

Date: June 9, 1979

Occupation: Librarian

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

NARRATOR: I guess from the newspapers.

INT: On Wednesday or Thursday? Was it in the paper Wednesday? I don't recall.

NAR: ... I don't remember. If it wasn't Wednesday- I think it was Wednesday night. Didn't it happen Wednesday morning?

INT: Yep.

NAR: It was in the Sentinel that night.

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

NAR: Yes, well actually not exactly where. John Luchelschwab had a Wednesday noon program some time ago about how safe nuclear reactors were and all that sort of stuff. And I knew it was in the general area but actually I did not know that when I crossed the bridge on the turnpike I could actually see it. I had no idea where in the neighborhood it was. But I knew...

INT: Did you have any idea how close it was?

NAR: No.

INT: When you found out about the problem at Three Mile Island, did you think or talk about it at that point?

NAR: You mean Wednesday when I first saw it in the newspaper?

INT: Yeah.

NAR: Oh, I suppose. My general reaction at the time was... that one more.... that's a way to... I would say it's a good thing, but its, for the anti-nuclear people, that's type of thing is the ammunition they need. So, it's not a good thing otherwise. So, I was not upset about it in that sense that I didn't know how bad it was going to be. But it was just one more reason why we shouldn't have nuclear reactors around.

INT: When did you start talking about this seriously?

NAR: ...Was it Friday night after they had the first thing at the college?

INT: Umm Humm

NAR: O.K., Friday afternoon when somebody said that it was- there was a possibility of a meltdown and George called to report they were even talking at the college and when I went home, I listened to it on the radio. But until that time I really hadn't paid that much attention to it.

INT: Had you been listening to the radio before then?

NAR: No, actually I only turned on the radio to see whether I could get the Dickinson station, and it turned out that I could so that I could hear what was going on.

INT: So, had you talked with anybody in the family about it before Friday?

NAR: I don't remember that we particularly had. We may have, but I don't remember.

INT: After Friday, what was your practice in terms of following newspaper, radio, and TV reports?

NAR: Oh, well before it, I had been reading all of the newspapers things from- we get two newspapers-we get the Washington Post in the morning so that was getting towards a national viewpoint, and then we were getting the local paper. So I had been reading everything that was on that. And then we started listening- Ohhh, I know what happened. Thursday morning, George had said as he left, "Oh we didn't get the radio on in time to catch the news and they might have said something about Three Mile Island". Because - we always listen to WHP in the morning and we get the weather from them, which is a relatively local station. But by that time we were listening to Hershey, and their news is not local and I was startled at 8:00 when they talked about Three Mile Island because I was thinking of it as a local problem not a national problem until I was startled to hear it on the national news. Then I realized that obviously it would hit national news, but I didn't at first, didn't even think of it that way. And I guess we then were listening to it and we did go up, I don't know whether we did on Thursday, but probably by Friday and from then on for a while we were listening to the six-thirty news and occasionally the eleven o'clock news.

INT: Did you have the radio on all day any of those days? Saturday? Sunday?

NAR: Ummm... I don't remember. We had, but the radio tends to be on frequently anyways so it's hard for me to remember on that score.

INT: How did you feel about the media's handling of the situation?...You read the two newspapers and you have radio and television, did you have any...?

NAR: I guess I thought it was O.K.. George thought it was a little sensationalist, but I didn't get upset one way or the other about it.

INT: How did you feel about the government official's handling of the situation?

NAR: Well if you're reading the newspapers and trying to piece together each of the various days it sounded to me like it was awfully confused. Like people didn't know what they were doing, and were contradicting each other and weren't communicating from industry to government to local governments and such very well.

INT: Was there any of those that you relied on or found more particularly reliable than any others, such as newspaper, radio, government statements, Met Ed statements?

NAR: What was the guy's name, Denton?

INT: Yeah.

NAR: I decided I thought he was the most reliable whichever, I suppose that's government. But not the state government.

INT: Was there anyone that you particularly mistrusted?

NAR: ...Well, I had a hard time. I didn't quite trust what Met Ed was saying but I had a hard time not believing them because I couldn't see how any company could say that things were going well when they weren't because it would damage their image so badly that they would have problems later on. But in reading about it later, I think that that's just what they were doing, so it seemed to me like they had poor problems on their... I can't remember who was saying what now. My inclination was to worry when John Luschelswab would tell me to, when he was ready to leave home I figured it was time to worry.

