How would the information have gotten out to the populace? To say, ok, now we are going to go?

NAR: Radio. People were told to I think turn to WHP. WHP was the emergency network and WHP, our local radio station once you got to a certain point in the emergency, at a Carlisle radio station Y96.

INT: WHY?

NAR: Yes. They automatically became part of the WHP. So people were informed what to do or where to keep your radio and any area or any station you would've been listening to would have told you. I guess even your out of state stations would have been carrying. Or if you were listening to this station and you live in such an area please turn your dial to and you would have been told so that you would have been brought up to date right away on every thing that was going on. I don't think that here would have been too much problem letting people know. Everybody is so eager and anxious to get every word that they could. I don't think we have had any problem at all. We could have had loud speakers on automobiles touring neighborhoods to begin with, too.

INT: Would the sirens I guess all be blowing?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Would everyone have been required to leave in an evacuation or would you just be requested to do so?

NAR: It was my understanding that expectant mothers and children up to a certain age would. It would be mandatory that they leave. I, there would have been no choice. Older people, no. It would have been up to them. Of course there again it would, the whole thing would depend on what, supposing we had fallout. What degree of fallout? Do we have the type of fallout that it could start seeing burns or such instantly? Which I guess there is that possibility. But the older people volunteered, a number of them volunteered that if we evacuate Carlisle you are going to need somebody behind. We'll stay. I've got this piece of equipment, I've got that. And it was amazing.

INT: Yeah, you were talking about this to me the other day where they were saying that I've got a pick up truck or a tractor or something that they would help with it. Why were they doing this and where were they coming to? Were they going to the borough council hall or were they coming up to you here and?

NAR: No, they would either call me on the phone or walk in the store here. And it's just the idea that they weren't. They were concerned, yes. We'll say they weren't scared. Some people said, hey, what's going to happen is going to happen. And mother and I talked it over and we're not leaving. And there is going to have to be some people stay.

Which was true. Of course there again people will stay up to what point? We have to have some protection. You'd have to keep a piece of fire apparatus around. You'd have to have probably an ambulance around. And there has to be some police protection. And we had checked to see what National Guard units or army personnel could be used for patrolling and such. Now there again it depended in what state of emergency you were in as to what you could expect. If the town was ordered evacuated then we would depend on some military help. If we were on a go if you wish base and if you don't want to go you stay. Then it is still pretty much in our hand to furnish what protection and such would be needed. But it was amazing; I'll tell you the people just never let you down when you need them. It made it all worthwhile, all the hours. Some of these fellows on the go 48, 72 hours and such. I was a little more fortunate. I had, I was getting some sleep at night. But some of them were just on the go constantly, depending what they were connected with and the communication lines and getting everything set up. Those boys just kept going around the clock. And never a gripe, never a word out of any of them except to say something good for somebody else. But it was amazing.

INT: Well, the older people you said came in because they figured they were already passed a certain age and 20 or 30 years from now they'd be dead so this didn't bother them?

NAR: Yes, they said. Ohh. Take myself. I'm no old man by any means at 53. But add 20 to 30 years onto that, I could care less about, worrying about age 73 or worrying about age 83. Because by that time, well, I could die of natural causes more easily probably within that time than from the fallout or what danger you have from that. But they, then some of them said there's, if a mass of people would have to be moved at, it would include if we had a general evacuation order from this whole area. Where do you send them? And they said somebody might be able to get a spot where we might take. It was amazing the number of people that went to the banks and drew out money that went to motels and hotels.

INT: Went to motels and hotels here?

NAR: Further west. I mean they got away from the area. But I don't know what they expected to do when the money ran out, because some of them did. Some of them depleted their money. A fellow standing over here at the bank drew out \$5000 in cash. Where are you heading? I don't know. We're taking off and we are going to stop and stay here a couple days or there a few days.

INT: Was this someone you knew or just someone who happened to be there?

