

August 7, 1979

Occupation: College administrator

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

NARRATOR: Thinking back, I'm not even sure. Did it happen on a Thursday? I'm not sure... I think I might have. I'm not really sure. It might have been the radio or... TV. Really, it's not one of my vivid memories, you know. President Kennedy got shot and you knew exactly where you were, it was one of those. It didn't seem to be very important at the time.

INT: So you heard it from radio or television or something like that and you're not really exactly sure when?

NAR: Like I said, it didn't seem to be very important at the time. It was just one of those excerpts, I guess, that they were having problems at Three Mile Island and I wasn't really clear exactly what had happened, so. It wasn't.

INT: Did you hear about it several times before it made any sense to you?

NAR: Yes, I think that's probably it. I guess before people... well, working at the college here too. I know they had a staff meeting to discuss repercussions of it. This was initially; I believe that was on a Friday. And that's when it began to take some serious overtone that what could happen if. And... so then I guess I was joined everybody else in paying more attention to the news releases and reading the paper and trying to find out as much information as I could about what was happening.

INT: Did you know that there was a reactor there before this accident happened?

NAR: Oh, yes.

INT: How did you know about it?

NAR: Driving to the airports and you see these big towers, these big cooling towers so you knew it was there, and I guess. And hearing about, being in personnel, labor problems of getting people to work on a nuclear reactor. I guess they had articles in the paper about security at Three Mile Island and so forth but that is about the extent of it.

INT: You know how far it is from us?

NAR: How far it is from where I live or from here?

INT: Both places.

NAR: I guess it's, we are right outside. At Dickinson College I know is just outside of the twenty mile limits. It is about 22, 23 miles from where we live up in Mt. Holly.

INT: You mean about 22.3.

NAR: Give or take a few.

INT: A few yards. Well when you first heard about it, when it was the first time coming through, did you think it was serious?

NAR: It didn't register as being, you know, really didn't give it much thought. Certainly I didn't think it was that serious, at the time. It's just, a mishap, one of those things and they would correct it. I just didn't think of the repercussions that could come as a result of the problem.

INT: What was it that made you think it was serious finally? Or did you ever think it was particularly serious?

NAR: Oh, yeah. As time progressed. I thought it was serious. In that public reaction, people were beginning to get concerned about it, and the media started to play with the seriousness of it. I think they were the one that was sort of giving the emphasis as to how serious it was and conflicting stories as to exactly what was happening, as if anybody knew what was happening.

INT: What do you mean conflicting stories?

NAR: Well, you know, they... You'd hear that this could happen or that could happen. And they'd say they would be able to resolve it, no problem. And then they say well, they can't seem to be able to resolve the problem. And the bubble, the hydrogen bubble, you know, it never happened before. And you just, just were confused. Then a lot of it came from people you met, you know how rumors go. Everybody had a different version as to what's happening and people in general seem to be concerned about it.

INT: Well would you go out looking for more information on it? Sort of actively or wait until things come in or...?

NAR: No. Like I say it just so happened it was, a weekend was coming up. We had a staff meeting at the college and that sort of gave me a rundown that the college had facilities here that we could be a reception center for people. That if things got to the point where we may be called upon to help others. But it was just in the very preliminary stages, and there was no specific duties involved that I had to attend to. Friday nights...

INT: Who called the staff meeting?

NAR: I guess it was the president's office. Senior staff. It was called by the President.

INT: Who attended and where was it and...?

NAR: It was in the college here in the Common Room. I don't think Dr. Banks was, the president was not there but Mr. Seller and, who is Dr. Banks' assistant, and the members of the senior staff, that would be the Director of the Communication and Development, the Treasurer, Dean of the College and plus some of the business area staff and just to discuss.

INT: Just to discuss what they knew or were they ready to...?

NAR: Just to discuss what they knew and how to handle any releases to parents calling, you know, how to handle the switchboard and just to be kept abreast of conditions in Three Mile Island. At that point there was no concern to us, we were not in danger at all but we should be kept abreast of what's going on just in case things should develop. What we would have to give to parents. Yeah, this is Friday.

INT: About noon or so?

NAR: Umm, afternoon, yeah, I'd say.

INT: Were they already contacted that this would become an evacuation center, would they know that yet?

NAR: I don't know. I don't know. I really didn't get involved in all of that.

INT: What was the extent of your involvement as far as this staff meeting was concerned?

NAR: Information only.

INT: Did you get anything to do afterwards that you were going to go out and take care of?

NAR: No.

INT: So you weren't personally involved in making the arrangements?

NAR: At the college, no. Oh, I was on call. I said I would be available, you know, should there be a need to man the switchboard but there wasn't. I did not receive a call to help out.

INT: So this was Friday afternoon. What happened then?

NAR: Went to Happy Hour.

INT: At the faculty club?

NAR: At the G-man, downtown.

INT: With...?

NAR: Friends.

INT: From the college?

NAR: From the college, yeah.

INT: What was that like? Were people discussing what was going on at TMI at all or...?

NAR: To a degree, I guess yeah it was sort of a topic of conversation. But again the seriousness hadn't hit home. It was "what could happen if" and it just didn't seem to be of importance, uptight. Oh, went out to dinner and I remember, you know, watching the news on TV and it still hadn't sunk in.

INT: So up to this point you still didn't think it was particularly serious?

NAR: No.

INT: What changed your mind?

NAR: Well it sort of progresses to Saturday and again being home and not having, trying not to listen to the media. I said if anything is going to happen, we would know about it.

INT: But you were trying *not* to listen to the media?