INT: Did you make any plans different from what you would have ordinarily made?

NAR: ...No- I- we weren't doing much of anything so that there wasn't really much of a problem. I was concerned because James was supposed to be driving the car, driving a bunch of the choir kids to Harrisburg to a concert on Monday. And until that trip was cancelled, I was beginning to get a little nervous about the fact that James would not be where the rest of the family would be easily gotten together and he would have the car which was our only means of transportation out of town. But, I really- we didn't make our plans to go anywhere or anything like that. We didn't even, we didn't do anything.

INT: You didn't change your regular routine?

NAR: No.

INT: More listening to the radio maybe, or television?

NAR: Well yes, O.K., since we haven't been watching the news lately that was a change in the routine. And making sure we got the radio announcements off and on during the

day. And of course, it was the topic of conversation at the public library with whoever came in, so I suppose in a sense that it disrupted my work routine at the- at library. Mainly because I was talking to patrons about it.

INT: The thought crossed your mind of leaving the area, you suggested, when you were talking to me about James.

NAR: No, it didn't cross my mind about leaving. If we were told we had to leave.

INT: Ok.

NAR: No intention about leaving unless we were told we had to leave.

INT: Ok.

NAR: It was only- if we had been told we would have to leave then (indistinguishable) car be in Harrisburg. Or, actually, Harrisburg being closer, he might have been told- they might have had to evacuate Harrisburg (indistinguishable) and then...and he might be directed somewhere where he shouldn't be going, or something. I think it was more of a problem with the family being separated .

INT: So you really didn't think about leaving or make any plans for leaving?

NAR: That's right.

INT: And you said you were checking with- you had John Luschelswab in mind, and if said it was time to get out you would get out. Were you watching anybody else?

NAR: Yes, and Priscella Laws because Priscella is so opposed to x-rays and all those things I figured she would panic if, I mean if she panicked, I could panic. Until then I didn't need to.

INT: Do you have any mental pictures of what was happening at Three Mile Island, or what might happen? Did any mental images go through your mind?

NAR: ...No, not really. I did,-I had trouble picturing and I guess that's it. I had trouble picturing what a meltdown might be, or I suppose I could envision a mushroom cloud except that didn't sound to be like anything they were saying was going to happen. So, I couldn't really conceive what it meant for a meltdown and I still don't. Maybe if I had seen the China Syndrome I would have, but I didn't. So I didn't really have any mental images, at least of the plant.

INT: Do you think that anything that happened at TMI might have affected your health? Either now or in the future?

NAR: No. That did happen or might have happened?

INT: Do you think that anything that happened?

NAR: No, no.

INT: You don't think your health was affected?

NAR: No, I don't anything happened.

INT: And you are not concerned about food or milk from the area?

NAR: No.

INT: If the worst had occurred, what do you think might have happened?

NAR: Well, that's what I'm not sure what this meltdown thing is. I guess the whole area could have been contaminated and we would have had to leave. I mean, I gather from what they are saying is that an area surrounding it, maybe not getting out as far as this. But even if it didn't get out this far I would imagine the chances of effectively running Dickinson College close to a contaminated area would be kaput so we probably would have to go elsewhere.

INT: How long elsewhere?

NAR: Forever.

INT: Forever?

NAR: I mean mine- I- I don't know anything about it but I assumed, that was my picture of what a meltdown must be. That these things contaminated for fifty thousand years or something like that, so as far as I am concerned it is forever.

INT: Did any ideas of your death or the death of others cross you mind?

NAR: ... Hum, um (no)

INT: Did you feel you had certain responsibilities during the incident? Family, job, others, the community?

NAR: I suppose I felt that I had a responsibility when I was talking to other people to... point out what I thought were the facts and the case as far as they distance that we were from the place, and our ability to leave if anything really drastic should happen, and the fact that we need to be sane and sensible otherwise we were causing problems for the people who were closer in and had more problems than we did. So I suppose in that sense I felt I guess responsibilities to the kids and the people I talked to. Otherwise I

guess I just kept right on working. We were supposed to be an evacuation point if that was necessary so obviously we couldn't jeopardize that.

INT: At the time did this event bring to mind any past experiences or past events in your life or in the life of, well any life?