NAR: I, Its somebody I know as a resident of Carlisle.

INT: Do you know if they actually left?

NAR: Yes, yes they did leave. Now they were gone I think about 6 days and things were looking better at that time and money was starting to get depleted because naturally the hotels and motels were charging their regular rates. It wasn't a case where this was an emergency and \$5 a day we could put you up. We are talking regular rates. And some just took off knowing they had friends in this state or that state, and head in that direction. If they can take care of us fine, if they can't we know somebody else. We'll just check, got our bed rolls with us, and this and that.

INT: Our talking about hotels brought to mind the hotels and motels here in Carlisle. What was their status and the situation with them during this incident?

NAR: I think the motels around the area; I think were quite busy with the people that were coming in to this particular area. There were different personnel assigned to the county here out of the Washington Offices of nuclear energy. We had, oh I think 3 or 4 that were over here at the Courthouse Office, the County Office, around the clock. And that's where we got our official communicates to send out to the different boroughs and such, because they had a direct line right in if there was a. When people were saying about how fast the bubble was increasing and they could pick up the phone and they could call TMI and talk to one of their own men and say "Hey, has there been any change at all?" But we did have a link with TMI.

INT: At what point did evacuation of Carlisle seem imminent?

NAR: Do you mean as far as what would have happened at TMI?

INT: No, at what point did it seem possible that you would have to evacuate Carlisle?

NAR: When, probably at the beginning more so than at any time. When they started talking about the. They had their 5 mile radius, they had the 20 mile radius, they had their 25 mile radius. And until we realized exactly what they were talking about. I think right, right at the beginning most people thought when they were talking about evacuation without a doubt we were within that area and then as more details got out, and then of course the governor. Which I have nothing but praise for him, the way he handled different situations. But when he asked the mothers and children to leave the area that was not 20 miles. That was only 5 miles, a 5 mile radius there. Then I think people started to take a little different look at it. After all they weren't evacuating Middletown they weren't evacuating Goldsboro. So once information got around a little bit you had a chance to see exactly what was going on? Because when word first come out about the use of it, and then you realized this thing started 3 days ago. Now what stage are we at? It took them 3 days to, when the word finally leaked out or they got to a state when they finally couldn't hide it anymore, what has gone on that we don't know about? Then as things moved on and we found out what could have happened in that time level time span that we didn't know anything about. You couldn't have added too much more to the problem than what you knew about. It wasn't a case where something burst that you didn't know about, anything like that that would have been evident in some manner. The Geiger counters could have picked up something on that. But until you realized exactly what the situation was, which was right at the beginning, then I think that's when you figured Carlisle is going to go. Its just a question of when, but then as things moved on we realized that we were going to stay right here and probably receive people.

INT: Carlisle itself would not have been evacuated, would it, except by an order from the state? Well, that is the question. Who would have given the evacuation order?

NAR: I think it would have come from the state level really. Because it looked like the state got right on top of everything and they had their own radiuses and areas as to what they figured was going to be safe. And if things would have continued to get worse I think the state would have evacuated a lot larger area than anybody is aware of, really.

INT: Carlisle couldn't have decided on its own to evacuate?

NAR: We could have probably. But where, if we were going to evacuate on our own, we probably would have started finding who was going to take us. Most people would have considered where they were going as long as they were heading away. But I don't think it is a decision that we would have had, would have to make on our own. As I say they were, the county was on top of it, the state was on top of it. I think if you were to look at state plans you would find out that yeah, we definitely according to state, we definitely were in the next evacuation move. It didn't get the point where the state was looking at that next step.

INT: A state of emergency could have been declared.

NAR: Yes.

INT: In the borough itself. At what point were you the closest to actually declaring a state of emergency?