NAR: Oh yeah. I think I was.

INT: Because of this or...?

NAR: Because I didn't know, people didn't know what was going on and you could get uptight by the things they were saying and maybe subconsciously I was trying to, you know, say things are not as bad as they seem. It will all go over and so forth. But we had a gourmet dinner to go to that night and we were preparing food for that. And they were having meetings at the college and before the gourmet I did go to one of the meetings, general open to the public sessions.

INT: Which one was that? Friday night or Saturday or...?

NAR: I didn't go to the one Friday night. I went to the one Saturday. And people were real...

INT: How did you hear about that one?

NAR: Pardon? On the radio. It was on the radio.

INT: WHYL or the college station?

NAR: Don't know.

INT: But they announced that there would be?

NAR: It was on the radio, some channel. And I was aware of it and so I decided to go just to see what was happening. And people were really concerned. People were really getting uptight at that time. I began to become aware that, you know, people were leaving town, hearing stories about people leaving. And I thought at that time, well, far be it from me to criticize anybody. If they wanted to go, fine. But I thought it was also soon to tell, and I had no, I didn't think there was anything for us to do at the present time. Let's see, what else. Well, we went to that meeting and there was some concern that, yeah, that people didn't know what was going on.

INT: Did you go by yourself or did you and your wife go?

NAR: I went by myself. I dropped my wife at the, it was at the Wertman's which live right on College Street. so I, we could just, I dropped her off there and just walked over to the Union Building.

INT: That's where the gourmet dinner was?

NAR: That was, yeah, the Wertman's. And so I listened to that and... But the people in charge, Dr. Banks, Priscilla Laws, the people who were presenting the, seemed to be pretty calm, cool and collected in saying that again we are in no danger, no problems. But people in the audience, again, some didn't seem to be buying that. They were saying "what happens if" this and "what happens if" that. We will all be contaminated. Rains, you know, will we get more contamination? How can you stop it? How can they control this hydrogen bubble? And they didn't seem to have some answers but again they were reassuring that we were far enough away from the site that if anything that would happen would not necessarily affect us to any great degree. One other thing too that I guess I should mention is that we were getting phone calls from, from friends outside the area.

INT: You were getting them at home?

NAR: At home, yeah. A good friend of ours in Rhode Island, he happened to be a lawyer, he drew up our wills, calling us to see how we are doing. Wanting to see if, I thought that was ominous, we wanted to make any changes in our wills. We got a call from people in Connecticut., people in Massachusetts. You know, people from a distance were calling and I guess what they were hearing was much worse than what we were, saying that things were sort of getting to a catastrophic state and disaster was imminent and what are we doing here. And of course, my wife's mother who is an X-ray

technician in Massachusetts started calling on the hour Friday evening because we weren't answering. We weren't home and she called three times wondering what we were doing and we should get home right away and so forth. And of course calling on Saturday and we kept...

INT: Was there a sitter at home?

NAR: Yeah, a babysitter.

INT: So she got the babysitter every hour?

NAR: Yeah, she said why aren't you home? Your kids are there. You should be evacuating and so forth. So we said, "Relax. No big thing. You know, we are okay." and so forth. We appreciated people calling. It really was sort of nice to have friends call.

INT: Were they freaked out by the fact that you weren't concerned?

NAR: Well, yeah. They were sort of, you know, maybe they didn't think much in us in saying hey, what type of people are you to leave your kids?

INT: Were you freaked out by the fact that they were so concerned?

NAR: Oh, no. No. I don't want to say that they were uptight, but they were just like, "Gee, we tried to get a hold of you and we couldn't."

INT: Well, you seemed to think that everything was going to blow over. It would be okay. You mentioned that before. Why were you so confident? Or why did you think this way as opposed to being uptight and saying some of your friends were or some of the people in the audience that you saw on Saturday night here at the college?

NAR: I guess I just wanted to repress it. I can't really think of a good reason. Maybe I just didn't want anything disastrous to happen and I always think if you think the worst, you know, maybe it will happen. So you have to be positive and be very optimistic and hopefully that will blow away. But the ironical part of it, apparently I was, I think subconsciously I was concerned. Outwardly I was trying to say that everything would blow over and if you got your mind occupied in different areas, like the gourmet dinner and so forth and having a good time, everything seemed to be okay, you know. It was something that you didn't. Everything was going on normally. It wasn't like the winds were blowing and the sky was dark or earthquakes. Everything was just normal. It was just only this eminent danger that could. And as I say, being a weekend, Saturday, I tried to say away from as much information. Because I think at that time they were having excerpts on the radio every fifteen minutes—bulletins about this or this. And, again, they were all saying the same thing. They don't really know what is happening, but then I'd get these commentators who would say well this could happen or this could happen. It

was sort of scare tactics, I thought. So until they had some concrete information I would just as soon wait until that came about.

INT: Okay, we are really rolling along here in talking about it. At what point you began to think it was serious?

NAR: Well, I was fine until the gourmet dinner. We left that.

INT: What was it like, before we move on, what was the gourmet dinner like? Were people worried about it and talking about it, and feeling weird about being here, or were they feeling normal or a little bit uptight?

NAR: Well, I think you know. We had, it was a very good Greek dinner and we were having all sorts of Greek delicacies and some wine and so people seemed to be enjoying themselves. Again it was a topic of conversation, but I think there was some conversation, some joking about people leaving, you know, haha. There were some people saying, "Aren't they foolish to leave?"

INT: They were people joking about the people leaving?

NAR: Because again I don't think people really saw the catastrophic state. They didn't think it was serious, apparently. That's what I think.