NAR: Hum, um (no). I can't think of anything.

INT: Nothing crossed your mind that this was like something in the past?

NAR: Hum um.

INT: Was this incident more or less frightening than, say, a flood or a hurricane, or a war?

NAR: ...Well, it's less frightening than war... I guess to me it was, it was less frightening. I have never been- left town just before Agnes- I have never been in a flood. And, I have been involved in some high winds, but I have never been in a hurricane. I guess I am more afraid of that kind of thing. And tornados and that sort of thing are more terrifying to me, I suppose because they are more erratic or something and it is less possible to do something about them. I never felt that the situation here was so imminent for me, put it that way, that I was in great danger or something. I thought that I would be able to- I would have plenty of time to get out. Maybe not with all my belongings, but that didn't- that's not that crucial.

INT: Some of these next questions have to do with images in the mind. For instance, did any TV shows or movies that you've seen in the past come to mind? You said you hadn't seen *China Syndrome*, but...

NAR: No- I- we got almost no tele- movies, and we don't watch television so that's...

INT: Any books?

NAR: ...No. There have been books that have been written on, but I haven't....

INT: They didn't come to your mind at the time?

NAR: I guess, no.

INT: Did you find yourself singing any songs then? That had words related to it?

NAR: No

INT: Any day dreams or sleeping dreams that were different?

NAR: ...Well, I suppose there must have been. There was, you know I was concerned about having the family all together. So obviously there was more concern there than I may have been vocalizing or something like that.

INT: But no images disturbed your sleep or...?

NAR: ...No, not particularly. Except for the fact when James was still driving off to Harrisburg. So on Saturday I was a little, you know... I couldn't say he couldn't go, but I would like to have.

INT: So there was a little conflict?

NAR: Yes, there was conflict there. And it wasn't that I wanted to go somewhere else, I just didn't think that that would be a good idea. So, I was very relieved when that got cancelled.

INT: Were you worried about Karen and Susan in any way?

NAR: ...Oh, you mean about their health?

INT: Yeah.

NAR: No.

INT: What changes happened to people around you during the incident?

NAR: ...Well, immediately around me, George was more harried and tired and this sort of thing. He was trying to cope with the college. The kids were- would question us but accepted what their father said, figured that he was right and he knew what he was talking about because the people up at the college would know what they were talking about. And so they were mainly reporting what other people were saying. There were people at work- one gal who was planning, getting ready to go, to leave the area, she does have a small daughter, and then changed her mind, be- just- she- that was on Tuesday, she was planning- she came to work on Monday but she was planning to leave on Tuesday. But, by Monday it was settling down or something like that, and- so did not actually leave the area. Most of the people at the library just kept right on coming in.

INT: Are there any changes in Karen or Susan or James in their views of nuclear energy...since the incident?

NAR: ...I guess I'm not sure about that except that I would say on the whole, the family does not think that that's a tremendously good way to go and never has so that if anything it would strengthen it in that viewpoint.

INT: Did they become more conscious of the...?

NAR: Well, I would say we all know something, I mean now we know Three Mile Island exists, and though I knew it intellectually before, it's a different thing to know exactly where it is.

INT: These next questions have to do with jokes and incidents that you heard, and I wanted to ask you some questions about religious activities. Did you hear any jokes about radiation or Three Mile Island?

NAR: ...Yeah, they intended, you know, the kind of sure sick humor, but unfortunately I'm the kind of person that a joke goes right out of my head and I do not remember a single one for you.

INT: Any new words or funny remarks that you can remember?

NAR: ...I think there were some words, but I can't...

INT: They don't come?

NAR: I am sieved brained for those things. I don't remember them at all. I never have.

INT: How about funny incidents that occurred?

NAR: Well I, my only incident is the gal that came into the library that I was supposed to write up for you and never did. And she was only humorous in the sense that she had so many viewpoints as to what was happening at Three Mile Island, from the fact that it was obviously sabotage, probably by the Russians and the Chinese. Though it was quite likely-these all came out in over an hour and a half, she was in the library making photocopies of her important papers- in all likelihood the young man that wrote the article six months or something before that was describing a similar incident at Three Mile Island. She figured that he probably had a great deal to do with it. I suppose with either the help of the Russians or the Chinese. However, she also said that it was very interesting that it occurred six days after the signing of the Israel-Egyptian peace treaty, so that was probably, you know, had an effect on it. I don't know whether that meant it was the Israelis or the Palestines or the Egyptians or who...And she was also very sure that it was the end of the world, which I would think had more of a divine... thing to it. But while she did think it was the end of the world, she was concerned enough to have her car towed because it wouldn't work. Spent a hundred dollars to have her car towed as far as Carlisle carrying all of her business papers. I don't know why she needed those things if it was the end of the world, but apparently she did.