NAR: Probably Sunday. Saturday night and Sunday morning I think was the closest. That's when they were talking about breaking the bubble? Because that had more people concerned I think than anything. Because nobody seemed to be able to explain to them exactly what was going to happen if they had to burst the bubble. But I think the most calming thing of all was when the President arrived, and that was later that Sunday afternoon, and went to the site and had his wife with him at the site. Sure he might have been there if they had to drag him there, but they wouldn't had to take his wife along. And I think more people looked at things in a little different light after that, when he went right in to the reactor and such. I'm sure he had the clothing on that they wear down there and such but even at that people got to thinking, "Hey, if there was the danger right now that we think there is, that man would be in California."

INT: Yeah, I've heard jokes at that time about well if it was really that dangerous, he wouldn't have come himself, he would have sent Vice-President Mondale.

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Or maybe it is that dangerous because he didn't bring Amy.

NAR: But this Denton, he would have ran for president the next week and I think could have been elected! It was odd how the people picked him up right away and if he said it, it was true. It could have been your best friend telling you the same thing and you'd be skeptical. But they just, he just got the public trust and he had the credibility that nobody else had at that time.

INT: What was the problem with credibility do you think? Before Denton.

NAR: Trying I think, you know, I want to tell you the story but I don't want to give you the facts. I want to tell you where we are right now. I don't want to let you know what got us to this point. And of course then the, it depends who the commentators were, too at times. You could here the very same announcement from three different commentators. And you wondered whether they were at the same spot. They had tried to tell the same story. Some were so glamorous and some so frightening. It was like the newspapers. People on the west coast, according to their papers out there you would have thought the whole east coast was ready to drop off the end. I mean not just the small area that was included here. People in town here that have relatives in CA. The one fellows that lives

out there his mother is here and his brothers here. And his brother said he called 3 times in one day! And was really irritated when we kept answering the phone, because he figured. Nobody should be here to answer the phone. Why are you still there? Why are you even in Pennsylvania yet? And they had everything going I guess the whole way up the east coast and as far west I guess as Pittsburgh.

INT: Why do you think that problem existed? Why was it so?

NAR: I have no idea. It's like somebody trying to outguess the other or. I heard, I think I mentioned a physicist up at the college. Now that one Sunday night meetings we had I think he, the 11:00 meetings he addressed the group.

INT: Which group was this?

NAR: Why this was the mayor, the chief, and the emergency coordinator from every area in the county.

INT: Was this the first Sunday night right after the occurrence?

NAR: Yes.

INT: So it was right during the middle of it, the height of the crisis?

NAR: Oh yes, yes. And when he stood up and tried to explain what he knew of it and then let himself open to questions and everybody had questions. But he just took his good old time and tried to explain everything. He was probably the Denton of Carlisle because, well, one individual that was there from one of the communities he had studied physics at Penn State supposedly and this and that and someone ask him. He had a doctorate of something and someone asked who was speaking, why Dr. So and So. How long he had been at Penn State. Well, he was at Penn State something like 14 years and you find out yes, he was the ROTC Officer or something at Penn State and the physics that he had was part of the ROTC course! Which in no way went into any depth like they were talking about. Now that guy could have driven that whole crowd wild, because somebody asked a question before it got to that particular point and he always had the answer, but it was never an answer you wanted to hear. But he could have thrown a whole community into a calamity for being, and the other gentleman. Wolf?

INT: Prof. Neil Wolf?

NAR: Yes. When he started his explanation and such at what, he said I can only tell you what I know. And right away you figured well here's a guy at least you are going to get facts He is not going to come back I think this will be done" or "I think that" he said "I am just trying to tell you what I know." And he did and it was most helpful.

INT: Well, how do you feel about the media? Well, before I even get into that question, did you follow the media much at all? Radio, television, newspapers for information on what was going on at TMI? Or were you getting most of your information from the county?

