

Date: 1979

Occupation: Insurance company employee

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

NARRATOR: The day it happened. It was on the news. I heard it on the radio.

INT: Did you know that there was reactor there before?

NAR: I knew about it. You can see the towers from my job.

INT: How far is TMI from us, right here?

NAR: From us? It's about 25 miles from here but, 12 miles from my job.

INT: What did you think at that point when it happened?

NAR: When I first heard, I wasn't afraid but when I saw Walter Cronkite's special...

INT: When was it on?

NAR: It was on a Friday night. It happened on Wednesday, and Friday night, he took prime time TV for a special and I got scared.

INT: Did you feel it was a serious situation? Such as a crisis or did you make a distinction between something you consider a crisis...?

NAR: Crisis sounds like life or death to me and I thought that much from watching Walter Cronkite. I was scared.

INT: Did you seek any further information?

NAR: Other than listening to all the news casts on TV and radio...

INT: Did you talk to your friends or family about it?

NAR: Yeah, it was just everyone's conversation at the time.

INT: How did you feel about other's reactions to the incident?

NAR: Some talked about it too much. It got on my nerves. Well, I thought everybody was, you know, entitled to their, you know- everybody was really afraid.

INT: How do you feel the media- the way they handled the situation?

NAR: I thought it was poor because nobody knew that anybody was doing. There were too many conflicting reports. They should have had just one person in what they were talking about being the mediator over the whole thing.

INT: How did you feel about Metropolitan Ed in the incident, how they handled the situation out there?

NAR: I thought they were tacky (laughter). They were trying to save face.

INT: Actually to my knowledge, they said it happened Wednesday, before anybody even knew what happened. And, then, that Monday they started, the bubble started increasing and finally they released in the news what, you know, had happened.

NAR: The bubble- the only was to release it was letting out the radiation.

(29 second of blank and indistinguishable tape)

INT: Was there anyone who you found in particularly reliable during that time?

NAR: Well, I felt that maybe it was the major TV broadcasts like ABC or the big stations, not the local because I felt-thought that the major stations would be the ones who would have to get the right report because they have more at stake because they are reporting all over the US.

INT: Was there anyone who you particularly mistrusted?

NAR: No.

INT: Do you feel that those that were in charge are in control now of the situation or in control of the whole plant?

NAR: You mean the whole situation that is now?

INT: Like the Metropolitan Ed people, yeah...Do you think they are in control now?

NAR: Well, they've been having accidents all along since then. There's been little accidents down there.

INT: I was unaware of that.

NAR: Several weeks ago, there was a couple of guys got exposed to radiation, cleaning up the place. So, it's real bad situation down there because that stuff is really difficult.

INT: It's just something that you can't see and that makes it so...

NAR: Yeah, I work at an insurance company and we had an application on a guy who works down there setting up disposal and the office called for a full medical on him. Because, when the application came in the girl told me that guy worked at TMI. It had 'nuclear waste disposal' on there and I said to put on there where he works because they will want to know that. (indistinguishable) Bad Risk.

INT: That's an unusual one. Did you make any plans different from what you ordinarily would have done around that time?

NAR: No, I had to go to work because my boss, she was off that week, so I had to go in. I really didn't want to because I was so close to it but I had the obligation to go in and work.

INT: Did you change any of your ordinary routines?

NAR: No.

INT: Did you think about leaving the area?

NAR: I thought about it but if that thing would have blow, where I would have went, I would have still died anyhow.

INT: If you had thought about leaving, what do you think would have taken with you?

NAR: I'd of just taken my papers and everything else. I couldn't have taken my furniture and stuff like that. Where would I take it?

INT: Was there someone in your life that you were watching in order to decide what to do?

NAR: Someone in my life that I was watching to decide what to do? Well, my husband, he kept talking about leaving but then he never did so I didn't either.

INT: As an example of that, I think, at our school our physic professors- I stayed, most of the students went home but there was a physic professor doing an update report on the happenings there every hour on the hour and she seemed to be the only one that was really going down as far as her knowledge was and I think most people that remained there were watching her. It was like, if she left, that must have meant that something wasn't going on too swift, so I know u was watching her and I figured that if she figured, you know, 'well, I think it's time' from her readings that she would have gotten out of whatever, then I would had (indistinguishable).

NAR: A lot of people watched Carter but he was just politicking. That's why he went down.

INT: Did you have any mental pictures of what was happening at TMI or what might happen?

NAR: Oh yeah, my imagination went wild.

INT: How?

NAR: Well, all I could see was this thing getting- you know, when they said a bubble, I could just see, in this big containment building, some type of air bubble that was increasing in size and it got to a certain point- they didn't know what point it would bust. And I could just see the whole thing blowing up and I could see the thing melting down to the ground and a great big explosion. I went the whole way.

INT: Do you think that anything that happened at TMI might have affected your health? As far as, were you thinking in terms of in the future, long term...

NAR: Yes, cancer. My father died of cancer so that was on my mind... One thing I did do in my life- that changed, I didn't go shopping. I usually sometimes go to Harrisburg to shop, I didn't go shopping.

INT: Did you have any concerns about the food or milk from the area?

NAR: In the stores I went to, I checked to see whether they had signs that says where the milk was produced in this area or not.

INT: How about- did you picture any effects of radiation on like, the life around, and that nature type thing?

