

September 9, 1979

Occupation: Retired

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember about when you heard about the Three Mile Island incident?

NARRATOR: Yes, it was on the Friday morning and my son-in-law said to me, Mam-Mam, that's what he calls me, get your things in a bag and we'll go to Shamokin and take Vanessa up there because she's five months pregnant.

INT: And what did you think about when he first said that?

NAR: Well, I was scared. I was really scared. I was annoyed. And we went up there and they say that coal makes smog but its worse in Carlisle with all that smog down there than it is in Shamokin with all the coal that they burn.

INT: Really?

NAR: Sure it is.

INT: So you'd prefer coal over...

NAR: Yes. That what they should be using instead of that nuclear.

INT: Have you always been against nuclear power?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Do you feel... Has the incident at Three Mile Island changed your opinion at all?

NAR: Nope, I still think they should have coal.

INT: And why is that?

NAR: Well, it would give the miners work that they don't have in Shamokin anymore in the coal region and that it is just as clean as the nuclear and it's healthier.

INT: Did you know that Three Mile Island was there before this incident happened?

NAR: I heard talk of it but I never was there.

INT: Do you think they shouldn't reopen Three Mile Island?

NAR: No, they definitely should not.

INT: When you first heard about it, you took off on that Friday?

NAR: That Friday morning.

INT: Did you try to find out more information about what was going on?

NAR: Well, we listened to the radio and after they said it got settled that you could move back in, we went back home again.

INT: Do you remember about when that was?

NAR: I think it was a Sunday morning. From Friday morning till Sunday morning then we went back.

INT: What sort of things did you take with you when you left?

NAR: Just enough to stay a couple of days.

INT: Did you expect to be coming back? Did you think it would...?

NAR: I expected to come back when it cleared up but I didn't think it would clear up as soon as it did, but I was glad it did.

INT: How did you think about the way the radio handled the incident?

NAR: Very good, very good.

INT: You thought they had good coverage?

NAR: Yes. Harrisburg was just wonderful.

INT: How did you feel about the way Metropolitan Edison handled the incident?

NAR: Good, good.

INT: And how about the government, the way they handled it?

NAR: Well, I think he done the best he knew how and of course it took him a long time to decide what to do, but he done what he thought was right.

INT: By he, do you mean Thornburgh or . . . ?

NAR: I mean the President.

INT: President Carter.

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did you feel reassured when he came?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Was there anyone who you particularly trusted during the whole thing?

NAR: What do you mean trusted?

INT: Just anyone whose word you relied on more than another person?

NAR: Well, I relied on the Harrisburg radio station.

INT: So, that was your main source then?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Was there anyone who you particularly mistrusted or didn't believe?

NAR: No, I didn't mistrust anyone. I just thought that God would work things out for us.

INT: Did you pray at all during the incident?

NAR: I sure did.

INT: How did you think God figured into the incident?

NAR: Well, I thought that God was giving us a warning about different things that were going on and that was one way to let us know that He still was God.

INT: So do you think he caused the incident to happen?

NAR: No.

INT: Just that he used the incident.

NAR: It was just a misfortune.

INT: Do you think he cleared the incident up?

NAR: I think He helped.

INT: Do you think he helped directly or he worked through people?

NAR: He worked through people.

INT: Did you think of the end of the world at all?

NAR: No, it never entered my mind.

INT: Or Satan worked into it?

NAR: No. I don't believe in Satan.

INT: Did you attend a religious service during the incident?

NAR: No.

INT: Does your faith have anything to say about nuclear power?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you think religious institutions or persons should have an opinion on nuclear power or would it be all right if they did?

NAR: Well, it's all right if they did and... I don't know, I don't think they should bring religion into something like that. I think they should just try to correct it without religion.

INT: Did you have any mental pictures about what was happening at Three Mile Island?

NAR: Yes, I was afraid that the unborn baby that my granddaughter was going to have.

INT: What were you afraid that might happen?

NAR: That is would be misformed or something would happen to its brain which they were talking about. I didn't have no idea of what was wrong.

INT: Did your daughter seem have a great deal of fear about this?

NAR: Oh yes. and my son-in-law.

INT: Has the baby been born since?

NAR: Yes.

INT: And is it all right?

NAR: Perfect.

INT: Is that the one I saw the other day during the summer? A little boy?

NAR: No. It's just two weeks old.

INT: Really?

NAR: Today. Yes.

INT: Oh, Verna.

NAR: Two weeks old today at 11:45 and her name is Brooke Erin Culverson.

INT: That's a pretty name.

NAR: She was in intensive care because she was five weeks early but not because of this here nuclear thing, it was because of the difficulty in having been born the way it was. But she's a little doll like all newborn babies.

INT: Did you have any images of what would happen if the worst would happen down there?

NAR: Well, I was afraid that the people who lived nearby. I was afraid that something would happen to them and I prayed for all the people that was by it to get away okay or the thing would get settled. That was the only thing that I worried about. Those people so close.

INT: Were you worried about your own health at all?

NAR: No, because I lived my life and I thought if I got it. Got cancer or whatever would happen to me, God's good to me and if I had to go, I would go.