NAR: I was getting most of my information from the county, because we had a direct communicates coming over there, coming right off their wire service over there that they had. And every hour you got news. Even if it said this hour there is no further news. At least you had that line. But I could hear something in the street. Hey did you hear what

just happened? Over at the reactor? No, no. Well, things have really gotten worse. They're they're. I think they are afraid to say exactly what happened. Now we could go over there. Like I said they had the official group out of the Washington Office of Emergency Preparedness and they could pick up a phone and call. But you'd walk over there and pick up one of the latest news releases to come in and they mention maybe that somebody had heard it on the radio. WHP in Harrisburg. They got all their disc jockeys together and they were on the air just answering questions, call in any question you have that you are not sure of. You hear a rumor, call in. And I think they were on for about 8 hours running. And a guy call up and you got to know certain, over the years certain disc jockeys and certain announcers over there and- such. You'd say, "Hey Ron, somebody said this thing could happen. Can it?" or "Did it?" Something, he knew something about it, he would tell you, he'd say, "I don't know. Just keep listening. I'm going to get on the phone. And I'll be giving you the answer back here in a couple minutes." And things like that really helped.

INT: So you had this kind of. You had the radio on when you were at home or in evening?

NAR: Oh yes. Yeah, but truthfully I wasn't paying that much attention. Because I wasn't home that long. I knew within another hour I was going to be down at the headquarters and I'd check then to see what.

INT: What did you think about the media handling the situation in general? Did you have? Do you have any over all opinions about how, how the media handled?

NAR: I think it was blown way out of proportion.

INT: By the media in general? Or do you think that, was there any. Do you think that the local media had a different a approach to the whole thing as opposed to say national media or?

NAR: Yes, I do. The national receivers wanted to make a big spectacle out of it. It almost seemed to be to the point where who can put the most terrifying headline in the paper. But the local media stayed away from that pretty much. Even here in Carlisle. Now with, you are reading articles where from one of the local reporters says "now I am standing here right on Three Mile Island at the time I am writing this." This and that. But it, it just seemed to be blown too much out of proportion.

INT: How about the government handling of the situation? Do you have any opinion of the, of their handling of the situation? Government agencies, government people, government anything?

NAR: I can't help but feel that they did everything that they possibly could. Because there was too much of an unknown factor connected with this. The, a lot of people said I don't think they are telling us everything. I don't think they knew everything. That's why they weren't telling us. They, when they set off the first atom bomb they didn't know what that was going to be like. There is no telling that everyone of them is going to go off the same way and create the same condition. I can't truthfully find fault with the government. Either federal or state.

INT: Well how about the industry? Do you have any opinion of how the industry reacted, took care of the situation? I guess I am primarily referring to Metropolitan Edison.

NAR: I really think they tried to cover up everything possible. I think when it hit that first leak or whenever it was, that Tuesday or that one valve or whatever it was on the panel that didn't function properly. I think if they would have come out and said, 'Hey, we got a little bit of trouble here and we are keeping it closely monitored and we'll be right on top of it. I think it would have been a different situation. You don't hide something like that for three days and then the only reason you did bring it out was because you don't know what to do now.

INT: Or was there anyone that you found particularly reliable or whose word you trusted more than anyone else's during this whole situation?

NAR: Denton. He, I don't know. He just came across to you and. Just watching him. Now there I did see him on several TV newscasts, and the way they were throwing questions to that man right and left. And of course they were all difficult questions, but just the way he fielded them. He wasn't in any hurry. He wasn't about to get excited or upset. Just an attitude, I know a little bit of what I am talking about so if I just say we are OK right now, we are OK. Just that whole attitude. He was the one person really to.

INT: Was there anyone that you particularly mistrusted?

NAR: No.

INT: Well, do you feel that those who were in charge were in control of the situation then?

NAR: You say those that were in charge?

INT: Those people

NAR: Met Ed or?

INT: Yeah yeah. The people who were in charge of the reactor at that time.

NAR: No, I don't think they were in control of it.

INT: What made you uneasy about that situation?

NAR: Not knowing even what they were telling us was truth or not. I think that, that was the worst thing. Because till somebody got here from the federal picture, nobody would believe a word.