INT: This all come out in an hour and a half?

NAR: Yes, she stood right there at the desk talking to us the whole time. Made it difficult for the rest of the patrons, and they were all... Well, she did talk about a few other things, and she told one young man that he had the wrong music training. She apparently had a music degree from Temple, and had taught music for a number of years.



And she was, oh, I suppose in her fifties. But, it was very definitely either a Communist plot or else the end of the world, depending on which part of the day, I mean the hour and a half, that she was talking about it.

INT: There was some joking going on, why do you think people were joking about this?

NAR: I think that's a common way of relieving tension. People do that in all kinds of situations where we're tense, unsure of ourselves, afraid.

INT: Did any biblical stories, or events, or sayings cross you mind during this incident?

NAR: Not by flood but fire next time, I don't know. Not really.

INT: Not really?

NAR: Uh huh.

INT: Did you or do you now consider the incident at Three Mile Island related in any way to God and his instructing or disciplining of mankind?

NAR: No.

INT: You attended a religious service during the crisis?

NAR: Yes.

INT: What kind? Where?

NAR: ...Which service did we... I went to College Church.

INT: College Church on Palm Sunday, wasn't it?

NAR: Well, that was afterwards. I mean that was...

INT: That was the week after.

NAR: But we had a service the Sunday before, didn't we? Or was, yeah, because college was in session so we had to have had a service before. I don't remember that anything in particular was said about it. I don't even remember now what the service was.

INT: So if I asked you whether the service changed your thoughts or feelings about the problems there's nothing you would say?

NAR: No, it didn't.

INT: What does your own faith say about the rightness or wrongness of man's desire to use and control atomic power?

NAR: ... Well, I think that my faith would lead me to say that we need to conserve and use all of the earth's resources, energy, etc. in a way that would not cause harm to future generations. And for that reason, or to the world, I mean, whatever. One has to not only think of oneself but also for the future, and for that reason I have great doubts about nuclear energy. Not so much the problem that occurred at Three Mile Island, but the problem is the storage of the wastes that come out.

INT: Do you think that religious persons and/or institutions should take a public stand?

NAR: Yeah, sure.

INT: How?

NAR: Against.

INT: I know, but what kind of?

NAR: I think that religion, religious groups should be concerned for the future of the world and the health of all mankind, now and in the future, and therefore they should take a stand for those kinds of energy sources that will be the greatest benefit to the most people. And I don't mean by the greatest benefit by being immediately giving them more energy down the road. I recognize the fact that nuclear energy is giving us cheap energy at the moment which provides jobs and all kinds of things and that has-when you lose Three Mile Island you are also creating problems for a number of people who are out of work. I would like to see us work on other kinds of energy sources rather than putting people out of work at the moment where we would empathize getting more things going so that you don't start something like Three Mile Island which you have to close down, which is putting people out of work. Anyway. I realize there is more than one side but I do think that religious institutions and others that have had a service kind of background should be pushing that viewpoint.

INT: Well, anything else you want to say? About any of it?

NAR: I guess my biggest gripe from the people that I've talked to who got upset during Three Mile Island were the ones who smoked and griped (laughter). I did have troubles with one of my friends who had called up and was upset that the college wasn't doing- wasn't closing down officially and telling us all to leave and that sort of stuff. And she smoked a lot and I said something to the effect that I didn't think that it was fair- I didn't think that one should be concerned with the possibilities of nuclear radiation from Three Mile Island when you were going to fill up your lungs with stuff and you were far more likely to get lung cancer from cigarettes than you were to get some cancer twenty years from now because of possible nuclear radiation. She didn't like that. But I guess that I think that's right. That people- the only people that had a right to gripe- now I am

forgetting about the meltdown possibility, which I guess is a whole different thing, but as far as worrying about radiation and what was coming out of the top, the only people that had a right to be concerned were the ones who are intelligent about their health and don't smoke and things like that anyway.