INT: Do you think you may have been affected by radiation?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you think other people might have been affected?

NAR: That lived close to it, yes.

INT: So it's going to have repercussions then?

NAR: I'm afraid it will.

INT: Do you think Carlisle may have been affected by it?

NAR: No, it didn't come this far.

INT: Did you have any concern about the food or the milk?

NAR: No.

INT: You didn't stop drinking the milk from the area?

NAR: In fact, I don't drink much milk.

INT: Vegetables?

NAR: Vegetables. I eat a lot of vegetables but as far as milk, I don't have it that often.

INT: Okay.

NAR: I can do without that. I'm too fat now. (laughs)

INT: Did you picture in your mind any effects of radiation on life other than human life?

NAR: No.

INT: You didn't think of the plants or the animals?

NAR: Well, I did think of the animals being destroyed. I like to sit and watch the squirrels and chipmunks and the birds and at my house and I think it's wonderful just to hear them chirp and I feed them and I love to take care of them. So I was afraid for them.

INT: Do you think they may have been hurt?

NAR: No. They are too active at my place. (chuckles)

INT: They kept talking about meltdown and the hydrogen bubble and that it might get really bad, what did you think might happen if that had happened?

NAR: I thought we would have to go to Shamokin or farther away than that.

INT: You thought they would have a force evacuation.

NAR: Yes, and I could go to California anytime and stay out there until it cleared up but I just don't want to go out there.

INT: Do you have relatives out there?

NAR: My son.

INT: Have you ever been to California?

NAR: Seven times.

INT: That's a pretty state.

NAR: It is. Yeah, and I liked it out there but I like to be around my daughter and my son-and-law. I love my son-in-law. He's just the finest man that ever was. In fact, he's he likes me just as much as I like him. We get along good.

INT: Did you think about your own death during the whole thing?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you think about other people's death?

NAR: Yeah. I was afraid of my daughter and them, but I didn't care about myself but I was afraid of them having to go through something that wasn't necessary.

INT: Were you confident that everyone, that your family would come through all this?

NAR: Yeah, after . . . after the 3rd day when we were away and we heard over the radio that you could go back and then I was comfortable.

INT: Okay. Did you feel you had special responsibilities during the incident?

NAR: No, there wasn't anything that I could do.

INT: So it was mostly stay with your family and help them?

NAR: I just stayed with my sister up in Irish Valley.

INT: Did any ethical behavior guide your actions?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you think of any past experiences or past events or anything else that you'd been through in your life?

NAR: Yes. I was thinking about the coal. Always about the coal because we lived and had coal all our life and there was nobody had cancer or coughs or anything like that. But now they all have coughs and they are all getting cancer and it's just not the coal. ...It's other things that causing it, not coal. And they should go back to burning coal.

INT: Do you think a lot of it is due to nuclear energy?

NAR: No. I wouldn't say that. I don't know that much about nuclear energy.

INT: Was this incident any more frightening to you than a flood would be or a natural disaster?

NAR: No.

INT: Would you rate them about the same?

NAR: About the same.

INT: Did you think of any TV shows or movies?

NAR: Oh we watched television a lot because we were curious to see if they had anything on about the nuclear, that's all.

INT: I mean, did you think of any thing you may have seen like a movie that it reminded you of?

NAR: No, I never watch them. I don't like them. They bother me.

INT: Or did you think of anything like Hiroshima or something like that?

NAR: No.

INT: Going on up there. That's what a lot of the people at college were saying that it was just like Hiroshima. That was the only thing they could compare it to. People were looking for a big mushroom cloud over the corner of the sky.

NAR: That never bothered me though. If I would have been closer to it and could see it why I probably would have.

INT: Did you find yourself singing any songs that were related in some way?

NAR: No. I'm a poor singer by myself.

INT: So am I. But when I sing, I sing by myself. The other people don't hear it. When I'm in the shower, my roommate will knock on the door and say, "I hear you!" (both chuckle) Did you have any daydreams that you can remember?

NAR: About the nuclear?

INT: Yeah.

NAR: No.

INT: Or did it disturb your sleep at all?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you have any night dreams that you can remember?

NAR: No.

INT: Okay. Did you see any changes happening to the people around you? Did they act normal or did they start acting different?

NAR: No, they all act the same.

INT: Did it . . . Did you hear any joking around you? People making jokes about radiation or Three Mile Island?

NAR: No. At the time I was in, up at my sister's. She had to be taken to the hospital the day before I got there and I was all alone in the house and I thought the house was spooky, it was a big farmhouse and that bothered me sleeping, that's all. There was nothing else to concern me.

INT: Have you ever heard any joking from other crises?

NAR: No.

INT: Is there anything else you like to add to your opinion on nuclear power?

NAR: Yes. Go back to coal. That's all I can say. Go back to coal. Not just to give the miners work and maybe it would be better that if they would go back to coal and see how . . . maybe our life would get cheaper and we . . . the heck with the oil then. So that's all I have to say.

INT: Is there anything you'd like to add about anything?

NAR: No. Only that I like you. That's all.