INT: Why do you think they joked about it, though? I mean, you said they joked about it "Ha ha, such and so leaving."

NAR: Well, I guess it was. I don't know... Inappropriate affectation I guess, maybe. Something to, you know, why do people laugh at funerals sometimes. That's the only thing I could think of because it, when you get into it you really, you think back, it really was this serious and maybe they were even brighter ones to leave. But maybe they just thought that well, boy some people left as far as, you know, went away as far as Omaha, Nebraska type thing. You know, they say geez.

INT: They knew people who went to Omaha? Or something like that?

NAR: Or something, yeah. And some people were saying how, what they, what great pains they went through to avoid Harrisburg to get away and so forth.

INT: Were the people at the gourmet dinner college people exclusively?

NAR: Yeah. And, you know when I say raucous, there wasn't a raucous laughter. Some people were concerned about what happens if, what routes they would take. But again it wasn't, it wasn't, it didn't put a pawl on the dinner at all.

INT: Was it the main topic of conversation at the dinner or was the food the main topic?

NAR: I would say the food was and social conversation was. It was not the main conversation. It was sort of put off, you know. Somebody would come in and say something, we came back from the meeting and we mentioned what was going on and we briefly discussed it and then it was dropped.

INT: Were there a number of people at the gourmet dinner who were also at the meeting?

NAR: A couple of them I'd say. But that was sort of dropped. They went on to other topics of conversation so it wasn't by means a...

INT: Okay, well let's roll on.

NAR: Okay, so we go into Sunday and we were woken by a phone call by a friend and, well, her name, well the Hendersons. Mary Jane Henderson had given us a call.

INT: Is she someone from the college or...?

NAR: Yes, her husband is, works at the college. And she is good friends--

INT: In what capacity, I'm sorry?

NAR: He's the Director of Off-Campus Studies. Mary Jane is a very good friend of Gail Shearer.

INT: Who is?

NAR: Whose husband is in the Chemistry Department. Now, Gail is one who is a.... I don't know what you would call her, I wouldn't call her a psychic, but she is one that spoke in your wife's class. I don't know if you were present there?

INT: No, but I remember when she was.

NAR: So I don't really know what her title is or whatever, but she can lay on hands and feel and predict as to what's going, what's going to happen in the future and so forth. Not really a clear description or explanation as to what her duties are or what her powers are, but my wife had taken... Or had been at that class and experienced some of her...

INT: Medical anthropology classes.

NAR: The medical anthropology class with Melissa. And she was just talking about how she goes about looking into the future and so forth. Well anyways, Mary Jane had called and said I don't want to panic you at all but we're getting out of town right off the bat. Now Mary Jane is a very calm, cool, collected person and she was very uptight when she called. And she... they have three children and we said well why? My wife had gotten the call. Well why? I just got a call from Gail Shearer and Gail had a vision

that at 11:00 that morning, Sunday, that there was going to be a great disaster, catastrophe. And they were moving out and they called the Henderson's, as close friends. The Henderson's called us and another couple. And said take it for what it is worth, things have gotten to a point that something is going to happen at 11:00 and we want to make sure we are out of it. I'm not sure what time that this was. I guess it was about 8:00 in the morning, 7:30, 8:00. A combination of being woken up out of a sound sleep and to hear this, and to hear it from someone who normally is pretty calm and not one to be excited easily, a combination of having had that course, having experienced some of Gail's predictions that apparently came true and so forth woke me up and I just was really panicked. Really, "Gotta go, gotta go." And I don't know whether it was a combination of my being woken up out of a sound sleep and seeing my wife in a state as to whether you can make a rational judgment. And so, long story short, we left. We called back to be sure that was right, and it was just a decision you had to make.

INT: You called back to whom?

NAR: To the Hendersons and said, "Now are you sure?" Have you called back Gail and said, "Are you making this up at all?" And her husband being a Chemistry professor said this hydrogen problem with the bubble and the water and something or other, just to them it all seemed to make sense – her vision and what her husband knew about chemistry— what was going to happen then so it was best to be out. So it was Sunday and we just figured what have we got to lose? Nothing planned for the day. Terry's parents had been calling. Maybe we were the dumb ones? Maybe we were the ones that, we just sort of – I don't... Laughing at it. We weren't really laughing at it but we were just really not taking it serious and that maybe why should, maybe that we should take it serious. And so we decided that we would go and leave and we did.

INT: Did the other couple also leave?

NAR: Oh, they had left. No, they had talked about it.

INT: The Hendersons left, but did the other couple that called the Hendersons called?

NAR: Oh, yeah.

INT: They also left?

NAR: Yeah, uh, hum. And they had their camping gear so they were able to go camping. They were going to go up, some park. And then use that on the route going up to Canada or Maine. We didn't have a camper so we figured rather than going with them that we would go to Massachusetts, which we did.

INT: To your mother-in-law's?

NAR: Mother-in-law's, yeah. And so we left. I guess we got as far as Wilkes-Barre around 11:00 and then realized that nothing was happening. But all along the while on

the radio. There was no one the road at all. No one. And the radio was saying that over two hundred thousand people had evacuated and they were saying that the... It was sort of imminent that something was going to happen soon.

INT: Were you frightened as you were leaving?