INT: Well, do you think that those who are in charge are in control now?

NAR: I have no way of. I have to. I'd have to get my confidence back in that group first before I could say whether they are or they aren't. They are still. If you'd say I have to have an answer, I'd say no, I don't think they are in full control. They might be in better control than what they were. I just can't help but feel they are not in full control.

INT: Were you worried about the situation during that time? Did you feel worried? Uneasy?

NAR: No. The only uneasiness that I had was that we could get plans set up fast enough to take care of what they were hoping to get from us. No, I wasn't that concerned as far as the radiation fallout, this or that.

INT: What about for the evacuation or for a state of emergency? Did you feel that you could actually, that Carlisle could cope with it?

NAR: Yes, yes. The same as. A lot of other areas could have too. But it. When the chips are down its surprising how people react. That reaction has always been in the plus side as far as I am concerned. Now I think we could have faced almost anything we had to and we would have gotten through.

INT: Do you think that Carlisle could have been evacuated successfully?

NAR: Yes, definitely so.

INT: How much lead time was necessary, did you feel? What was the minimum amount of lead time?

NAR: 8 hours was a time that was given to us at one point. There is so much an hour, if you are going to have to evacuate, how soon are we going to know. We are going to have to know before the public announcement is made in that community and I think they figured 8 hours.

INT: So that you would have known 8 hours before the public announcement was made to leave?

NAR: Yes. And I have heard calculations or estimations given by some, supposedly from the state mental and such that to evacuate a community you are talking 24 hours of notice and such to really come through with a full evacuation.

INT: What would these 8 or 24 hours be used for?

NAR: You mean as far as leaving? If we were to be evacuated?

INT: What would be done in these 8 hours before the public was let?

NAR: Securing what. Oh you mean as far as our notice?

INT: Yeah.

NAR: Making sure that all transportation was at the sites its supposed to be at. Because all that stuff is going to have to be gassed and oiled and checked, even if you just checked it yesterday it is going to have to be rechecked. And along with your transportation system, you gotta have that little pick up truck come along with it with the mechanics. The possibility of breakdowns and such. There'd be certain things that would have to be arranged, or preparation would have to be made for shutdowns. Industry would have to have advanced notice too as far as shut downs and such. There is any number of different things that 8 hours possibly wouldn't have been enough.

INT: Would, the populace though in that eight hours would probably have learned about the coming evacuation informally. Wouldn't they? Or would?

NAR: Yes, I said that same thing myself. Because there are certain movements that have to be made and you started making those an people start putting 2 and 2 together and they'd come out with 4. That's why you had to try and be as prepared as possible in advance so that hopefully what with an 8 hour advance notice could work out that you were lucky if you had an hour or two before.

INT: Do you think that would have caused a problem though, that people would have found out informally before hearing it formally that the evacuation was to be called?

NAR: That could create problems.

INT: I'm just thinking in terms of resentment, saying you know, gee whiz here they know for 8 hours that we were going to be evacuated and they didn't tell us and now they don't. They don't have the confidence that they would have enough time to leave.

NAR: Hopefully, so we'll say you were set up in phases. And the public could have been enlightened on that. Phase One we'll say could have been the 8 hour notice as far as we we're concerned. So Phase One we start to close down industry. What about the Water Plant? What about the Power Plant? There has to be some safety precaution taken at those places. So we start with Phase One. And depending on the situation when you get to the end of Phase one, it depends on how it looks whether you are going to Phase Two or not. Now there, they would probably have a very good idea. If you start Phase One you know something is pretty definite. But it might only be 99% definite. There is still that 1%. But the different phases. And I'm not sure how harmful it would have been, or if it would be harmful to let them know exactly what, why we are possibly going to start something 8 hours before they do. Because it is a little different maybe going down in the cellar and turning off your water meter than it is trying to shut down the water plant. There again I can't help but feel that you'll have less trouble by trying to tell people as much as possible. It's what they don't know and what they don't understand that creates most of the problems.