NAR: Well, I saw an article about photosynthesis and they say, like, plants and stuff now, through that process, are used to getting radiation so, in this article it said, it could be a cure for radiation exposure to have chlorophyll because- it had something to do with plants. The radiation they get from the sun is helpful in this photosynthesis process and maybe something from that, the chlorophyll, might help someone who's exposed to radiation. It was little article in the paper. I think it was in the GUIDE. And, if you think about it, maybe. Because everything in nature has a purpose and something simple like that might affect something...

INT: Did you think of your own death or of others?

NAR: Yeah, it came to mind, after that explosion.

INT: Did you think that you would survive if something like that would happen?

NAR: Not living this close, no. I'd rather die living this close than be a little bit further away and get the exposure and have a bunch of illnesses and bad effects from the radiation. All I could think of was Hiroshima and all that.

INT: Did you think about God during this incident?

NAR: Yes. It was the strangest thing, I was in church that whole weekend. It was planned but it was strange.

INT: Did you pray?

NAR: Yes.

INT: Did any biblical stories or anything like that come to mind?

NAR: Oh yeah (indistinguishable)

INT: Did the idea of Satan or the last judgment come to mind? Or the end of the world type thing?

NAR: Well, if they would have had the melt-down, it might have. In that melt-down thing if it melted down to the core it might explode the whole planet. I used my imagination. I let it go wild.

INT: Did you consider the incident maybe as related in any way to God instructing or disciplining mankind as if to say, you know, “watch out, don’t get too big for your britches”?

NAR: I’m sure there is something in Revelations that has to deal with this.

INT: I was trying to think- there is something in particular but I have to go back. I was looking for that the other day myself, but I couldn’t find it. It occurred to me, because I read something before, as a matter of fact just before I came back here, at our church, we studied revelations and I was thinking about that. Did the attendance at church change any?

NAR: At my own church? I don’t think so. I had gone to different churches that week. I didn’t notice anything unusual.

INT: Did you think that any religious leader or institutions even should have taken some type of stand during this time?

NAR: I think they should have. They might have saved a lot of souls that weekend, if anything. It could make people more ware that these are the last days. And that would really (indistinguishable.).

INT: It might take something like that for some people out hear.

NAR: Yeah, they need the explosions.

INT: Did you feel that you had a certain responsibility during the incident, say whether toward your family or your job?

NAR: Well, my job. I had to go because my boss was off and that left me in charge and I had to be there because we didn't get a call to close the office so I had to go.

INT: Did you have things to do that you otherwise would not have had to do, say um...I don't know, prepare some people, stocked up on food, and you know, things like that?

NAR: No, no.

INT: How did the situation seem to affect those around you? Maybe your friends or, you know, family?

NAR: (indistinguishable) in everyone's conversations. It just made them more aware of what's happening around them.

INT: At any time, did this event bring to mind any past experience like that or you were mentioning about (indistinguishable) Hiroshima?

NAR: Yeah, like that, yeah. It's good thing I didn't see the China Syndrome first.

INT: I didn't see that either.

NAR: I saw it afterwards.

INT: You saw it afterwards? I heard that they even used Pennsylvania in there?

NAR: Yes.

INT: That's wild. It really makes you think. I didn't see that. Was it in town?

NAR: Uh-huh.

INT: Guess it's not coming back anytime soon...Would you say that the incident was more or less frightening than say a flood or a hurricanes, something like that?

NAR: Yes. Because, this is something that we are not used to. It's something new and they don't know how to handle it. We're not really sure what to do with it. It's like a monster.

INT: It's something you can't see. That's what keeps sticking in my mind. You can't smell it, you can't touch it; it's just there. Did any other TV shows come to mind or any other movies?

NAR: ...No.

INT: Did you have any daydreams or nightmares?

NAR: No (laughter).

INT: Just vivid imagination?

NAR: Yeah.

INT: Did you hear any jokes about the Three Mile Island incident?

NAR: Oh, there was jokes.

INT: Did you think they were funny or, did you think that, you know....

NAR: Well this was after it all cooled over so, they were funny. After, yeah.

INT: Can you remember any particular ones?

NAR: I can't remember jokes. They just pass, I laugh, and then it's gone. If it is really good, I have to write it down and remember it.

INT: This one guy I interviewed had one joke, "I survived Three Mile Island" or something like that, "but will I survive my electric bill". We had some pretty crude ones in school they had T-shirts, "Go to Harrisburg and have 2.5 children." I was like, "wait a minute!" and I thought that was pretty bad. I thought that was pretty bad. I didn't appreciate that myself. What do you think your overall opinion of nuclear energy is at this point?

NAR: Well, it's necessary but it has to be- they have to get to the point where they can control it, because right now, I don't think they really can. And the people who work there- I told you yesterday, there needs to have more dedication, the people that work in these plants. Because, it seems like a boring job and when you have a job that's boring you sort of slack up on your responsibilities and then if something happens then you're lost. And you have to be really dedicated at your job. When you have to watch those meters, *you have to watch those meters*. You have to give your all to those meters. I heard that there are a lot of guys that work down there, some people from work know them, and the guys will be sitting there making rugs while they're watching the meters, their making rugs, macramé, it's an art shop.

INT: I didn't think about that. I guess...

NAR: It's a boring job. They need something else to help the boredom. And helping the boredom, they're not doing their job.

INT: Someone else had said that the machine, the computer itself was printing something is wrong with my 'such and such or whatever, check it out' and they kind of ignored it for the first couple of hours and they by that time the thing had started to grow and then the next thing they are saying is that they were evacuating the women and children from the area...Is there anything else that you might like to say?

NAR: No.