NAR: And so I think once we were on the road we began to say, we began to feel better. That we were sort of nervous up until 11:00, then 11:00 came and we said maybe we should get back, should we turn back at that time. And I said, "Well, you know, we have gotten this far, I would just as soon drive you up, drop you off with the kids and you can stay there for the week, and I'm going to come back. I'll come back the next day. That's no problem. And I'll stay here for the week and if anything happens I can take care of myself and I'd just be a lot more comfortable having you away, at least a distance. And I can just take care of myself and do what needs to be done at the college." Well, my wife didn't really appreciate that. She said, "I don't want you to go back there and so forth and so on, we should turn around and go back." I said, "Well, you know. If we turn around and go back now what happens if you get afraid again or uptight again. We'll probably just have to stop making these treks back and forth" so I said why don't we go there and just see what happens. All along there was no reassurance or encouragement on the radio.

INT: You felt better about it but you were getting terrible reports on the radio? That's interesting that the reports got worse and yet you felt better.

NAR: I was getting out of it. That sort of reassured me that maybe I was doing the right thing to leave.

INT: Oh, to do the right thing to leave, I see. But you were saying something about maybe we should go back?

NAR: Because it didn't blow up at 11:00 that.

INT: Oh it was only that one particular incident then that was worrying you?

NAR: That triggered. Well, how do you second guess it, you know. How do you second guess it and. But after that, it sort of made us think that there was a lot of tension going on. And maybe it was sort of getting back to why didn't I think it was serious? I, there, was a bit of pressure, tension around. And on Sunday I was of course thinking of driving up and say it was a seven hour ride, trying to justify leaving. And I sort of equated a little bit to when I was in Vietnam. When I was in Vietnam I was quartermaster and I was in the Central Highlands. I was in supply. I was in a base camp surround by three miles of concentrated wire, and there was the same type of tension. You went about and did your business. You worked from, twelve, you know, twelve hours a day, from seven in the morning to seven at night. Went home and went back to your barracks, had dinner, watched combat on TV and got up in the morning and did the same thing seven days a week. And there were many times I didn't want to be there, but you couldn't leave

because there was a feeling that anybody could rocket you any time, you could be wiped out at any time. Be killed at any time, but you were there and you just had to be there until you had a chance to come home. And I said it was sort of ridiculous for me to be in the same type of environment setting and have my family have to go through this when we could get out and so it was sort of ludicrous to stay. And so for that reason, I think that again was sort of a reassuring thing, saying well that is right, I am doing the right thing at least to get them away and to go. And so we did.

INT: So ultimately you left them up there in Massachusetts?

NAR: So, we got up and I call back. Well before I had left I called my boss, the Treasurer, and told him I was leaving and taking the family up to Massachusetts. He was sort of surprised because we were at the same gourmet dinner the night before and everything seemed to be calm, cool, and collected. And it was. It was just that initial moment, or call in the morning in the frame of mind that we had that we said hey, you know, let's go. So I said well as you know I got up there. When I called he was, call in the evening, he was busy and I had called. I forget who I called. Oh, I called another friend, Professor Stodgell and he said the college. He got a call from somebody and said the college was closed, up to this point the college had not been closed. Students were going home and so forth and parents were calling but it had not been closed. And so at that time I said, "Ah ha," you know and he says well maybe you're he says you did the right thing because as the feedback he was getting was that they were talking about evacuation routes and that maybe I was one of the lucky ones to get out because, because where we were located we would have had to have gone south or something and we wouldn't have been able to have gone off so. But he would keep me posted, so. I had called my secretary and tried to get my boss and it was just some general confusion as to what was going on. So I said well I had planned to come back in the morning the following day. But, I said, I am not going to come back if everything is closed, so I waited until the following morning and Monday morning found out the college was not closed that the students. It was closed as far as students went, but administrators and so forth should be back so I said I'll be back. In the meantime we had found out that morning that things were good. The bubble had dissipated. And the crisis appeared to be over, not entirely, but things were really sort of, the worst had passed and so we all came back home.

INT: The whole family?

NAR: The whole family came back home.

INT: You didn't feel any trepidation about it?

NAR: Oh, I did. I, at that time you know did I do the right thing? I didn't feel comfortable at all coming back, you know. Saying should I have gone. Maybe we shouldn't have gone at all. Maybe we were right to begin with that, why did we have to get that phone call? Why did we have to be such good friends of the Hendersons that they would select us to call?

INT: Why did it bother you so much that you left? The idea of leaving at all? It seems that it upset you. You know, that you couldn't just sort of go off and feel, well, we went off and we took a precaution and now we are coming back. But you seemed to think was it right to have gone. Why did you feel that way?

NAR: I wanted to appear as though you were, a coward escaping, you know, something that a... And as I indicated people, you know, react to it differently. I don't know whether, why they do it that way. People get very defensive as to people, and I guess maybe going back to why do people laugh about when people going off when it was serious and so maybe I had a better appreciation and that's when we found out, that people were going as far as Nebraska, had gone as far as Maine, had gone as far as about, parents calling children from California and saying grab the next plane to fly home. So maybe these things, you know, were not all that funny or out of the ordinary. And I guess you always like to have a good self image, what people think, well of you. That you are not afraid, that you are brave and can withstand the storm and so forth. I don't have any qualms at all about the decision I made. I think we made the decision. It was the right decision at the time. But... coming back, you know, I guess it is just human nature that, was it a waste? How would people perceive it? You know, your leaving.

INT: Did people around you leave? Your neighbors?

NAR: Yes.

INT: A lot of them or..?

NAR: A number of them, yes.

INT: 10%, 20% sort of, what is your impression?

NAR: I would say.

INT: OR do you have any numbers out of neighbors?

NAR: I would say 40 or 50%.

INT: 40 or 50%!