INT: Did you ever think about leaving the area?

NAR: No. That's one thing I never gave a thought to. As far as I was concerned, I think I did mention one day my wife asked me if I'd given any thought to where we were going, and I said I gave it some thought as to where you are going. I'm going to send you to your brother's. She said, well, I'm not leaving without you, and I said, well, I can't leave. I'll stay. There has to be somebody stay. I felt that even it was, if we were having fall—out and such, I'm going to be monitored, hopefully, from time to time to see how much I'm glowing, see whether I can stay (laughs) a little longer. But, I just never gave it any thought. My wife and little dog, yes.

INT: Did they actually leave at any point?

NAR: No they didn't.

INT: Had you left what would you have taken with you? Or had you sent them, what would you have sent them with?

NAR: Clothing, money. That's about it.

INT: Was there anybody in your life that you were watching sort of in order to decide how to act what to do? Someone who would be a model for you?

NAR: Not that I realized. If there was, I would have say it was two gentlemen: Tom Blosser and John Broujos. With the county office. I never saw two men take over anything so completely as they did and in such a short time and come up with all the plans and committees and such. It was amazing. I could never say enough words for those two guys, because they just seemed to know what to do at the right time. And

things just kept falling into place for them. Well, I think the plans they came up with are more or less be the model plans for the state and possibly for the nation eventually, who knows. They moved right ahead. No hesitancy. And then we were to come up with our own plans and send them to the county to make sure that they would fit right in. In some cases it was, “Now do you think it would be better if you were to do this instead of that?” It was always, “What do you think?” Not: “Hey, this isn’t going to work. You got to do this or you got to do that.” They had some ideas of their own and their main concern was that with all the individual communities having their plans that, yes, they do fit in.

INT: Did you have any problems with these plans fitting in?

NAR: No. Everything we came up with just seemed to interlock. Of course, being around the local group here and such, you have some idea of their thinking also, and at times when we’d come up with different things, someone would say, “Now is that going to fit right into a mass plan that might be for the entire county or are we going to be out in left field?” Someone would say, “No, the way they usually think is this way or that way, so we’re going to fit right into their scheme.

INT: What were their positions, actually — Tom Blosser and John Broujos? What is their official capacity?

NAR: Tom is the county coordinator — the Office of Emergency Preparedness, and actually John is the lawyer, the solicitor for the county. John’s had a lot of military training and John apparently was tied in with transportation and such, I think, during some of his military career.

INT: Was what he doing part of his official duties or did he step out of his official duties and sort of create his own niche or was it part of a coordinated effort?

INT: It wasn’t in line with his county solicitor’s job. Now, apparently, somewhere along the line he is on the county board or committee for Emergency Preparedness. John just surprised me no end, because knowing him as just an easy going lawyer and seeing the way he was making decisions with no hesitancy. “We’re going to do this. This will work; That will work, and when this works this ties in with that or this.” It was amazing.

INT: Did you have any mental pictures of what was going on at TMI at that time? Did you have any idea of sort of imaginings of what happening there right then? What were they like?

NAR: Oh, yeah. Oh, I could picture that bubble just as plain as could be. (laughs) in that reactor. Of course we had seen a couple pictures of it. Those three towers got to be almost the national symbol for a while, but in your mind, year, you could I don’t think there’s anybody that didn’t have some idea in their own mind just exactly what was going on.

INT: Could you describe a little bit of what it was you were thinking about?

NAR: Well, trying to picture the bubble when they kept saying how large it was and where it was, you could just picture that bubble and really I could picture the bubble bursting, but only one going out, never going up. Now they started talking about meltdown, you could see the little hole going right through the floor of the earth.

INT: What do you think would have been the result of all that?

NAR: The bubble, I think the main result of what would have happened from the bubble, is that would have burst and you'd have had all that in the air. I think the way we situated here and with our wind flow I still wouldn't have been concerned as much about this area as it would if I'd have been on downstream. Philadelphia might have ended up getting the worst part of the deal, depending upon how the wind was blowing that day. But one thing that concerned me as far as the meltdown was the water. Eventually, in the ground itself I wasn't concerned. Now whether you could just picture that going right down into the ground and then seeing the little channels going to these different water sources. And water probably concerned me more than anything as far as what concerns I did have. I just. You could picture radiation going up, but I can't picture it coming back down. Of course, it doesn't all stay up there. I still believe that a lot that did go up just dissipated in the air itself. And yet is that possible? You can't see it to begin with. I think that's what scared a lot of people. If I can see what I fighting, even though I know I don't have a chance of winning, at least I know what I'm fighting. But when you can't see it, that's a different story.

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

NAR: I don't myself, know. I don't think anything happened there that would have affected my health. Now whether it could be possible that some of them closer ——— Goldsboro and such ——— yes, there could be.

INT: Did you have any concerns about the food and the milk produced in the area?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you think at all of your own death?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you assume that you would survive?

NAR: Yes.

INT: What reassured you that you would survive?

NAR: I don't know if I needed reassured. I just never thought any thing about dying.

INT: Did you think about god at all during this incident?

NAR: You know, I never gave that a thought—— I mean that question a thought. And now that I do think about it. I truthfully can't say that I did.

INT: Did you pray?

NAR: Yes. I said my prayers same as I always did.

INT: What did you pray about?

NAR: Same as always. You're thankful for the day that you lived, and hopefully tomorrow can be an even better day. Take care of your loved ones.

INT: Was there anything concerning TMI in your prayers at that time?

NAR: No. Since you bring it up, it does seem strange. That TMI was still divorced from prayers and such. I don't know why.

INT: Did this event bring to your mind any kind of past experiences or past events? Did it make you think that, gee this is just like...?

NAR: Yeah. When the bomb went off.

INT: Did it make you think about the bomb at Hiroshima?

NAR: Yes. And, you know, I think everybody was picturing the mushroom cloud, you know the big blast, the big mushroom cloud, going up and they were tying that same thing in to TMI. Cause I talked to so many people and I tried to point out (and I didn't know anything) you're not talking about a big explosion. Where you have the big blast and the big mushroom. "Oh, no? Well, what are you talking about?" I said, "Vapor, mist is what you're talking about here." And I don't know how right or how wrong I was. "Oh, I didn't realize that, I was picturing the big boom, and then you stand there and you watch that big cloud. Now which way is it going to go?" And all this and all that. I did a little bluffing sometimes, but it seemed to give people some answers for the moment anyhow.

INT: Do you think that an incident like this was any more or less frightening than a flood or a hurricane or a war? How does it compare to things like that?

NAR: I don't know. It's probably worse than floods. It's that unknown factor. You were just waiting. The same with water, I mean, floods, at least you can see the water. You're not sure how high it's going to keep raining because you don't know how long it's going to keep rain I would say to most people it would be worse because of the unknown factor there. And you're still fighting something you can't see.

INT: So if you had the choice, you would rather go through a flood again than go through another TMI?

NAR: Yeah. Well. I would probably say yes. I was never really that concerned about TMI. I just figured it was, once they could know the problem. It might take them a little while, but they were going to correct it.

INT: Did this incident bring to mind any past experiences, did bring to your mind any kinds of T.V. shows or movies? Did it make you think of anything like that that you started thinking about certain TV shows or any movies or any...?

NAR: I don't see that much T.V. except I usually turn the T.V. with the 11:00 news. I don't sit down and watch an evening of T.V. No, I don't think I was doing too much singing. Somewhere over the rainbow (laughs) No.

INT: Some people, for instance had seen the movie On the Beach which was about nuclear destruction and they found themselves absent mindedly whistling waltzing "Matilda" which was the song going throughout that movie.