NAR: So that's sort of reassuring too. It is not like we are the only one. So all these. You are sort of looking for these things to make sure and well they left and they left, ah ha, and they left. And I have to say when we came back we didn't get. You get a couple of people sort of maybe it was just your trying to build defensive. That was a crazy thing, oh you left. Well, that sort of a dumb thing to do, but I would say on the most part most people were really very understanding of, you know, and didn't joke about it, about people leaving. Because I think at that time people really realized the seriousness of it, about people leaving. Because I think at that time people really realized the seriousness

of it as to. All along I guess I was realizing that it could be serious and was trying to repress it and that suddenly it just sort of came into being Tuesday or Tuesday morning. And that made you realize, hey, who are you trying to fool? Maybe there is something to this and if there people what we think of, you know, are willing to take the step, far be it from me, us to say you are crazy.

INT: Did you believe when you were leaving that it was really a very definite possibility that it could go, that some accident could happen then?

NAR: Yes.

INT: What did you take with you when you left?

NAR: Bare essentials. Took absolutely nothing. Took no jewelry, took. We just closed it up and we said, you know, just took our clothes with us, enough clothes to last us a week and that's it.

INT: When you left you were leaving with the idea that you might not have anything to come back to or that you wouldn't be able to come back or did you expect that you would or? How did you feel about it and how did that?

NAR: I think that sort of hit us in the car. After we got the phone call our main concern was getting out, and as soon as possible. Made the beds and made sure the house was neat in case people came in that they would say they weren't slob living here or anything. That's about it.

INT: You mean looters coming in or?

NAR: Oh, just anybody. I guess anybody coming in, not looters, no. We just thought of anybody coming in to. Like the ruins of Pompeii, you know, coming back and saying. If people could ever if it was contaminated you never knew how long it would be before they could get in so. Just didn't think about it. Just thought about getting out. And we just took the clothes and the kids and. The kids, by the way, were very unhappy about leaving. So that was another thing that was sort of hard to... Because Kevin, my son, is in Little League and they were having, starting Little League that Monday. So he had to be there for the first game. I mean he just had to be. What would they think if he wasn't there? So can't he stay with somebody else? And he said why don't mom, you and Kristen go? And dad and I will stay here. And I said I need the car Kevin, well yeah. Okay, well I'll go with you, but I'll come back. You and I can come back that same night. And then my daughter was saying why don't we go to a reception center at Hershey Park. They are having a good time there. We'll just go there for awhile and stay. And I said no. I just said we were going to go and when we were halfway there it was too late to turn back and just drop them off. And so they were not, the kids were not happy about going. I don't think they really knew what was going on. The kids in the neighborhood didn't seem to be, the ones that were left, didn't seem to be affected by it.

INT: Did you have any sort of imaginings about what would be sort of the result of all of this? If it did go. Did you have any, you mentioned a couple of things but what did you think it would be like?

NAR: I don't know I guess.

INT: What did you think could happen or would happen? Might happen?

NAR: I guess I am a pessimist, Steve. I don't. I really hate to think the worst, I really do because I think when you do that sometimes it is foreboding. So I was trying to be very much the optimist saying I am sure everything is going to be okay. This was about the twenty mile radius. They kept on saying, well twenty miles, you know, if anything happens anyway it will just be the twenty five. I just didn't buy that. I guess I was thinking what are they going to do? Have people stand up on the border with fans and blow it back saying you can't come twenty miles beyond? And stop right there? No. It would have to waft over into the area and I was really concerned for the family, the kids and wife. That they were outside that area and safe, protected. So so far as I was. Driving up in the car we sort of thought (unintelligible phrase) what would happen if. It is the type of condition, it wouldn't be havoc. It wouldn't be like everything would be blown apart. I would just think that everything would remain the same the way we left it only it would be contaminated just couldn't do it. I just guess I would have to rely upon our family to support us. Until the word as to what would happen. It was just too mind boggling to think the repercussions could happen. I was concerned about my position here, with the personnel, how I could be of help, whether we would have a staging area someplace and how we would ever get a hold of people to disseminate information to them about the employees. It just seemed to be so mind boggling. Something that could never happen but obviously could happen. So I think the main thing was just family safety and just getting them out of there. So when I could come back I could sort of deal with problems as they arose. I felt more comfortable that I could handle, that I could take care of myself, be more supportive, not having to worry about family needs.

INT: Do you think that anything that happened during TMI affected your health or your family's health in anyway?

NAR: No.

INT: Either now or in the future?

NAR: I just hope it doesn't happen in the future. They say there was some levels of contamination. Again I think we were. I just have to rely upon the information provided by the various agencies, news releases and so forth, that we were far enough away that we should not have been affected, greatly by it. I just hope not.

INT: Do you think about it all for what might come up in the future? Do you think about anything like twenty or thirty years from now? Are you nervous about it? Or do you not think of it at all?

NAR: I try not to think about it.

INT: Do you, did you have any trepidations about eating the food or milk or anything produced in the area? Did you stop eating any of the food?

NAR: No. I just figured we'd buy our milk at Allen Dairy so it is local. And no, I just. Just a little. After we came back it seemed that everything was over and everything, a catastrophe was averted and you could try to go back and live a normal life and I think we have since then. We have gotten a better awareness as to how nuclear energy plays an important part in a person's life and how catastrophic it could be. But I think even that, when you think of that number of sites located throughout the country, you are not going to be able to get away from it. I think I do have a concern that... I don't know whether it's... I don't like to have a doomsday approach in thinking that the world could come to an end, but if it ever does come to an end I can see where it could come to an end through nuclear energy. And the fact that a lot of questions have not been answered, problems resolved, it does sort of bother me subconsciously. Don't dwell on it. If I did, again you could be, there are an awful lot of things you could get uptight about, affect your whole way of living. So leave that up to the powers that be to govern and try to come up with answers.

INT: Do you trust the powers that be to govern and come up with?

NAR: It all depends who you call the powers to be, whether you think it is the religious powers or the governmental powers or whatever. I think this is where faith does come into it strong and that we are placed on this earth and a lot of strange things happen. A lot of things that could happen that don't happen. And you have to have faith and believe that, that if you lead a good life hopefully you will be spared hardship and that there is a reason for things happening the way that they do. That's what I guess on a philosophical mind or a religious.

INT: But when you think of the powers that be do you think in terms of religious rather than Metropolitan Edison or?

NAR: Both. I think of. When you get down to a crunch a few prayers, you know, don't hurt. And believe me, a few prayers were said during that time.

INT: You did pray then during this time?

NAR: Oh, yes. Sure.

INT: What did you pray for?

NAR: Oh, just, just basic being, being Catholic there are not, you say the rosary or Our Father, Hail Mary and you just hope that everything will be resolved and it is not like doing the litanies or anything like that. It is just to yourself. You hope that, pray for the

best. It is sort of done privately but not. You go to church but that's I think the way we are. We are not (end of tape Side A).

INT: How did you think that God figured into this?

NAR: I , I really didn't. I don't think He, you know, planned or did it or anything. I sort of separate that into the governmental powers and human powers. But He or He sort of was aware, you know, All Being, All Powerful, that was going on and He had it in His, you know, plan so to speak. There is nothing you can do about it. But I think it's not, it wasn't strictly religious. A little relies upon it. You know it's, it wasn't, you know sometimes you can use religion as a crutch when things go wrong, you know, you say a few prayers when things go right you sort of forget it. But. Help us through. He was just sort of a calming influence, too, to help you through it, troubled times.

INT: Did you pray for anything in particular at that time? I mean, did you ask God for anything, that He should do anything or...?

NAR: I just prayed and hoped that the problems would be resolved. That that particular incident, you know, would work out to everybody's advantage.

INT: Well, did any Biblical stories or sayings or events or anything like that cross your mind during this time.

NAR: No. No.

INT: Did you ever think about Satan or the Last Judgment or the end of the world or anything like that?

NAR: No, because I think it was regionalized. Again, it was just a regional it would have been a catastrophic type of accident, I thought. You know I didn't see it as a whole world going up or I didn't see it as some plot, strange happening. It was something that could be explained. It was one by man. It was built by man and it was a human error of sorts and it just had to be decided upon and resolved in a human way. So you know, I think but somehow a few prayers don't help along the way, too when you are looking for guidance or advice. So that is sort of the correlation I had with the powers to be, was sort of a partnership there hopefully that...

INT: Well do you think the TMI incident might have been related in any way to God instructing or disciplining mankind in anyway? Do you think that there was anything like that involved?

NAR: I really didn't, Steve.

INT: Did you attend a religious service then? During this time?

NAR: As a matter of fact we did not.

INT: Yeah, because you said you were leaving?

NAR: Leaving Sunday morning, right.

INT: Did you think about your own death at all during this time? Or the death of any others – family or friends or people in general?

NAR: Sort of selfish, thought about my family and that's why we left. Did not want to see them contaminated or you know, result in death. But it just seemed so farfetched, again. Just seemed that it was farfetched.

INT: Did you think you would survive?

NAR: Huh?

INT: Did you think you would survive?

NAR: Oh yes. I just thought we were. That's why we... When you think of the logistics of the hundreds and thousands of people leaving it just seems to be the right thing to do, you know. What happens if they say, because they are talking about evacuation and plans and so forth and when they said go ahead go you just.... I think one of the things that Priscilla Laws mentioned in the sessions that she was at. She said it is much safer to be where you are than to think what could happen in the mass chaos that could happen when people were all trying to leave at once. All the death that could result. So that was the type of thing, that if it ever came to blowing the whistle, okay go, the pandemonium that would happen, that's... I was just more afraid of that. So we had a chance to leave early and we. There was nothing to hold us here. It was, we had no commitments that day. Why don't we take off and go. It would make us feel better.

INT: Well, does your own faith say anything about the rightness or wrongness of man's desire to use or control the atom?

NAR: I'm not aware of any.

INT: Well, do you think that any kinds of religious persons or religious institutions should take a public stand on the development of atomic energy? That they should say something in favor of it or against it or in control of it or anything like that? Do you think as a religious person or as a religious institution?

NAR: I'm not sure religious people have the education and knowledge to comment on a discipline or an area that they are not totally familiar with or even familiar with. Nuclear fission or sciences, how can they say? Now if it gets to the creation of a human cell and so forth. That's where I think, there should be some conflict should be made. But the fact that they come up with some source of energy that will be beneficial and helpful to, hopefully its done. The development of nuclear energy is to be beneficial and helpful to

mankind. As compared to his detriment. Now if it was the electric chair or something like that, I can see where they could say you know maybe that is not the way. It is killing people. But now if they have enough supporting documentation that can say that the atom is going to be detrimental to mankind, yeah I can see where they probably, religious people, or any people. Not necessarily just religious people but I can't speak out against it. As it stands now, no one's, well you can't say no one but, that many people have died of nuclear mishaps. If they have it has been few, but again we don't know. As compared to tunnel collapsing in coal mining or any number of things – oil rigs collapsing and people dying there. So it just seems people, more people have died in that area. I don't totally buy that because I know what could happen. I see where they were just saying on TV now that a nuclear, I'm not quite sure who came up with this, but it's a regulation commission, saying that a nuclear accident could happen one out of one hundred and seventy five and the business is saying one out of a million, this type of mishap ever happening. Who do you believe? Who do you believe? I think you have to make it your personal judgment and hope for the best again. Maybe this is again my optimistic attitude comes out to me and says.