NAR: No, I had nothing I was tying in.

INT: Did you have any daydreams that you can remember? Or any sleeping dreams about anything? In particular during, or your sleeping dreams Were your sleep patterns at all upset by this?

NAR: No, I'm the type of person that I can pretty much blank out before I go to sleep.

INT: Do you think that anything happened during this incident that changed people around you? How do you think it changed people?

NAR: Possibly more togetherness. More closeness. You're concerned or not, you still were trying to look out for the other person also. I think it was just your concern for your fellow man. Whether it was openly or just subconsciously or what. I think it was there and I think it was there in most people.

INT: At that time?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Do you think that people have retained that?

NAR: It has lessened. I don't think it has dropped away. I don't think it ever completely drops away after circumstances like that.

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

NAR: No. I'd like to say it made me a better man, but it didn't. (laughs)

INT: How about jokes during this time? Did you hear a lot of jokes about TMI, about radiation, about meltdowns, about things like this?

NAR: Yeah, we were hearing different jokes and punch lines. I can't remember. Most of them come out in tee shirts and such, or "Hell, no, we won't glow" or I think Dickinson had some of the first tee shirts out. But it got to the point where you were hearing the little one—line jokes and such, "Gee you're looking rosier today than ever."

INT: When did people start with those things? Did that start before the bubble went down?

NAR: Oh, yeah. yeah.

INT: It started right with the beginning of it?

NAR: Pretty much so.

INT: How long did it last?

NAR: I don't think it's stopped yet.

INT: People are still joking about the radiation?

NAR: Oh, yeah. You still hear it.

INT: What sorts of jokes do you hear now? Are they the same ones?

NAR: Yes. They're pretty much the same ones.

INT: Why do you think there was this kind of joking going on?

NAR: Well, I've said this so many times. I've said a joke and someone said, hey, this is no time for a joke. And I said, well, I could just sit down and cry, but when I stop crying I still have the same problem in front of me, so I may as well joke about it. I could just sit down and let it get the better of me. And I think that's the way with most people. It is something that is very easy to be a hush—hush thing among people and people just don't

want to talk. "Oh, don't mention this and don't mention that." But I think you'll find people do that in the fact of almost any danger and I think it's a good reaction.

INT: Can you remember jokes like that from other crises, in the past?

NAR: In the same type nature, yes, yes. I think we've always had them and I think we always will have them.

INT: Have you developed or changed any opinion about nuclear energy as a result of this incident? Either developed an opinion now, or changed an opinion you might have had before. And how is it?

NAR: I always have thought since they started talking nuclear energy that it's almost a must for the future. If I've altered or changed any opinions since, it would just be as far as safeguards go. Now, we have human beings working where there's controls and such and you'll never eliminate a hundred percent the chance of there being some mistake. The same with the machines. The machines break down. How you go about it if anything that has come to my attention or I've thought about it is that I don't think anybody gave too much thought about the waste. (I haven't had lunch yet.) This contamination, this water and such, they've been taking somewhere and dumping. I don't think ninety percent of the people ever gave that a thought what we do with it. What will you do with it? You can put it in some kind of container that is safe for X number of years, but as long as they are going to be making nuclear power, unless they can find some way that they can recycle, that could be a concern. I still think it has to be part of the future. But I still think we have a lot to learn from it also.

INT: Do you have anything you'd like to say at all about the entire subject any statement that we haven't covered?

NAR: No. I think we've covered just about everything, everything possible.

INT: Do you have a particular statement as mayor that you'd like to make?

NAR: The only thing I could say is that I've never seen so many people putting so many hours and try to do so much for so many. It's all the so's ... but I just can't find words. Then when I see the people today yet I still say, "Hey, I can still picture you doing this or that. And I want to thank you again for the job you did." They just never let you down. And the rougher the situation and the worse it looks, the more strength and power they come up with. That's all I have to say.