INT: Well as long as we're talking about this... How did you feel about the handling of the whole situation? How do you think that the media for instance, we were talking about the media a little while ago. How do you think the media handled this entire thing?

NAR: I am trying to look for the right word to say. Not circus, but they go for the... What am I trying to say? Not an extravaganza but a, I just can't think of the word for it. Make a big play, a big splash. The more gore the more information they have, that they can bet them, you know. So I am not really sure if they are honest, sympathetic.

INT: Did you not trust them, in other words then?

NAR: I would say and agree that you can't trust them. Each one is trying to get a story and a bigger bone in life.

INT: Was there any particular media area that you might have trusted or that you. What media or what group or person or something in the media did you listen to and perhaps trust more than others?

NAR: Oh, I guess Walter Cronkite. That type of, rather than just try to hear bits and pieces of news releases because you never know what was happening. And as you say, it may just be my idea of the media coming up with a by line trying to sell their papers or trying to get more audience participation.

INT: Did you, we were mentioning something before about the difference between the media outside the area and the media in the local area. Did you notice much of a difference between them? Did you pay attention any more to one than the other?

NAR: Well when we were in Massachusetts we talked to people that were saying oh boy, you escaped, you really got out, boy are you lucky. It must be really bad news,

panic in the streets and so forth. And we said, well no it wasn't that way at all. But again it was the reaction that they had, not knowing, that's maybe how their minds worked. The news, I don't recall anything overly dramatic on the news broadcast in Massachusetts.

INT: Well how about the governments handling of the situation. How do you think the government took care of it? Did you uh...?

NAR: I think they... Oh, the gentleman that came up from the NRC seemed to be the answer, seemed to have the answer. He seemed to be a little... relate to the people. I don't recall what his name is now. It was sort of a household word at the time.

INT: Oh, Denton.

NAR: Denton, Denton. He seemed to be, up until that point there was confusion and not really knowing what was going on and when you say local. Thornburgh, I thought did very well under the pressure he was under and he needs to be commended for that. But then you get local politicians who want to play politics too and put the things to blame on somebody and I guess it was one of those incidents that happened and we sure want to know so it doesn't happen again but I guess I wouldn't be vindictive against the people. After it all came about and everything was beginning to get resolved it was to the point of I guess we realized maybe the NRC didn't know as much as they knew about, thought they did about the handling of emergency type of accidents or happenings.

INT: How about the industry, Metropolitan Edison? How do you think they handled it?

NAR: I think they sort of think they came out of this with sort of a black eyes as far as saying everything is fine, you know. I think. But then again maybe they knew, maybe they were just trying to prevent panic and so forth. But I don't think they came across as being totally honest and saying everything is fine and everything is okay. And then crying poor house that you are going to have to pay for it which really I think. As a purchaser of Met Ed power and seeing the bills. Even before I started on Three Mile Island, seeing price increases I think that just sort of tied in and said that you are being very antagonistic to the, just another example of inefficiency or poor handling.

INT: Well considering the whole incident and everything, was there anyone or anybody or anything like that that you found particularly reliable? That you trusted more than anyone for information or good data or anything like that? Was there anybody that you trusted?

NAR: Oh...

INT: Or any organ or...?

NAR: I think at the college here they were commended. They were trying to be very forthright and saying hey look, you know. I think at that time they were talking about

Sky Lab falling and I remember Dr. Banks saying, “Hey, if you are uptight, if you are concerned, leave.” I guess he was talking to the students primarily. It’s just life, but if you feel as though Sky Lab is going to fall. It is inevitable it is going to fall and if you feel it is going to fall on Dickinson College – leave. That type of thing is something that you can’t tell. I wish I could give you an answer, give you safe secure and sound answers. So I think people, they were being very honest with people and not trying to hide anything or trying to persuade or dissuade people. So I sort of looked to them as, the college as being a reliable source of information, someone you could trust.

INT: Well was there anyone that you found particularly unreliable or that you have mistrusted?

NAR: No. Because no one really knew. Who are you to say yes or no or...?

INT: Was there anybody that you found unreliable or whose information was conflicting or did you find anything that...?

NAR: Obviously Gail Shearer didn’t.

INT: What happened with them, did they...?

NAR: They apparently left and went camping, stayed overnight up in Perry County and came back the following day.

INT: After the 11:00 thing passed.

NAR: Yeah.

INT: And the Hendersons?

NAR: Same thing, they stayed, they camped overnight.

INT: Also in Perry County? They went up together?

NAR: I think they did, yes.

INT: And the other couple that was contacted?

NAR: They stayed where they were. They have a farm and they really couldn’t leave and so they thanked them for the...

INT: Oh, so they never evacuated?

NAR: No.

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

NAR: No. When you say those in charge where at...?

INT: At TMI.

NAR: Oh no, definitely not. I think it was quite obvious. I think they were, even admitted that they didn't know what was going on. Quite clear on that.

INT: Do you think that they are in control now?

NAR: I would like to think they are. I'm not totally convinced. They have. We haven't heard as much. I think that, one good thing about, I think on Saturday, they cut back on the number of news releases and maybe that was a little more reassuring. Come to think on Friday where there was news releases every fifteen minutes or so and it just seemed to be building up to a big crescendo. Which was not healthy, but on Saturday there seemed to be less. Maybe they were doing that purposefully, not to see people as panicking.

INT: Do you have in your mind any picture of the effect of radiation on life around you?

NAR: I just think of like Hiroshima and that. But that was an atomic bomb and I realize this was not an atomic bomb. So that's initially. When you say you think of that. But as I understand it this way, I, it is something that is scary too because it was something you couldn't see, you couldn't touch, you couldn't feel. And it's something that doesn't show up right after that. It is not like leprosy, you know where all of a sudden you get something on and it starts eating your skin. As I understand it just affects you in a way that you can develop cancer or get you in the blood cells. But then again so many people get it, cancer prior to Three Mile Island that it's not a totally unfamiliar sight or happening, experience.

INT: Do you have any ideas about how it is best to behave in a situation like this? How people should behave in a situation like this? How you should behave in a situation like this? Any kinds, of you know, ethical or moral or religious ideas or?

NAR: Keep busy. Keep busy. That's the whole thing is to, no matter what it is at, just keep your mind occupied and try to pick a source that you feel confident, comfortable in, that you trust.

INT: A source of information?

NAR: A source of information and rely upon and then just try to, again as they say, prayer doesn't hurt. And then you just have to... You rely upon your own decision. Your own innate instincts. And once you make a decision, stick to it, right or wrong.

INT: How did you notice people around you behaving? Did you notice them at all? Did they behave any differently? Were they behaving in ways that you didn't approve of?

NAR: I thought they did very well. That is why these conflicting stories about panic and so forth and so on were just unfounded. I thought people did very well and I didn't see any panic. I didn't see any distraught people. Again it was over the weekend so I didn't come in contact with that many people. The Friday and Saturday, you know, as I say we were involved in entertaining type things and people seemed to be having a good time and not distraught. And then we left on Sunday, and came back Monday and people seemed to, you know, be handling it very well. They made decisions and they left. There wasn't... but I think that was commendable.

INT: Well did this event bring to mind any kinds of past experiences or past events? Did it make you think of anything?

NAR: I think all it brought back was the Vietnam experience, being in that type of environment. But, you know, being under that type of pressure, knowing that, that any minute you could be wiped off, you could be.

INT: How old were you then? In Vietnam?

NAR: I was in... Let's see... I was about 24. 23, 24.

INT: How old are you now?

NAR: 35.

INT: I just wasn't sure if I asked you your age but that is one of the things I should have here. Do you think that something like this, an event or an incident like this is any more or less frightening than floods, hurricanes, wars?

NAR: I think they are more frightening because floods, you know the water is there and you know that if you get far enough away you are going to be safe and dry. War, you get out of the area. But for this you didn't know whether you were out of the area or not and what you are running from, or whether you should run or what you should do, you know. So I thought it was a little more scary than that.

INT: Well did it make you think of any kinds of TV shows? You know I was thinking of. What did it bring to your mind? Did you think about TV shows or movies? And it is just like such and such a TV show, did it make you think of that? Or is it just like a movie that you saw at any time?

NAR: No, I can't think of anything.

INT: Did you find books or stories?

NAR: It's twenty past four. I'd be happy to go on.

INT: As a matter of fact we are just about done. Can you take about three or four minutes?

NAR: Okay, fine.

INT: Did you find yourself singing any songs?

NAR: No.

INT: How about telling jokes?

NAR: No.

INT: You mentioned you were telling jokes a little bit or joking about?

NAR: Yeah, but I say that sort of facetiously when I say. It wasn't that silly type of thing that they would go off and do that, boy. And going to great danes. But it wasn't. I think it is more an appropriate, well laughter type thing. You didn't know what to do so you just sort of felt a little bit foolish that they did that. But it wasn't. I think of telling jokes and singing songs and so forth of a joyous occasion but that wasn't. That was sort of serious. Like telling jokes and laughing at a funeral. It doesn't seem to be appropriate. After everything, you had gone and they come up with all these, these Three Mile Island things and jokes and something or other, but that as after everything was gone by and that was just sort of a release. But during the time I didn't think it as appropriate.

INT: Well have you developed or changed any kind of an idea or opinion as a result of TMI about nuclear energy?

NAR: As I say, I have become more aware in how it's provided and so forth. I think we know a lot about how. What the reactors look like and the containment vessels and cooling of the rods and the radium and so forth and so on and... I guess I would have to say that I am not totally in support of nuclear energy.

INT: Is this a change from your previous?

NAR: Yes, I just sort of took it for granted before as being a help and advancement. Modern technology, you know you have got to keep up. With the age of providing people with their needs and this is just another way of providing energy. But it just brought up too many concerns about not being able to get rid of the waste, being able to handle accidents when they occur. The devastation that it can cause. Sure a tunnel can collapse and a hundred people can get killed which is devastating, but when you think of killing hundreds of thousands of people from a nuclear reaction that is just again mind boggling which is jus at risk I would not want to take. So I guess it has changed from living so close. Now if I lived far away and just heard about this, maybe I wouldn't. I would say I see no one got killed up there and so no problem.

INT: Well if they open up TMI again, would you object?

NAR: Yes. Until... I guess I would, yeah. And... because of the inefficiency and the problem of, having the problem there. I don't know whether they could correct it all, ever get it decontaminated and I always fear that where it actually happened once there is a chance of it happening again, would be greater. The risk could happen someplace else, but I think it would be greater here. In the way they managed it and things like that.

INT: That's just about it.